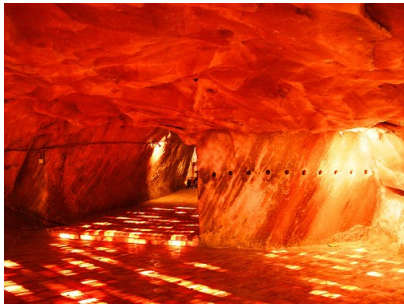


PAKISTAN'S ATTRACTION: KHEWRA SALT MINE FAMOUS FOR CARVED STRUCTURES



Khewra salt mine is not only the second largest salt mine in the world, but it is also a frequently sought-out tourist attraction in Pakistan.

The Khewra is a massive salt mine in Pakistan, which not only generates an overwhelming 325,000 tons of salt every year, but also attracts thousands of visitors who long to admire its breathtaking illuminated beauty.

The story of its discovery only adds to Khewra's appeal. It is said, that in 326 B.C., the great king Alexander the Great decided to take a rest with his army in the area. His horse started licking the rocks and soon, other horses followed its example. Having noticed this strange phenomenon, one soldier tried it as well and alas, the salt was discovered.

Annually, nearly 40,000 tourists visit the mine to discover not only the palette of pink, red, white and transparent salt veins, but also to see some of local miniature structures carved from salt. The Great Wall of China and the Mall road of Murree or Lahore's Shimla hill are among the most popular. Interestingly, a small Badshahi Mosque has been built in the mine out of salt blocs. The 'Pul-Saraat' is a long salt bridge and a very significant allusion to the famous 'Pul-e-eSaraat' - the bridge one must cross on judgment day.

The history of the salt mine is not of the happiest. In fact, after the British captured the mines in 1849, the working conditions for local miners became unbearable - they were often locked inside the mines until they met their 'targets'. Many women were forced to give birth in the darkness of the mines for that reason and the resistance movement did suffer some life losses as well. Twelve miners were shot and their graves near the entrance still remind every visitor of the rough times.

To cater for the tourists, an electric railway and a guest house were built here to improve and speed up the tours around the mine. Everyone seems to be stunned when they learn they may send a postcard from the midst of the mine as Khewra features the only fully functional post office of this kind.

The stunning salt structures created over thousands of years are illuminated to add even more magic to the wondrous tours. Discovering the mine's intricate maze of corridors, narrow passages and grand halls is undoubtedly a visit to remember.

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