

# Masal, a slice of paradise in Iran

## Iranica Desk

Masal is a small city located in the northwest of Rasht, the capital of Gilan Province. The summer retreats in this region offer a pure and exceptional climate, a pristine and misty atmosphere, indescribable tranquility, towering waterfalls, and endless green meadows that allow you to feel as if you are walking on clouds. Each year, numerous travelers visit the Masal highlands to enjoy a peaceful vacation away from the hustle and bustle of city life. This area is undoubtedly a slice of paradise in Iran, resembling a surreal painting.

## Location

Masal is situated 60 kilometers from Talesh and 55 kilometers from Rasht, the provincial capital of Gilan. The city is approximately 380 kilometers away from Tehran, requiring around five hours of driving to reach Masal, the second highest city in Gilan after Rudbar. Passing through the winding roads of Masal, you will enter the highlands, each of which holds its own wonders.

Masal boasts towering waterfalls, lush forests, flowing rivers, and picturesque highland meadows with colorful cottages dotting the hillsides. The Khalkalaei and Morghak rivers are the prominent rivers in the area. There is a popular coastal park near the Khalkalaei River where visitors can relax. The locals in Masal are known for their warmth and hospitality. The primary language spoken in Ma-



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sal is Taleshi, with many residents engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry.

## Summer retreats

Olsabelangah is arguably the most beautiful summer retreat in Masal, offering stunning views of the surrounding area and situated at an elevation of 1,490 meters above sea level, 27 kilometers northwest of Masal city. The climate in this highland region is so pleasant that even locals visit to escape the summer heat. Olsabelangah is a protected area, allowing construction only with wooden materials. As a result, the highland has preserved its charming wooden cottages, colorful tiled

roofs, and traditional architecture.

The water used in the houses of Olsabelangah is sourced from springs and stored in water tanks. Electricity in the village is provided by a power generator, which unfortunately shuts off after midnight. Sanitation facilities are situated outside the cabins, requiring a short journey to access them.

Sueh Chaleh summer retreat is another popular destination in Masal, following Olsabelangah. It is renowned for its colorful two-story houses that offer a spectacular view, especially during sunset. Located 25 kilometers south of Masal at an altitude of 1800 meters above sea level, Sueh Chaleh translates to a place where tulips and irises flourish in the local language.

Witnessing the pristine and enchanting landscapes of Sueh Chaleh, with the valley covered in a mystical mist, is an experience that everyone should have at least once in their lifetime. When visiting this highland, be sure to take a morning stroll to witness Sueh Chaleh in its most breathtaking form, resembling a piece of paradise before your eyes.

Talaragah summer retreat stands out as one of the most stunning locations in Masal, offering unparalleled views of forests, valleys, mist, and clouds. While internet access is not available in this highland, the lush green meadows of Talaragah are so captivating that you can easily spend a few days disconnected from the digital world, immersing yourself in the natural beauty surrounding you.

Traveling through the winding and lush greenery-lined roads to reach the highlands of Masal undoubtedly offers the joy of experiencing one of the most picturesque natural trekking routes in Iran. The road often resembles a green tunnel, occasionally shrouded in mist.

The summer retreats in Masal are among the finest places to immerse oneself in rural life and atmosphere. Visitors can enjoy a unique ecotourism experience in wooden houses that may lack urban amenities such as electricity, gas, and piped water. Heating in these houses is typically provided by wood or small gas capsules, with water sourced from nearby springs.

## Dining options

After journeying through the city of Masal and making your way along the verdant road towards the highlands of Masal, you will find limited dining options, with only a few hotel restaurants and small roadside shops offering *aash* (a Persian bean and noodle soup), tea, and *balal* (a traditional Persian snack). Given the scarcity of restaurants, we recommend that travelers bring their own cooking essentials to prepare meals amidst the stunning nature of Masal's highlands.

## Best time to visit

For those planning to camp in the summer quarters, it's crucial to note that nights in this region can be very



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## Being above the clouds

Within these highlands, there are no streets or avenues, only well-kept hiking trails that guide you through the landscape. The rural ambiance of Masal's highlands, accompanied by the soothing sounds of birds and the presence of livestock, offers a tranquility unlike any other.

Arriving early in the highlands or spending the night in one of the villages may reward you with a breathtaking sight—being above the clouds, an unforgettable experience. When journeying to the highlands of Masal, remember to indulge in photography, nature walks, mountaineering, and horseback riding to make the most of your visit.

cold. Even during the summer season, it's advisable to have warm clothing and heating equipment for comfortable overnight stays in nature. The weather in Masal tends to be cold during fall and winter, with temperatures dropping below freezing. However, the spring and summer seasons bring milder weather, with an average temperature of around 18°C, characteristic of a highland region.

The winter in the highlands can be extremely cold, prompting most individuals to migrate to the city of Masal and leaving the cabins empty. Hence, it is advisable to avoid traveling to these highlands during the winter season to ensure a more pleasant and enjoyable experience.



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