



Saqalaksar Lake a natural beauty in Iran



If you're a nature lover and have a penchant for lakes, then come along with us as we explore one of Iran's greatest natural wonders.

Saqalaksar Lake, located near Rasht, the capital of Gilan Province in northern Iran, is a sight to behold with its unparalleled beauty and captivating natural attractions. Picture a serene lake nestled amidst lush forests, creating a picturesque vista that is truly mesmerizing. Known as the cleanest lake in Iran, Saqalaksar Lake is a testament to the pristine beauty of nature.

Situated approximately 64 meters above sea level, Saqalaksar Lake, together with its surrounding green forests, spans a remarkable fifteen-hectare area. The lake itself stretches six hundred meters in length and five hundred meters in width. It is an artificial lake formed by the construction of a dam, receiving its water supply from precipitation and nearby springs.

The name Saqalaksar is derived from three words: "saqa," meaning water-hole, "lak," meaning stork, and "sar," meaning starling. Essentially, it signifies a place where storks and starlings quench their thirst. It is said that these birds inhabit the area surrounding the lake and utilize it as a source of water.

To fully grasp the beauty and tranquility of Saqalaksar Lake, take a leisurely stroll along its shores and through the encompassing woods. Listen to the harmonious melodies of the birds that dwell in this idyllic setting. If you prefer a more immersive experience, consider camping near the lake. However, try to plan your visit during weekdays to avoid the crowds typically present on weekends and holidays.

There are also boats available for rent, allowing you to paddle through the lake and explore its enchanting surroundings from a different perspective. Until a few years ago, an intriguing sight

awaited visitors at Saqalaksar Lake — an ephemeral house that emerged or submerged depending on the season. During periods of heavy precipitation, the house would vanish beneath the water, only to resurface during dry months. Unfortunately, for unknown reasons, it has since been removed, leaving behind fond memories of this remarkable phenomenon.

Saqalaksar Lake has gained recognition for being a haven of cleanliness and natural preservation in Iran. The nearby villagers are renowned for their warm hospitality and friendliness. They firmly believe that the village and its environs belong not only to them but to the Earth as a whole. Thus, they strive to preserve its pristine condition. They embrace the concept that actions speak louder than words. Consequently, maintaining a healthy environment is deemed crucial for a sound mind and heart.

In their tireless efforts to uphold the integrity of the lake, the villagers have established a remarkable tradition. Visitors must pay an entrance fee, which grants them access to the site. However, this fee serves a dual purpose. In addition to welcoming guests, the villagers provide them with bags to collect any trash they may encounter during their stay. Guests who gather and deposit trash into these bags are eligible for a partial refund of their entrance fee upon departure.

Saqalaksar Lake's allure knows no seasonal bounds. Regardless of the time of year, it exudes its own unique charm that captivates all who come across it. In the spring, delicate light green trees cast their reflection on the lake, creating a mesmerizing tableau, while vibrant flowers and flourishing rice farms embellish the surrounding landscape. In the fall, the lake is encircled by a breathtaking display of fiery-hued leaves, leaving spectators speechless. Finally,

the winter brings a tranquil scene of snow-covered trees and an icy lake surface, forming a winter wonderland.

Before setting out on your Saqalaksar Lake adventure, take note of the following tips: 1. Fishing and swimming are not permitted in the lake. 2. Visitors are allowed to enter only until 8 p.m. If you're traveling with friends, don't worry about individual fees. The entrance fee applies per car and is reasonable. Saqalaksar Lake is in a village with the same name, a mere fifteen kilometers from Rasht.

Take the opportunity to immerse yourself in the pure air and captivating scenery. Afterward, if you're interested in exploring nearby attractions in Rasht, Shahr-dari Square, Saravan Park, and Gilan Rural Heritage Museum are excellent options. Additionally, don't miss the opportunity to visit the famous stepped houses of Masuleh and the historic Gha-leh Roudkhan.

Aspakhu Fire Temple and its unique architecture

Iranica Desk

Aspakhu Fire Temple, which dates back to the ancient Sassanid era, is the oldest recorded structure of this period in North Khorasan Province.

This stone temple, which is sometimes called a church, is located on a high hill in the forests of North Khorasan Province, 115 kilometers from Bojnourd, on the road to Ashkhaneh, in the southern part of Aspakhu village.

The architecture of this building combines domes and *ivans*, which have a long history.

Near this building there is a cemetery on a hill that differs significantly from the burial and tomb-making practices of Muslims; the bodies are buried in a family manner. According to experts, these indications suggest that certain Zoroastrian communities lived in this vast area, and this magnificent building belongs to them.

The entrance of the temple, which has a special significance in its architecture, consists of two parts: the dome and the base. The dome is placed on the base in the shape of a semi-circle.



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Overall, considering the architectural features and the use of materials, especially the use of uncut stones, small wooden beams, method of dome-making, dome arches, and other elements, it can be said that this type of architecture prevailed in the early Sassanid period and, at most, until the early Buyid era in Iran.