

Across The Zin Valley

Hotze Zin

A breathtaking hike through impressive canyons and up steep mountains to a beautiful oasis and the ruins of an ancient city.

Closest Town **Midreshet Ben Guryon**

Difficulty **Medium-Difficult**

Length **28 km**

Duration **2 Days**

Recommended season **Nov - Mar**

Recommended time **Morning**

Getting There:

On a 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 at 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: 16 km

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. 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 with Narcissus flowers, in the winter, grow out of small depressions in the rock where water collects. Continue on the trail for another 2km.

Negev Trails

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 the canyon opens up head down south for 2 more km. you'll meet a abandoned jeep trail. Red 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 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 1 -

Starting Point: Hod akev CG

Finish Point: Avdat NP

Length: 12 km

Duration: 4-5 hours.

From the campground head west for 300 meters until you reach the trail with the red markers. Follow it southwest to the cliff and up the steep climb. Caution- at the end of the climb there are two ledges with hand holds and foot holes. Once on top of the mesa, take a moment to catch your breath and head up the green trail to the top of Hod Akev- Akev pinnacle. Great 360 view. Climb down the other side (southeast) and merge back to the red trail. Follow it down for 2km into a wadi and then climb over a small hill to your left- southwest. Meet a blue trail in the main canyon, Turn left (south) and follow the blue markers all the way to the pool of lower Ein Akev. Dive in! Jumping from the ledges is dangerous.

Go back for 100 meters and climb out of the canyon on the left (west) bank. Pick up the black trail south and follow it up along the canyon. After 3km you'll come to a lush green patch of vegetation. Follow the trail on the left (east) side of the canyon until it turns sharply to the right and crosses the canyon through an opening in the dense vegetation. You'll connect to a blue trail. This is upper Ein Akev- a small spring with a shallow pool hidden among the reeds. Take the blue trail out of the west bank of the canyon. It will climb steeply at first and then more gradually. Follow it over the ridge and down through a wide valley divided occasionally by straight terraces.

After 3.5 km there will be a green trail branching to the right. Follow it for 1.5 km to the top of the ruins of the ancient city of Avdat- built by the Nabatean at their height. If you arrive after the closing hours of Avdat NP, stay on the blue trail, and follow it for 2.5 km all the way to HW 40 and the gas station at the bottom of the national park.

Attractions: Steep climb, 360 scenery, spring- cool dip, desert plants, ancient city.