

West Loop

Sivuv Maaravi Hadash

The best the west has to offer

Closest Town **Mitzpe Ramon**

Difficulty **Hard**

Length **19 km**

Duration **8-9 hours**

Recommended season **Oct - Apr**

Recommended time **Early 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: Mt. Ramon parking area

Finish Point: Mt. Ramon Parking area

Head out on the red trail as it climbs to the peak of mt. Ramon.

Congratulations! You have reached the highest point in the Negev, and the third highest mountain in Israel- 1038 meters above sea level.

Continue on the red trail along several Tumuli- piles of rocks which are, in fact, ancient burial sites, and next to the K-line (look at the sign on the ground). This 4000 year old structure has baffled archaeologists as to its use and origin, stretching for 4km completely straight from mt. Romem to mt. Ramon. The Red markers and the purple markers will drop down into a ravine, and arrive at the edge of Makhtesh Ramon.

The Red markers turn left, and the purple markers arrive at a T intersection. Turn Right (south) and follow the purple markers for 1 km following the cliff line on your left side. Arrive at a blue marked dirt road, and a parking area with a view point to the center of the Makhtesh.

Follow the dirt road and the blue markers for 1 km to the east, with the cliff of the Makhtesh on your left side.

In the winter, keep your eyes open for the endemic Rhubarb- Large leaves, lettuce size, laying on the ground and a pink flowering stock growing from them like a bonsai tree.

Negev Trails

Arrive at an intersection with black markers, and continue with the blue for 100 meters. The purple markers will appear again splitting off to the left and climbing a hill with broken flint around it.

Follow the purple markers along the ridge for 2.8km keeping the amazing view of the Makhtesh on your left side. The trail will connect with red markers.

Note- the next section is a short detour (2km total) to a viewpoint. If you are in a hurry you can skip it:

Turn right at the intersection and follow the red markers for 1km south. You'll arrive at a saddle with a "transparent" trail leading to the top of mt. Ido. This is an impressive viewpoint and the rock kerns left by hikers over the year make it an ideal spot for creative photography.

Head back north on the red trail to the intersection. From the purple and red intersection follow the red markers northeast for 300 meters to a saddle and the view of the Makhtesh again. The red marked trail will head down into the Makhtesh, passing layers of colorful sand in volcanic rock. Walk for 1.8 km to the bottom and the dirt road in the center of the Makhtesh, marked in black markers.

*If you are running short on time you can take a shortcut and continue straight along the red markers and up to the cliff in front of you.

Turn right (northeast) along the black dirt road follow it for 1.4 km to a meeting with green markers on the left. Turn left on the green marked trail and follow it north towards the gorge between two black hills of volcanic rock.

Once you've passed between the hills, the trail will turn to the left (southwest) and head towards the base of the cliff, where you'll turn northwest and head up to the top. From the pass at the top continue along the green markers for another 500 meter to a meeting with a blue marked trail on the left. In the spring this barren valley becomes an amazing meadow of flowers.

Turn left (southwest) and follow the blue markers up along a small valley for 2.6 km until it returns to the cliff line and meets a red marked trail. Continue southwest (right) along the red marked trail, keeping the view of the Makhtesh on your left side.

Arrive at a small memorial site that was built here for the Astronauts of the Columbia space shuttle that crashed in 2003. Find the black markers and follow them for 900 meters to the mt. Ramon and head west on the red trail back to the parking area and your car.

Attractions:

Really awesome view, ancient rock structures, colorful rock and volcanic formations, ancient trails, flowers in the season, possible Onager sighting.