

Natural wonders of Alborz Mountains



Alborz Mountains

The Alborz Mountains are one of the most recognized landmarks in Iran's geography. This mountain range stretches like a great wall from the Republic of Azerbaijan in the northwest to Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. The peaks of the Alborz Mountains line the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, creating a climatic barrier that separates the lush northern regions from the arid central deserts of Iran. This geological feature significantly influences the country's climate and weather conditions. The most notable peak in this range is Mount Damavand, which is Iran's highest mountain, located in Central Alborz. The name Alborz has its origins in the Avestan language. The Zoroastrian Avesta refers to a mythical mountain called Hara Berezaiti, regarded as the center of the world. In Middle Persian, it evolved into Hara Berez and Harborz, where "hara" means "guard" and "Berezaiti" means "tall." Zoroastrians believed this mountain served as a gateway to the afterlife, destinationiran.com wrote. Numerous legends in Iranian literature, including the Shahnameh (Book of Kings), feature Mount Damavand, highlighting its historical significance among Iranians, including followers of Zoroastrianism and Mithraism. This importance extends beyond mythology; the Alborz region plays a crucial role in Iran's ecology and environment.

Located in northern Iran along the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, the Alborz Mountains act as a natural barrier, preventing the sea's humidity from reaching Central Iran. This extensive mountain range spans several provinces, including Mazandaran, Gilan, Golestan, Ardebil, Zanjan, Tehran, Semnan, Qazvin, and Alborz provinces. Major cities near the Alborz Mountains include Amol, Larijan, Damavand, Firuz Kuh, and Lar. Archaeological expeditions in the Alborz Mountains have uncovered evidence of human settlements dating back to the Lower Paleolithic era, approximately 200,000 to 250,000 years ago. Findings from the Darband Rashi Cave in Gilan Province include stone tools and remains of hunted animals. Additionally, traces of Neanderthals have been found in various sites along the mountain range. Notable Paleolithic sites include Kiaram Cave in Gorgan, Golestan Province, and Buzeyir Cave in Dalikli Dash Mountain in Azerbaijan, both containing Neanderthal remains. Kiaram Cave also yielded bones of an extinct rhinoceros species, indicating their presence in the region around 200,000 years ago. Evidence of early Neanderthal settlements has been found in Garm Roud, where primitive humans lived and hunted from 200,000 years ago until the end of the Second Ice Age. This extensive history underscores the Alborz Mountains' significance in the development of civilization in Iran. The Alborz Mountains represent the highest land mass in the Iranian plateau. The eastern peaks of the Alborz Mountains are generally lower than 4,000 meters, while the central region features higher elevations. The Alborz range is divided into three sections: western, central, and eastern. The western Alborz Mountains lies between the Sepid Rud Valley and the Astarachay River, encompassing a significant portion of the Talesh Mountains. The central Alborz Mountains extends from the Sepid Rud Valley to the Talaar River and Firouz Kuh Valley. The eastern Alborz Mountains stretches from Golestan Province to the Firouz Kuh Valley. The northern section of the Alborz, characterized by dense vegetation, boasts stunning natural landscapes and fertile soil. These areas rise to about 2,500 meters above sea level and are adorned with picturesque mountain forests. The Alborz Mountains are the source of many significant rivers in Iran, with several permanent rivers flowing from melting ice and springs in this mountain range. Below are some of the most

important rivers that originate from the Alborz Mountains:

Jajrud River

Jajrud is a well-known river in northern Tehran and is considered a permanent river. It flows from the Alborz Mountains, specifically the Kharsang and Kolon Bastak mountains.

Karaj River

The Karaj River is one of the most water-rich rivers on the slopes of the Alborz Mountains. It originates from Kharsang Mountain and eventually joins the Qom Salt Lake.

Sefidrud

The Sefidrood River, located in Gilan Province, is another important river in northern Iran. It is formed by the confluence of the Qazal-Ozan and Shahroud rivers.

Tajan River

Originating from the heights of Alborz Mountains in the Sorkheh and Darab Kuh regions, the Tajan River ultimately flows into the Caspian Sea.

Vegetation

The central Alborz Mountains are divided into two sections: the northern and southern slopes. These areas are rich in plant and tree diversity, with many flora species classified as part of Iran's biosphere reserves, necessitating their protection. The northern slopes, exposed to heavy snowfall, rain, and humidity, are particularly lush and green.

Here are five notable biosphere reserves in the Alborz Mountains:

Golestan Biosphere Reserve: Located in Golestan Province, this reserve is known for its diverse plant and animal species, including various endemics. It features mixed forests, temperate rainforests, and a range of ecosystems.

Alamut: Renowned for its historical significance and rich biodiversity, the Alamut region features mountainous terrain and unique geological formations.

Hyrcanian forests: Extending along the Caspian Sea and including parts of the Alborz Mountains, these ancient forests are known for their diverse flora and fauna.

Talesh: While primarily located in the Talesh Mountains, this reserve extends into parts of the Alborz Mountain range and is recognized for its biological diversity and cultural heritage.

Its lush forests are home to a variety of flora and fauna, making it a vital ecological zone. Additionally, the region hosts

numerous traditional villages where local customs and crafts thrive, reflecting the rich cultural tapestry of the area.

Unfortunately, the Hyrcanian forests, a prominent vegetation cover in the area, have been largely destroyed due to unsustainable development and industrial activities. In these regions, herbaceous plants are more prevalent than trees and shrubs. The beech marten population has rapidly declined in the Alborz region, making them an officially endangered species.

The dense forests on the slopes of the Alborz Mountains provide a habitat for various animal species. The specific topographic and ecological conditions support a diverse range of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Some notable wildlife includes:

Birds

Over 156 bird species inhabit the area, including the common kestrel, falcon, partridge, golden eagle, Caspian partridge, and common partridge.

Mammals

Forty-eight mammal species have been identified in the Alborz Mountains. Key species include: Beech marten, red deer, wolf brown bear, mouflon and sheep, wild goat and ibex, wild cat, hedgehog, leopard, amphibians and reptiles.

In these humid areas, 26 species of reptiles and seven species of amphibians inhabit the mountain range. Notable reptiles include: Alborz viper, Caucasian viper, saw-scaled snake.

The northern regions of the Alborz Mountains are home to various aquatic species, contributing to the marine life of the Caspian Sea.

Skiing, hiking, and climbing

The Alborz Mountains are a premier destination for winter skiing, with the top three ski resorts in Iran — Dizin, Darbandsar, and Shemshak — located on its slopes. Additionally, there are numerous scenic hiking trails and mountain climbing routes, such as Tochal and Kolakchal.

The Alborz Mountains are defining landmarks in Iran's geography, playing a crucial role in the development of civilization in northern Iran and serving as natural fortifications in historical battles. This mountain range is also home to indigenous species of flora and fauna that are part of Iran's natural heritage. Mount Damavand, Iran's highest peak, symbolizes perseverance and strength, celebrated in Persian literature throughout the ages.



Karaj River



Golestan Biosphere Reserve



Hyrcanian forests



Alamut