

Hemet Cistern loop

Bor Hemet Maagali

A beautiful easy hike along a rocky wadi with a majestic view of the Ramon crater. Flowers and a cool dip in the season.

Closest Town **Mitzpe Ramon**

Difficulty **Easy**

Length **4.5 km**

Duration **2-3 hours**

Recommended season **Sep - June**

Recommended time **Afternoon**

Getting There:

By Car- From Mitzpe Ramon drive North 6km along HW 40 to HARUHOT intersection. Turn West onto rd. 171 . Drive for 13km and reach a sharp curve to the right and then to the left and park at the parking lot marked with a brown sign- "Hemet Cistern"

Hike Description:

Starting Point: Hemet Cistern parking lot.

Finish Point: Hemet Cistern parking lot.

You can start by walking over to the Cistern itself. It is located just Northeast from the parking lot, behind the white dirt mound. The cistern was dug into a soft layer of clay and its walls are held by roughly-cut stones from a hard limestone layer that can be found nearby. The cistern was dated to the Iron Age, and with little restoration work- it still fills up with rain water every year. The cistern is fed by two simple aqueduct-trenches which divert runoff from the slopes of the hill. The water flows through three settling pools which allow some of the mud and clay to settle, and then continues into the cistern itself.

Start your hike along the green markers which will take you on a short climb to the flatland just East of the cistern. As you continue on the plain you will slowly enter the mouth of a shallow desert ravine. Look carefully stones buried almost completely in the soil arranged in lines across the wadi. These are terraces that were built about 2000 years ago to collect soil and allow agriculture in this region.

The trail will slowly curve right and then left and eventually will descend into a small canyon. Once in the canyon the green trail will end at a blue trail. Turn left on the blue trail and head up canyon in a general Southeastern heading. As you gradually climb the scenery will open up until suddenly in front of you the crater will be exposed. Time to pull out the camera and admire the view. Don't forget to drink some water while you're here.

Negev Trails

Time to head back: Return on the blue trail, down canyon, and when you reach the meeting point with the green trail- continue along the blue markers. A few surprises will reveal themselves along this stretch: Ancient Pistacia trees, small hidden rock puddles and old Bedouin caches. These last ones were built under overhangs of rock in the Northeastern cliffs of the canyon. They were used for storing seeds and possessions that were not needed on long journeys. The blue markers will start climbing out of the canyon to the right and will turn back to the parking lot and the Hemet cistern. After a rainy winter there is nothing like dipping in the cistern at the end of this hike.

Attractions: Flowers in the season, Majestic view, swimming in the cistern, Pistacia trees, Bedouin hideouts