

Zin to Ramon in 6 Days

Noded Zin- Ramon

Cross the central Negev Highlands in 6 days through breathtaking landscape and Geological wonders.

Closest Town **Midreshet Ben Guryon**

Difficulty **Difficult**

Length **101 km**

Duration **6 Days**

Recommended season **Nov - Mar**

Recommended time **Early morning**

Getting There:

By Bus:

From Mitzpe Ramon or Dimona catch bus number 55 to Merhav Am. Get off at the intersection on rd. 204. You can also catch this bus in Midreshet ben Guryon or in Yeruham.

By Car:

From Mitzpe Ramon drive north on HW 40, and at Halukim intersection continue straight onto 204. Drive for 3.5km to the entrance to Merhav Am. Turn right and drive into the community. Park your car at the entrance. This small community is an observant one and cars are not permitted to drive into the residential area on Shabbat.

Hike Description:

Day 1

Starting Point: Hatzaz cisterns trailhead

Finish Point: Hod akev CG

Length: 16km

Duration: 5-6 hours

Walk 600 meters northeast on rd. 204 until you reach the brown sign for Hatzaz cisterns. Turn right and walk along the dirt road with the black markers for a little over 1km. On your left there will be a branch-off of the dirt road leading to the cisterns themselves. These water collection systems date back to the byzantine period in the Negev and still collect water every year.

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Continue southeast for another 1.5 km. The jeep trail will turn right (south) and switch color to red. Continue on the black markers southeast on a foot trail. After another 1km up canyon you will come to a small patch of vegetation where, in the winter, Narcissus flowers grow out of small depressions in the rock where water collects.

Continue on the trail for another 2km. You will arrive at the watershed and the trail will change direction to the right (southeast). As the trail drops into the Daroch canyon you'll follow it as it winds down towards the Zin valley. After 3 km you'll see on the northern bank the shape of a rock U or arch. Once you see the canyon opens up head down south for 2 more km. you'll meet an abandoned jeep trail. Red markers on your left (east) and black continuing to the right (west). Follow the black west. After 1km more turn left (southwest) onto a blue trail for 1km. Arrive at a wide, straight dirt road with Green markers. On the other side of the road is the Hod Akev campground.

Attractions: Ancient cisterns, Flowers, rock arch.

Day 2-

Starting Point: Hod akev CG

Finish Point: Ein Zik CG

Length: 15km

Duration: 5-6 hours

Head west from the campground for 30 meters until you find the red markers. Follow them south (left) and climb up the narrow trail to the top of the cliff. This trail is extremely narrow at parts, and includes a difficult ledge.

Arrive at the top of the plateau, and enjoy the scenery, but not for long, as your climb isn't over yet- Head up to the top of Akev Pinnacle (HOD AKEV). Head down on the other side and reconnect with the red trail. Follow the trail down into a dry wadi and follow it west and southwest for 1.5 km until you arrive at the blue markers. Follow them south (left) all the way to the amazing pool of Ein Akev. DIVE!!

It will be hard to walk away, but you must. Climb out of the canyon on the west side and find the black markers.

Follow them south for 3km along the wadi until you hit the vegetation and reeds of upper Ein Akev. This small spring is mostly hidden under the vegetation, but here and there small pools are visible.

Arrive at the signpost, and switch to the blue markers- continuing south in the canyon. After about 300 meters the canyon will start to curve left (east). Continue for another 250 meters and climb out of the canyon along a small ravine. Follow the blue markers east and northeast and enter another narrow

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ravine, heading up (due east) until you arrive at the pass and the view to the east will open up, revealing the wide expanses of the Zin valley below you. A green trail will join you from the north (left).

Continue along the blue markers and head down 2 km all the way to the grove of poplars at Ein Shviv. This is a TMILL'E- a place where the ground water is very close to the surface, and can be accessed by shallow digging. This ground water supports the abundance of life here in the oasis, and also attracted nomads throughout the history of this region.

Head North along the green markers on a foot path for 300 meters until you arrive at a gate and a jeep parking lot. From there continue for another 1.3 km along the jeep road and the green markers until you arrive at the campground.

Attractions: Challenging climb, great vistas, Cool pool, hidden groves.

Day 3-

Starting Point: Ein Zik CG

Finish Point: Hava CG

Length: 18km

Duration: 8 hours

Better get an early start this morning. Head south from the campground back towards the grove of Ein Zik along the green markers. Switch to the black markers and continue south into the canyon. The trail will climb along the east side of the canyon for 1km and then cross the wadi and curve southeast (left) and climb along a narrow shoulder for another 1.5 km before joining a wide dirt road with blue markers from the left (north).

Continue southeast along the dirt road with the black markers for 2 more km. This road follows "KATZA", the Eilat Ashkelon pipeline. This oil line was built when Iran and Israel had a warm relationship, and was a joint venture which made shipment of Iranian oil to the markets in Europe much cheaper. Since the Iranian revolution the pipe is operated by Israel alone and is actually the subject of a legal dispute between the two governments.

You'll arrive at a trail intersection with Green markers continuing straight (southeast). Turn left (Northeast) along the black markers and follow the jeep road down two curves until you reach a leveled platform and the opening of two tunnels in the cliff. These tunnels were dug as underground oil storage, but were abandoned when the rock was discovered to be too cracked and porous. The ceiling of the tunnels has collapsed in several places, making entering the tunnels is extremely dangerous.

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After a rest in the shade of the cliff head down "Thirsty Snake" pass along the black markers for 1km until you reach the base of the cliff. The trail will curve to the east. Follow it for 3.5km, curving to the right (south), until you reach "Ein Sharav" (Hot day spring). This seasonal spring is surrounded by vegetation and a small pool collects here under the shade of a date tree. The water is slightly salty, so drinking is not a good idea.

Head northeast along the black markers for 1.2km until you reach an intersection with a jeep road (black markers, north), and a foot trail (red markers, south). Follow the red markers to the south for 1.2km to the base of Sharav Pass. Climb up the cliff for 1.2km and arrive at the top. Continue south along the red markers for 1km to the Sharav ruin, an Early-Muslim-period (7th century) village, with one of the earliest mosques discovered in this region. A blue trail will merge from the northeast with the red trail. Head southwest along the red markers for 1km to the Hava Campground, where the red trail will meet a wide dirt road ("KATZA" again) with green markers, black markers and INT markers.

Attractions: challenging desert passes, remote and hidden waterholes, vistas, abandoned tunnels, remote ruins.

Day 4-

Starting Point: Hava CG

Finish Point: Mt. Ardon CG

Length: 19km

Duration: 8 hours

This morning starts with a march southeast along the black markers on the KATZA jeep road. Follow it down the hill steeply until you reach a sandy wadi and blue markers leading northeast into a narrow ravine. Follow the blue markers and the INT markers for 600 meters along a narrow trail on the side of a steep slope. The trail will drop steeply into the canyon. When you arrive the bottom, turn left following "transparent" markers leading into the narrow part of the canyon. walk for 300 meters, passing small fig trees growing out of cracks in the side walls. Arrive at the Hava waterhole.

This shaded pool is an accumulation of rain water that gets preserved here thanks to the clay on the bottom and the shade of the narrow canyon. Enjoy your dip!

Head out back to the blue markers, and continue northeast along the canyon for 2km, passing a sharp curve to the right (southeast). Arrive at a trail intersection on black slanted plates of flint rock. Follow the green markers south to a side canyon, passing a small boulder field. The canyon will end at a solid cliff with

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seems to be closing it completely. The only way out is a steep climb through a narrow crack, with a couple of metal handholds at the top.

Continue southeast for almost 4km along the green and the INT markers. This section of the trail is very scenic, with wide vistas on the table-top formations of the Avdat plateau. These are relatively young formations of sedimentary rock from the last major oceanic flooding of this region, 40 million years ago. Connect to a jeep trail intersection with red markers, black markers and INT markers. Follow the black markers south for 700 meters along the KATZA jeep road. Turn left (southeast) off the jeep road, along the green markers, passing the ruins of a rainwater collection pool. This reservoir served the residents of the nearby Mahmal stronghold you are about to arrive at. We can tell you about the amazing scenery waiting for you at the stronghold- but words just aren't enough...

Once you filled a memory card or two with pictures, head down the ancient trail. This is a section of the incense road. The stronghold at the top protected it and made sure the caravans carrying mere and frankincense could continue undisturbed to Avdat, and from there to Gaza.

Arrive at the bottom and reach a trail intersection. Follow the blue markers south (left) for 2.3km to a red jeep road. You'll pass a roman milestone, one of several that were left from when the roman legion took over the Nabatean incense route. Turn right (southwest) at the red marked jeep road and after 300 meters turn left (east) along another jeep road marked in green. Walk for 3km and arrive at the mt. Ardon campground in time for the best sunset over the town of Mitzpe Ramon.

Attractions: Cool waterhole, impressive rock crevasses, ancient roman road, magnificent vistas of the Ramon crater, ancient strongholds.

Day 5-

Starting Point: Mt Ardon. CG

Finish Point: Nahal Gvanim CG

Length: 17km

Duration: 7-8 hours

Good morning. Head out along the black markers to the southwest for 2km along the bottom of the cliff. Connect with the blue marked trail and turn left, up the trail, to the top of the cliff. The trail continues for 1.5 km along the rim of the mountain. Quite a morning view, isn't it? The trail will descend sharply down the southern side, watch your footing as you go. You'll arrive at the bottom, next to a white sandstone cliff. Continue south. the trail will cross a flat valley of sandstone. The color of the sandstone will change as you advance through older layers of rock, tilted below you.

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Arrive at a meeting with a red marked trail. You can climb Harut hill if you want, straight, or continue along the red trail to the left (southeast), for 1km. Turn left along the black marked jeep road, and walk for 1.5km. As you walk keep your eye on the canyon wall to your left (north). You'll find vertical intrusions in the horizontal layers of rock. These are Dykes- intrusions of magma that was injected into cracks in the layers. You'll pass a blue trail branching to the right and another blue trail branching to the left (east). The INT will join your trail here. Continue along the jeep road for 500 meters more and arrive at an intersection with blue and red jeep roads. Head west along the blue jeep road, passing a green trail branching to the right (north). After 600 meters you'll arrive at a large hidden cave on the left (south) side of the canyon.

Continue on the blue markers into the "horseshoe" canyon. You'll pass the narrows, and then climb through a boulder field. The canyon will constantly curve to the right as you walk completing the U shape which gave this canyon its name. Look for the black markers climbing out of the canyon on the left side (west). This steep climb will bring you, after 500 meters, to the narrow ridge of mt. Saharonim. Arrive at a green trail and continue straight southwest for 1.5 km. You are walking on the south rim of the Ramon crater, on cliffs of limestone, looking into the inside which is made up mainly of continental sedimentary rock- sandstone and clay, mostly.

Arrive at a black marked jeep road (You guessed it- KATZA again, but for the last time). Turn right (north) and head down steeply to the Gvanim campground, visible next to the Power-line below you.

Attractions: Majestic view, magmatic rock formations, colorful sand, hidden cave, narrow canyon.

Day 6-

Starting Point: Nahal Gvanim CG

Finish Point: Mitzpe Ramon

Length: 16km

Duration: 5-6 hours

Last day! Start your day with a 3km march along the dirt road from the campground to the southwest.

Arrive at hw 40 and walk along the south side of the road for 2km, until you see a sign for "Ammonite wall" on the opposite side. Cross and head west along the red markers for 1km, passing a green trail on the right (north) to the exposure of fossils indicated by a small sign pointing at the wall. Continue southwest for 2km on the red marked trail (INT as well) and the trail will turn to the right

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(northwest). Continue for another 1km to the base of a slanted limestone cliff. Head up, pass a narrow foothold, and notice the rock change abruptly to reddish granite. Climb up Ramon's tooth for 600 meters to the peak. Enjoy.

Head down northwest for 1.5km until you arrive at a jeep road. Continue north along the red markers for 2.2km until you arrive at a single Acacia tree and an intersection with a black marked jeep trail. From here you can see your destination- Mitzpe Ramon on the cliffs to the north.

Stay on the red trail/INT and go northwest for 2.5 km, entering a small ravine of colored sandstone. Arrive at a green trail right at an exposure of black pillars of volcanic rock.

Turn left (southwest) along the green trail and follow it, for 1km, onto the side of a black hill of volcanic rock. Arrive at a meeting with a blue trail. This is where the INT markers will split off. Head up, northwest, along the green trail. This is the ancient pass leading up to the ancient site of Camel Mountain on the outskirts of Mitzpe Ramon. After 1.5km of a climb you'll arrive at Mitzpe and the end of your long journey.

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