

Unique landscapes of Mesr Desert

Iranica Desk

The Mesr Desert, located in Isfahan Province, is a top destination for tourism and nature enthusiasts who appreciate its boundless beauty. The sand dunes near Mesr village, along

with the presence of camels and specialized off-road vehicles for desert excursions, make this area incredibly attractive, drawing many domestic and international tourists. When planning your trip, be sure to enjoy not only the

desert during the day but also the stunning sunsets and the starry night sky. This desert is regarded as one of the most beautiful natural landscapes in Iran and is a popular spot for nature lovers and desert adventurers. Sur-

rounded by mountain ranges to the west, southwest, and southeast, it forms part of the central Iranian plateau's mountainous terrain. The Mesr Desert boasts stunning sand dunes formed in natural depressions at the foothills of

these mountains, making it a favored destination for both tourists and adventurers, according to IRNA. In recent years, particularly during the tourist season, local residents have increasingly engaged in jobs related to

accommodation and services for visitors to the Mesr Desert. The fame of this desert has transformed their livelihoods; in the past, they primarily relied on agriculture and animal husbandry, cultivating saffron and wheat, and raising camels.



Village and environment

The Mesr Desert is located near a village of the same name, 55 kilometers from Khor, along the route connecting Damghan to Naenin and Isfahan. The village features simple adobe houses with domed roofs and wooden doors, all designed to blend harmoniously with the desert landscape. Adjacent to each home, there is a small barn where residents keep turkeys, goats, and occasionally camels.

While the desert is undeniably beautiful, it can also be harsh and unforgiving. Travelers face several dangers, including shifting sand dunes, the risk of snake and scorpion bites, optical illusions during the day, excessive thirst, and the possibility of getting lost. For those venturing into the desert for the first time, it is advisable to join a Mesr Desert tour, which provides professional guides, eco-lodging, and access to attractions, ensuring a safer and more enjoyable experience.

Best time to visit

The Mesr Desert has a hot and dry climate, resulting in very high temperatures during the warm seasons, while the weather becomes milder in the cooler months. Generally, the days are hot due to the sun's rays, and as night falls, the temperature drops, bringing cooler conditions.

Considering this, the ideal time to visit the Mesr Desert is from November to

mid-April. However, the stunning natural beauty and starry skies of the desert make it an attractive destination for nature enthusiasts year-round. Most people who venture into the desert relish the experience of spending nights under the stars and camping amidst its stunning landscapes. If camping isn't your preference, the Mesr Desert offers a variety of accommodations, ranging from traditional eco-lodges to hotels. Many eco-lodges are traditional native houses, showcasing authentic desert-style architecture that immerses guests in the unique charm of desert life.

Camel riding is one of the most enticing activities in the Mesr Desert, allowing tourists to ride camels in designated areas both within the desert and near the village. Today, camel riding has become an essential part of the Mesr Desert tour experience.

All-terrain vehicles provide visitors the chance to drive into the heart of the desert and navigate the sand dunes. Renting off-road vehicles adds an extra thrill, enabling exploration of the desert and the opportunity to perform stunts. The speed and excitement in this pristine environment undoubtedly create unforgettable moments.

Sandboarding is another exhilarating sport that boosts your adrenaline; all you need is a board to enjoy an unforgettable experience. Photography of the Mesr Desert's breathtaking landscapes is also a captivating activity that allows you to

capture lasting memories while appreciating the beauty of your surroundings.

Wildlife

The Mesr Desert is home to a rich diversity of wildlife, including species such as cats, sand foxes, Jafari snakes, rabbits, caracals, various kangaroo and bipedal animals, as well as birds of prey like hawks. Additionally, the desert is inhabited by reptiles such as snakes, lizards, and scorpions.

Gear and clothing

Despite their stunning beauty, desert environments can be harsh and potentially dangerous. Therefore, it is essential to bring the right equipment and have an experienced guide familiar with the area for a safe journey.

Water bottle: Staying hydrated is crucial during a desert trip, as you may not encounter any springs or rivers if you get lost.

Tent: To fully enjoy the desert's breathtaking starry nights, you will need a tent and camping gear for an overnight stay in the heart of the desert.

Clothing: When exploring the desert, it's important to wear clothing that is comfortable for walking and hiking while providing protection against water, wind, and dust. Ideally, your attire should harmonize with the natural surroundings. Wearing long pants and long-sleeve shirts can help prevent sunburn. Lightweight cotton clothing is highly recommended for the Mesr Desert, as it helps keep the body cool.



Echoes of history in Sukias House of Isfahan



Jolfa neighborhood of Isfahan is a unique area where diverse opinions converge, showcasing remarkable aspects of culture and art. This blend is evident in the houses that merge Iranian-Islamic and Armenian artistic traditions, built during the migration of Christians displaced from Jolfa of Azerbaijan to Isfahan. The neighborhood took shape during the reign of Shah Abbas I, featuring elements typical of

other Isfahan neighborhoods, such as a main square, crossroads, waterways, and houses that resemble those found throughout the city. Among these, the Sukias House stands out as one of the surviving structures from the Safavid period, named after its last owner. Architecturally, the Sukias House shares similarities in structure, composition, and appearance with other buildings of its time, while also being functionally

adapted to the culture and customs of Christianity. Although constructed for the Armenian community, it adheres to the architectural style of Safavid-era Isfahan.

The largest space in the Sukias House is the courtyard, resembling a pavilion in line with Safavid design principles, influenced by the Christian garden aesthetics. The building is divided into southern and northern sections relative

to the courtyard, with the southern part overlooking a private courtyard and entry occurring from the northern section through a vestibule. It rises two stories, resting on a platform approximately 40 centimeters high, featuring domed ceilings and arches. The entrance is richly adorned with muqarnas, complemented by platforms beside the wooden door, a vestibule, and a corridor leading to the kitchen, as well as a dedicated prayer

room and rooms overlooking a small columned porch. The courtyard includes flower beds and a pond on the northern side. The northern section contains a hall, a columned veranda, and additional rooms. The primary materials used in construction are adobe, finished with protective coatings.

The decorated hall or pool house is cruciform in design, two stories high, with a circular dome over a quadrilateral section and a central pond featuring a fountain. This hall connects to the private courtyard or a separate part of the main courtyard via a wooden door. A corridor in the western part of the building links the two larger primary courtyards and the smaller southern courtyard.

Currently, the Sukias House is under the jurisdiction of the Isfahan University of Art, which is fortunate as the university is committed to preserving and restoring the structure. However, this also means that public access to the building is limited. Nonetheless, visiting this unique site is worthwhile, and coordination with the university is recommended to arrange a visit.