

Cross crater (Ramon)

Hotze Makhtesh

Two days through the famous highlights of the Ramon crater.

Closest Town **Mitzpe Ramon**

Difficulty **Medium-Difficult**

Length **28 km**

Length of longest day **16 hours**

Recommended season **Nov - Apr**

Recommended time **Morning**

Getting There:

On a bus- Take a bus to Mitzpe Ramon and ask to get off at the "camel mountain" bus stop (HAR GAMAL, in Hebrew) in front of The Green Backpackers hostel. Walk southeast along the street to the left turn. Follow the street for 50 meters and go to the cliff on your right, looking for the green markers.

By car- Drive to Mitzpe Ramon. Turn into town on Ben Guryon Blvd. Drive straight to "Zvi Hazan" circle and continue straight. Turn left on Rehavam Zeevi St. Pass a left turn as the street curves right and arrive at a circle. Turn Left at the circle and drive straight for 200 meters to the left turn. Pass the Green Backpackers Hostel. Turn left and drive for another 50 meters. Park on the street, or at the nearby parking lot, and look for the first green markers heading southeast from this point.

Hike Description:

Day 1

Starting Point: Mitzpe Ramon, Southwestern corner

Finish Point: Gvanim CG

Length: 16 km

Duration: 5-6 hours.

Start off from the trailhead at the southwest corner of town- marked green. You'll be following an ancient camel pass. Towards the bottom of the descent you'll pass a connection with a blue trail on your right. Stay on the green and follow it on the side of the black hill and down into the small wadi. Once you descend to the bottom notice the basalt pillars on your left and follow the red trail markers heading south (with the town of Mitzpe Ramon behind you). Your next stop is the lone acacia where the trail crosses Ramon creek. Occasionally along this section you'll see the INT markers.

Negev Trails

The trail will climb gradually as you approach the southern cliffs. A green trail will branch off to your left- Remain on the red-marked trail, it will take you straight up to Ramon-Tooth- a mountain of granite thrust in the middle of the continuous limestone cliff-line. Take a moment to enjoy- Ain't the top of the world awesome?

Climb down the other side and follow the trail as it curves left to Ammonite wall and HW 40. When you arrive at the road cross to the other side and turn left (North). Follow it for 1.5 km to a dirt road that branches to the right, with a sign "Nahal Gvanim" and green markers. Follow the dirt road for 2.5 km Northeast between two ridges, with occasional acacia trees. When you get to the power line you have reached your destination- Gvanim CG.

Attractions: Ancient camel trail, Basalt prisms, Colorful sand, Lone acacia tree, 360 lookout from peak, ammonite wall- fossils

Day 2

Starting Point: Gvanim CG.

Finish Point: Beerot CG

Length: 12 km

Duration: 5-6 hours.

From the Nahal Gvanim CG head South on the wide dirt road (black markers). The road will climb steeply up the side of mt. Saharonim. When you reach the top and catch your breath turn left (northeast) to the foot trail, marked in green. After 100 meters you will come to short ledge-climb with metal hand-bars. Continue along the ridge and enjoy the scenery of the crater on your left side as you hike. You are walking along the tilted layers of marine sedimentary rock that was left here by an ancient ocean. These layers were lifted about 70-90 million years ago. After the second peak the trail will split. Grab the green markers to the left and follow it down to the wadi below you.

This trail will lead you directly to Ein Saharonim – one of the only stable sources of water in the crater. You will find various type of desert vegetation around this vital source of water. During the winter the water actually flows here in small streams, but in late summer the level of the water drops and the animals (and humans) must dig to get to the water. You can take the opportunity to climb up to Han Saharonim- A 2000 year old caravan stop on the incense route that provided safety and supplies for the Nabatean traders along the road from Petra to Gaza. From the spring follow the blue markers to the south and head into the horse-shoe canyon.

As you walk through the canyon you'll notice the large boulder. At this point the canyon is "caught" by a fault line and turns to the left. Eventually you'll arrive at

Negev Trails

the narrows, where the distance between the canyon walls is just your arm-span. After that point the canyon opens up and 200 meters later you'll notice a cave under the cliff on your right. Continue on the blue trail on the gravel road. Pass a green trail connecting on the left and arrive at a trail-intersection. A red-marked jeep trail will cross your path and your blue markers will end. A black marked road will head straight- Northeast. Follow the black markers and notice the ground gradually changing color to red. After 700 meters a blue trail, with INT markers as well, will branch to the right. Stay on the black and head into wadi Ardon.

Once in the wadi, look to your right and notice the layers of colorful rock. Occasionally vertical columns will breach the horizontal layers. These are magmatic intrusions- molten rock that was injected into cracks in the rock and cooled off. 1km into the wadi a red trail will branch to the right (North). Follow it up a small ravine and exit the wadi. Once on the Plato the trail will turn left (west) and climb to the shoulder under Harut hill. You may climb to the top of the hill or just head on the blue trail to the left (west) back down to the wadi. At the bottom you'll arrive at an impressive acacia tree. Great spot for a rest before your last stretch. Head right (southwest) on the black marked jeep trail and climb along the slanted rock.

Once you arrive at the parking lot keep following the dirt road to the west. After 1km you'll come to an intersection with a boulder in the center. Look for the Green markers of a foot path leading west. Follow it for a little under 1km to Beerot CG, the only developed campground in the crater. From here you can hitch out or arrange for a pickup.

Attractions: "Floating trail" along a narrow ridge, Vistas, spring, archeological site (optional), impressive boulders and narrow canyon, Cave, acacia trees, magmatic intrusions.

Water Locations: West Nekarot Campground and Beerot Campground.