

Expedition into an ancient fortress and scenic landscapes in Bahram Chubin Gorge



Iranica Desk

The Bahram Chubin Gorge is a notable tourist attraction in Ilam Province, recognized as both a national heritage site and a natural wonder. Located in Darreh Shahr, this area not only boasts natural and historical attractions but is also considered one of the largest geoparks in the world due to its geological significance. The county lies along the Seymareh River, at the foothills of the Kabir Kuh Mountain.

Historical significance

This narrow and elevated gorge features the remnants of a historical fortress from the Sassanid era. At the entrance, a very narrow passage indicates oversight of entry and exit from the area. Military fortifications attributed to Bahram Chubin can be seen at the highest points of the rocky walls. Although a significant portion of this ancient structure has been destroyed, staircases and towers made from common materials of the Sassanid period remain visible.

Fortress design

Accessing the upper points and the remnants of the main fortress is quite challenging. Many believe this intelligent design was intended to ensure the fortress's impregnable nature during wartime, protecting the forces during Bahram Chubin's attacks and his rebellion against Khosrow Parviz. Despite its natural features and fortifications, the Bahram Chubin Gorge houses one of the most impregnable ancient castles in Iran.

Natural habitat

The environment surrounding the gorge provides a pristine habitat for various animal and bird species. According to some accounts, Bahram Chubin, the Sassanid general, had a passion for hunting and pleasure, which led to the construction of the current fortifications. However, other historians argue that this fortress served as an impregnable sanctuary during wars and uprisings. This gorge is also known as a hunting ground for Bahram.

Structural features

The Bahram Chubin Gorge is a fortress carved into the rocky walls of the mountains. The entrance lies between the eastern and western faces of the mountain. In the past, before entering the gate and over the Seymareh River, which originates from Kabir Kuh Mountain, there was a bridge, of which only the foundations remain today. The remaining foundation of this bridge measures three meters wide and four meters high.

Eastern wall

The eastern wall of the fortress is perched on a rocky ledge that rises 200 meters high. Constructed from stone and sarooj, a type of waterproof mortar, this wall features a two-meter-high watchtower that remains today, with both the eastern and western entrances accessible via a winding path.

Water reservoirs

On the eastern side of the Bahram Chubin fortress, you will find a water spring with four stone reservoirs, each approximately three to four meters high. These cisterns, carved from the mountain, were used for water storage. Notably, one cistern resembles the torso of a bull. The cisterns in the Bahram Chubin Gorge are located in a part of the fortress that is virtually inaccessible to enemies due to the winding paths, eliminating the possibility of conspiracies from adversaries.

Shahneshin fortress

At the highest point of the Bahram Chubin Gorge, you can see the ruins of walls that some researchers suggest were the residence of Bahram Chubin himself. In the middle levels of the gorge, stone structures resembling dwellings can also be found. Additionally, unglazed pottery with various simple designs has been discovered around the Bahram Chubin fortress.

Anahita Temple

On the western side of the Bahram Chubin Gorge, opposite the caves, there is a temple located 10 meters above ground level, believed by some documents to belong to the ancient Iranian goddess Anahita. This temple features a central room flanked by two additional rooms.

Carvings and stone steps

Remnants of stone steps can be seen at the entrance of the Bahram Chubin Gorge. These steps have been carved into the sloping rocky surfaces to guide visitors to the upper levels of the fortress. In various sections of the Bahram Chubin Gorge, carvings

depicting images of humans, plants, and animals can be observed, dating back to different historical periods. Notably, the image of a goat is prominent in the engravings on the walls of this area, as the goat was historically a symbol of fertility and the continuation of the human race.

Best time to visit

The ideal time to visit Ilam and the Bahram Chubin Gorge is during the spring. At this time, the weather is cooler, the landscape becomes lush and vibrant, and the stone cisterns of the fortress fill with water from melting snow and spring rains. Late summer and early autumn also offer pleasant conditions for exploring the gorge.

Nestled at the foothills of the Kabir Kuh, the gorge is surrounded by stunning natural scenery. Visiting this ancient site does not require any specific permits or fees. However, since the Bahram Chubin Gorge is located in a natural environment, it is advisable to check the weather conditions prior to your visit to ensure a comfortable experience for picnicking and camping.

Travel equipment

When planning a trip to the Bahram Chubin Gorge, it's essential to prepare adequately. The final stretch of road leading to the gorge is paved, allowing you to drive close to the site and park your vehicle in the designated parking area.

If you intend to camp or stay overnight in the surrounding plains, be sure to bring appropriate camping gear, suitable footwear, and clothing for the season. It's also important to verify that the weather conditions are favorable. A water spring is available in the parking area, providing access to fresh water for your needs.

For those wishing to explore the upper sections of the Bahram Chubin Gorge or the stone cisterns of the fortress, a higher level of physical fitness is required, and climbing or mountaineering equipment may be necessary. If you plan to spend an extended period at the foothills and entrance of the Bahram Chubin fortress, don't forget to pack sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat to protect yourself from the sun.