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Introduction

The Friendliest Desert in the World

The Friendly Negev Desert is a tourist concept, combining the advantages and unique aspects of the Israeli desert, sprawling across a vast territory (approximately 60% of Israel's entire land).

The Negev is a small and concentrated desert, full of breathtaking biblical views, with an abundance of impressive geological phenomenon and pristine and calm landscapes and views.

The Israeli desert space is rich with remains of earlier cultures, ancient architectural sites and remnants of early agriculture. Alongside these bits of ancient culture and heritage, you can experience rare encounters with the last of the Bedouin desert tribes, who have maintained, until today, ancient traditions from their days as nomads in the Middle Eastern deserts.

Unlike other deserts in the world that are difficult to visit, and sometimes even dangerous to visit, the Israeli desert stands out due to its accessibility, friendliness, safety and comfort for trips, and above everything else welcoming to visitors.

Here are a few advantages, which make this desert the friendliest in the world:

- **Accessibility and proximity to Europe:** there are an abundance of international low-cost flights from a wide range of destinations in Europe which land at two international airports in Israel: Ben Gurion (Tel Aviv) and Eilat's airport.
- **Personal security and safety:** Many routes and paths are marked throughout the entire desert (Israel is the most marked country in the world and the Israeli desert is marked with hundreds of clear and comfortable walking trails which offer different levels of difficulty for a wide range of hiking and walking lovers).
- **Extraction and Rescue:** In Israel you can find the highest level trained and experienced rescue teams in the world, backed up by the best air force in the world. They are available for rescue activities in any place in the desert at all times.

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<< *The Friendliest Desert in the World*

- **Medical treatment:** Israel has western medical services, which are among the most advanced and highest quality in the world.
- **Cellular service:** Most of the Israeli desert has cellular phone service.
- **Local population:** The Israeli desert population is happy to welcome visitors and offer a great tourist experience filled with excitement and great memories.
- Unique combination of a desert package with heritage. Israel is the only country in the world, which can offer an adventurous desert package or a calming desert experience together with a day full of heritage and tradition in Jerusalem, with a visit to historical and traditional sites of the most important religions in the world. There's no package like this in other deserts throughout the world.

The vast range of tourist activities along with the development of sleeping arrangements in the area, have made the Negev a desirable, interesting, rich and creative place.

Today, many tourists are enjoying the magic of the Negev, which include a wide variety of landscapes:

- In the northern desert you can find vast sand dunes.
- In the central desert, the craters with their cliffs and springs with running water all year.
- In the east you can experience the African desert, with its



sprawling savanna, lined with thousands of Acacia plants.

- In the south of the desert, you can find the red and black granite mountains, rich from the exposure the to the colorful and impressive sandstone

In a relatively short drive, no longer than 3 hours total, you can cross all of the different desert views and landscapes of Israel and enjoy a rich and rare diversity, which in other deserts would require a drive of hundreds and even thousands of kilometers.

This rich tourist experience, allows visitors and guests to choose the vacation experience or route which is best for them, and the enjoy two or three days in each of the Negev areas.

Visit our website and plan your next vacation in the Friendly Desert: www.negevtour.co.il

Please call or e-mail us for more information, at the Negev Highland Information and Reservations Centre, 972-8-8681635, or info@negevtour.co.il

We will be happy to assist you!



The Negev Highland

Wide-open spaces sprawl from horizon to horizon; Magical sunrises and impressive sunsets, those that can only be seen from the heart of the desert; Natural darkness at night from star-filled skies, like those that were seen by our fathers many years ago, before the invention of electricity. Silent mountains full of majesty, a bare desert that is quiet and serene, and an abundance of trails in which you can hike to no end.

Welcome to the Negev Mountains, the tourist heart of the world's friendliest desert. High mountains (up to 1,000 meters above sea level), rare and spectacular geological phenomenon that can only be enjoyed here, and hundreds of routes and trails marked by their difficulty level suitable for a wide range of hiking enthusiasts and cyclists are only some of the major attractions here.

In the heart of the Negev Mountains is the Ramon crater, which draws hundreds of thousands of visitors and nature enthusiasts each year, due to its uniqueness and its rare desert character. Its cliffs, hidden valleys, rare geological

cracks, layers of colorful and unusual stones and the abundance of rare natural secrets hidden from eyesight, draw nature and desert enthusiasts from all over the world who come to the city of Mitzpe Ramon, located on the edge of the crater.

The Negev Mountains area is the highest geographical region in the Israeli desert. Its topographical height creates a desert climate, which is unique and pleasant, alongside a wide range of fascinating phenomenon and tourist attractions. Sleeping arrangements in the area includes a wide range of options from simple hostels and modest guest rooms, to mid-range hotels and exclusive high-level hotels that provide an exclusively comfortable and pampering experience.

The abundance of attractions in the Negev Mountains includes a wide range of impressive options, providing activities for a number of days. Visitors to the Negev Mountains can enjoy all that the area has to offer including: breathtaking sky viewpoints and an exciting astronomical experience in the only starlit reservation in the Middle East,



agricultural tours full of original technology that was developed in Israel, a wide range of Jeep tours, mountain cycling areas in differing difficulties, guided camel rides throughout the desert, horse rides, rappelling, archery competitions, RZR tours throughout challenging desert landscapes, surprising wine experiences at “Derech Hayain B’Har Hanegev” where they grow vines in local “terroirs” and make high-quality and interesting desert wine. Impressive and special historical and heritage sites which were announced as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, an abundance of cultural remnants of the past and a wide range of archeological sites alongside rich and varied local agricultural products (olive oil, cheeses, honey, wine and more).

Another layer of the Negev Mountains offers an individual experience including authentic lodging with “desert people”. The last of the Bedouin local tribes living authentic desert lifestyles host guests in tents for unique desert experience.

Visit us: www.negevtour.co.il

A 3-day FIT tour for tourists with a rented vehicle in Har HaNegev

Set out from the center of the country and drive through Har HaNegev to Mitzpe Ramon, using each of the 3 tour days to explore a different region.

Day 1 - Depart Tel Aviv in the morning, stop in Be’er Sheva to visit the Biblical Tel Be’er Sheva National Park or the International Visitors’ Center at Abraham’s Well.

Tel Be’er Sheva National Park

This is an important biblical landmark - one of three biblical sites declared by UNESCO to be World Heritage Sites. The Tel overlooks the living quarters in which the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob labored. Today the Tel hosts a spectacular view of the modern city of Be’er Sheva. The tour of the Tel takes an hour and a half to two hours, including a visit to the ancient underground water plant preserved for almost 3000 years.

Another amazing site is the Visitors’ Center at Abraham’s Well in Be’er Sheva.



This is an intriguing tourist site that showcases the history of the Patriarch Abraham and his going down into the desert. The site portrays the relationship of Abraham with all religions and the impact of Be'er Sheva on settlement in the desert.

Continue traveling south on Highway 40 for approximately 30 minutes and at Tlalim Junction drive straight ahead to the Ramat Negev Agro Research Center, where you can take a guided tour of the agricultural R & D center and solar energy site.



Continue driving to the Nabatean city of Shivta to explore the fascinating antiquities of the city in an exciting tour of churches, an ancient water reservoir, and the almost entirely preserved streets.

Entrance to the site is free, the tour takes about an hour and a half, the drive from Be'er Sheva is about 30 minutes.

At the entrance to the national park, there is a small one-family farm specializing in providing delicious and memorable meals in their restaurant, which is designed in an ancient building - the Nabato Restaurant.

Stay overnight in the Mashabim holiday village or guest apartments at Nitzana.

Day 2 - Trip to the Pitchat Nitzana region

Drive to Be'er Milka for a tour of the herb farm - a tour that includes tasting teas and learning about desert plants and their medicinal uses. The tours run by appointment with farm manager Golan Cohen. The visit to the farm is about an hour to an hour and a quarter's drive from Be'er Sheva to near the Be'er Milka settlement.

From there to Ezuz take the access road to Nitzana to the end of the old road, which will bring you to the secluded community of Ezuz. The little town is situated at the top of a

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hill above 2 wells, Be'er Moshe and Be'er Aharon, located in a beautiful grove of trees below the town. At the entrance you will find a desert café - Café Ezuz - where you can get directions to galleries and artists in the village. The visit lasts about two hours + travel time from Be'er Sheva of an hour and a half.

Day 3 - Trip to the Sde Boker region

A visit to Ben Gurion's Hut and the home of David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel and one of the founders of the state. The tour is self-explanatory and does not require a guide. At the Hut and its surroundings there



is an updated exhibition on the life and times of David Ben-Gurion, the fateful dilemmas he faced, his involvement in the Negev and with Sde Boker, and the house itself has been preserved as a museum from the time of his death.



After the tour, we recommend continuing to Midreshet Ben Gurion where Ben Gurion's grave is located. The entrance is to the right of the gate, and it is a short walk through a lovely park taking you to a beautiful tomb with spectacular views overlooking the Tzin Valley and the desert.

From there we recommend going to the information station located at the entrance to the reserve (Tzin cliffs) to get information on walking trails in Ein Avdat. A 5-minute drive will bring you to the lower parking lot of the spring. Enter the comfortable hiking trail from the parking lot to the spring and back to your vehicle. (The trail is located in the southern part of the parking lot next to the services building). It is a pleasant and easy trail for walking throughout the year. A half hour's walk in any direction will take you to beautiful gorges of the canyon with numerous pools and flowing water all year round.

Stop for a lunch at Midreshet Ben-Gurion at Cana'aniya (a local deli), the local pizzeria, or the pub Juma's.

In the afternoon, drive to Mitzpe Ramon for a walking tour of the Spice Route Quarter, and enjoy the sunset view over the Ramon Crater.

This is a simple and comfortable tour for strolling among galleries, a local soap factory, a bakery and artisans working in Quarter workshops. The tour can take 2 hours or more. You can do your own tour or ask at one of the tourist information points in the Quarter for guidance and a map of current attractions.



Finish the day at the Mitzpe Ramon Visitors' Center - this is a museum that shows the journey of astronaut Ilan Ramon on the Space Shuttle Columbia, and about the creation of the Ramon Crater as the world's largest geological crater

3-day FIT tour in the Pitchat Nitzana region

Arrival to the Nitzana region by bus line 44 from Be'er Sheva to the educational community of Nitzana. Travel time about an hour.



Day 1 - Trip to Nitzana sites

1. Day trip to Pitchat Nitzana sites encompassing Nitzana, the cave and the ancient Tel Nitzana.

The route begins at the Nitzana Youth Village where you can obtain a schematic map and an explanation of the trail. A comfortable hike from the Nitzana youth village via ancient Byzantine and Nabatean farms in the direction of the Egyptian border, observation of the border and descent to the loop of the Nitzana trail, from there south on the waymarked trail to the Nitzana Cave and Tel Nitzana. The Tel is one of the ancient Nabatean cities and is located on a hill, part of the ruins of the city lie at the bottom of the hill on the east side. You can observe the town's wells, churches and many partially preserved buildings.

There are no entrance fees at the Pitchat Nitzana sites.

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Day 2 - Ezuz

2. Arrival at the Ezuz settlement by rides from travelers on the road from Nitzana to Ezuz, a distance of some 15 kilometers. Public transportation is sparse to and from the settlement.

When you arrive it is best to obtain information on the hiking trail or biking trail at Cafe Ezuz.



There are several single track and marked trails around Ezuz passing interesting tourist sites such as Givat HaKetovot with its rock art, a Byzantine pool, an ancient agriculture farm, and spectacular views of the Egyptian border and the Sabha Valley.

This day trip provides an interesting and challenging experience of freedom and disengagement in the desert.

3. You can spend the day on a bike trip or a longer trail vehicle route which is also marked as a single-track trail over 23 km from Ezuz and back via the Sabha cistern (filled with water all year round), hills overlooking the Egyptian border, the ancient patrol road, and returning via the Be'erotayim stream to Ezuz. (For this trail it is advisable to obtain a map and instructions at Cafe Ezuz of Khan Be'erotayim.) You can ride camels on parts of the trail- to coordinate camel rides contact Khan Be'erotayim in Ezuz.

4. In Ezuz itself there are galleries and artists displaying their talents and wares which will be happy to have visitors: the "Be'erotayim Sheep" dairy farm, Golan Gilboa's blacksmith and pottery gallery, Shahaf Givon's porcelain studio, jewelry artisans, organic food and oil, theater and mask arts, acrobatic artists, clowns, sculpture and painting. Stay overnight in Ezuz.





Day 3 - Tourist sites in agricultural settlements in Pitchat Nitzana

5. A hike of about 12 km between three agricultural communities in Pitchat Nitzana begins in the community of Kmehin and from there along the entrance road leading to the town of Be'er Milka, a short tour inside the city of mud houses being built there and then on to experience the desert at the ancient well Bir Malaga and the experience of visiting a unique herb farm.

From the herb farm continue by ride or on foot back to Kmehin and from there to Kadesh Barnea.

You can have a charming and delicious at the Honey House and the Ramat HaNegev Winery.

Hiking trail to Ein Avdat National Park

Enter from the Tzin cliffs. Be sure to bring water, comfortable hiking shoes, and a hat, and acquire a trail map from the information shop at the beginning of the trail (open from 8:00-15:30). It is an easy and pleasant hike to Ein Avdat and the town of Avdat. The trail begins by the tomb of David Ben Gurion, with a breathtaking view of the Tzin Valley at the burial site of the first prime minister and his wife. From there it descends along the Hagar trail to the Tzin stream (a quarter of an hour downhill), a hike along a paved path to the entrance to Ein Avdat Nature Reserve (entrance fee about \$7). It continues through canyons with pools and flowing spring-water streams and waterfalls, on the cliffs you can spot birds of prey and other desert birds. By the pools in the early morning or in the afternoon you can see the ibexes gathering to drink.

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Before reaching the large pool of Ein Avdat there are carved steps up the canyon wall to the upper level to reach the water source of the Ein Ma'arif spring. The trail passes along a cuesta above the pools, crossing the riverbed, and arrives at a lovely eucalyptus grove from which it begins a long ascent to the top of the cliff – about a 20-minute climb that includes the use of iron ladders. At the top of the cliff there is an observatory with a spectacular view of the canyon and of Midreshet Ben Gurion. From there the trail continues south to a 60-meter-high dry waterfall and continues along the Tzin stream to the ancient town of Avdat. The entrance to the city of Avdat is located adjacent to the gas station by Avdat National Park (open daily from 08:00-15:30). The city of Avdat is a well preserved ancient Nabatean and Byzantine city. The tour follows a convenient walking path linking neighborhoods built 2000 years ago, Byzantine churches, wine presses, an impressive acropolis, cisterns and caves for oil processing and wine storage. The tour, including a short film about the city's history in the Visitor's Center, takes about an hour and a half to two hours.

Mitzpe Ramon hiking day:

- 1.** Arrival in Mitzpe Ramon by public transportation
- 2.** Hiking tour of the Mitzpe Ramon area: The "Minsara" Trail: Descend into the crater via the Brosh (Cypress) Climb, hiking along the waymarked trail to the Minsara ("Carpentry"). The trail hike takes about 3 hours and reaches Route 40, you can catch a ride or hike (another 2 hours) back. The trail passes the Mitzpe Ramon Visitor's Center. Be sure to bring a map and water, wear comfortable hiking shoes, and be prepared with information about the trail, the weather, and other restrictions. The beginning of the trail descends steeply from a cliff for approximately 400 meters into the crater and then weaves between colored sand dunes to the Minsara, a geographical wonder with a surrounding trail, in which natural stone slabs look like wooden planks of carpentry, a result of a melting and formation process from underground lava flowing through the sandstone. Lunch in Mitzpe Ramon (at one of many options in the Spice Route Quarter or in the commercial center).





3. Afternoon Tour of the Spice Route Quarter: The Quarter is located in the old industrial and craft area as you enter Mitzpe Ramon, where artisans and craftspeople gather alongside bars, restaurants and cafes. A jazz club entertains the area on Wednesdays through Fridays; bars are open in the evenings. You can find a local bakery, a sales gallery, a soap manufacturer, a ceramic and painting studio, local artisan shops, a center of authentic carpets, a carpenter who works with recycled materials, a blacksmithing workshop, and much more. This is a pleasant place to hang out with artists and craftspeople and mingle with both tourists and locals enjoying the Quarter.

Hike to Ein Akev

The full-day hiking trip begins at Midreshet Ben Gurion and descends to Tzin stream beginning from Ben Gurion's Tomb National Park. Hike east along the stream to the entrance to the Akev stream and from there along the jeep trail to the spring Ein Akev (full of water all year long). The spring is shaded and pleasant, with the opportunity to bathe on warm days. From there, climb above the spring along the green waymarked trail to Ma'ale Divshon. The trail continues along the heights to the top of Ma'ale Divshon and descends to Tzin stream, before rising back to Midreshet Ben Gurion. The hike takes about 6 hours. Be sure to take water and food for the whole day, a map and information and details about the trail that can be obtained at the entrance to the Tzin cliffs or the entrance to Ben Gurion's tomb.





Arava way

The “**Arava Way**” - a narrow, long road between the Menucha junction in the north and the entrance to Eilat in the south with the Negev and Eilat mountains in the west and the Edom mountains in the east.

The Arava region has many attractions and activities for travelers, groups, and families, offering a rich and intriguing desert experience.

Arava Way visitors can enjoy a variety of short, long and even challenging hiking trails on the Israel Trail, in six daily walking segments from Mt. Ait at the Ketura junction to the Gulf of Eilat.

Cycling enthusiasts can enjoy cycling trails of varying difficulties, ranging from easy trails for the whole family to singular trails adapted for experienced riders, constructed with lots of thought and respect for the desert. For those who prefer to explore the region in vehicles, there are plenty

of additional excursions available offering the opportunity to visit beautiful desert oases.

Nature reserves and attractions, workshops for the body and soul, some of the world's most beautiful parks, spectacular sunrises and sunsets and starry skies, provide Arava visitors with the most beautiful backdrops nature has to offer.

The southern Arava region offers a variety of accommodation options, from camping, desert khans, fully equipped caravans, kibbutz guest rooms to luxurious suites located on isolated farms.

Visit our website and plan your next vacation in the southern Arava: en.araway.co.il

Please call or e-mail us for more information, at the Arava Way Information and Reservations Centre: 972-8-6616976, or: tayaroot@gmail.com

We will be happy to assist you!



Hiking:

Sand Dunes and "Tiger Temple"

This trip begins at the Ketura intersection. Those arriving from the Arava will arrive at the intersection and turn west to Highway 40 (the Mitzpe Ramon road) called Ma'ale Grofit. Pass Kibbutz Neot Smadar with its colorful houses and the House of Arts with the high water tower to the Neot Smadar Inn. From this point connect to Highway 12 and continue another six kilometers until you turn left onto the road leading to the Ovda Valley, the Air Force base and Shacharut settlement. An additional 6 km drive will lead up to a dirt road to the left (east), marked in red and next to it a sign indicating "Shayarot Cliff Reserve and Nahal Yitro". On this easy dirt road, notice the sand dunes descending to the right. Continue approximately 2 more km and you'll see larger sand dunes until you reach the Great Dune and Sand Dune Reserve. Park in the parking lot, climb, and slide down the dunes and soft sand.

The composition of the sand is unusual and approximately half of the grains consist of tiny marine fossils.

After visiting the dunes, return to the road and continue another 2.5 kilometers until the road divides from the road leading to Shacharut to the road leading to the air force base, at which point you can return to the Ketura intersection. On the east side of the road, there is a unique prehistoric site, surrounded by a low fence, known as "Tiger Temple". An explanatory sign is located near the site.

On the eastern fringes of the Ovda Valley, there is a large concentration of archeological sites discovered from various historical periods, attesting to settlement in the region and ancient agricultural activity.

On your way back, stop and observe the viewpoint at Mount Ayit. The best time to arrive is during the afternoon when the sun shines on the Arava and the Edom Mountains, you will be able to see the dunes that start from the Edom Mountains and merge into the Arava Valley, the Jordanian



settlement of Rahma, the fields and the kibbutz orchards of Yahel, Neot Smadar, Lotan and Ketura.

From the observation point, descend down the road to the Ketura junction and turn south on the Arava road to Yotvata Park for home-made ice cream, in a variety of flavors.



Shechoret Canyon and Amram Pillars

This route includes dirt road trips suitable for all types of vehicles combined with short walking trails suitable for families. The trip commences approximately 20 kilometers north of Eilat, next to the sign "Amram Pillars and Shechoret Canyon".

Please note: For those coming from the north (Lotan, Ketura, Yotvata, Elifaz) turn right. From the south (Kibbutz Eilat or Eilat), drive to the Beer Ora junction, make a U-turn and drive south to the sign.

At the sign, turn west (to the right). The trail is marked with blue marker stones. Travel along the dirt road until the road divides, and turn left to the southeast, to the road marked in green. On the way, keep your eyes open, you may be lucky enough to see deer grazing under the acacias. The road ends at the opening of Shechoret Canyon. Park the car, take adequate drinking water, walking shoes, a hat and a camera, and follow the circular route.

Walk to the gorge that winds between the ancient granite rocks and climb a number of rock steps. This section of the route is part of the "Israel Trail" and is accompanied by appropriate signs and markers. You will arrive at an area where the wadi expands and emerges from the dark foundation rocks, which give the wadi its name.

An ascent to the right (north) following the red trail marking leads to an ancient camel trail. In the first part, the road

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passes along a geological fault line. To the right there are dark foundation rocks, and to the left are light rocks that originated from ancient seabed sediments, with distorted layers, a testimony to the enormous forces that broke the Earth's crust.

Continue along the path to the right (east) and after the bend there will be a magnificent view of the Arava region and the Edom Mountains. The trail continues down and joins with the black marked path and continues to the right (south). Along the route, there are remnants of a trap for predators, probably tigers. A 5-minute walk will bring you back to the starting point.

Return to the junction and turn left to the northeast, following the blue sign, to the Amram Pillars site. To the right (north) is Mount Amram, which is built of foundation rock and on the left, layers of limestone followed by colored sandstones. The road ends in a small parking lot, a 10-minute walk following the black trail markers leads to the foot of the Amram Pillars. The columns appear to be carved out of the sandstone cliff, a natural sculpture formed by erosion, a great site to take amazing photographs. Return to the parking lot and drive on the Arava road, south to the entrance to "Shechoret" industrial zone where there will be a U-turn and head back north until reaching the sign indicating "Be'erot Sharsheret". Travel about 1 km between dates other plantations, until reaching the salt pools. These pools produce salt by evaporation. The pools attract many species of birds, the most prominent being the pink flamingo. Their color is derived from eating Eilat

Artemia, tiny marine crabs, and monoblasts that produce a large amount of beta-carotene.

Continue northward for approximately 2 km until you arrive at a cluster of Doum Palm trees, this is the northernmost point for this species in the world.

A great place to end your morning trip is the Hai-Bar – Yotvata Reserve for a safari tour, to visit Timna Park, enjoy a new light and sound display depicting the life of the miners. End your day at the "Spice Way" farm where you can learn more about Eilat Artemia and purple Friedman fish.



The Arches Site and the Egyptian Miner Cave

This trip begins near The Arches site parking lot in Timna Park, identified by the red marking on the steps to the right. After a few steps, you won't be able to miss the "Arch" in all its glory. Continue along the trail to discover 3,000-year-old Egyptian mining shafts. If you look inside through the iron grids, you can still see the diagonal marks of the miners' axes. You will also notice the niches used by the miners to descend to the mine.

Climb the Arch to the balcony overlooking the northern basin of Timna Valley, then descend the ladder on the other side of the Arch to the sandy canyon. A sharp right turn marked in red will lead you to a dry watercourse.



Continue along the red trail until you reach the ancient Egyptian mine. You can enter the mine and with the help of handles, climb up to the balcony.



From the balcony, you can take in the magnificent views of Mount Berech, easily identified by the pair of antennae at the top. Continue westward on the red marked trail until you reach an additional dry watercourse facing south and left. Carefully descend until you reach the dry creek bed.

Turn east to the copper stream and shafts, observe the sides of the creek with the blue markings and see mining shafts from different periods. Mining from the Chalcolithic period (5,000- 7,000 years ago) is characterized by mining marks. Strips of dried leather were used to attach granite rocks to acacia branches to form hammers. The diagonal marks are more 'modern' and were created with a chisel. Turn left at the blue mark and climb from the streambed to the flat area. The fences ahead of you surround the way to the oldest mine in the world! A short crawl in the 5,000-year-old mine reveals walls with copper veins that the miners were looking for. Upon leaving the mine, follow the blue sign that bring you back to the parking lot.



Biking

Timna Singular

This is a unique cycling path that combines technical cycling sections. Suitable for cyclists aged 12 and over.

Ride out from the lake area towards "Solomon's Pillars". At the western end, connect to the Ram-El segment. After a kilometer and a half, you will connect back to the road and continue riding to "The Mushroom" junction, turn

left and arrive at "The Mushroom" visitor's center. Cycle to the highest point of the track for a spectacular view of the Timna Valley. Cycle on to viewpoint of the new Timna mines and cycle back to the lake area.

The trail passes through the following sites:

- **Solomon's Pillars.** Pillars formed from natural rock that

are part of the cliff wall. These are natural landscape forms created by the weather. The columns are named after King Solomon.

- **The Mushroom.** A unique formation from red sandstone. The result of more rapid erosion of the lower part created a “mushroom” rock. The site has a visitor center that presents and illustrates the story of the Egyptian village located at the foot of the site.
- **Timna Lake.** An artificial lake designed to create a permanent water point for animals and an activity center for vacationers. The water is not suitable for drinking or swimming.



One Day - Three Parks

A visit to Timna Park, a tour of the Hai-Bar Yotvata Nature Reserve and a stop at Yotvata Inn. A day trip by private vehicle, for the whole family and especially recommended for children.

The trip starts at the entrance to Timna Park, located west of the Arava road - Route 90 (an entrance fee is required). Imagine a journey back in time, a fascinating tour that combines past and present. A tour that will take you to the places where ancient Egyptians dug and produced copper in the oldest mines in the world, amongst spectacular views of the vibrant colored desert.

Recommended Route: Start the tour by viewing “The Mines of Time” exhibit, which illustrates the lifestyle of the copper

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miners and is a prelude to the trip in the park. Continue the tour and visit the diverse natural sites that include "The Arches," "The Mushroom" and the impressive "Solomon's Pillars".

Take a break to eat a light meal at the King Solomon Khan Restaurant that is located on the banks of the Park's artificial lake.

Exit Timna Park to the Arava Road and turn left to the west. Continue approximately 5 km and turn right to Hai-Bar Yotvata Nature Reserve (entails an entrance fee). Hai-Bar Yotvata is a unique reserve dedicated to breeding, nurturing and restoring the wildlife mentioned in the Bible that had previously disappeared from the region. On touring the open safari area, you will encounter the white ram, addax, onager, wild ass and flock of curious ostriches with their chicks. The tour is conducted in a variety of different languages with interesting explanations, via a disc that can be purchased on entering the reserve.

At the end of the visit, return to the Arava road and continue northward to the new Yotvata Park. An interactive recreation

area offering four different themed areas, an open-air playground, desert world, renewable energy games with technological exhibits, a kibbutz and dairy complex with a simulated farm and entertaining games that include milking a purple cow, searching for dinosaur remains in a sandbox, moving butterfly wings by capturing the sun's rays and a refreshing water fountain.

It is recommended to visit the "Off-Grid Village" at Kibbutz Ketura or Eco-Life in Lotan for those traveling north. Those who plan to return to Eilat are recommended to visit the "Spice Way" Farm near the Rabin border terminal in Eilat.



Red Canyon, Desert Agriculture & Kibbutz Life Tour

Explore the Red Canyon, one of the most beautiful spots in southern Israel

- Visit the beautiful sand dunes in the Ovda region
- Tour Kibbutz Neot Semadar, with its iconic arts complex, and learn about Kibbutz life from this ecologically minded community in the Arava Valley including a taste of organic wines in the local winery.
- Visit Kibbutz Ketura, learn about kibbutz life and the transformation from traditional agriculture to technology. Visit the huge solar panel fields.

Tour Itinerary

09:00 – Pickup from Eilat hotels

10:00 – Red Canyon

13:00 – Kasui dunes

14:30 – Kibbutz Neot Semadar

16:00 – Kibbutz Ketura

19:00 – Arrival back in Eilat

* All times are approximate

Included

- Pickup from your hotel by our professional team
- Guided tours at sites
- All transportation
- Return to point of departure

Excluded

- Lunch (optional)
- Health insurance.
- Credit card commission of 2.8%.

Available every Sunday and Wednesday
from Eilat for \$65 per person.





Arava - Fall in Love with the Desert

Desert tourism, innovative agriculture, and untouched landscapes... Fall in love with the Arava.

Welcome to the Arava, the stunning 200 kilometers stretching from The Dead Sea to Eilat, inhabited by just 5,000 residents.

The breathtaking nature and scenery combined with the purity of the desert landscape let you leave your day-to-day hassles behind and enter a space of tranquility and quiet.

Arava tourism is based on unique natural treasures, geological phenomena, and varied options: family vacations, cycling, jeeping and hiking.

Ancient routes criss-cross the valley, such as those from the Roman.

Empire and the Spice Route – declared UNESCO World Heritage sites – along which you'll find prehistoric, Biblical, Roman and Byzantine ruins.

We welcome you to the Arava: Choose from a plethora of lodging accommodations, sights, and activities, all of which can be found in this guide, as well as at:

www.goarava.co.il

Questions? We're happy to help.

Write us at tourism@arava.co.il.

Enjoy your stay!

Arava Tourism Board



Day Trip in the Arava

The Arava area is a long valley spanning from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea, with the Negev Mountains to the west and the Jordanian border to the east. While the valley is a desert, it is full of life and most of its residents work in agriculture. Here, some of the most advanced agricultural methods in the world were developed in order to deal with the difficult desert conditions. A rental car is an excellent way to get to know the area and its special people. This is a great day trip on the way from Eilat to the center of the country or in the other direction from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem to Eilat.

It is recommended to begin the trip in the alligator farm in the city of Ovot. It's hard to believe but in the middle of this town there is an alligator ranch. This allows you a glimpse into the world of these massive water creatures, which once could be found in many of Israel's rivers but today, unfortunately, no longer exist in nature. The Arava is known for its dates that are considered the best of their kind in the world, throughout the entire valley you can find a wide range of agricultural tours in general, especially dates. In Moshav Hatzava you can visit a family factory that makes silan. Silan is a sweet liquid, similar to honey, which is made

from dates. Here in the Arava it is made with traditional methods with no added sugars or other ingredients at all. Throughout the day you will certainly be hungry and thirsty and of course there are solutions, even great ones. The community of Tzukim, located in the heart of the Arava, is different than other communities because it deals less with agriculture and more with tourism. You can find an excellent brewery here and a few different restaurants. If you want to stay for the night you can find many different sleeping options with a special desert feel.

After lunch, this is the time to get moving and to go out for an ATV ride in the desert, for the length of the entire valley there are multiple excellent options to go out in the field on ATVs which are comfortable and safe. This is a great way to get to know the desert from close up, far away from the main road, quickly and safely. If you're not so into noisy vehicles, you can go out with a bike or by foot, the desert is full of many great paths that are waiting for you.

The desert is an intense place, for many years people came to the desert in order to connect to themselves and to go through a spiritual experience. In the Arava there are many opportunities to have a spiritual desert experience, from yoga to the silent lookouts, classes and courses in a wide range of fields and more. The spiritual aspect combined with your trip will make your day one to remember for many years to come. The way to Eilat is much more than a drive on a road, along the entire route there is a magical world waiting for you to discover it.

Bike trip in the Arava

Mountain bikes are the perfect way to get to know the desert and the ancient paths, the Arava is full of cycling options for many different levels. Here is one special trip:



The Spring Path and Scent Way – Cycling Route with an Amazing View

The bike and walking path on the “Spring Path” reveals amazing Bereshit (biblical) views and allows full enjoyment from the quiet and calm desert.

The route gives a unique experience to professional and hobby cyclists who enjoys ascents and descents at the entrance and exist from the rivers and streams.

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This is one of the only places in Israel that gives this experience close to comfortable sleeping arrangements. The path got its name thanks to multiple small springs, which hide at the edge of the eastern Negev Mountain, at the meeting point with the Arava rift. The springs erupt along the entire rift, and emphasize the places where the mountain in the east and the Syrian-African rift meet, this is the Arava rift. In the past this was an important route for hikers in the Arava but today, due to over pumping, the springs are dry.



Vegetation, hungry for water, has taken the place of the springs, and still provides an important spot for desert animals to be refreshed. The Ein Tamid springs, located in a hidden channel, are adorned with beautiful palm trees, which close off the place of the spring. Here you can find remnants of earlier agriculture, including an aqueduct. South



of Ein Tamid, you can find a beautiful mountain viewpoint named after a resident of the Ein Yahav community, Idan Gadish, who investigated Oryx and their re-acclimation in the desert.

Two kilometers south of the Shahak spring is the Ein Dohan spring, filled with saltwater, which is common in the Arava, and is used as a water source for many animals.

Continuing south you will cross the wide Nekarot River, and after it the ground of the desert turns red. The last stop is Park Sapir, an amazing site, a pleasant desert stop, which is refreshing and wonderful, surrounded by lawns that were planted by KKL. The park is 150 dunam in area and includes the "hidden valley", a sunken typography, which is hidden from the eye, and two springs that fall from a small waterfall which streams into the lake. The water in the park is a collection of salt water which gets traps between the layers of the ground in the area and the vegetation, a natural desert occurrence. The visitor's

authority has different stands throughout and entrance to the park is free.

The Scent Way was inspired by activities taking place over 2400 kilometers long ago. At first in Yemen, continuing in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and finally in the port of Gaza in Israel. Along the entire length, you could find long caravans of camels carrying expensive goods: perfumes, oils, spices and salt which were loaded onto boats in the Gaza port and shipped to Europe to the Roman Empire. The entire journey took approximately half a year. The camel caravans moved slowly and passed 65 stops along the way, where they stopped, rested, took care of the animals and gained energy for the next day. Along the path were robbers who would break into the expensive goods, and therefore along

the way they built “Khanim” (inns), fortresses, watchtowers and treasure houses where they would deposit their goods for large sums of money that would help them along the way.

The path lost its strength when people found more comfortable and cheaper routes, and it came to its final end when the water spice route to India started to become popular.

The scent path and the accompanying sites were coined a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Throughout the path you can see remnants of reservoirs, watchtowers, religious sites, bathing sites and signs of the rich nomad culture, which got to know the desert and all of the opportunities inside of it.



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Short Hike along the Israel National Trail

Along the entire length of Israel runs a long walking trail, the Israel National Trail. Its length is 1,100 kilometers and it begins in the upper Galilee next to the Lebanon border and ends in Eilat on the shore of the Red Sea. The trail runs through archeological sites, magical views, and special places. The trail also goes through the Arava, it arrives from the city of Mitzpe Ramon which is in the Negev Mountains. You can experience walking on the trail and possibly meet some of the hikers on it, without hiking for two months along the entire route. The trail runs next to Moshav Tzofer in the center of the Arava, here is where our trip begins, you can arrive at the Moshav in your rental car or with convenient public transportation.

Head out from the Moshav to the west toward the mountains and not toward the road to Eilat, you can use Google Maps to find the best route to get out of the Moshav. The trail is also featured on Google Maps so you can easily find where you are. After a short walk you will find markers of the Israel National Trail, the trail is marked by three stripes in white, orange and blue. Once you've found the first marker, turn south, if you're coming from Tzofer it will be a left turn, and from here everything is simple with a wide and clear path, which is clearly marked. Go with the trail for about 3 kilometers until you reach Moah, these are "Khan" remnants from the scent path that carried expensive products in ancient times to the port of Gaza



to be transported to Europe. Read the signs and check out the building before you head back towards Tzofer. You don't need to go back the same way, next to Moah you will see markers with two white stripes with a black stripe in the middle, follow these signs towards the road and you'll arrive very close to the entrance to Tzofer. The entire hike takes about two and a half hours, don't forget to take water and hats (in the winter as well) as the desert sun is very strong.



4x4 Trip

Off-road vehicles are the camels of the new world, if in the past camel caravans crossed the desert in journeys that took months, today off-road vehicles cross the desert in a few hours. If you want to get to the depths of the desert, far from all settlements and towns, to silence and open

spaces and can't allow yourself a few day walk or you don't know how to ride a camel, you can head out on a 4x4 trip. These trips can be a few hours or a few days and usually include small meals, tea and coffee as a desert tradition.

The Arava is a great gateway to whoever wants to go out to the desert, you can travel with one of the local tour guides to secret corners of the desert, get to know the vegetation of the area and be lucky enough to see some of the wildlife that wander around without bothering them in their open spaces. After you head out to the desert with your local guide, the desert will never look the same to you again. For the local guides the desert is not just a place, it's home, it's the place for plant healing, and it's a way of life. There's nothing like a trip with them in order to feel what desert life is really like.





Yeruham

About Yeruham

Yeruham “owes” its name to Shoshenq, an Egyptian pharaoh who reigned in the 10th century BC (approximately five years after the death of King Solomon). Shoshenq conquered areas of the northern Israelite kingdom, threatened Jerusalem, looted treasures from the holy temple and destroyed many of the sites along his path (see The Book of Kings I, Chapter 14, verses 25-26, The Books of Chronicles II, Chapter 12, verses 2-9 and the royal inscription at Karnak). Among his conquests was the site called “Yeham”, of which our town takes its name. In addition, Yeruham is mentioned in the Bible as the name of Prophet Samuel’s grandfather and others, mainly of the Benjamin Tribe.

During the first three decades after its establishment by Romanian immigrants in 1951, the town suffered many hardships. Some of its veteran residents found it difficult to cope with the desert environment, the lack of employment and the distance from the country’s center.

Various government offices and local leadership, partially failing, were unable to remove the negative image of a development town in general, and specifically, one in the Negev. This, along with other reasons, led to a mass exodus of residents who had just arrived. According to the legend, had Yeruham’s “doors” been one-way, its current population would have reached about 30,000... and yet, despite all of the hardships and trials, many of its founders remained and set the path for future generations, for immigrants from Morocco, Tunisia, Persia and India in the 1950s and 1960s. The town continued to absorb immigrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States and, since the early 1980s, for young religious Zionist families that continue to contribute and alter Yeruham’s demographic composition. The dry air in Yeruham and its desert surroundings make way to pleasant breezes that bring in the desert chill toward the evening. The town’s location between two unique natural



phenomena – the crater and the lake – which were not utilized for tourism over the years, led to a strong momentum of tourism initiatives by veteran and new residents who wisely integrated within Yeruham's transformation. The 21st century "shortened" the distance and travel time from the center. "Periphery" is a term that is disappearing from local awareness and hopefully from public considerations as Israelis choose where to spend their vacations.

The results of these changes are already evident in Yeruham – the list of tourist attractions grows every year (see below), the Desert Iris attracts many guests and has gained a reputation in the Israeli hotel industry, the Big Crater –

renamed Yeruham Crater – and the Yeruham Lake Park have gained financing that enables proper management and supervision. The local authority is an encouraging factor, providing support – to the extent possible – for every tourist initiative related to Yeruham and the character of the town. The variety of communities living in Yeruham is a source of local pride and a lever for combining local history with past traditions, enabling a community that adjusts to the Yeruham transformation in education, cultural-community activities and tourism.

Visit us: www.bamidbar.org, visit-yerucham.com

Hike in Yeruham

Now is the time to become one with the land – take a hike and enjoy the breathtaking desert landscape, covering various challenging trails.

Trails around Yeruham – Around the Lake

The Black Trail – Located at the first incline on the road to Be'er Sheva – this is a short trail, suitable for all. It begins with a left turn onto the “Old Oil Road” and follows a short climb towards Mekorot’s large water reservoir.

Just before the reservoir, where the IDF Squad Commander School operated for 17 years and is the current site of occasional Armored Personnel Carrier driving drills, you will find a wonderful observation point revealing (on good days) the entire Yeruham Ridge, the city of Be'er Sheva, Ramat Hovav and, of course, Yeruham itself. From there,

the trail descends toward tributary of Tzavoa Stream flowing westward, climbing back to Qasqassim Mountain. Upon reaching the ridge, we will begin hiking south toward the Yeruham Lake dam, enjoying a breathtaking view of the lake, Revivim Stream and Qasqassim Mountain.

Toward the end of the descent, shortly before reaching the dam, we will reach the shacks used by the Tel Aviv workers who built the Yeruham Dam in the early 1950s.

The hike ends at the dam parking lot if there is a vehicle waiting there or, we can leave by foot, following the blue markings toward the exit from the Lake Park.

We recommend that you wear shoes, be sure to have plenty of water and prepare to hike near home and have a great time...

Avnon Observation Point of Yeruham Crater

The Negev craters are a unique natural phenomenon in terms of how they were created (some say ~100 million years ago). “Yeruham Crater” is one of them.

Read more...

The crater is approximately 12 km long and 5 km wide. The observation point is reached from Yeruham, driving on the main road (Rte. 225) to the east. After passing the eastern industrial zone, continue carefully on the winding road until you reach a right turn at the “Mt. Avnon” sign. Drive to the parking area between Mt. Avnon and the observation point.

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At this point, you can choose one of two options based on your hiking/climbing skills: Climb the trail leading to the top of the mountain (~100m) or walk to the trail – left of the parking lot – leading to the observation point lot. Either way, the view will leave you in complete awe.

Ammonoids at Yeruham Crater

The new green trail, extending from the red marking of Ma'aleh Avraham, a bit after the "Petrified Trees", offers a wide variety of geological and botanical attractions, all in return for 3-4 hours of your time.

Start slightly south of the petrified trees, at the new green marking descending west of the red trail at Ma'aleh Avraham.

It returns to the red trail about a kilometer later and, after a few hundred meters, it veers east, leading to the oil drilling reservoirs marked by the Site Preservation Council.

From there, the trail continues toward Hatira Stream to which the oil drilling camp's reservoir is connected. At the stream's channel, we will pass an area of metamorphic rocks (~10-15m wide and 150-200m long), cracked and broken in straight lines and various angles. Some of the divides are filled with beautiful white pebbles.

We will then walk by a reef of fossilized corals and, from a distance, we will identify the giant palm tree growing at the center of the channel.

One of the two main attractions will be waiting later on, when a rock suddenly crosses the entire channel, creating an actual step in the stream. There, we will see whole and wonderful ammonoids.

The second attraction is Negev Pancratium in full bloom on the small tributary along the stream channel. This is an amazingly beautiful site and, obviously, in bloom only for a short time.

The trail continues through the Hevion Stream channel and ends at the black marking of HaSnapir HaKatan, 150-200 meters before the colorful sand parking lot where you should leave your second vehicle in order to return to the beginning.

Trails Around Yeruham – Ma'aleh Yeruham

The blue trail of Ma'aleh Yeruham (Tube Channel) begins at the "Big Crater" road sign, in front of the orange sign directing to Mt. Avnon, to the right (south) of the road. It begins with a sharp descent into the "Mekorot" water pipe, providing an amazing view of the Karbolet and the crater's southeast section.

A short distance down the channel, the marking will take us under a huge stone leaning to the channel, providing the kids with a lot of fun. Later, we will leave the channel and turn right (south) to pass the waterfall. About 200m later, we will get to a darker stone made entirely of fossils of various shapes and amazing density. We will pass the rock and continue left (north), back to the channel.

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Walking in the channel, we will be dazzled by its rich and colorful blossoms that, during this time, seem to resemble a Swiss pasture more than a Negev wadi.

At the bottom of our descent, we will reach the “Purple Windows” – an amazing area of colorful sand, where the wind formed square windows in the purple stone. The trail ends at the petrified trees at the bottom of the crater, where the “Soling” road paved by the British for oil excavations in the early 1940s meets with the dirt road marked in red and leading to Ma’aleh Avraham.

Experience in Yeruham

Yeruham has a lot to offer for your leisure time – accommodations, various workshops and a multitude of artistic and cultural attractions.

Star Songs

We offer a unique and unforgettable nighttime experience – a star observatory and mobile stargazing activity using professional telescopes. Get to know the night sky and constellations using laser beams with which we will almost touch the stars. We will gaze at the planets, galaxies, nebula and binary stars – whatever the sky has to offer on our night out – all accompanied by scientific explanations, legends of ancient nations, Judaic lessons and a melody of Israeli stars – all against the most amazing backdrop in the universe.

People have been looking to the sky for thousands of years, whether to navigate in dark nights, to follow the seasons of the year or to determine their future – so much so that astronomy has become one of the seven arts that everyone

must be familiar with. We will take you on a fascinating celestial tour, beginning with the birth of astronomy to the latest astronomic discoveries. We will embark on a journey where we will talk about physical stars – large gas orbs that illuminate our nights – and about stars that are anointed with crowns, songs, tales and beliefs.

Astronomer John Dobson, who introduced astronomy to the masses with his telescope, once said: “The importance of a telescope is not how big it is, it’s how many people got to look through it”.

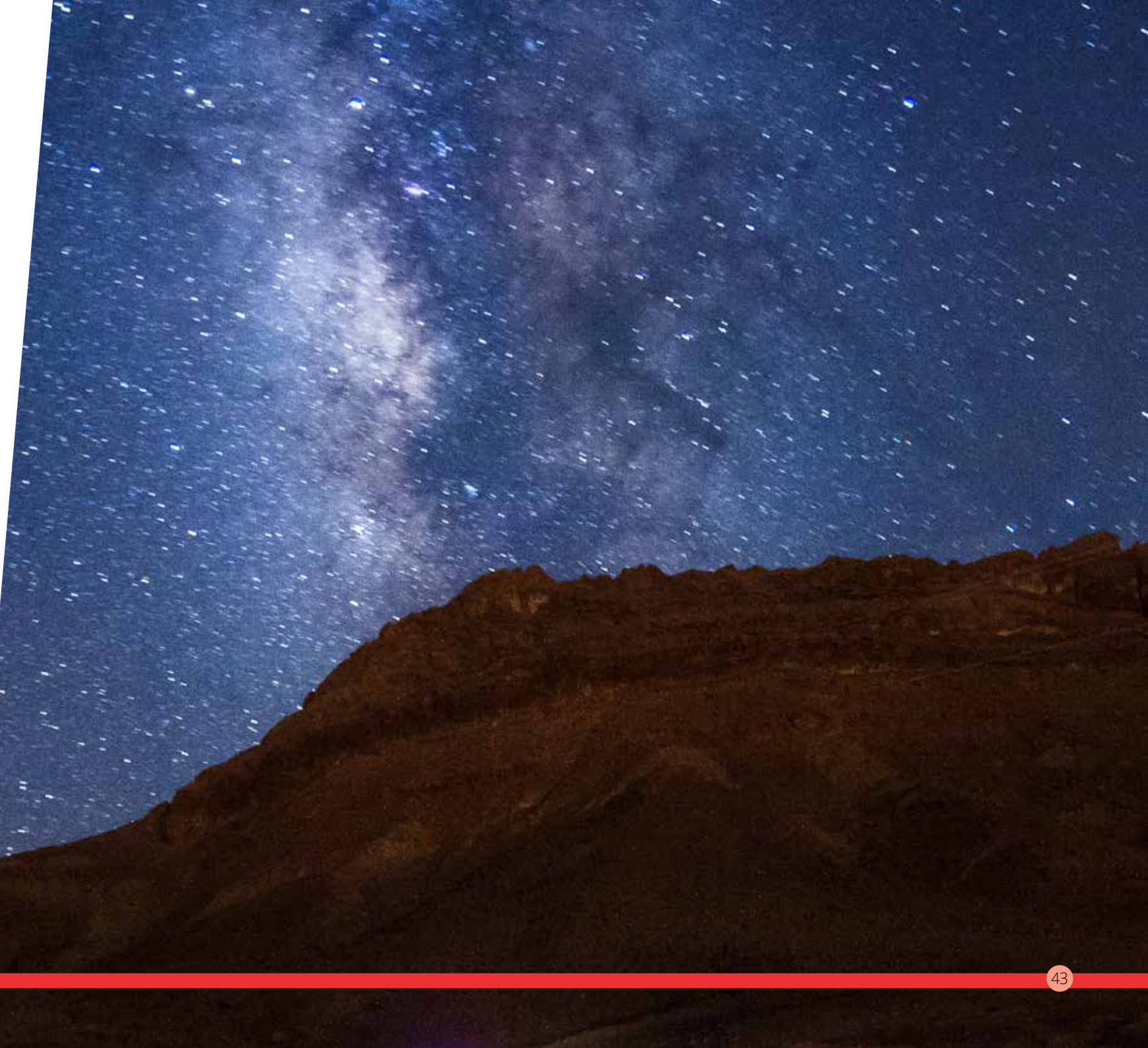
Star Songs was established in 2015 by Moshe Glantz, an astronomy buff and member of the Israeli Astronomical Association, whose love for the sky led him to thoroughly study astronomy and cosmology through courses, professional literature and desert nights under a star-filled sky.

There are currently several instructors at Star Songs, whose love for the sky is evident in all that they do. We conduct astronomy activities and social events, special evenings for couples, families, small and large groups of hundreds. We are also active at science centers, schools, astronomy courses and more. Our motto is to convey our great love of astronomy to as many people as possible.

Contact us and we will design an activity dedicated to your wishes.

Suitable for families, organized groups, worker unions and anyone attracted to the stars.

The star gazing experience can include boutique beer prepared at a local brewery (Yeruham).





Arad - a promise of the perfect recreation

Arad, considered the gateway to the Judean Desert and as such a perfect jumping -off point for any Israeli Desert Vacation offers travelers a unique and exciting desert experience. Arad offers enchanting views and desert tranquility, all while being close to the Dead Sea, the Masada UNESCO heritage site and the Tel Arad National Park. In the area you can find miles of hiking trails which are part of the Israel National Trail, quality vacation rentals and hotels, plentiful urban amenities and a warm and welcoming community.

Arad - Take a Breath

Let your Journey Begin

Enchanting views, desert tranquility, miles of hiking trails for all ages and difficulty levels.. all interspersed with hidden desert beauty spots - just a hint of what Arad has to offer.

The location of Arad has a wide range of advantages. To its east lies the Dead Sea, along with its many sites and possibilities. A beautiful scenic desert surrounds Arad. The Judea Desert lies to its North and to its South the Eastern Negev – with its craters, impressive hills, and wide Negev streams.

For additional information:

Arad tourism official site: www.travelarad.com

Town Council Tourism Department email address: annas@kalkalit-arad.co.il

Short Walking Trail into the desert

The Arad area includes many walking trails starting in the city and continuing toward the desert. The classic trail starts in “Mitzpor Moav”. The lookout got its name from the view from the Moav mountains located in the Kingdom of Jordan to the east of the Dead Sea. You can get to the lookout from the central bus station in Arad, by a one-hour walk or by a short taxi or local bus ride. The lookout is located on the outskirts of the city, next to the old hotel area. From this point and eastwards the desert spreads until the Dead Sea, which is at the foot of the mountains. From this location, you can see the desert and Dead Sea views and in addition to a hike starting point, this is a beautiful spot to stop along the way to Masada. From the lookout descends a steep walking path, which is marked with two white lines with a

green line between them, pay attention that this is a steep, but short, path. At the end of the descent, you will come to an intersection with a path marked in black, turn right with the path, and follow the markers. Along the length of the path you can get to know the desert from close up, you won't see the city anymore, just the ancient paths and the hills. The local Bedouins go out to the area with their sheep and goats and the many paths that you will see surrounding you were created by animals, be sure to stay on the marked path. After walking for approximately an hour, you will once again arrive at an intersection of paths, this time with the red marked path; this path ascends back to the city of Arad next to the starting point. The length of this path is approximately five kilometers and it takes two



hours. The path isn't long or complicated for walking and within a short time you will find yourselves surrounded by silence with only the desert around you, but the security of the nearby city will still be with you.



Hike to Zfira Pool

Not far from the city of Arad lies one of the more exciting dry rivers (wadi) in Israel, Tzelim River. On both sides are large cliffs and the river runs into the Dead Sea not far from Masada. On the upper portion of the river, just before it turns into a deep canyon, is the Tzfira pool, a pool of natural water, which gets its water from floods. The pool is situated above the Tzelim waterfall and an unforgettable view extends from the area. The walk to the pool is relatively short, you leave from the camping grounds of the Tzfira pool that is easy to get to using Google Maps. Walk along the green marked path, which includes signs directing to the

pool. Continue to follow the signs along the different trails. The descent to the pool is a bit challenging and includes a parts where you need to hold on with your hands and a short ladder portion, but the pool and its view are totally worth the effort. The way back to the car is the same way you used to arrive. Don't forget to bring bathing suits, the water is cold for almost the entire year but this is a particularly refreshing experience. Besides swimming, this is a great place for a short picnic overlooking the desert; this is one of the most beautiful desert trips in the desert so take your time to enjoy it.

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Car trip from Arad to Masada

From the city of Arad winds a small desert road that goes to Masada from the west, to the place that Romans went up the mountain and sieged it hundreds of years ago. The road is approximately 20 kilometers long and the drive is slow because of the many curves. The drive along the entire path with a few stops along the way and a visit to Masada can be a great day trip to the desert. The beginning of the

drive starts in Arad; this is also the place to stop for breakfast and to buy food and drinks for the rest of the day. Arad has a range of places, street food like falafel, coffee shops and supermarkets. After you're fully equipped, search for "Masada West" on Google Maps and start your drive. After about fifteen minutes, you'll see a sign for Mitzpe Omer on your left, this is the first stopping point on the road. A



leads to the peak of the mountain, this is a somewhat steep ascent, leave your car at the beginning of it. The views from the peak are definitely worth the effort to hike to the top, 360 degrees of desert, with the Dead Sea and the Moav and Red Mountains of Jordan right in front of you. Take a look to the east and you'll see a flat mountain, that's Masada where you'll continue your trip. There's almost no need to introduce Masada, one of the most important historical sites in Israel, where you will find not only history but also an impressive place with a breathtaking view. Entrance to the site is paid, at the office you will receive a map with everything you need to know about the site. You will finish your busy day with a tour of Masada. On your way back to Arad you can stop for dinner at one of the great restaurants the city has to offer.

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two-minute walk will lead you to endless desert views, to the east the Dead Sea, to the north the Hebron Mountains and Judaen desert. Under the viewpoint you'll see a patch of green in the middle of the brown desert, which is Kfar Hanokdim, a desert hotel in Bedouin style and this is also your next stopping point, the road winds from the overlook to the village. Above the village to the east, you'll see a high mountain with two close peaks; this is the Knaim Mountain, your next stopping point. You will recognize the way to the mountain by a blue marked path (rectangle with two white stripes and a blue stripe in the middle). The entrance is a dirt road to the right of the main road, you can leave your car right next to the road or continue to drive carefully. After a few hundred meters, you'll see a narrow path which





Cycling on the desert bike paths

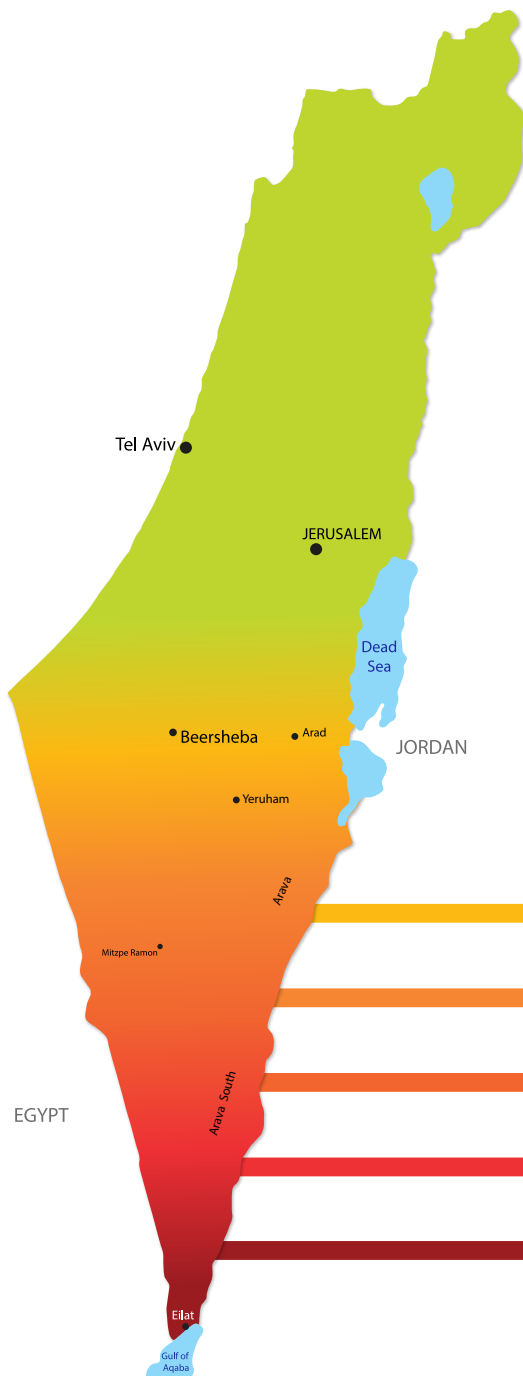
There are several options to rent bicycles in Arad, look on Google for the place that is best for you. A bicycle is a great way to see the city and the surrounding desert. Ask the rental place for ideas for a path in the area and for recommendations of places to eat and drink. If you're looking for a more challenging path, you can go to Singal "Rehamim", an enjoyable path that is located on the edge of the city. This is a circular path so you can begin to ride at any point but the easiest way is to enter from the Arad cemetery. Simply write in Google Maps "Arad Cemetery" and ride through the city until you get there. Here you will see the signs toward the bike path. The path is marked well, so you can ride the entire length easily. Due to many animals, there are small paths throughout the area, it's important to pay attention to the markers and if you don't find the sign, go back to the last place you did see one. Along the path there are a few shady spots but there is no water at all, make sure to take water with you for the entire ride, if it's hot make sure to take a lot of water, the desert is dry and it's always best to take plenty of water.

Stop between Tel Aviv to the Dead Sea

Most of the tourists in Israel don't stop anywhere between the major tourist locations: Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, although those who do want to take a break from the standard path without wasting too much time are welcome to stop in Arad. The city has a bustling artists' quarter; a short internet search will show that you can find multiple activities to suit you. Take advantage of your time to explore the city center, in addition to street food like shawarma and falafel, you'll see a side of Israel that most tourists don't get a chance to see. Take your time with a coffee and watch the people walking by, Arad has a large cultural mix which is rather uncommon, in the city Haredim, Russian immigrants, Arabs and Bedouins with traditional dress all live together. This is a glimpse into Israel outside of the typical tourist path. If you want to eat in the city you will find a wide range of impressive options, at all price ranges, once again, far from the typical tourist scene.



Writing & Editing: Shai Yage and Raz Arbel



The Negev highland - www.negevtour.co.il

Arava Way - en.aravaway.co.il

Arava - www.goarava.co.il

Yeruham - www.bamidbar.org , visit-yerucham.com

Arad - www.travelarad.com