

Morteza Ali Spring in Tabas allures visitors



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Morteza Ali Spring is situated in the eastern part of Tabas, South Khorasan Province, and is composed of a series of several springs that flow from the southern slopes of Kesh Siah Mountain towards the west. This spring is renowned for its therapeutic properties and is a major attraction in Tabas, drawing numerous tourists. What makes it truly unique is the presence of both hot and cold springs situated parallel to each other in a valley, creating a phenomenon that is rare and fascinating. Adding to its allure, one of the world's tallest arch dams is located at the end of the spring's route. Visitors to this spring will also encounter ancient cavities in the narrow walls which belong to the Zoroastrians. Morteza Ali Spring is formed by three main and several secondary springs, making it a remarkable oasis in the heart of the desert. The first spring, known as Qanbar, flows from east to west along the valley, providing cold water. Six kilometers further, there is a hot spring formed by the breaking and pressure of a fault. The water from these

two springs converges and forms a river, which ultimately joins the last spring named Jafari. The water from these three springs reaches an earthen dam named Nahrin, which is the primary water source for the farms and gardens.

The hot spring water flowing into the river from the right creates a temperature difference in the river, sometimes reaching 10 degrees Celsius. Due to its higher concentration and structural differences, the hot water does not completely mix with the cold water, resulting in both types of water flowing together for up to 300 meters. As a result, when you step into the river, you will be astonished to find that one foot is in warm water and the other in cool water. This rare phenomenon cannot be experienced elsewhere in the country. The total walking time along the entire route is approximately 40 minutes.

Throughout the river route, there are multiple springs, and an interesting point about them is the temperature difference, with some being cooler and others warmer.

In addition to all these nat-

ural attractions, one of the main reasons domestic and foreign tourists visit the spring is its therapeutic properties, as its mineral substances and salts can be beneficial and effective in treating certain diseases.

Walking in the water

One of the most thrilling parts of visiting Morteza Ali Spring is walking along the river path with giant boulders, especially when you hear the delightful sound of the springs flowing from among the rugged rocks. Playing in the water in this space can be appealing and charming for any tourist; however, be mindful of the large and slippery rocks to avoid any harm to yourself. As you proceed along the path, the depth and volume of the water increase, and in some places, by arranging stones, they have created small pools for swimming, tempting everyone for a dip. Interestingly, there are snails and fish living in this spring; you can feed them bread crumbs and see them up close. If you sit very quietly in the pools you will see small fish coming towards you. In the sections where the pools are deeper, there is a type of fish that is useful for



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treating certain skin diseases and eats dead skin cells.

Rock cavities

As you follow the path, you will notice cavities and holes on the rocks on both sides that have been meticulously created and connected to each other through a tunnel. These formations, known as the "Gabr House," date back to 1,500 years ago and belong to the Sassanid era. Accessing these cavities is challenging and requires the use of complete rock climbing and mountaineering equipment as well as the necessary skills to navigate them.

It is believed that these cavities served as the burial place of Zoroastrians. Some

speculate that these formations were used as houses. Interestingly, these cavities are positioned at specific intervals from each other and in pairs at the bottom and top, giving the impression that the lower cavity served as the entrance to the house.

Abbasid Dam

Further along the path, as the spring water reaches its end, you will encounter a historical relic from the Safavid era known as the Abbasid Dam. This 60-meter-high dam not only holds the title of one of the oldest arched dams in the world, but also held the record as the tallest dam in the world for 550 years.

Ancient legacy of Damghan and Hesar Hill

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Hecatompylos, the ancient name for the city of Damghan in Semnan Province, is one of the oldest cities in Iran and was once the capital of the Parthian Empire. Throughout history, Damghan has been a significant location as it lies on the Silk Road, serving as a passage from west to east. The city's importance is evident from its mention in numerous geographical and historical texts, highlighting its ancient significance.

The presence of caravanserais, fortresses, ancient hills, towers, and a massive inner and outer wall surrounding the city of Damghan further emphasizes its historical importance. The city currently boasts over 500 identified historical sites, with 134 tangible and intangible works registered on Iran's National Heritage List. Notable landmarks in this county include the historical fortification site dating back



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7,000 years, the ancient mosque known as one of the most important mosques of the early Islamic periods, the Haj Ali Qoli Salt Lake, the Shirband Cave, with its beautiful stalactites dating back millions of years, the Cheshmeh Ali

complex featuring a remarkable spring, and the historical mansions from the Qajar and Safavid eras.

Hesar Hill was the largest population center in northeastern Iran during the Chalcolithic pe-



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riod (5,500 to 3,500 years ago). Excavations and studies have revealed its important role in interregional communications. The discovery of clay tablets with cuneiform inscriptions indicates commercial relations of this

Chalcolithic city with contemporary centers in Mesopotamia and Elam.

The significance of Hesar Hill extends beyond the current borders of Iran, as its name is mentioned in international and

domestic literature about the cultural developments of north-eastern Iran and Central Asia. The artifacts from various periods up to the Islamic era illustrate the cultural and social transformations, emphasizing the endless importance of this area to modern Iranian society.

As a rich source of historical and archeological information, Hesar Hill plays a crucial role in understanding cultural exchanges between different peoples and societies. It also serves as a cultural tourist attraction, attracting visitors and contributing to public education.

In conclusion, Hesar Hill is not only a symbol of the continuous human presence in the region but also a key element in preserving and promoting ancient Iranian culture. It acts as a window to the past, facilitating meaningful connections between different generations and contributing to the understanding of our cultural identity.