

Arif Karkom trek

Noded Arif Karkom

An amazing trek through spectacular peaks and mysterious sites. Perhaps the best trek in the Negev.

Closest Town **Mitzpe Ramon**

Difficulty **Medium - Difficult**

Length **61 km**

Duration **4 Days**

Recommended season **Nov - Apr**

Recommended time **Morning**

Getting There:

Organized drop-off and 4X4 pickup are required from and to Mitzpe Ramon.

Hike Description:

Day 1

Starting Point: Nahal Nitzana trailhead

Finish Point: Oded wells CG

Length: 16 km

Duration: 5-6 hours.

From Nahal Nitzana trailhead, go south along a flat wadi following the green markers. You'll pass occasional stone terraces buried in the soil. After 2km you'll pass a blue trail splitting to the right.

Continue on the green for another 700 m, until you come to cliff. Take a minute to enjoy the scenery and also the "matamurot" – Bedouin storage sites that were built under the overhanging cliff on your right. Head down the trail following the switchbacks of the old camel trails. Once you get to the bottom the trail will turn left (northeast) and lead you to a black hill and down a canyon that cuts through the hill. As you climb down the canyon notice the prisms that the hill is made from. These were formed when the volcanic rock that flowed as lava started cooling off and solidifying. The trail will connect to a black marked jeep trail. Turn right (southwest) and follow the jeep trail for 2km.

When you reach a red trail crossing your trail, turn left and head up the southern cliffs of the Ramon crater. Once at the top you'll head to the shoulder under mt. Ido.

Negev Trails

Head up to the mountain and enjoy the amazing vista to the south. Return to the red trail and head south for another 1km to the blue jeep road along wadi Arod. Turn left and follow the road east for 1.5km to an intersection. A red trail and a Black trail will join. Turn left to stay on the blue trail and follow it for another 3km to the meeting a green trail and your campground for the night.

Attractions: Ancient trails, Majestic vistas, Basalt prisms, View of the crater, Rock piles on mt. Ido

Day 2-

Starting Point: Oded wells CG

Finish Point: Wadi Maazer CG

Length: 15 km

Duration: 5-6 hours

From the Oded wells Campground Head south on the green marked dirt road. After 1.5 km you'll merge with a Black trail coming in from the right.

Continue southeast for another 500 m. arrive at the cluster of well dug on the north bank of the wadi. These wells were used by the Bedouins to water their herds and survive in this area. Though this water has been used for centuries- its quality is not monitored nowadays and drinking is dangerous. Not far is an old Bedouin burial site. The green trail continues from this point as a foot trail leading southwest. Follow it for 2.5 km up to the ridge and down to the wadi. Cross the wadi and climb again until you catch a wadi heading south.

Follow it for 2.5km into wadi Kziaa. The trail will climb up from on the side of mt. Arif, along a wide ridge at first, and afterwards up a small wadi. Arrive at the ridge and at a Blue trail. Turn left (east) and head up to the peak of mt. Arif. Amazing! Head down the Blue trail to the west. Pass the connection to the green trail you came on and continue for another 1km until the trail drops into a wadi and follows it the rest of the way down. 1km more you'll see a connection to a Black trail on your left. Continue on the blue for 1.5 km and arrive at the campground.

Attractions: Old wells, amazing 360 view from mt. Arif, chance for Oryx sightings.

Negev Trails

Day 3-

Starting Point: Wadi Maazer CG.

Finish Point: Karkom well CG

Length: 14 km

Duration: 4-5 hours.

From Maazer CG head east on the blue marker for a little over 1km. Turn right (south) on the black trail and walk for 1km until you meet a green marked jeep trail. Turn left (southeast) along the green jeep road and walk for 2km.

Turn right (south) onto a black foot trail. You will climb gradually up one wadi to the watershed and then down another wadi until you hit the side of mt. Haspas. Climb up the side of the western shoulder of the mountain and down the other side. head east between mt. Haspas (to your left- north) and mt. Michael (to your right- south) connect with the path of wadi Karkom and follow it south for 2 km to the campground at Karkom well.

Attractions: Winding wadi, Oryx sighting opportunity, old cistern

Day 4-

Starting Point: Karkom well CG.

Finish Point: mt. Karkom CG

Length: 16 km

Duration: 6-7 hours.

Head southeast from the campground and up the side of the ridge. Once you get to the ridge line follow the black markers south along the narrow ridge for 4km to the wide tabletop of mt. Karkom. You'll notice the flint shards that cover the mountain top and give it its unique color. Follow the black train southwest along the northern edge of the mesa to a meeting with a blue trail. You can cut the trail short and head west on the blue trail to the pickup point. Otherwise turn left (east) on the blue trail for 1.5km.

The trail will curve south. Keep your eyes open for rock art on the exposures of dark brown rock. when you come to the trail intersection remain on the blue trail southeast and head for the Paleolithic temple on the eastern edge of the mesa, from here follow the black trail west for 1km. turn north on the green trail for 1km back to the trail intersection.

Now head left (west) on the green trail along a wadi. Look for more rock art on the south bank of the wadi. The trail will exit the wadi. You can go for a dip in Karkom waterhole (after the rain) – follow the wadi all the way to the fall and then return to the trail. The green trail will take you down the side of the mountain and to the campground where you should arrange a pickup.

Attractions: walk along a natural bridge, rock art, desert shrines