

Enjoy wildlife, hiking, and photography in Khojir National Park



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Khojir National Park, situated in Tehran and adjacent to Sorkheh Hesar National Park, is a significant natural area in the city. Despite their close proximity, Khojir has maintained a pristine and unspoiled environment due to its greater distance from Tehran. This article delves into the remarkable features of this national park in Iran.

Spanning from 1,200 to 2,138 meters in elevation, Khojir National Park comprises high and semi-high hills as well as tall mountains. Notable peaks within the park include Zelzeleh Peak, Barjamali, Zirak Chal, Sarukoh, Aseman Kuh, Gavi Dagh, Jangal Sookhteh, and Darbandak.

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History

Located to the east of the city, Khojir National Park has been designated as a national park since 1982, covering an area of approximately 10,013 hectares. It is part of the Jajrud protected region, which has historically served as a royal hunting ground for nearly 200 years and is the oldest no-hunting zone in the country.

Flora and fauna

Khojir National Park is home to a diverse array of wildlife, with species thriving in the park's varied environments. Notably, the park, along with Sorkheh Hesar and Jajrud Protected Area provides habitats for numerous animal species, some of which are considered habitat regions due to their reliance on the ecosystem. The animals in the area include wolves, martens, foxes, jackals, rabbits, otters, hyenas, badgers, wildcats, leopards, ibex, and gazelles.

Birds

The park's diverse ecosystems, which encompass rivers, mountains, steppes, farms, and gardens, provide a haven for various migratory bird species. Notable avian inhabitants include partridges, mallards, teals, shovellers, buntings, golden orioles, hoopoes, rollers, and the eastern imperial eagle. Collectively, Khojir, Jajrud Protected Area and Sorkheh Hesar National Park account for 22.6% of Iran's bird species.

Reptiles

The combined Sorkheh Hesar, Khojir, and Jajrud protected areas are home to 27 known species of reptiles, including nine species of lizard, 17 spe-

cies of snake, and one species of turtle.

Plants

Khojir National Park boasts the best wild pistachio forest in the Alborz Mountain region, along with other important tree species such as peanut, *Prunus scoparia*, *Celtis australis*, and juniper. The park also features a range of pharmacological, industrial, and edible plant species, including *Cotoneaster*, *Sophora*, *Rubia tinctorum*, plane trees, barberries, white poplar, *Paliurus spina-christi*, *ephedra*, maple, pine, hawthorn, European ash, tree of heaven, locusts, *Prunus lycioides*, cornflower, tamarisk, and common couch. Additionally, the area is known for wild poppies, which bloom in mid-spring.

Unique geological features

Khojir National Park is notable for its distinctive geological characteristics, encompassing a variety of soils and rocks, ranging from sandstone to volcanic formations.

Location

Situated to the east of Tehran, adjacent to Sorkheh Hesar Park, Khojir National Park is accessible via the Pasdaran Road to Parchin. The park is approximately 42km from Tehran and can be reached by private vehicle, with access points via Pasdaran Highway and the road from Tehran to Damavand.

Best time to visit

The recommended visiting period is from early July to early November, taking into account the wildlife's breeding and reproduction season and minimizing human disturbance.

Activities and attractions

Khojir National Park is primarily a scientific park, offering opportunities to observe and learn about unique and valuable plant and animal species. Notable activities and attractions within the park include:

Wildlife spotting: Visitors can observe a variety of animals in their natural habitat, surrounded by lush vegetation.

Hiking trails: The park features scenic trails suitable for hiking, jogging, or running, providing an opportunity to immerse oneself in the natural beauty and observe wildlife.

Photography: The park offers excellent subjects for photography, including natural landscapes and diverse wildlife.

Visitors should note that the park does not provide extensive facilities, with only a few local houses available for rent and limited sanitary facilities at the park entrance. Camping is allowed within the park.

Sights around

In addition to exploring Khojir National Park, visitors can visit Sorkheh Hesar National Park, which offers various recreational activities. Nearby attractions include guest houses, hotels, and facilities for leisure activities. The Jajrud area and its river, as well as the Latyan Dam, provide additional opportunities for outdoor recreation, such as sailing, water skiing, and cycling along the Lavasan Road to the Latyan section.

By offering a rich array of flora, fauna, and geological features, Khojir National Park stands as a testament to Iran's natural beauty and ecological diversity.

A poet's journey through turbulent times

Lutf Ali Azar Bigdeli was born into an Isfahani family that included officials who reached high positions under the Safavids. His birth in 1,722, however, occurred nearly simultaneously with the Afghan invasion of Isfahan, leading the entirety of his family to flee to Qom. Before he eventually returned to Isfahan his travels took him to Bandar Abbas (where his father was appointed to a position by Nader Shah), 'Iraq-e 'Ajam, Fars, Sham, Mecca, Mashad and Azerbaijan. After the assassination of Nader Shah in 1747 he served various rulers: the Afsharids 'Adil Shah and Ibrahim Shah, and the Safavids Isma'il III and Sulayman III.

In short, he experienced at first hand the vagaries of a chaotic time in Iran's history and was cognizant of the consequences that years of political upheaval and turmoil could have for family and professional prospects. Azar's keen awareness of the shifting fortunes of Isfahan and his utmost admiration for that city can be seen elsewhere in his poetry. In his introduction to the section dealing with

the poetry of his contemporaries in his Firetemple, Azar's understanding of the effect of Iran's chaotic recent history upon literary activities is on full display:

For many years, on account of the revolution of the time, at once the customs of poetic compositions are nullified and poets, from great anguish, are changed. The resolve of poets is corrupted. The scattering of easy circumstances and state of confusion are such that no one is in the state of reading or composing poetry.

Azar notes that for fifty years the condition of his contemporaries was defined by the tyranny, oppression and evil that reigned over all parts of Iran, once the paragon of the garden of heavens. During this torturous time Iran saw its 'wealth plundered — her daughters massacred, or sold to bondage — and the denizens of the once-smiling gardens ... exiled and wandering in a foreign clime'. Azar is adamant not only in detailing the sorry state of affairs in eighteenth-century Iran, but also in justifying the poetry and position of his contemporaries, which

must be viewed with consideration of these debilitating social and economic conditions. He juxtaposes the amicable social conditions of the ancient poets with the tumultuous times of his contemporaries, thereby indicating that any comparison between the two would not be fair. The ancient poets were 'nurtured in the cradle of prosperity and peace, and obtaining every want and wish beneath the shadow of the protection of the monarchs of the age'. Contemporary poets, on the other hand, were left at the mercy and whim of oppression and misfortune, heavily restricting their ability to compose poetry.

As Azar describes the arrival of Karim Khan Zand, he references the beneficial conditions more amenable to literary production, as witnessed in the case of Mirza 'Abd al-vahhab. But this did not mean Azar or his contemporary cohort were to be entirely immune from the social and political vicissitudes during the time of Karim Khan Zand's rule, nor necessarily able to cope with the loss of their patron Mirza 'Abd al-Vahhab.

With the death of Mirza 'Abd al-Vahhab, patronage for the Isfahani Circle was disrupted remapping Persian literary history and fractured. Faced with uncertainty following the loss of their patron, many of the formative members of this literary circle travelled elsewhere in Iran in an effort to seek new opportunities.

This interregnum between Mirza 'Abd al-Wahhab's death in 1770-1 and the establishment of Fat'hali Shah's literary society in Tehran, when the 'literary return' style achieved supremacy, is a crucial period for understanding how the early movement developed.

During this period one gains a better insight into the understandings and perceptions of the 'literary return' movement, the social conditions of which it was a part and the manner in which the poets viewed themselves. Several rich poetic sources from this time, including letters and elegies, capture some of the attitudes of the Isfahani Circle during a period when the formative stage of their movement ended and a new stage was to begin.

