

In Case You Missed**Sialk Hill Studies Underway**

Head of the archeological team of the historical Sialk Hill said that from the two geological layers in the hill, the Neolithic layer, dating back to 6000 BC, is currently under examination.

Speaking to ISNA, Hassan Fazeli-Nashlee referred to the 14-meter height of the layer which is rich in cultural value



and said, "Some two meters of this layer has been taken as sample measuring 2 by 2.5 meters. The layer belongs to 5000 BC. Results obtained from archeological studies of the layer suggest that the hill was host to innumerable daily cultural, social and economic activities at that time."

He opined that so far a large number of animal skeletons, a few hundred types of seeds and a variety of pottery have been found in the hill.

Fazeli-Nashlee further pointed out that archeological diggings in the area are aimed at collecting more information about characteristics of rural life in the central plateau during the pre-historic era.

Sialk Hill is located some four kilometers to the west of Kashan.

Shirvan to Become Geopark

Head of Ardebil Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department said Shirvan gorge, in the northern slopes of Mount Sabalan, will be registered at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as Iran's second geopark.

Speaking to IRNA, Masoud Alavian-Sadr added, "Measures have been taken for completing preliminary studies and compiling documentation. After being registered, the area will become the most unique geological attraction in the Middle East and will be used as a geopark by admirers of the Mother Nature."



The official opined that the area has a deep valley, beautiful springs and rocks, rare species of flora and fauna and caves.

"The main objective behind registering the area at the global level is to protect its natural resources and also improve the local economy through appealing to domestic and foreign tourists. Furthermore, the area is suitable for geological, as well as flora and fauna research," noted Alavian-Sadr.

He emphasized that when the area is registered as global heritage, all construction works will be carried out in compliance with indigenous considerations and only for temporary accommodation of tourists.

Sabalan is the second highest mountain of Iran after Mount Damavand. The highest peak of the mount is 4,811 meters.

Iran's first geopark is in Qeshm.

Largest Natural History Museum In Orumieh

Director general of West Azarbaijan's Department of Environment announced that the largest and most-equipped natural history museum of the country will be constructed in Orumieh.

According to Mehr News Agency, Kiomars Kalantari added, "This project covers an area of 3,300 square meters. The project site is located in one of the best areas of Orumieh. The undertaking essentially started toward the end of 2007-8."

He pointed out that 250 billion rials have been allocated for implementing of the first phase of the project.

Emphasizing that the project will become operational in 2009-10, Kalantari noted that the main sections of the museum are the auditorium, library, taxidermy workshop, databank and a hall for displaying various flora and fauna.

Sarein: The City of Spas

The city of Sarein, located some 25 km from Ardebil on the slopes of Mount Sabalan, is famous for its numerous spas. It has several hot spas, which originate from Mount Sabalan. The most important of the hot spas are Gavmish Goli, Besh Bajilar and Sabalan Water Therapy Complex. In the past, the area was also known as 'Sari Qieh' and 'Sarqin'.

According to AnoBanini website, temperate climate is the very first attraction to tourists who visit the area. The city ranks first in the nation in terms of therapeutic considerations. Tourism spots that have therapeutic value are quite important for the national tourism industry, as low-income families can also visit them and be cured of dermatological diseases and/or muscular pains.



Most hot spas of Sarein have been transformed into indoor swimming pools for both men and women. These swimming pools are crowded most of the time. In some of the better known swimming pools of the city a few people may be swimming in a total area of one square meter.

Spa water contains different minerals and it has acidic PH value. Its water is often murky or similar to muddy water. The temperature of most waters inside the city of Sarein is slightly above 40 degrees centigrade.

Like all other spots in the region, Sarein has cool and pleasant summers as well as cold and snowy winters. Of course, cold weather is not a hindrance to tourists as the natural warmth of hot spas can appeal to winter tourists. Furthermore, the ski resort of Elvares is another attraction for tourists who choose to visit the area in winter.

Honey and cream are the most famous products of the area that tourists typically take home as souvenir. The slopes of Sabalan Mount, due to the diversity of flora and favorable climatic conditions, have very high potential for producing honey. Ash-e Doogh (soup made of yoghurt) and kebab are also delicious food which tourists eat when touring the Sarein. A number of suitable hotels for accommodating visitors are also available. Compared to tourism facilities of other parts of the country, Sarein's hotel facilities are acceptable. However, the large influx of tourists to the area in summers hints at the fact that accommodation facilities should be upgraded.



2009 Proposed as Year of Ferdowsi



Secretary-General of the Ferdowsi Foundation, Yaser Movahhedfar, announced that the foundation will submit an official proposal to UNESCO for the naming of 2009 as Year of Ferdowsi.

Movahhedfar said the foundation will probably be handing the official proposal handed over to UNESCO within two days, Mehr News-Agency reported.

The Ferdowsi Congress commenced its work in Mashhad on May 14. A number of Iranian and international scholars, writers, poets and other cultural figures took part in the congress held to commemorate the birth anniversary of the author of Iran's national epic, 'Shahnameh' (book of the kings).

Iranian people annually celebrate May 14 as Ferdowsi Day. An expert session on Ferdowsi and his masterpiece, Shahnameh, was held at the Abi Hall of the Niavaran Palace Museum in Tehran on May 14.

During the session, Fereydoun Joneidi, the head of the Ferdowsi Foundation's Board of Trustees, presented historical documents showing that by 2009 a millennium would elapse since the composition of Ferdowsi's magnum opus, Shahnameh.

UNESCO celebrated the 800th birthday anniversary of the Persian mystic and poet Molana Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273) in 2007.