

Horseshoe and Wadi Ardon

Parsat Nekarot Ve-Nahal Ardon

A medium length hike with a little bit of everything the Ramon Crater has to offer.

Closest Town	Mitzpe Ramon
Difficulty	Easy-Medium
Length	9.5 km
Duration	4-5 hours
Recommended season	Sep - June
Recommended time	Morning

Getting There:

By Car- Drive from Mitzpe Ramon south. After 11km you'll come to the left turn, with a sign for Beerot Campground and Ein Saharonim. Turn left and drive on the dirt road until you come to the Bedouin Campground. Make the first right turn possible after the campground and continue along the dirt road. At the fork turn left and follow the signs to "Ardon". Park at the large gravel parking lot. (The drive takes about 40 minutes)

Hike Description:

Starting Point: Ramat Saharonim CG

Finish Point: Ramat Saharonim CG

From the gravel parking lot Head South along the Green markers for 1.5 to the Han Saharonim parking lot. Follow the footpath to the ruin of the old Caravan stop. This 1st century building was one of the stops along the frankincense route from Petra To Gaza. The Nabateans transported precious goods along this desert route and dominated the trade. In order to support such a financial operation, they built strongholds, water cisterns and Caravan rest stops like this one, where safety, supplies and water were offered to the caravan leaders and staff. Though not a fort, this is a fortified building, featuring storage rooms, a large kitchen with an oven and private rooms for distinguished guests.

In order to find the source of water that supported the guests and inhabitants, go to the top of the hill and continue down, south, into the patch of dense vegetation at Ein-Saahronim. The largest natural source of water in the entire crater. Here you'll find Tamarix and Reeds and Dutch rush- all water-loving plants. Their presence here, in this density, is an indication to the presence of water. Follow the Blue markers to the east (left). Be careful not to follow the blue markers heading west. You'll find the actual spot of the water under a small Tamerix. During the winter and spring months water is present here- in a small but actual flowing stream or in pools under rock ledges. As summer and autumn progress, the level of the water drops below the surface, and disappears. Animals still come here and dig to reach the precious water, and up a generation or so ago- so did the human inhabitants and nomads of the desert.

Negev Trails

Head East along the Blue markers into the horseshoe canyon. You'll pass Ramon's gate- the narrow pass where the main drainage of the crater exits the cliffs.

Shortly after you'll be joined by Black markers and Markers of the Israel trail on your Right. Stay in the canyon and continue for another 1.5 km to the "Narrows" – a corridor of White hard limestone, polished by flow of sandy water during occasional floods. As you exit and the canyons widens again, keep your eyes to the right for the cave which will appear after 300 meters.

Stay on the Blue markers, pass green markers on your left, and reach an intersection of trails- Red crossing and Black continuing straight. Pick up the Black jeep trail northeast, passing a sign to the right for the Arava, The INT markers will leave your trail. Stay on the Black markers as they enter Wadi Ardon and slowly curve Northwest. Pass blue markers on your left. After a little over 1km, you'll see the impressive Dike of Wadi Ardon- a Magmatic intrusion injected into the horizontal layers. After another 200 meters you'll come to a sign and Red Markers on your Right (North). Climb along the red markers, north, out of the wadi and up to Harut hill. When you come to the base of the hill you can either climb the top or simply follow the blue markers to the left (west) back to the wadi and to an impressive Acacia tree. After enjoying the shade, head on the black dirt road to the right (west) and up back to your car.

Attractions: Ancient caravan rest stop, Hidden spring, Narrow canyon, cool cave, Colorful sand and rocks, Magmatic intrusions, Acacia trees, desert vegetation, Vistas.