

City Tourism



Ain Al-Tamr

Ain Al-Zerka

عين الزرقه

Mineral waters, palm groves and holy places in the desert

Baghdad - Walid Abdul-Amir Alwan

This beautiful oasis, with a dense palm grove and other fruit trees, distinguishes itself by the immense goodness of its inhabitants, their simplicity and their indescribable generosity. They welcome visitors heartily. It is also characterized by an abundant supply of mineral water, which made it a place for the treatment of skin diseases. It has a rich history, with various holy monuments and fortresses that stood the test of time.

The site and the name

Ain Al-Tamr or Chatatah, is situated 67 km to the southeast of the holy city of Karbala, after the bifurcation that leads toward the border with Saudi Arabia, which has been called "The road of the Hadj". It has been called Ain Al-Tamr (source of dates), because of the abundance of dates that made it an important center for the production and export of this commodity since ancient times.

History of the city

Ain Al-Tamr is considered one of the old cities of Iraq. It existed 4000 years before the advent of Islam. The main reasons for the disappearance of the old city were the drainage of the sources of water and the proliferation of malaria that decimated the majority of its population. The city that now

carries the name of Ain Al-Tamr is made up of one of the districts of the former city, named "Chatatah" – an Aramaic word meaning clear water. This name was replaced in 1938 by Ain Al-Tamr, in memory of the ancestral, military city. Indeed, it was an impregnable fortress before the rise of Islam.

The sources of mineral water

Ain Al-Tamr conceals several sources of mineral waters that spring out of the soil and flow through openings made of iron towards central and secondary channels that irrigate long stretches of the agricultural land. Water reaches 4 m or more in depth and includes several varieties of fish. One observes a variety of fauna and flora and fish that can be

seen from the surface. The waters at their sources have a low salt content and chlorine and sulphur which makes them undrinkable.

The most important water sources are:

Ain Sib, whose name seems to come from the Persian word for apple - "Sib", because of the abundance of the apple trees in this region. In Arabic the word means flow of water. This source of water is surrounded with palm groves and fruit trees. It is situated in the eastern zone of the city and has an oval shape. It is used a lot for swimming, because of its remoteness from villages and passersby.

The other major source is Ain Al-Hamra – the red source - named after the colour of the water. The waters here are purer than ➤

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Local crafts

صناعات شعبية يدوية من أجزاء النخيل



The site of Imam Al-Hassan

مقام الإمام الحسن (ع)

those of Ain Al-Zerka - the blue source as they have a different origin. It provided the city with drinking water until 1958 but the digging of many wells altered its flavor. Today the city's drinking water comes from a water tower in the Ach-Chaib region. It is worth mentioning that this source is located to the east of the major source and is made up of two springs. Water flows towards the gardens by the slant of small openings. It is fenced by a wall of cement and white stones. The city's largest water source is called Ain Al-Zerka, because of the big depth of its bluish, fast-flowing water. The locals call it the big snake - Arbid.. It is situated in the center of the city and it is surrounded by a wall made of bricks and iron posts.

In addition to the major water sources there are twenty others including Ain Ad-Dabit, Ain Abid al-Mihna and Ain Bayt Assamina used in the treatment of skin diseases. The simplicity of life in these beautiful oases is also translated in the services offered by the local inhabitants in full spontaneity and

simplicity. The visitors are encouraged to come daily in large numbers, notably in September and October, because of the moderate climate and the date harvesting season. Specialists and investors commissioned a recent scientific survey of the waters so they could be used in the treatment of dermal illnesses. Water is bottled for those who cannot visit the springs themselves.

Palm groves

The cultivation of palm trees is not recent in Ain Al-Tamr: the former city had been an important center of date production and export. Miss Bell indicated that in Chatatah, there were 170,000 palms in 1924. Since Ain Al-Tamr is situated in the center of the palm grove, it became the main region for providing dates, catering for 85% of the total needs of the city. The Rahalia oasis nearby provides the remaining 15%. These two oases produce 12,000 - 14,000 tons of the country's top quality dates such as Zahdis,

Khestaoui, Barben, Auinat Ayoub, Adkalat Assioud and others.

The palm tree that Prophet Mohammed said should be treated with great care: "Be generous with your aunt the palm, played an important role in the life of this desert city. Indeed, the palm is the core of its life. The dates are used for direct consumption and also for the production of honey and vinegar. The long trunks of the palms are often used for the roofs of houses constructed from the white stones abundant in the region. The trunks are also used like posts and as a source of fuel. The palms are used by craftsmen to make flapper, baskets, hats and dishes. The peel is used to make ropes and "tabliya", the tool used to get to the top of the tree to pick dates.

Sites and historic places

Because of its proximity to the holy city of Karbala, several sites in Ain Al-Tamr are considered holy. It also incites its inhabitants to observe the precepts of Islam and its ➤

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Camels crossing the road near Ain Al-Tamr

قطع من الجمال يعبر الشارع الرئيسي عند مدخل عين تمر



Local crafts

صناعات شعبية

moral recommendations scrupulously. The holy sites include:

The site of Imam Al-Hassan

Situated in the eastern zone of the city, it is a stone built on the style of the old Arabian domes. Its walls are decorated with mirrors and verses of the Koran and are covered with henna. At the top of the door, a placard says: "site of Hassan Ben Ali". The inhabitants of this region, believe that imam Hassan Ben Ali Ben Abi Taleb prayed here and therefore consider it a holy place.

Imam Ali s basin

It is a small room situated in the northern region of Ain Al-Tamr. Through its wooden door, one sees an oblong basin 1,25 m by 0,75 m. Koranic verses and mirrors are on the walls. The inhabitants believe that Imam Ali visited this place and made his ablutions in this basin. Several historians mentioned this sacred basin.

The mark of Imam Ali s horse

It is an oblong room in the center of the city that includes a triangular stone of blackish

color with a mark resembling that of a horse-shoe. Next to it, there is a small round pit 7 cm in diameter. The inhabitants believe that the mark on the stone is the trace of the shoe of Ali's horse and the small pit is that of his spear.

Ali s strainer

It is located at about 2 km to the right of the road leading to Kerbala. The track is in a good state but not tarmac. This region is surrounded by underground carved caves. The rocky layers next to it contain copper oxides of clear greenish color. Imam Ali, frequently went to the region of Ain Al-Tamr. People recall that the water he and his companions brought with them ran out. At prayer time Ali went towards a mountain slope, said his prayers and water started flowing from the mountain. His companions filled their jars but the water level remained the same. People believe that this water is blessed and use it as holy water. There is considerable humidity on the rock over the pit.

The site of Zine El-Abidine

This site is at the entrance to Ain Al-Tamr. According to Hadj Shaker Mekkaoui Khalaf

who has an in-depth knowledge of the history of this city and depicted it on a painting, this is the road that was taken by Imam Hussein's family on their way to Medina after his murder.

History is alive

Among the old remains of the city, one finds Akhidar fortress situated in the center of the desert, some 17 km from Ain Al-Tamr. The historic tales indicate that Jadima, the 1st king of Hera, constructed it. This fortress consists of a square palace surrounded by defensive walls, 169 m long and 21 m high reinforced by big towers on every corner, 5 m in diameter. An oblong palace of 112 m by 80 m is inside this fortress, as well as a mosque and Mihrab made of stones of clay and gypsum. One of the marvels of this palace is its water supply from an underground channel connected to the Euphrates, situated some 50 km from Hera which was discovered by an Iraqi archaeological team. Among the other palaces are Chamoun Ben Jaber Al-Lakhmi, and Bardouil; as well as the Jewish and Christian (Dominican friars and Nestorian) cemeteries. ■