

# Wonders of Karaftu Caves in Kurdistan Province



## Iranica Desk

Tucked away in the rugged mountains of western Iran, near the city of Saqqez in Kurdistan Province, lies a remarkable natural wonder that has captivated archaeologists and adventurers alike – the Karaftu Caves. This intricate network of subterranean chambers and passages, carved by nature over countless millennia, holds within its depths a treasure trove of secrets from Iran's ancient past.

### A journey into the Earth's embrace

The Karaftu Caves are a true testament to the power of nature and the resilience of human civilizations. Spanning over two kilometers in length, these caves are a labyrinth of winding tunnels, cavernous chambers, and awe-inspiring rock formations. As you descend into the depths of this subterranean world, you can't help but feel a sense of wonder and reverence for the natural forces that sculpted this extraordinary landscape.

### Geological marvels

The caves are a geological masterpiece, formed by the relentless erosion of water and the movements of tectonic plates over millions of years. The limestone bedrock has been sculpted into breathtaking shapes and formations, including towering columns, delicate stalactites and stalagmites, and intricate flowstone patterns that seem to defy gravity.

One of the most striking features of the Karaftu Caves is the presence of underground rivers and lakes, which add an ethereal quality to the experience. The sound of water gently trickling and the play of light on the rippling surfaces create a mesmerizing atmosphere that transports visitors to a world far removed from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

### Traces of ancient civilizations

While the geological wonders of the Karaftu Caves are awe-inspiring in their own right, it is the archaeological discoveries within these subterranean

chambers that have truly captivated researchers and historians. Over the years, excavations have uncovered a wealth of artifacts and evidence that shed light on the lives of ancient civilizations that once called this region home.

Among the most significant finds are prehistoric tools, pottery shards, and human remains dating back thousands of years. These remnants offer a glimpse into the daily lives, cultural practices, and technological advancements of the people who sought shelter and sanctuary within the caves during those ancient times.

### Prehistoric rock art

Perhaps the most captivating discoveries within the Karaftu Caves are the remarkable examples of prehistoric rock art etched into the cave walls. These ancient illustrations depict scenes of hunting, rituals, and daily life, providing a unique window into the belief systems, traditions, and worldviews of the cave's earliest inhabitants. The rock art found in the Karaftu

Caves is not only a testament to the artistic talents of our ancient ancestors but also serves as a valuable source of information for researchers studying the development of human societies and cultural expressions throughout history.

### A subterranean adventure

Venturing into the Karaftu Caves is an adventure like no other. Guided tours led by experienced cavers and archaeologists take visitors on a journey through winding passages and chambers, revealing the natural and cultural wonders that lie within. As you navigate the narrow tunnels and descend into the depths, you'll be greeted by an array of geological formations that seem to defy the laws of physics. From towering columns to delicate crystal formations, each turn presents a new marvel that leaves you in awe of nature's artistry.

### Responsible exploration

While exploring the Karaftu Caves is an incredible experience, it is crucial to prioritize

responsible and sustainable tourism practices. The caves are a fragile ecosystem, and any disturbance or damage can have far-reaching consequences for the preservation of this natural and cultural heritage site.

Visitors are encouraged to follow the guidance of their tour guides, refrain from touching or altering any rock formations or artifacts, and minimize their environmental impact by adhering to the principles of Leave No Trace. By respecting the delicate balance of this underground world, we can ensure that future generations have the opportunity to marvel at its wonders.

### Preserving a priceless legacy

The Karaftu Caves are not only a geological and archaeological treasure but also a vital part of Iran's cultural heritage. Recognizing their immense importance, the Iranian government, in collaboration with international organizations, has undertaken efforts to protect and preserve this remarkable site. Ongoing research and excava-

tions are conducted under strict guidelines to ensure the proper documentation and study of any new discoveries. Additionally, measures are being taken to mitigate the impact of human activity and environmental factors, such as air pollution and water contamination, on the cave systems.

### A window into the past

The Karaftu Caves stand as a powerful reminder of the intricate tapestry of human history and the enduring legacy of ancient civilizations. As you explore these subterranean wonders, you can't help but feel a connection to the countless generations that have called this region home, each leaving their mark on the walls and echoes in the chambers.

Whether you're an avid caver, an archaeology enthusiast, or simply someone who appreciates the marvels of nature, a visit to the Karaftu Caves is an experience that will leave you in awe and inspire a deeper appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of Iran and the resilience of human ingenuity throughout the ages.

# Discover the unique hot springs of Dehloran in Ilam Province

Dehloran, located in Ilam Province, stands out as a special destination known for its unique hot springs. The water in these springs reaches temperatures of up to 50°C, making it a popular choice for visitors seeking health tourism experiences. Situated just three kilometers away from the city of Dehloran, at the foothills of Siah Kuh near Khofash (Bats) Cave, these natural hot springs provide a breathtaking sight. When the sunlight touches the water, a stunning rainbow-like color pattern emerges, creating one of the most rare and beautiful natural phenomena in Iran. The therapeutic properties

of Dehloran hot springs are well-known due to its high mineral content, especially sulfur. Every year, numerous tourists visit to find relief from joint pain, rheumatoid conditions, skin problems, and muscle ailments. It is crucial to mention that people with heart conditions should refrain from using the waters because of the elevated sulfur levels. Dehloran hot springs comprise a fossil type, influenced by the oil and gas resources of the region. The hot water, rich in minerals, originates from the convergence of two streams forming a river. The beneficial effects of the water also extend to the surrounding vegetation.

Accessing Dehloran hot springs is convenient, with two main paths available. The asphalt road leading to Dehloran provides easy access to the springs west of the city and also allows visitors to explore Khofash Cave. For a more adventurous journey, travelers can opt for the secondary dirt road leading to the fascinating tar springs. Here, instead of water, tar flows from the ground, creating a unique natural spectacle. This site is recognized as a national heritage of Iran and stands as the only tar springs discovered in the country, enhancing the attraction of Ilam Province's natural wonders.

