

Mt. Arkov

Har Arkov

Discovering hidden human presents in the desert

Closest Town **Midreshet Ben Gurion**

Difficulty **Meduim**

Length **9 km**

Duration **3-4 hours**

Recommended season **Oct - Apr**

Recommended time **Morning**

Getting There:

By Bus- From Mitzpe Ramon Catch a bus to Avdat National Park (64,65,55). The stop is right next to the entrance to the park, alongside a gas station and a McDonalds. Cross the road to the bus stop on the opposite side.

By car- Drive North from Mitzpe Ramon along HW 40 for 22km to the gas station at Avdat National park. Park your car and cross the road to the bus stop on the west side.

Hike Description:

Starting point: Avdat gas station

Finish point: Avdat gas station

From the bus stop find the black markers and follow them along a dirt road for 1km west towards the base of the mountain in front of you. A red marked dirt road will join from the left. Turn right (North) and continue on the black markers for another 400 meters, finally reaching the gravelly floor of the wadi. Attention- during winter flash floods this ravine is a major waterway, and the flow of water can be powerful and dangerous. Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to cross flowing water in this area.

Find the blue markers on your left and climb out of the ravine, following the blue markers for 500 meters as the trail climbs steeply to the top of Mt. Arkov.

Continue south along the edge with the blue markers. You'll pass several Tumuli- Ancient tombs that were built here probably 4000 years ago.

From the peak head west along the blue markers for 2.2 km. occasionally you'll pass patches of dark rock. These are areas which have a natural concentration of iron, oxidized by the exposure to the atmosphere. The dark rock served as canvas for rock art. Scratching and chipping at the rock, desert nomads and

Negev Trails

residents of this area have left their mark on the rocks starting thousands of years ago.

Be very careful when approaching these outcrops of dark rock, and mindful to your feet to protect the rock art and to make sure you do not destroy it by stepping on it. Scratching or otherwise damaging these ancient and rare artifacts is strictly forbidden.

The Blue markers will turn north at a large group of rock art. Continue for another 300 meters until you find green markers.

Turn right (East) along the green markers and follow them down a shallow wadi for 2.5 km. You'll notice simple farming plots and stone lines cutting across the wadi. These are terraces, 2000 years old that were built to capture clay and mud during winter floods. The accumulated soil could be farmed and allowed the settlement of this otherwise inhospitable region.

You'll arrive at a T intersection with a dirt road marked with black markers. Turn right (east) along this dirt road and follow the black markers for 400 meters to the wadi you started in. As you drop down the last ramp onto the gravelly floor look on the right (west) wall of the wadi. Find a small cave opening.

This is one of two cisterns, the Ramalia cisterns that were dug to collect the overflow of winter floods. The raised water level would be higher than the opening and the water would fill the cistern. Today, over a thousand years after it was created, the cistern is clogged with tons of clay, but the cistern is as deep as it is wide. This large cavity could only stay stable thanks to the central column which was left during the excavation. This model of cistern is characteristic of the Nabatean and Byzantine periods in the Negev, and hundreds of these systems are scattered along the wadis and slopes of the hills. Thanks to this technology, and the political stability of the time, the Negev flourished during these periods.

Exit the cistern and head back to Avdat gas station by the black marked dirt road you started on in the morning.

Attractions: Vistas, ancient stone structures, rock art, Impressive cisterns.