

Embark on a magical journey into depths of the Earth at Katalah Khor Cave



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The caves are one of the few natural wonders that simulate the experience of traveling inside the earth for us and are therefore very magical and fascinating. Katalah Khor Cave is located in Zanjan Province, 80 kilometers south of Khodabandeh and five kilometers from Garmab. This cave was discovered before 1921 CE. In the spring of 1952, a group of Iran's most famous mountaineers set out to discover and visit the cave, and one of the Zanjani members of the group named Seyyed Assadollah Jamali officially registered the cave. Since then, Katalah Khor Cave has been of great interest to cave enthusiasts as a magnificent natural phenomenon. Katalah Khor Cave is known as one of the world's top limestone caves in terms of the qual-

ity of crystals and stalactites, beauty, and number of floors.

This amazing cave is the second largest in the world, after Son Doong Cave in Vietnam, in terms of size. According to experts, it is unique in terms of beauty and is known as one of the most beautiful caves in the world.

The cave is not only important in terms of tourism but also in the field of geology and paleontology. It was formed during the third geological period, and according to findings, its age dates back to 27 million to 30 million years ago. In recent exploration operations, the skeleton of a dog-like animal was discovered in the second and third levels of the cave, which does not resemble any existing animal.

Until now, only three levels of this cave, which is located at an elevation of



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1,700 meters above sea level, have been discovered, and four other levels remain unknown.

The ceiling of this cave is full of hanging stalactites, and there are many conical sediments on its surface. The connection of these two beautiful phenomena has formed numerous columns in the main path of caving, which increases the beauty of the path.

Katalah Khor Cave's stalactites are unparalleled in terms of beauty and diversity in the world. Due to their high limestone purity, many consider Katalah Khor to be the most beautiful limestone cave in the world. Stalactites and stalagmites have formed columns that carry the weight of the cave and support the ceiling.

Katalah Khor Cave has many sub-tunnels, each of which has been named based on the similarity

and image it brings to our minds. This cave is divided into three cultural, recreational, and sports sections. The sports section is four kilometers long, but only cavers and rock climbers can go to this section. The recreational section is a two-kilometer straight path that all tourists can see. The cultural section is located in the southern part of the cave, and in the main part of it, there is a natural valley, the exit route of which has been artificially cut, and various ceremonies are held there.

Katalah Khor Cave's recreational complex has single and double suites with facilities such as a bathroom, toilet, suitable parking, restaurant, coffee shop, gazebo, gas station, and CNG station along the way, providing a suitable environment for overnight stays for tourists.

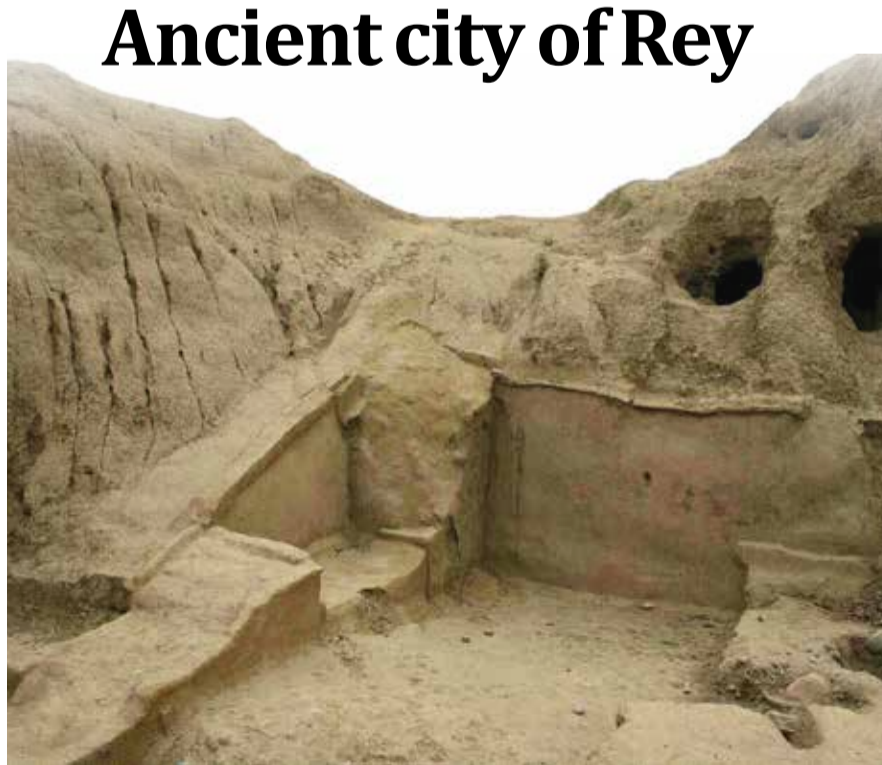
The western limit of Qumis was considered to be the station Ra's al-Kalb, in the low mountain spurs to the west of Lasgird; this place was separated from the fertile district of Khuwar by a salt desert in which the village of Dih-e Namak or Diz-e Namak, the Qasr al-Milh of the Arabs, is located. The chief settlement of the district of Khuwar now bears the Turkish name Qeshlaq (winter quarters). Travelers describe the guard towers and walls that until recently served as protection from incursions by the Turkomans. Such towers were there as early as the beginning of the tenth century.

The district of Khuwar is separated from Rey by a mountain passage; this passage, winds its way in helicoid fashion through the mountain chain; it is, in most scholars' opinion, identical with the "Caspian Gates" of the ancients, through which Alexander

the Great passed in his pursuit of Bessus. Ibn Rus-ta (a tenth-century Muslim Persian explorer and geographer) counts three farsakhs from the western end of this passage to the village Afridun, and from there nine more to the city of Rey (Shahr-e Rey).

Rey, ancient Raga, was one of the earliest cities of Iran; Raga, a city in Media, is already mentioned in Darius's inscriptions of the sixth century BCE. Because of its antiquity, it had the nickname Shaykh al-Bilad (the noble city) or, like Balkh, Umm al-Bilad. Subsequently, the Seleucids founded next to the mountain passage itself the town of Charax, the medieval Araz, where the Parthian king Phraates I in the first half of the second century CE resettled the people of Mardo.

Rey was conquered by the Arabs in the seventh century, and sometimes served as residence of governors who were in



charge of the entire eastern half of Iran, including Khorasan. One such governor was the future ca-

liph Mahdi (father of Harun al-Rashid), stationed here as governor during the caliphate of his father

Mansur. He developed the city and named it after himself, al-Muhammadiyya;

this name is often found on the coins struck by Mahdi while he was heir presumptive. At the time of the tenth-century geographers, Rey was a considerable town, although it remained behind Naysabur in terms of size and wealth.

Like other large towns, Rey consisted of a quhandiz, a shahrestan, and a rabat; the Friday mosque, built by Mahdi, stood, as in Samarqand and Bukhara, between the citadel and the shahrestan.

The citadel was on a steep hill and that from the top of this hill a view opened up over the entire city. The length and breadth of Rey equaled, according to some reports, one farsakh; according to others, one and one-half farsakhs. Both the citadel and the shahrestan were in the tenth century abandoned by the inhabitants, whose life, as in other commercial and manufacturing towns, completely shifted

to the rabat, where there were many bazaars. The chief market was called Ruda, after the name of the small river that flowed through it.

Besides the water of two small rivers, the inhabitants used well water. The district was famous for its fertility and warm climate because it was protected from northerly winds; at the same time, however, the climate of Rey, like the present climate of Tehran, was considered very harmful to health, especially in summer. One could see the volcano of Damavand, 5,900 meters high, from many parts of the city and even from a considerable distance further south. The tenth-century sources do not report it as active, but smoke was seen rising from it stop at all times.

As is known, Damavand is reputed in Persian mythology to be the place where the evil Dahhak, defeated by Faridun, was imprisoned.