

Khuzestan's Qasemi Gorge; stunning blend of adventure, beauty



Iranica Desk

Khuzestan Province, located in the southwest of Iran, is one of the oldest inhabited regions of the Iranian plateau. This rich historical background, combined with its proximity to the Persian Gulf and the Karun, Karkheh, and Arvand rivers, has given rise to numerous historical, natural, and geological attractions, making it a popular destination for tourism. Qasemi Gorge, situated in Izeh, is approximately 240 kilometers from Ahvaz (the capital of Khuzestan Province).

It is one of the most distinctive sights in western Iran and is ranked among the country's most beautiful gorges. Its location next to the Karun 3 Dam Lake and the options for boating in the valley significantly enhance the experience of visiting. As such, Qasemi Gorge is a must-see destination in Khuzestan Province. Qasemi Gorge is nestled in the east of Khuzestan Province among the Mongasht

Mountains, which are part of the mountain ranges spanning Izeh, Behbahan, and Lordegan, IRNA wrote.

Following the construction and subsequent flooding of the Karun 3 Dam, a vast lake formed behind the dam. Consequently, the Izeh road and a portion of the Shahr-e Kord to Izeh route became submerged. Since then, land crafts and government-operated barges (available for free) have transported passengers and vehicles across the lake at designated times. Additionally, local motorboats are available to ferry passengers at other intervals.

Qasemi Gorge has formed over many years through various geological periods, shaped by the erosive forces of a river flowing from the Mongasht Heights.

The Qasemi Gorge, characterized by its hard and rocky texture, is largely devoid of vegetation. The large polished stones and the flowing water contribute to the visual beauty of the



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gorge. The entrance is narrow and receives little sunlight, creating a captivating and eerie atmosphere. As you venture further in, the sunlight gradually increases, illuminating the surroundings.

As you glide through the Qasemi Gorge by boat, you will be mesmerized by the grandeur of the walls, while the sound of rushing water intensifies,

and splashes surround you. In that moment, the charming and small waterfall of the Qasemi Gorge reveals itself, enhancing the gorge's allure. The experiences of entering and exiting the gorge are truly breathtaking and unforgettable.

Spring is the ideal time to visit the Qasemi Gorge. During summer, the weather in Khuzestan can be hot and humid, leading

many tourists to steer clear of the region. In most years, during fall and winter, the water level of the Karun 3 dam lake decreases, causing the ground of the Qasemi Gorge to dry out, which diminishes its charm compared to spring. The early hours of the day are the best time to explore this magnificent gorge.

Visiting the Qasemi Gorge offers a range of recreational activities. River rafting on the Karun River and boating are essential parts of this adventure, and the thrill of navigating through the narrow gorge in a motorboat will leave a lasting impression. Rock climbing is another exciting option for enthusiasts, making the gorge a popular destination for both adventure seekers and professional divers. Swimming and water play are also favored pastimes for tourists; if you are a skilled swimmer, don't miss the chance to enjoy the refreshing waters. Watching the waterfall should definitely

be included in your list of activities while in the gorge.

Before heading to the Qasemi Gorge, it's crucial to check the weather conditions. If there's a chance of rain, consider postponing your visit. Due to the gorge's narrowness, it's essential to be accompanied by professional boatmen; attempting to navigate alone may lead to collisions with the walls, posing serious risks.

Adhere to all safety precautions while on the boats, and ensure you wear a life jacket. If you happen to fall into the water in the narrow sections, the risk of drowning under the boat is significantly heightened. For your trip to the Qasemi Gorge, you'll need a variety of equipment. Life jackets and waterproof clothing are the most important items to bring. Additionally, consider packing drinking water and snacks, a cap, sunscreen, extra clothing, suitable footwear for the beach or river rafting, a waterproof camera, and a monopod.

Historic charm of Mir Gholam Hashemi Castle in Darreh Shahr

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Darreh Shahr is regarded as one of the historical cities in the western part of Iran, situated near the foothills of Kabir Kuh, part of the Zagros Mountain. This city lies on the southern bank of the Seymareh River in the southeastern region of Ilam Province. Darreh Shahr is bordered to the east and southeast by the provinces of Lorestan and Khuzestan, while to the north, northwest, and southwest, it connects with other cities of Ilam Province. The presence of Kabir Kuh at the city's edge has created a forest cover that significantly influences the local climate, providing a unique beauty during late winter and spring, according to IRNA.

Due to the Seymareh River and its location at the foot of the Zagros Mountains, many past governors of Ilam have constructed historical castles in this area. Hashemabad, a picturesque tourist village located 10 kilometers from Darreh Shahr, is also 10 kilometers from the historical city of Seymareh and 126 kilometers from Ilam, the provincial capital. Known for its pleasant climate and advantageous geographic location, this charming village attracts numerous tourists and nature enthusiasts each year. The Mir Gholam Hashemi Cas-

tle, situated within this village, is considered its most significant historical attraction.

This fortress is designed in the four-ivan style, resembling historical buildings from the Sassanid era, and served both military and residential purposes. The history of this ancient castle dates back 1924, and it has been registered on Iran's National Heritage List.

The materials used in the construction of this fortress contribute to its remarkable strength, with numerous interconnected rooms built in a nested fashion. The Mir Gholam Hashemi Castle features 35 interlinked rooms, along with two watchtowers located in the northeastern and western sections. Additionally, there are three guard rooms above the entrance archway on the western and northern sides, which were used as observation points. A parapet approximately one meter high has also been constructed around the entire fortress and along the roof for protection.

The exterior of the castle is made from mud and plaster, leaving no empty spaces visible between its walls. In the central courtyard of the castle, there is a square pool, similar to those found in other fortresses, supplied with water through a channel leading from

the river.

Holes in the walls of the fortress were used for ventilating the air inside the tower. The entrance area of the structure protrudes from the main facade, facilitating easy identification. This entrance is higher than the adjacent walls and, due to additional spaces like the throne room and guard room, has been constructed in two levels.

The architecture of this castle adheres to the four-ivan design characteristic of Sassanid-era structures, making it exceptionally solid and durable for its military and residential functions.

This historical castle was built by Mir Gholam

Hashemi, one of the nobles of Darreh Shahr, during the Pahlavi era, in the Sikan Valley near the river. It was transferred to the Ilam Province's Cultural Heritage Organization by the daughter of Hashemi in 1997.

Darreh Shahr is recognized as the largest ancient city in the western region of the country and is considered the historical hub of Ilam Province due to the richness of its historical resources. Its proximity to Kabir Kuh and the ruins of the ancient city of Madaktu enhances its significance, establishing it as a center for tourism in western Iran.



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