

Zagros Mountains, home to various plant and animal species



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an Period. Ecologically, about 40 percent of the country's water comes from 5.5 million hectares of forest and ten million hectares of rangeland.

In addition to Iranian oak, there are other exclusive plant species in this mountain range including mountain almond. Its other herbal features include 57 species, subspecies, and varieties of the Rosaceae family that represent the peak of the vegetative evolution of this family on a global scale. About 44 percent of Zagros trees and shrubs have medicinal properties.

Many botanists believe that Iran is one of the main territories for growing tulips. The tulip has 18 species in Iran, four of which are endemic to Iran. There are unique fields of these flowers in the Zagros region and numerous related festivals are held there annually.

Mammal species roam the rocky slopes of Zagros Mountains including the Persian leopard, the Syrian brown bear, bezoar ibex, and striped hyena and Persian red squirrel. Lethely leaping among branches of oaks, beautiful Persian squirrels make their homes in the oldest and tallest trees; skilled swimmers and competent climbers, they boast luxuriant tails of splendid russet red.

Finally, in the midst of this mountain range, there live many tribes and cultures that have their own lan-



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The ancient and vast plateau of Iran is located at latitudes between 25 and 40 north degrees. It is placed in the dry and semi-dry strip of the Northern Hemisphere.

The 1,300-kilometer Zagros Mountain range ex-

tends from northwestern Iran (Iran's border with Turkey) to the southeast, oirantour.com wrote.

Zagros Mountains have a history of several thousand years; some empires such as the Achaemenid were formed in its vicinity about

2,500 years ago.

Limestone and shale rocks from the Mesozoic Era and Paleogene Period form the most commonly seen geological structural materials of Zagros Mountains. The oldest rocks found there date back to the Precambri-



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guage, customs and traditions.

Mount Dena

The highest point in the mountain range is Mount Dena, with an elevation of 14,465 feet (4,409 meters), located in the middle of the

Zagros Mountains. Passes through the mountains are used for reaching the fertile intermontane plains, which lie at elevations above 5,000 feet (1,500 meters).

Gahar Lake

Gahar Lake is one of the

best sights of Lorestan Province and one of the largest freshwater lakes in Iran. This lake, with its beautiful nature and clear water, attracts every tourist, especially since it is one of the best places to catch trout.

Development of different cultures in Iran

The natural formation of the Iranian landscape – the steep mountain ranges of the Zagros and Alborz, the coast of the Caspian Sea, the tableland with the big desert, the lowlands in the West and the elevated plain in the East beyond the Lut Desert – has favoured the development of different cultures that are all embedded in their specific environment. At this time, six main geographical regions can be distinguished. The desert margin regions on the central plateau surround the desert. Iranian Azarbaijan mirrors the development in Eastern Anatolia and Transcaucasia.

The lowlands of Khuzestan Province in southwestern Iran, the ancient Susiana and adjacent plains were closely connected to Mesopotamia. The high valleys of the Zagros in Fars Province constituted an independent region, and southeastern Iran – Sistan-Baluchestan Province – had connections to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Finally, the discovered oasis culture on the Halil Rud maintained long-distance relations with Arabia and Mesopotamia across the Persian Gulf.

The definition of cultural tra-



Uzbek Hill
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ditions and their regional and chronological variants in Iranian prehistory relies mainly on pottery classification. In the fifth and fourth millennia BCE, pottery with dark painted decoration over a beige or red surface was widely but unlike Mesopotamia, painted pottery stays common in this region until well into the

fourth millennium BCE.

It is only in the late fourth millennium BCE, and probably due to the influence of new technologies, especially the introduction of the fast potter's wheel, that a new trend toward the production of a monochrome mass-produced ware emerges.

This ware is occasionally deco-

rated with horizontal circular bands and can be found throughout western Iran and the plateau. In the north, grey polished wares, already attested in small quantities in the ceramic assemblages since the fifth millennium BCE, increase continually in ratio. Only in the southeastern part of the country, on the other side

of the Lut Desert and along the Halil Rud, and therefore beyond Proto-Elamite influence, a characteristic style of painted pottery survives into the middle of the third millennium BCE.

Settlements

The southern Zagros highlands reveal a radical reorganization of settlement structures during the late fourth millennium BCE. After decreasing steadily in size and number since the end of the fifth millennium BCE, a process possibly due to the appearance of alternative ways of life, like for example nomadism, some settlements in favoured locations now started to grow to an unprecedented size. Fortification systems, administrative buildings and craftsmen's quarters portray a truly urban character. These big settlements are usually surrounded by an array of smaller sites that comprise farming villages, nomadic camps or even specialised production areas. A good example for such an early city is Tal-e Malyan in Fars Province, later to become the capital of Anshan. In the late fourth millennium BCE, its urban area, which covers several small mounds, increased

noticeably in size. A city wall encircled some of the mounds. An administrative complex formed the centre of the settlement, while workshops producing stone tools and shell beads, as well as processing areas for arsenic copper and lead, were located on the smaller outer mounds.

A similar process of development can be assumed in other settlement areas of the southern Zagros, like Tal-e Ghazir in Behbahan, Tappeh Sialk and Tappeh Hesaar, the two best known settlements on the plateau.

Nevertheless, they too certainly represent regional centres with specialised economic areas that can be characterised as proto-urban as early as the early fourth millennium BCE.

Looking at a wider geographical context, the surveys and excavations at Arisman also indicate the existence of contemporary specialised industrial settlements that supplied the market in Sialk.

More specialised settlements can be found on the plateau at Tappeh Ghabrestan, Qazvin Province, and at the excavated settlement of Tappeh Ozbaki (Uzbek Hill) in Alborz Province.