

Oron to Makhtesh Katan

Maale Palmach

The Israel National Trail day 4 in the Negev

Closest Town **Dimona**

Difficulty **Difficult**

Length **20 km**

Duration **7-8 hours**

Recommended season **Nov – Apr**

Recommended time **Early morning**

Getting There:

By Car- This hike requires an arranged drop-off and pickup. The closest taxi services can be found in the city of Dimona.
*Through-hikers of the Israel trail will arrive on foot.

Hike Description: North to South

Starting Point: Oron Phosphate factory

Finish Point: Small Makhtesh CG

From the campground walk north along road number 206 for about 250 meters and turn left onto the black trail. Pass under the power line and cross the railroad by the sign "135". Climb up the mountain and go past the blue trail arriving from the southwest. Continue on the black trail and follow it to the east. Ignore the black trail arriving from the bottom of the crater and continue with the national Israeli trail marking to the last observation point at the top of the last ascent.

Head down east on the black trail and cross yet another tunnel. After about 600 meters you will arrive at road 206 and cross it again now following the green trail marking to "Ein Yorkeam". Follow the "transparent" markers branching to the right (southwest) down ancient carved stairs and arrive at Ein Yorkeam spring. An important source of water throughout history in this region, and the immediate destination of the young Palmachniks in 1944. After a rainy winter this waterhole is a great place for a cool dip.

Continue down the wadi with the green trail going east. Look out on your right for an inscription on one of the rocks that commemorates the branching of this pass in 1944. Follow the narrow path, and with the help of the handholds and the footholds - climb down into the Wadi until you reach a tall ladder.

Negev Trails

Climb down the ladder and then down the rockslide. Continue climbing down the steep trail on the west side of the canyon.

Head Northwest down the Hatira canyon still following the green markers and the INT markers with them. After a few more kilometers in the canyon you'll arrive at a "dead end", facing two waterfalls- solid cliffs blocking your way. This same obstacle forced the young members of the Plamach, one of the 1940's Zionist militias, to create a new pass on the side of the canyon. During a 21 day march in the desert they arrived here looking for a hidden path to the water source at Ein Yorkeam. Using axes, ropes and sticks, and pulling each other up one by one, these determined teens and 20 year olds, found a way up the cliff and were able to complete their journey without being discovered by the British soldiers in the area.

Arrive at the meeting of the canyons- Yamin and Hatira. You'll notice a meeting of trails as well. Right at the intersection of the markers you'll notice a lush Acacia partly covered by a plant with red flowers. This parasite is the Harnug- No roots, just feeding tubes inserted into the branches of the Acacia. Camels and other grass eaters prefer the meaty leaves of this parasite on the tiny thorn-surrounded leaves of its host, and constantly trim it back, preventing it from completely taking over and killing the Acacia.

Leave Nahal Hatira which continues south east with a red trail and stay on the green trail which goes north to Nahal Yamin. Arrive at the bottom of Ma'ale Yamin, take a deep breath and start ascending. Once on top, arrive at a trail intersection right next to in impressive crack in the solid limestone that builds the flat floor of the wadi.

Leave the green trail and continue with the Blue markers to the east. Climb down the small ascent and after about 3 KM you will arrive at the Zafir stronghold. This is one of three strong holds that were built along "Scorpion's pass" a crucial section of the ancient road from Hazeva in the Arava valley to Mamshit and the center of the Beer Sheva valley. This small foort was built during the Roman period in order to secure the pass and protect it from bandits.

From Zafir stronghold head northeast along the red trail which will lead you to the top of the ridge - you'll notice the trail is following the ridge-line, in very gradual moderate angles. Climb down with the red trail, cross route 227 and continue east, still on the red marked trail which is now a wide dirt road accessible to cars. After a short while you will reach the small crater campground.

Attractions: Ancient trail, Hidden spring, Roman ruins, Challenging climbs, Tectonic cracks, Historical pass, ladders, view of the large crater, Colorful rock.