

# Discovering Azerbaijan with *IRS-Heritage*

**Musa MARJANLI,**  
Editor-in-Chief

Azerbaijan is one of the most ancient places of human civilization on earth. Mankind has gone through different stages in its development on this soil. The rock paintings in Gobustan in Azerbaijan's east are attributed to BC times, the stone and bronze age caves, the Agdash plain near the Gala village on the Absheron peninsula, the archeological findings in Khashakhuna and Dubandi, the dwelling sites, burial mounds, remains of hearths and other material culture dating back to the 3rd millennium BC are evidence of how ancient our history is.

From the standpoint of historical monuments, the Absheron peninsula is of particular importance. The history of the peninsula, which is considered an ancient dwelling site, covers a period dating back to BC times. This is evidenced by traces of numerous burial mounds, hearths and graves discovered here in archeological excavations. One of the most ancient settlements in Absheron is the Gala village in its north-east. It is now home to the well-known Gala State Historical and Ethnographic Reserve. The reserve was established by Government of Azerbaijan in late 1990s, but most of the work on developing this open-area museum and attracting tourists from all over the world has been done in the years of independence. It is therefore no coincidence that this issue of *Irs-Heritage* opens with a story about Gala. The ample historical, cultural and natural heritage is a source of attraction for visitors from around the globe. The virgin nature, the mineral water springs, the archeological monuments, the unique ancient architecture, the national cuisine and a number of other factors have paved the way for the development of different types of tourism in Azerbaijan, including business, sport, health, fact-finding, hunting, exotic, beach and even gastronomic. The tourism sector in Azerbaijan is developing by the day and gradually transforming into one of the key drivers of the national economy. We at *Irs-Heritage* will continue doing our best to promote this ancient center of human and material culture.