

# Explore majesty of Shirkuh Mountain in Yazd Province

## Iranica Desk

Mountains have long been revered as diverse and captivating tourist destinations. The allure of exciting sports and the exploration of mountain ecosystems has only grown over time. In this article, we'll delve into the allure of Shirkuh Mountain in Yazd, offering insight into this natural wonder for those interested in embarking on an exhilarating journey.

Rising to a height of 4,075 meters above sea level, Shirkuh stands as the highest peak in Yazd Province, forming part of the expansive Zagros Mountain. Surrounding the peak are various villages, including Bagh Mehdi to the west, Bardestan to the southwest, Deh Bala to the east, and Dareh Shir to the northwest.

Situated to the south of Yazd, Shirkuh is recognized as one of the 1,515 most prominent peaks globally. Its impressive elevation allows for a day-long ascent to its peak. Renowned for its numerous climbing routes, the mountain boasts many attractions. Additionally, atop Shirkuh, natural springs provide refreshing drinking water.

The name Shirkuh holds significance, as *shir* translates to lion and *kuh* to mountain, giving rise to the moniker Mountain Lion. This name is attributed to the mountain's snow-covered peak, resembling a white lion, and its likeness to a sleeping lion when viewed from a particular angle.

To witness the majesty of Shirkuh, visitors often venture to Deh Bala village, a verdant, hospitable community that has long embraced the mountain's presence, even amid harsh winter conditions. Shirkuh serves as a vital water source for the qanats in Taft and Mehriz, as well as the Posht-e Kuh and Pish-e Kuh villages, contributing to the underground water supply of Yazd. Moreover, the mountain's influ-



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ence on rainfall patterns in surrounding areas is noteworthy, making it a crucial component in water distribution and ecological balance.

Geologically, Shirkuh rests on a granite base, overlaid by over 1,000 meters of dolomite and limestone from the Cretaceous period. Erosion has significantly impacted these formations, particularly in the southern regions of Shirkuh. Notably, igneous formations from the late third and fourth periods, along with layers of travertine, can be observed in the mountain's southern periphery. The area's geological phenomena, including river terraces, attract the fascination of visitors. The ascent to the peak begins near

Sheikh Alishah neighborhood's mosque, marking the starting point for the journey. While the initial stretch allows for vehicular travel, the subsequent kilometer requires traversing on foot. Along the way, three perennial springs offer a respite and their cool and clear waters providing sustenance for the climb. The first spring, nestled amidst towering Tabrizi trees, has earned the local moniker Taabestan Khaneh, or the Summer House.

Shirkuh stands as a testament to the rich biodiversity and ecological significance of the mountain, serving as a vital sanctuary during periodic droughts in Yazd Province. Whether for its natural beauty, geological marvels,

or cultural significance, Shirkuh Mountain offers a captivating experience for those seeking adventure and exploration in this breathtaking region.

### Mountain shelters

Three shelters are available along the route. One newly constructed shelter is made of metal, offering three sections suitable for accommodating 40 to 45 individuals. The other two shelters are constructed from concrete, with the larger one capable of housing 20 people and the smaller shelter accommodating eight. Blankets are provided in both concrete shelters, offering superior warmth and insulation compared to the metal shelter.

### Shirkuh Peak

The ascent from the shelters to the peak of Shirkuh follows a well-defined path with a gradual slope. The journey covers a distance of 5.4 kilometers, occasionally challenged by high wind speeds and snow. However, reaching the peak alleviates all fatigue, with the sense of accomplishment indescribable.

### Mountain condition

The Shirkuh shelter, situated on the ridge, presents a relatively easier climbing experience to the peak compared to other 4,000-meter peaks, particularly due to the potential for nightfall during the ascent. Depending on weather conditions, the main

ascent route of Shirkuh is suitable for individuals capable of navigating rough nature paths spanning 9 to 18 kilometers, including challenging trails and steep paths. However, alternative routes, such as the southern wall route, present more difficult conditions, particularly in winter due to rocky terrain and the absence of facilities like springs and shelters.

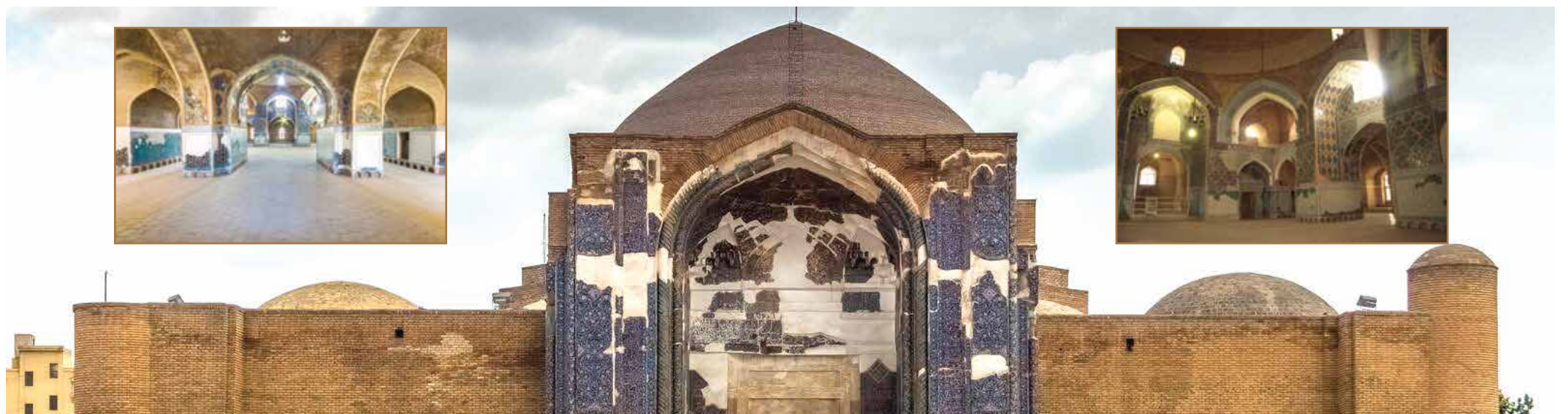
### When to climb

The climate at Shirkuh Peak is ideal for climbing during spring, autumn, and summer. While Shirkuh experiences cold, snowy winters, winter ascents are less dangerous than other peaks of similar height in Iran. Early spring ascents offer a blend of lush greenery and pleasant temperatures. The first half of spring provides the most balanced temperatures and optimal spring water conditions, offering the chance to witness waterfalls along the way. Climbing from April to November ensures a simple and enjoyable ascent, with the added beauty of the mountain's landscape. It's advisable to commence summer ascents early in the morning to reach higher altitudes before the weather heats up.

### Camping or overnight stay

In Deh Bala village's Sheikh Alishah neighborhood, situated along the ascent to Shirkuh peak, accommodations are available at the Central Mosque or Zeinabiyeh Mosque, with prior arrangement. Additionally, a mountaineer's house has been established by a local resident next to the Zeinabiyeh Mosque, providing a comfortable overnight stay for climbers. If weather conditions permit camping in the village, the area next to the Shir and Khorshid (Lion and the Sun) spring at the beginning of the ascent to Shirkuh is an excellent choice, offering ample space for parking and camping.

# Blue Mosque, turquoise jewel of Tabriz



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Did you know that there are only four blue mosques in the world? One of these rare, beautiful buildings is located in Tabriz, the capital of East Azarbaijan Province. Covered with dazzling blue tiles, this building has a fascinating story to tell. Let's delve into the history of the Turquoise of Islam.

The Blue Mosque, known as "Masjed-e Kabud" in Persian, and "Goy Masjed" in Azeri, was built in 1465 CE by the order of Jahan Shah, a ruler of the Kara Koyunlu dynasty. Once one of the most famous buildings of its time, it remains a testament to the region's rich history.

When standing in front of the magnificent entrance of the Blue

Mosque, the first thing that catches one's eye is the blank spots on its blue facade. These missing tiles are a result of two massive earthquakes in 1727 and 1773. Despite ongoing reconstruction efforts since 1973, the restoration remains incomplete.

The Blue Mosque was once part of a vast architectural complex, including a mosque, a monastery,

a courtyard, and a library, all destroyed during the earthquakes. Despite this, remnants of the main gate, the dome, and some parts of the outer walls still stand, showcasing remarkable architecture.

What makes the Blue Mosque truly unique is its blend of Iranian and Ottoman design elements, a result of the Kara Koyun-

lu era's influence. The fusion of Islamic architecture from both regions, along with intricate calligraphy and geometric patterns, creates a stunning visual tapestry.

Visitors to the Blue Mosque can also explore the mausoleum and tomb of Jahan Shah, the king who commissioned this architectural marvel. For photography enthu-

siasts, the interplay of light and shadow makes the Blue Mosque a captivating subject, offering a dreamy destination for capturing Islamic architectural beauty. If you're ever planning to visit Tabriz, be sure to add the Blue Mosque to your bucket list. It's a must-see destination, offering a glimpse into a rich historical and architectural legacy.