



Head of Department of Agriculture Ministry announced that 220,000 tons of pistachios to be harvested in Iran this year. According to Hossein Rezaie, 28,000 tons of pistachios are to be harvested in Rafsanjan, Kerman Province, southeast of Iran this year. Rafsanjan produces 30 percent of Iran's pistachios, he said. Pistachio orchardists in Kerman Province will harvest 126,000 tons of pistachios this year, he added. A total of 1,618 tons of pistachios worth about \$14.68 million were exported from Iran during the first month of the current Iranian year (March 21-April 20), the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration announced. Germany, Afghanistan, the UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, India, Iraq, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were the main buyers of Iranian pistachio during the period.

220K Tons of Pistachios to be harvested in Iran

Visit Mysterious Katale-Khor in Western Iran

Iran has many caves, some of which are unique and special. Situated in Zanjan province, Katale-Khor cave offers its visitors breathtaking scenes of natural crystals and rock formation. Katale-Khor, literally meaning "Mountain of Sun", is said to date back to Jurassic period (some 120 million years ago), however, it has embraced lots of natural and artificial changes during this lengthy period. The cave was reportedly discovered some seven decades ago by a group of Iranian cavers.

Katale-Khor is estimated to date from tens of million years ago. It features millions of lime stalactites and stalagmites.

The cave interiors embrace huge hallways and corridors, which are impressively lit by flashlights. Some three-seventh of the prolonged cave have been explored so far. A length of about 3km of the cave is open to the public while a 4km-route is accessible to experienced cavers and researchers.

Exploring a cave may not be on the "to-do list" of travelers in Iran. However, Karaftu, Ali-Sadr and Quri Qaleh, and Katale-Khor are amongst the most visited caves, the latter is situated some 150km south of Zanjan, off a road that connects Soltaniyeh to Hamadan.

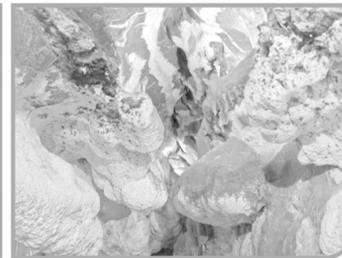
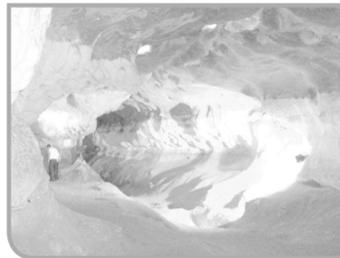
The extensive Katale-Khor cave system, rated by locals as the best in western Iran, is 150km south of Zanjan, off the Soltaniyeh-Hamadan road near Garmab. According to Lonely Planet, less visited than the more famous Ali Sadr caves, which it is thought to eventually join, Katale-Khor has 3km open to the public and another 4km available for experienced cavers. There are six recorded levels and a visit takes one to two hours. There's no public transport to the site; hire a taxi. Iran is geologically a part of the Alpine-

Himalayan organic belt. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, the enigmatic evidence of human presence on the Iranian plateau is as early as Lower Paleolithic times. The first well-documented evidence of human habitation is

Under tourists' eyes

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the cave have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

Stalagmites and stalactites



in deposits from several excavated cave and rock-shelter sites, located mainly in the Zagros Mountains of western Iran and dated to Middle Paleolithic or Mousterian times (c. 100,000 BC).

The existence of nature's carvings through million years in the beautiful form of stalagmites and stalactites in the corridors and halls is showing off and adds to the beauty of the Cave. In some corridors ani-

mals' skeletons were found which are not similar to nowadays animal and probably belong to the extinguished generations of the past ages. It's good to stay in Zanjan's hotels, plan one day trip to Cave and back to Zanjan again. It will take about 6 hours (2 hours driving there ,2-3 hours visit the Cave , 2 hours drive back to Zanjan). (Rich C.; Reviewed March 2016)

Beautiful but less-visited

This cave system is much less popular than Ali-Sadr Cave further south - which is a shame, given the extent and quality of the grottos. There is the (unfortunately expected) colored lighting, but even that cannot hide magnificence of the glaze-like stalactites. Getting there can be a bit complicated without a private car: Shared taxis might take you as far as Garmab from either Bijar (changing at Khoorkhoreh and Tatardeh) or Zanjan (probably changing in Qeydar), from where you can hire a taxi. Alternatively, hire a taxi for a day - we paid appr \$15 Bijar return. This would allow for a combined visit with Takht-e Soleyman. (a_appelt from Aarhus, Denmark; Reviewed June 2016)

mountain of the sun

The name, Katale Khor, means "mountain of the sun". Geological studies in 1984 showed that the cave formation dates back to the Jurassic period. It is believed that the cave is connected to Ali Sadr Cave in Hamadan province. The road from Zanjan to Katale Khor passes Soltaniyeh, an ancient Ilkhanid city.

The cave was discovered about 90 years ago. It has many remarkable scenes that is rare to see in other area even if exist. I took several photo from the different part of 2500 meters walking distance within the cave. (Kaveh H. from Ottawa, Canada; Reviewed April 2016)

cooking



Green beans salad

Green beans salad is another healthy salad that can even replace your unhealthy snacks during the day. Green Beans salad contains very high amounts of vitamin C and vitamin B6. It is also a great source of vitamin A.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb (453 g) Green Beans
- 1 Onion
- 3 Tomatoes
- 1/2 Bell Pepper
- 1 Garlic Clove
- 4 Tbsp Olive Oil
- Salt, Black Pepper Powder
- 1/3 Cup Water



Directions:

Pour olive oil into a frying pan. Add onions and fry until translucent. Add sliced tomatoes and bell pepper to the pan and continue frying for 5 more minutes. Add green beans to the pan. Mash a garlic clove on top. Add a pinch of salt and black pepper as preferred, stir well. Add 1/3 cup of water (boiled water) to the pan. Cover the pan with a lid, simmer for 35 to 40 minutes. Keep in refrigerator before serving.

Chehel Sotoun; a Blend of Prominent Persian Garden, Glorious Palace

Located next to Naqsh-e Jahan Square and Chahar Bagh, Chehel Sotoun Palace is considered as one of the tourist attractions of Isfahan, Iran. The attractive Safavid architecture and world heritage sites have made Isfahan province a popular destination for both Iranian and international tourists. Isfahan is Iran's most beautiful city, where it boasts the highest level of Islamic and Iranian architecture and, as a living museum; shows the culture and tradition of the Iranian people. The artistic and historical city of Isfahan has over 22,000 historical sites and monuments, of which 850 are nationally registered and four have been designated by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites, namely Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Imam Mosque and Chehel Sotoun Palace. Chehel Sotoun Palace is renowned for its unique paintings and mirrors and has once been the place of hosting greats from all over the world. The palace dates back to Safavid Era in 1588, was established during the reign of Shah Abbas I, the first king of Safavid Empire, in the midst of a vast

and lush garden. It was a small palace in the middle of a large garden and to be used for the Shah's resting. The immense halls of this palace used to be the selected places for official feasts of the country. After his reign, Chehel Sotoun Palace was enlarged and inaugurated by Shah Abbas II for receptions and amusements. Some porches, paintings, ornaments and various parts were added at the behest of Shah Abbas II, making it a glorious palace for the Safavid kings. It was selected as the official venue for the usual political ceremonies and reception of other kings and officials. The land of

Chehel Sotoun Palace is 67000 square meters. The architecture of this palace is a blend of Iranian, Chinese and European arts and consists of a main porch on the east part of the palace. The 20 slender, ribbed wooden pillars of the palace rise to a superb wooden ceiling with crossbeams and exquisite inlay work. The name, meaning "Forty Columns" in Persian, was inspired by the twenty slender wooden pillars supporting the entrance pavilion, which, when reflected in the waters of the fountain, are said to appear to be forty. The main porch of the palace consists of two parts. The first part consists of 18 wooden pillars and 4 middle pillars on the stone lions.

The second part of the palace is the Hall of Mirrors, which is on two columns and is decorated with a

very wide and beautiful mirror. The central hall of the Chehel Sotoun Palace is dedicated to guests and great figures from other countries and contains the beautiful paintings by the famous Safavid painter, Reza Abbasi. Each miniature here is depicting one certain time during Safavid dynasty. In the paintings of the central hall which, in some cases, have been repainted in Qajar period on the previous paintings, we can see the depiction of "Shah Abbas I, Shah Abbas II and Shah Tahmasb entertaining Turkestan kings and Indian Homayoun" and "the battle of Shah Ismail and the Uzbek". Two other illustrations one in front of the hall entrance opposite to the other depict a scene of Chaldiran Battle in Shah Ismail's period and Karnal Battle in Nader Shah Afshar's time. Dedicated to entertaining the guests and foreign ambassadors, this hall has

a pretty dome with colorful corner motifs, golden and lucid details. The doors and windows are all decorated with fretworks and cachet designs. In addition, the central hall of the palace includes some glamorous paintings on the walls that each refers to a special event on a specific period of time. All these elements are representative of the proficiency of the skillful Iranian masters and architectures. Chehel Sotoun Palace is a great example of the royal gardens left over from the Safavid era. It was registered on UNESCO Cultural Heritage list in 2011. It is among the 9 Iranian Gardens which are collectively registered as one of the Iran's 23 registered World Heritage Sites under the name of the Persian Garden. The best time to visit Chehel Sotoun Palace is in spring and summer and visiting this palace will take one hour.

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In 2017, Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, which has recently turned to a ministry, in close collaboration with the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways submitted to UNESCO a preliminary dossier titled "Trans-Iranian Railway".

The industrial heritage, which dates from the World War I and II, contains expanded railway networks mainly stretched from south to north. It also includes a variety of monuments such as Tabriz railway station as well as Veresk and Sekhat-tala bridges built at hard-to-access points of deserts or highlands. Such bridges are the first of their kinds in the country which were constructed based on modern technical and engineering calculations and from materials like metal and concrete.

Further on after crossing flat lands of Qom and Arak, the Trans-Iranian Railway penetrates into Zagros highlands in Lorestan Province and passing through a large number of tunnels and bridges reaches Andimeshk situated in the low Khuzestan Plain. Finally extending to the vicinity of Dezful, Ahwaz and its grand bridge on Karoon, the Trans-Iranian Railway is divided into two branches ending separately at Khoram-shahr and Imam-Khomeini ports on the Persian Gulf.

Moreover, Trans-Iranian Railway features a complete collection of beautiful natural resources including mountain ranges, ponds, peaks, slopes, forests, plains and grasslands as well as deserts and steppes can be seen on this course belonging to a variety of weather conditions such as temperate, humid, arid and hot.

