

Qeshm Island's underground caves



A view of Qeshm Island
● surfiran.com



Namakdan Cave
● irancultura.it



Chahkooh canyon
● hipersia.com

Qeshm Island, a geological treasure trove, boasts a multitude of underground caves that are waiting to be explored. These natural wonders, formed over thousands of years, present a unique opportunity for adventure and learning.

Namakdan cave

Venture into one of the longest salt caves globally, stretching over six kilometers in length, Namakdan Cave offers a surreal and captivating experience like no other. This fascinating cave showcases a dazzling array of salt formations, stalactites and stalagmites that have taken shape over millennia, creat-

ing a landscape that resembles a crystal wonderland, kentaltravel.com wrote.

As you explore the cave's chambers, you'll encounter various unique formations that have been shaped by the slow deposition of salt minerals over thousands of years. These formations come in all shapes and sizes, from delicate, icicle-like stalactites hanging from the ceiling to massive, pillar-like stalagmites rising from the cave floor. In some areas, the stalactites and stalagmites have grown together, forming breathtaking columns that bridge the gap be-

tween the ceiling and the floor. The otherworldly environment of the Namakdan Cave is a product of geological processes that have been at work for millions of years. The cave was formed by the gradual dissolution of the surrounding salt rock by infiltrating water. Over time, the water carved out an extensive network of passageways and chambers, leaving behind the intricate salt formations that we see today.

As you navigate through the cave's labyrinthine corridors, you'll also notice fascinating patterns and textures on the walls, floors, and ceilings. These are the result

of water movement and mineral deposition, which create swirling designs and undulating surfaces that add to the cave's mystique. Visiting Namakdan Cave is not only a visually stunning experience, but it also offers a unique opportunity to learn about the geological processes that have shaped this remarkable subterranean world.

Chahkooh canyon and caves

A geological marvel, Chahkooh Canyon boasts a series of underground caves, passageways and natural wells. As you navigate through the narrow passages,

marvel at the striking rock formations that have been shaped by wind and water erosion.

Dark canyon cave

Explore the lesser-known but equally fascinating Dark Canyon Cave, near the village of Tabl. Delve into the depths of this hidden gem and be captivated by the cave's enchanting beauty, characterized by its unique rock formations and underground streams.

Tips for a successful Qeshm Island cave tour

Safety first: Ensure you have ap-

propriate footwear and clothing for exploring the caves, as well as a helmet and headlamp for your safety.

Stay hydrated: Bring plenty of water to stay hydrated during your adventure, as the climate can be hot and dry.

Capture the moment: Don't forget your camera to capture the incredible sights you'll encounter on your tour.

Respect the environment: Help preserve these unique ecosystems by following the guidelines provided by your tour guide and practicing the 'Leave No Trace' principle.

Persian art of the 8th-11th centuries

Persian art of the 8th-11th centuries was first of all unusually varied as regards its range of themes and subjects and its influences. One of the major historians of Islamic art, Oleg Grabar, wrote: "Every newly discovered monument reveals to us completely unknown aspects of this art."

It is true that there were attempts to create specific styles at the courts of rulers, such as a court style in Khorasan under al-Mamun (early 9th century) and under Mahmud of Ghazni (early 11th century), but these were merely episodes not leading to any sort of lasting unification.

Such variety is characteristic of all types of art at this time. In the architecture of Iran, for example, the hypostyle plan was introduced as the basic mosque layout, brought by the Arabs from the West (the mosques in Siraf, Naein and Damghan), but at the same time the so-called "kiosk-mosques" were being built, based on the Zoro-

astrian plan of the *chahar taq*, and tower mausoleums were spreading (there are Middle Persian inscriptions on some of the mausoleums, alongside Arabic).

Mosques were decorated with stucco panels consisting of plant and geometrical motifs, whilst in the east of the Islamic world, as in Neyshapur, these motifs are extraordinarily close to those used in the west, for example in Iraq.

At the same time we know of stucco panels of that period (mid-8th century) which depict not only Sassanian animals but even Sassanian deities (Mithras on a stag) and heroes of Sassanian legends.

All in all it could probably be said that during these centuries a process of selection was taking place in Persian art, involving a choice of forms and themes from traditional art together with various innovations. Historians of Persian art are unanimous in mentioning the slowness of this process.



Jameh Mosque of Isfahan
● odysseytraveller.com

The most innovative art was produced in the north-west of the country. It is especially important that in the same period one sees how the propagandistic and class character of the hunt, feast and battle scenes have entirely disappeared. Strange new motifs appear during the 9th and early 10th centuries on Neyshapur ce-

ramics, and there alone. The designs portray birds, beasts (most often a goat), various monsters, horses being attacked by beasts of prey, figures in rich clothing holding goblets and flowers, and riders on horseback.

All these designs do, of course, have their prototypes in Sassanian art, but they are very primitively executed with no

regard for proportion and are sometimes mere caricatures, though this style gives the faces a lively character and expressive quality.

The ceramic style, which appeared suddenly and vanished just as suddenly, possibly in the course of a single century, is an example of those completely new aspects of art appearing in connection with the new discoveries which Oleg Grabar mentions.

Ceramics from the Garrus region (northwestern Iran) are also curious, executed in a technique involving the carving out of a layer of slip, which results in a low-relief design. One such bowl portrays a character from an Iranian epic, the tyrant-king Zahhak who killed Jamshid. Some scholars assign these ceramics to the 12th century.

From the beginning of the 11th century changes in Persian art are clearly distinguishable and this new phase covers a lengthy period of about 300 years, until

the mid-14th century.

It should be noted that ceramics and metalwork depicted the most vivid figurative images of this period. The golden age of miniature painting dates from around the end of this phase of Persian art (after the Mongol conquest) and this form was subsequently to occupy a dominant position in figurative art. The political history of this period involves the rise of the Turkic dynasties of the Ghaznavids in the east and of the Seljuks, and the crushing Mongol conquest.

In view of the fact that works of art have as yet been insufficiently researched it is impossible to relate them precisely to historical events, and, on a wider scale, to events in the field of culture (often it is necessary to date objects of this period from the 11th-12th or 12th-13th centuries; although in the course of these centuries extremely important changes occurred both in politics and ideology).