

Eli Ascent - North to South

Maale Eli

The National Israel Trail Day 3 in the Negev. Part 2

Closest Town **Dimona**

Difficulty **Difficult**

Length **10 km**

Duration **4-5 hours**

Recommended season **Nov - Apr**

Recommended time **Early morning**

Getting There:

By Car- Drive to Dimona. Continue East on hw 25 for 10km to the Rotem intersection. Turn right (South) onto rd. 206, and drive for another 10km, crossing the train tracks, to the left turn to "Maale Akrabim" and rd. 227. Follow 227 southeast for 11km to intersection with a gravel road- left to the small Makhtesh and right to Eilat. Follow the gravel road to the left for 700 meters and arrive at the Akrabim parking lot.

Hike Description:

Starting Point: Eli ascent CG

Finish Point: Small Makhtesh drainage CG/ Satan's gate CG.

From the Wadi Akrabim Parking lot head northeast along the Red markers. Follow this trail, for 2km, as it climbs the slope and then descends towards the edge of the cliff of the crater (INT markers present as well). Once at the view point you'll see a sign post.

Take a moment to enjoy the scenery. You can see the entire Small Makhtesh (not really a crater- something far more exciting...) the cliffs you are standing on are about 400 meters above the lowest point below you. You can also see all the way to the Arava valley and the southern tip of the Dead Sea.

As you start descending this solid lime-stone cliff keep your eyes open for fossils of the marine creatures that used to live in the ancient ocean that covered this are 100 million years ago.

The trail is very steep and includes narrow ledges and a short climb down a hand-hold ladder. There is also a railing along a narrow rock slide.

Negev Trails

Congratulations! You've made it to the bottom and have gone back in time about 120 million years. You'll be walking through the realm of sandstone from now on. Follow the trail for about 6.5 km in this vast colorful sandy-rocky kingdom. You're headed directly towards the only opening in the cliffs- the exit wadi Hazera.

As you get close to the gap you will pass two small buildings that house the pumps and the machinery for several wells that were drilled here. You'll join a dirt road and will be joined by blue markers on your left. Stay on the red and merge to the dirt road. The road will enter the opening in the cliffs and exit the Makhtesh. You'll notice twigs and branches caught and tangled in the electric pole on the northern side of the road. These are a great indicator for how different this place can be during a flash flood. In 1994 and again in 2004, this area saw record breaking amounts of rain over short periods of several hours. Since this is the only opening in the walls of the Makhtesh, all of the water that fell here had to find its way out and the height of the water at the peak of the flood is evident in the debris that got caught and abandoned by the flood. You'll also notice the tilted layers of rock climbing up on either side of the trail. The Makhtesh was created were an island was once pushed up from the seafloor. These layers, bent to 90 degrees in the most extreme places, are the result of the same warping force that lifted the island.

If you have a car picking you up it can drive into this point and pick you up.

If your pickup is by bus- you'll have to keep walking for another 1km to the parking lot outside which is wide enough for the bus to turn around. As the road leaves the wadi floor you'll see a green trail branching to the right. You can follow these markers for about 20 meter to "Satan's Gate"- the narrow gap through which the first explorers of this amazing valley first entered.

Attractions: Majestic view, Steep descent, fossils, Colorful sand, Tilted layers, desert vegetation.