

Aras UNESCO Global Geopark



Aras UNESCO Global Geopark is situated in the northwest of Iran. The Aras River forms the northern boundary of the geopark, serving as the dividing line between Iran, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Within the geopark region, there are three designated protected areas. The area's conservation efforts are significantly influenced by its rich wildlife variety and the existence of endangered species like the Caucasian Black Grouse, Red Deer, Armenian Ram, and Leopard.

Celebrating Earth Heritage

Within Aras Geopark, four lithological provinces can be identified. The western cliffs and highlands consist of Late Paleozoic and Early Mesozoic carbonate rocks. In the central areas of the Geopark, there are Cretaceous and Eocene sandstone, shale, and marl beds with a prevalent flysch facies. Towards the east, intrusive igneous rocks, primarily granitic in nature, dominate the region. In the southern and central parts of the area, there are dacitic volcanic and sub-volcanic rocks. The Alli-Bashi geosite within this geopark holds the utmost geological significance on an international scale. It presents an extraordinary chance for geoscientists to examine uninterrupted successions of carbonate to claystone-dominated facies, brimming with abundant fossils, at the Permian-Triassic Boundary. Apart from the Alli-Bashi geosite, the geopark has approximately 30 additional geosites.

Sustaining local communities

In addition to the wealth of intangible heritage encompassing local traditions and ceremonies, Aras UNESCO Global Geopark is home to several remarkable cultural treasures. These include a UNESCO world heritage site, Saint Stepanos Monastery, which stands as a testament to the region's historical and religious significance. Furthermore, the geopark proudly showcases national monuments such as the Khajeh-Nazar Caravanserai, the Historical Bath, the Duzal Historical Tower, the Zia-ol-Molk Bridge, and the Choopan Church, all of which represent iconic elements of the area's cultural heritage.

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QESHM ISLAND UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK



Celebrating Earth Heritage

Qeshm Island UNESCO Global Geopark is an island of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has the shape of a dolphin. It is the largest island of the Persian Gulf region and stands parallel to the south coasts of the Hormuz Strait. The highest point on the island, Kish Kuh Mount, is 397 m high.

Qeshm Island UNESCO Global Geopark is part of the huge mountain range of Zagros, which has been deformed and folded as the result of the last phase of the Alpine orogeny in the Plio-Pleistocene. The geological formations of this mountain belt belong to the Late Precambrian to Cambrian (more than 480 million years old) and include salt diapirs attributed to the Precambrian period called Hormoz Series. According to the majority of geologists, the tectonics of this region has been active from the Late Tertiary. The tectonic zone is represented by the south part of the deformed foreland or the convergent belt (Mesopotamia and Persian Gulf region), as well as by the margins of the compression and collision plates of the Iranian-Arabic continent.

The Qeshm Area of the Persian Gulf Region forms part of the south and eastern extreme foreland of the Zagros geological and structural Province, expressed in the NW-SE trending Zagros Mountain ranges. The more southerly part of the Zagros Fold Belt faces, but is separated from the Oman Region, while the Mokran geological and structural Province lies to the east, beyond the Minab-Oman fracture zone. The highest mountain peak on Qeshm Island is related to the Kish Kuh Anticline structures that have increased the height in part as an effect of diapirism tectonics, related to the Namakdan Salt Plug. Qeshm Island UNESCO Global Geopark has also the world longest salt cave, 6600 m in length. In addition to the salt formation and complex, other sedimentary formations are exposed in the different anticline structures on the island. The succession consists of conformable Neogene (Mio-Pliocene) units, with a total thickness of about 1200 to 1850 meters from the eastern to western ends of this island, respectively. In general, mountainous or high ranges nearly coincide with the folds having anticline structure, or in part, as salt dome diapirs, and the relative lowlands are mainly within or based on intermediate forms or synclines. Several major geosites are also located around the anticlines.

The island has abundant wildlife, including birds, reptiles, dolphins, and turtles. In Qeshm Island, zoogeographical areas of Palearctic and Oriental, and phytogeographical areas of Afro-tropical, Oriental, and Eurasian, are meeting each other, which generated a huge variety in fauna and flora.

Sustaining local Communities

Qeshm Island UNESCO Global Geopark has three cities and 57 villages. There are about 120,000 people residing on Qeshm Island. The major business opportunities of the people are trading and fishing. Local communities are now also engaged in geotourism activities and profit from the benefits of this sustainable and environment-friendly business, which provides a real motivation for the local community to conserve the geosites.

The culture of Qeshm is based on its intact nature and geological heritage. The oldest human settlement in the Qeshm Island UNESCO Global Geopark is about 40,000 years old. According to archaeological analysis, the island inhabitants were famous traders in ancient Persia, especially during the Sassanid era, with the Far East, the west coast of the Indian subcontinent, the southern shores of the Persian Gulf, and especially the east coast of Africa. This trade continued during the Islamic periods. According to anthropological observations, some cultural traces, clothing, or music, observed on the island, have their roots in African and Indian cultures. Qeshm is also a supposed site of the Garden of Eden according to Cassell's Bible.

In some of its geosites, Qeshm Island UNESCO Global Geopark has established an educational program for the local community aimed at conserving these natural zones. An example is the educational visiting center built in the tourist jetty of Soheili village, lying on the southern coast near the Hara Biosphere Reserve. The Qeshm Island UNESCO Global Geopark also produced a specific educational program based on the framework of schools' science textbooks. It persuades students to learn about the Earth, stimulates their sense of responsibility about the Earth's resources, and encourages them to do teamwork. The educational-promotional program encourages students to care about the environment. There is a special program dedicated to kids aged 7 to 11 that aims to leave a durable and happy impression about taking care of the Earth.

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Tabas UNESCO Global Geopark



Tabas UNESCO Global Geopark, situated in the northwest of South Khorasan province, has historically gained recognition as a transportation highway, facilitating travel from the southern and western regions to the eastern and northeastern parts of Iran, owing to its distinctive geographical positioning. The geopark has been referred to as Iran's geological paradise, by numerous geological thinkers and scientists owing to its abundant geological wealth, showcasing the uninterrupted evolution of the planet from the Precambrian to the Early Cretaceous periods. Within this geopark, where the most comprehensive Paleozoic succession in all of West Asia can be found.

Celebrating Earth Heritage

Tabas UNESCO Global Geopark distinguishes itself from other parts of Iran by showcasing rock outcrops from the Cryptozoic Eon (ranging from 542 million years to approximately 4.6 billion years ago) and the Paleozoic Era (251-542 million years ago). These geological reflect the Earth's evolutionary history and the existence of ancient life forms. It features a range of geological outcrop periods, including the Precambrian, Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic, accompanied by an impressive assortment of fossils and minerals. Within Iran and West Asia, the Paleozoic Rock Outcrops found in Tabas UNESCO Global Geopark are the most comprehensive series from this geological period.

In addition to its geological wonders, the geopark encompasses picturesque valleys, hot springs, and rivers, all contributing to its significance. Noteworthy geological features of international importance in this geopark include the Kalmard Box Folding, Darin Angular Unconformity, Nayband Fault, Permian-Triassic Boundary, and Cruziana.

Sustaining local communities

Indigenous peoples and local residents of Tabas UNESCO Global Geopark actively engage in close cooperation, contributing to various initiatives such as the establishment and construction of local guest houses and information points, the conservation of geosites, and providing assistance regarding historical background and intangible heritage. This collaborative effort with the local community has significantly enhanced the operations and functioning of Tabas UNESCO Global Geopark. For example, the Esfahk Local Ecolodges, situated within the Historical Texture of Esfahk Village, have undertaken the restoration of old houses. Furthermore, the Tabas Anthropological Museum, managed by the Tabas Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handcrafts Organization, offers a captivating exhibition showcasing the bygone lifestyles and tools of the region.

One of the primary objectives of Tabas UNESCO Global Geopark is to entrust the management of geosites to the local communities while maintaining geopark oversight and supervision. Consequently, the geopark has delegated the

responsibility for geosites located in rural areas or near villages to the local residents, who serve as the primary beneficiaries and operators of these sites. The locals actively participate in geopark meetings focused on the development of geosites, ensuring that the conservation of these sites and the preservation of the region's culture are addressed in accordance with their input and demands. In order to achieve sustainable tourism development, the geopark places significant emphasis on socio-cultural, economic, and environmental considerations. This approach prioritizes the involvement of local communities, who play a crucial role in addressing these aspects and contributing to their sustainable management.

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