

**Jacob Saar**

**Yagil Henkin**

**Hike the land of Israel**

# **Israel National Trail**

*Includes for download:*

*The Jerusalem trail*

*Recommended Alternate Routes*

*And the Best 25 day hikes in Israel*

**Reviewed by Dany Gaspar**

Third Edition

Copyright © Jacob Saar

All rights reserved. It is expressly forbidden to copy, reproduce, photograph, record, digitize, disseminate, store in a database, restore or record by any electronic, optical or mechanical means any part of the book, without written permission from the copyright owner.



Printed in Israel

Although the authors have taken all reasonable care in preparing this book, the authors and publishers make no warranty about the accuracy or completeness of its content and, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from its use.



*Copyrights for maps in this guide:*

*All Rights Reserved by the Survey of Israel 2017. The maps are printed with Survey of Israel permission. Survey of Israel is an Agency for Geodesy, Cadastre, Mapping and Geographical Information and is an Official Agency of the Government of the State of Israel.*

For most recent updates about changes to trail, to find a hiking partner, your comments to the guide and any other INT related issue please visit the forum.

**Forum: <http://israeltrail.myfastforum.org>**

ISBN 978-965-42046-6-8

## **IMPORTANT LINKS**

**The Jerusalem trail guide & maps:** <http://israeltrail.myfastforum.org/forum54.php>

**Recent changes to the trail:** <http://israeltrail.myfastforum.org/forum43.php>

**Recommended INT alternate routes:** <http://israeltrail.myfastforum.org/forum54.php>

**Forum:** <http://israeltrail.myfastforum.org>

**Website in English:** <http://israeltrail.net>

**Website in German:** <http://www.israel-trail.com> . Uses Google translate for your language.

**Pictures of the trail:** <https://www.facebook.com/hikeisrael> (The INT photo album)

Thanks for visiting the forum. Each INT hiker as a potential partner for improving the guide. Please send us any comments that you have about the preface or the guide.

Change is a constant fact of life and the INT is no exception. Please help us in improving the guide and let us know if you have identified that things have changed on the trail.

**Please post your comments [on the forum](#).**

Enjoy the INT hike!



# Preface to the guide

## Table of Contents

<b>The Israel National Trail .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Dictionary & abbreviations .....	8
Marking of the trail .....	8
Planning is key to a successful hike.....	9
The forum.....	9
Get in shape first.....	9
Water.....	10
Food and resupply .....	10
When to hike? .....	10
When not to hike?.....	10
Limited time hiking - Best section .....	11
Hiking in the wilderness.....	11
How many kilometers (miles) to hike each day? .....	11
What is the direction of the hike?.....	11
Hike and rest .....	12
Insurance .....	12
Weather .....	12
National holidays in Israel.....	13
Emergency calls .....	13
Money issues .....	14
Camping out .....	14
<b>Your backpack and what's inside it .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Gear, sporting and outdoor stores.....	16
Gas refill canisters .....	16
First aid.....	17
First-Aid kit suggestions .....	17
Cell phones.....	18
Hiking shoes and backpack repair.....	18
<b>Transportation, accommodations and miscellaneous .....</b>	<b>19</b>
From Ben-Gurion airport to Dan or to Eilat.....	19
Domestic flights, train, bus and taxi service .....	19
Trail Angels and other accommodations.....	20
Storing of small packages / clothes.....	20
No litter policy.....	20
Restricted access zones .....	20
In a nature preserve .....	20
Wildlife.....	21
Hiking the trail with a dog.....	21
How do I know I'm not lost?.....	21
<b>The Desert .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Camping, caching water and food. ....	21
Supply points – water caching points .....	23
Problematic water caches .....	24
Service providers & logistical support in remote places.....	24
Supermarkets & grocery stores .....	25
Taxi service.....	25
<b>Water caching - do it yourself.....</b>	<b>25</b>
North to South .....	26
South to North .....	27
<b>Hiking the desert without caching water .....</b>	<b>29</b>
From Arad to Eilat.....	29
From Eilat to Arad.....	31
Hiking plan in the desert for very fit hikers.....	32

<b>Day hikes .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Kiryat Shemona area.....	33
Safed (Tzfat) area.....	33
Tiberias area .....	33
Nazareth area .....	33
Haifa - Isfiya area .....	33
Zikhron Ya'akov, Caesarea area.....	33
Tel Aviv area .....	34
Jerusalem Trail and vicinity .....	34
Desert: Arad area .....	34
Desert: Midreshet Ben-Gurion area .....	34
Desert: Mizpe Ramon area .....	34
Desert: Paran area.....	34
Eilat area.....	35
<b>Recent INT changes and guide updates .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>INT alternate routes .....</b>	<b>35</b>

## The Israel National Trail

The idea of a long trail in Israel was initiated in 1985 by Avraham Tamir (1907-1988) after he had hiked the Appalachian Trail in the US in 1971 and 1972. His vision was to establish a similar trail in Israel. Avraham Tamir met with Ori Dvir (1931-2011) of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel [SPNI]. His vision inspired the initiation of the Israel National Trail [INT]. The Trail has been the work of many people from SPNI and people from all over the country who teamed together over many years. The marking of the trail began in 1986, and the late President Ezer Weizman officially inaugurated the INT in 1995. In the first years of its existence, a handful of visitors hiked the length of the trail, until gradually word spread to hiking enthusiasts throughout Israel. As of this writing, the length of the trail is close to 960 kilometers. Since then Shvil Israel has been the work of many people from SPNI and people from all over the country who teamed together over many years. The Trail runs from Kibbutz Dan in the far north of the country to Eilat in southern tip of the Israel. It intersects and overlaps with many trails – all part of the large network of trails and routes.

The Trail winds from Mount Hermon in the north to Eilat on the Red Sea. You will hike in several geographic areas. The 2,800-meter-high Mount Hermon and its ski resort, Upper and Lower Galilee, Sea of Galilee (Kinneret), Mount Carmel, the Mediterranean sea shore, Jerusalem, Judea Mountains and the Negev Desert. In Eilat you can complete, or start, the fascinating trip with snorkeling or scuba diving in the magnificent coral reef. Young hikers of 16 and hike addicts of 70+ years have completed the whole trek; I hope you join them soon.

**Spring** is the best time of the year for the trek. Between mid-February and mid-May, you will see the rich **wild flora** of Israel: anemone, cyclamen, daffodils, wild tulips, and the jewel in the crown: The **Iris**. Several species of these magnificent flowers bloom between February and April from the northern part of the Negev (near Arad) to the Upper Galilee. Spring is also the time when all creeks and rivers are full of water. Many water reservoirs and dry creeks in the desert are filled with water during late winter and spring, and the surrounding areas are covered with wild flowers. Spring is also the time of **bird migration**. From Eilat to the Hula Valley in northern Israel you will be walking while birds, on their way back home to Europe, pass overhead. During fall time, the second-best season for the trek, birds migrate from Europe to Africa. Bring binoculars with you, it will help you watch **wild animals**. Deer and ibexes in many areas are used to humans' company. The Arabian oryx lives here too. Foxes are easy to spot at night, close to villages in the desert.

**Historic and archaeological** sites are spread along the trail. In the desert, you will pass near ruins of ancient Roman and Nabatean fortifications, originally built to defend and provide shelter to merchants passing on the **Spice Road**. On the Mediterranean shore, you will hike by the gates of ancient Arsuf (Phoenician name) or Apollonia (Hellenistic name). Further north on the shore is the magnificent ancient city of Caesarea. Hiking in Lower Galilee brings you to ancient Zippori (Sepphoris) a site of diverse archaeological legacies such as: Assyrian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Crusader and Ottoman conquerors of the Holy Land.

Some parts of the trail use **ancient roads** built by the Romans. One section is a Roman road going down from Mount Amasa to Drejat. This road was one of the main routes from Jerusalem to the southern parts of the country. Another one is "**Caesar's Road**" in the Judea Mountains that was built circa 133 AD to allow Hadrian (78-138 AD) to lead his forces from the sea port of Ashkelon to Jerusalem, to quell the rebellion that broke out in 132. When you hike along route #375 east of "Netiv ha-Lamed Heh" you'll notice that nothing has changed in almost 1900 years – route #375 is **Caesar's Road**.

One cannot complete a visit to Israel without bathing in the **Dead Sea**, the lowest point on earth. Arad is the last town before the Negev Desert if you hike from the north, or the first town after hiking in the desert for about three weeks. This is a good place to make a one- or two-day stop and go down to the Dead Sea by bus.

**The Negev Desert** is one of the most beautiful desert treks on earth. It is a unique challenge to hikers. The trail goes through unique geological places of interest: "**The three craters**," the largest of which is the **Ramon Crater**. You will hike all three of them in the northern part of the Negev Desert.

**Art lovers** will find **Ein Hod** a perfect place to stop for a day and visit the famous Marcel Janku (1895-1984) **Dada** Art Museum. Janku was among the founders of the **Dadaist** movement in Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich (1916).

**Authentic ethnic food** is served in many locations along the trail. **Ethiopian meals** and the bread that is prepared over a period of three days in Ein Hod is just one example of the variety of ethnic foods along the trail.

**The Jerusalem Trail:** While hiking on the Jerusalem Trail you can plan to stop for a day or more and visit Jerusalem and places such as the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, the **Dome of the Rock** and the **Wailing (Western) Wall**. All three are within a 30 minute hike from the Jerusalem Trail and separated by only a few hundred meters, within a single square kilometer, in Jerusalem. **St. John in the Desert** monastery is just off the trail in Sapir, which is near Jerusalem. The Jerusalem trail guide and maps are available for a free download on the forum.

**Tel Aviv:** The trail goes through the Yarkon River Park, a large recreational area in Tel Aviv. You will hike within 5 kilometers of the famous Azrieli Center and its three towers: round, square and triangular.

**Haifa** and the **Bahá'í World Center** are 30 minutes by bus from the trail. On your way north from Haifa you pass **Mount Carmel** and **the gates of Zippori**. On the next day you arrive in **Nazareth** and the Church of the Annunciation, which are located just a few kilometers off the trail. **Mount Tabor** and the **Transfiguration** site are on the trail. **Yardenit**, the holy baptismal site on the Jordan River, is just 300 meters from the trail, south of the **Sea of Galilee**. A few kilometers to the north you will hike above the city of **Tiberias**, near the **Mount of the Beatitudes** and **Capernaum**. Both places are less than 10 minutes by bus from the trail.

The trek provides you with a unique opportunity to meet people of all religions and cultures. **Jews, Christians, Moslems, Bahá'ís, Bedouins, Druze and Circassians** live here.

**Trail markers** are tricolor – orange, blue and white of the INT, and red, green, blue, black and purple for area segments. In many cases the markers are both single and triple color markers. Please refer to the maps' legend. The guide provides hikers with both tourist and practical information to make the adventure an unforgettable one. The exciting trek can be divided into various sections. You can hike the full trail or decide to do only segments, from the south or the north, from Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. No matter where you start or where you end your journey, this is one of the most exciting treks on earth.

**The Best 25 Day-Hikes in Israel:** The guide contains also the best 25 day-hikes in the country. They cover sections of the Negev desert, Eilat area, archaeological sites, the Jerusalem area, the Mediterranean Sea shore, Mt. Carmel, holy sites and the Lake of Galilee, and the splendor of nature in the northern part of Israel.

### **Recommended INT alternate routes:**

Alternate routes can be downloaded at: <http://israeltrail.myfastforum.org/forum54.php>

**Wherever you spend your vacation in Israel, you are just minutes away from the Trail. Whether you are a frequent visitor to Israel or it's your only visit here, take a day or two on the Trail. Even if you are here on business, look for the nearest section of the Trail nearest to your hotel, take a taxi there and enjoy the day.**

## Preface

**Please read the entire preface and study the maps in the guide, before you start planning your trip.** You will find here all the necessary information to complete the whole trail or only parts of it. You can detach the day hike description and the relevant map. Please keep them in a transparent plastic bag to avoid moisture damage (well, if it rains...). Any experienced hiker is aware of the problems associated with carrying too much weight. We have tried to minimize the guide's weight as much as possible. After all, one cannot carry less than 5 liters/day of water in the desert, and food is important too. Reducing the weight of your fully loaded backpack becomes a matter of taking out a few grams of your tooth paste, packing a small bar of soap or only half of it using ultralight gear or taking out from the guide the hike description in the other direction. We continuously update the preface and upload it to the forum. **Before leaving home to fly to Israel please download the latest version of the preface [from the forum](#), save it on your smartphone and use it while hiking. Enjoy your INT hike.**

## Dictionary & abbreviations






**East** – Mizrach; **West** – Ma'arav; **North** – Tzafon; **South** – Darom; **Yes** – Ken; **No** – Lo; **How much does it cost?** – Kama ze ole? ; **Thank you** – Toda.

**Pronunciation:** Some names are written like that: Beit **Za'it**. The proper pronunciation is: **Za it**. **KH** is usually pronounced like the Spanish letter "J" (Makhtesh).

**Bik'a** - Valley  
**Be'er** - Well (of water)  
**Beerka** (Arabic) – Pond  
**Beit Baad** - Oil press (ancient)  
**Ein, Einot** - Spring, Springs  
**Emeq** - Valley  
**Gadol** - Large  
**Gat** - Wine press (ancient)  
**Gev, Gevim** - Natural pit, pits  
**Giv'a, G'vaot** - Hill, Hills  
**Giv'at** - Hill of...  
**Guy** - Canyon  
**Halva** - Sweet confection based on Tahini  
**Har** - Mountain  
**Hirba (H.)** - Ruins, ancient village  
**Hirbat** - The Hirba of...  
**Hummus** - Made of chickpeas & spices  
**Katan** - Small  
**Khan** - Caravanserai (old roadside inn).  
**Ma'ale** - Ascent  
**Ma'eem** - Water  
**Makhtesh** - Crater  
**Makolet** – Grocery store

**Me'ara, Me'arot** - Cave, Caves  
**Mezad** - Fortification (ancient)  
**Midbar** - Desert  
**Mif'ar** - Gap (in geology).  
**Mitzpe** - Overlook  
**Nahal** – (**H** = Spanish **J**). Creek, stream.  
**NC** - Night camp  
**Negev** - The desert in the south  
**NP / NR** - National Park / Nature Reserve  
**Pita** - Pita bread  
**Rama** - Plateau  
**Ramat** - Plateau of...  
**Shalom** - Peace, hi, goodbye  
**Shehuna(t), (Shnt.)** - Residential quarter  
**Shvil** - Trail  
**SP** - Supply Point (desert caching point)  
**Tahuna** (Arabic) - Mill  
**Tel (T.)** - A mound, ancient settlement.  
**Tmee'le** – Water close to ground.  
**Tzomet** - Road crossing  
**Tzuk** - Cliff  
**Wadi** (Arabic) - Dry stream.

## Marking of the trail

When the trail was inaugurated in 1995, the Israeli trail system was already 40 years old with approximately 7000 km marked trails. The INT connected existing trails marked with: Blue, red, green and black signs    . In places without an existing trail, the INT was marked with the triple color sign: White, blue and orange . The three colors were chosen randomly and do not mean anything. However, over the years it became popular to say that the White represents the snow of Mount Hermon in the north, Blue is the color of the sea in the central part of the country




## Planning

and Orange is the desert in the south. Along the INT the existing trail markers were not erased. While hiking, you will see the triple colored marker following a trail with another color, or just the triple color marker.

### Planning is key to a successful hike

Proper planning is key to a successful hike, never underestimate its importance. Plan your own hike including your re-supply places, water refill and accommodations. In the northern part of the INT there are numerous picnic areas many of them with running water. Check the maps when you plan the hike.

This icon on the maps  indicates a picnic area with tables and water. However sometimes a faucet might be broken or closed. The most reliable water sources are in villages and towns along the INT, gas stations etc. In the desert, private water caches are very reliable.

Example: By the end of day two (map 2) ~1km west of the INT there is a picnic area with water. Picnic areas are a reasonable place to camp out, unless they are within the limits of a nature reserve. Please pay attention to nature reserves limits marked with a green line on the maps. During weekends and holidays, you will not be alone there. Re-supply is easy between Dan to Arad, same goes for water refill. Once you enter the desert south of Arad proper planning becomes critical.

### The forum

**We continuously try to improve your hiking experience. If you are missing some information before or while you hike, please [log onto the forum](#). We visit the forum at least once a day. You'll find there a lot of useful tips. If you've found that the information in the guide is inaccurate, insufficient or any other issue that you have with the guide, please post your comments on the forum. They are always appreciated since they are immediately helping other hikers too.**

**Occasionally we find and read blogs about the INT. Comments are less efficient on blogs since we can't read every single INT blog.**

### Get in shape first

At least 8 weeks before your planned arrival in Israel, start your preparations. Put on your new hiking shoes and hit the trails and sidewalks in your neighborhood. After 2-3 weeks, when blisters are no longer a threat, put on your backpack with a load of 10 kilos, and continue the daily routine. My preparations included a 7-km walk in 1 hour without the backpack. I did it this for 8 weeks, 4 times a week. Additionally, I had two weekend trips of 15 kilometers with my fully loaded backpack (15 kg), and it did the job for me. There are many other ways to prepare your body both in and out of the gym.

**Starting in Eilat** requires a much better physical shape. The first 60 km are difficult. During the first day, you will climb a total of 1000 meters. Consider an Alpine preparation plan: Locate a steep ascent (25-30% gradient) which is at least 100 meters high or a 30 stories high-rise. Train for 6 weeks three times a week as follows:

Weeks 1-2: Climb the hill (last floor) and go down and use your hiking poles. When you are able to repeat the drill three times in one hour, continue training with a backpack.

Weeks 3-4: Put a load of 8 kg in your backpack and continue training for two weeks.

Week 5: Increase the load to 12 kg and continue training.

Week 6: Increase the load to 15 kg and continue training.

End of the training: Three days before you leave home to start the hike.

## Planning

By the end of the 6 weeks you are in a great shape. There are numerous other ways to get in shape. Check the web for your preferred option.

### Water

In the north, there is water in villages, kibbutzim, towns, gas stations and some picnic areas. It is recommended to start the day with all the water you need until the evening. Each day starts by or near a reliable water source. If you plan on refilling while you hike, make sure the refill point is reliable. [Check this link](#).

**When hiking in the Negev desert you will need a minimum of 5 liters / day of water for drinking only**, assuming you hike in the desert approximately 22-24 km (14-15 miles) on an average day. If you want to take a quick half a liter "shower" that's more water (in the water cache). I've skipped the "shower & co." in the desert while camping out. In the northern part, you can fill about 3-4 liters of water in the morning and refill during the day if necessary. However, several days in the northern part requires 5 liters of water a day. I've always filled 5 liters every morning, in the north too. It saved me time.

**The amount of recommended drinking water** for the day's hike for each hiker, is mentioned at the beginning of the daily hike description. Regular weather conditions less than 30°C are taken into consideration, the recommended length of hike and its nature (ascents, flat, etc.) and a load not heavier than 16 kg including water and food. When temperatures are high, 35°C (98°F) or beyond, do not hike but rest in the shade. **Hiking the desert at hot temperatures is dangerous!**

**Purifying water from natural sources.** This is mostly applicable in winter or spring. In the desert, there are very few natural springs. Pits are filled with water only after flash floods. [Check this link](#) for specific locations where water might be available for purification.

**Caution: Water used for agricultural purposes is not for drinking.**

### Food and resupply

You can resupply at any village along the trail. The grocery stores / supermarkets, are located at the village center. All gas stations (they are marked on the maps) have convenience stores and/or small restaurants and all of them are open 24/7 except for Yom Kippur. For specific locations please **download** from the forum the full list of grocery stores and supermarkets along the INT.

### [When to hike?](#)

If you consider hiking the entire trail, then the best time of year for the trek is February to May. The weather is mild at this time of the year. If you start in Eilat you can begin as early as mid-February. However, expect more rainy days when you hike in the northern parts of Israel. Fall is the second-best season, from October to December.

Winters in Israel are relatively mild. However, in winter you will experience more delays due to rainy weather. Locals who have hiked parts of the trail in winter confirmed that winter is very special, particularly in the desert. I do agree with that; I've lived very close to the desert for 25 years. Chasing a flash flood is exciting to me, but you definitely don't want to get caught in the middle of it. It is a magnificent view to watch the vertical drop of 100 meters at Nahal Hatira, become a waterfall for 30 minutes. Summer is too hot to hike in the desert, but you can hike in the north.

### When not to hike?

- **Do not hike in the desert in hot weather above 35°C (95° F).**
- **Do not hike at night.**

## Planning

On hot days, it is recommended to start hiking as early as possible in the morning, preferably at sunrise. Look for shade or cooler shelter between 11:00-15:00. Don't hike during these hours. It is extremely important when you are in the desert. [Shade in the desert is difficult to find](#). Complete the day's hike when temperatures drop in the afternoon. In winter and spring when it rains, a few sections can be slippery. Take extra caution when conditions are wet. Make your plan flexible and allow sufficient extra days for rest. Keep updated about weather conditions and change your schedule accordingly.

### Limited time hiking - Best section

If you have only few weeks to hike the best part of the INT, and without any doubts is the desert. You can hike the desert in any direction from November to mid-April. The best time to hike in the desert is early February to Late March. The desert section is ~400 km (250 Mi) long from Arad to Eilat.

### Hiking in the wilderness

Hiking in the wilderness is limited mostly to the desert. Between Dan to Arad you will pass by villages, small cities, hike near roads through cultivated land, numerous archaeological, religious and historical sites from all eras, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and more. If you prefer to hike only in the wilderness the desert is your choice

### How many kilometers (miles) to hike each day?

The INT can be completed in 35-60 days, or more, it's up to you to decide. The **hiking profile** provides you with distance (km) from the start of the day and elevation in meters above sea level. A starting point in the north or in Tel Aviv allows you to gradually get into a good hiking shape for those who still need some "getting in shape" time. You may start with 12-15 kilometers daily for the first two days and then gradually increase. In the desert flexibility is reduced and is determined by access to water in small villages and/or water caches.

Starting in the south in Eilat requires better shape than hitting the trail on Mount Hermon or Kibbutz Dan. The first day on the trail has several steep ascents. The first mile takes you from sea level to 300 meters (~1,000 feet) above it. You'll end the first day after about 13 kilometers at 700 meters (~2,300 feet) above sea level. For most mortals, starting in the south means that the distance hiked each day depends primarily on the availability of potable water sources. Very few hikers will be able to get to Ein Netafim, 15 km from Eilat, at noon time, have their lunch and rush to Shehoret Canyon. I leave them to set the records on the trail. "[Mwyaf y brys, mwyaf y rhwystr](#)" which is Welsh for: "[They will find the obstacles as fast as they hike](#)."

### What is the direction of the hike?

**In spring** the best option is to start the hike in February to mid-March in Eilat. Average temperatures in March in the Negev are 14-23°C with very little rain, making March an ideal time to start. When you reach the area of Tel Aviv in late March or early April, the spring blossom is still at its peak and rain is becoming less likely. When you arrive at Tel Aviv continue the hike from the north. From Tel Aviv take a bus to Kiryat Shemona (842). From Kiryat Shemona take bus number 55 or 56 to Dan or to Nimrod. There are five buses a day: 08:30, 10:30, 13:00, 13:50 and at 18:00. Hike south all the way to Tel Aviv. Numerous local hikers (~50%) choose the north as their starting point in spring. If you start in the north, rainy days are more frequent in March. If you plan on hiking in early May in the desert, expect several extremely hot days and sandstorms that are more frequent by the end of spring. **We don't recommend starting in April in the north. You will end hiking in late May in the desert when it is extremely hot.**

## Planning

Another very good alternative (...best IMHO) is to start in [March in the area of Tel Aviv and hike south to Eilat](#). From Eilat take a bus or fly to Tel Aviv, and then take a bus to Kiryat Shemona in the north, and hike south. Starting in Tel Aviv has the advantage of at least 3 days of an easy southbound hike (~75 km).

**In fall** you'll start in the north due to cooler weather. As you go further south, day temperatures drop slowly. When you get to the Negev in early October or later, average day temperatures are not higher than 26 degrees Celsius. I can't mention all the options, but the main ideas are here. If you happen to have a friend living in Israel, a remote relative or a cousin of your next-door neighbor, make sure you have his or her telephone number, it may be useful. Don't rule out a meeting with them. You will find the Israelis very friendly.

## Hike and rest

It is recommended to take a short break of 10-15 minutes every hour. Once a week take a full day off. Adopting this hiking routine prevents injuries due to fatigue.

## Insurance

Don't leave home without it, and it's not just your AMEX, but more important, it is your **Medical Insurance**. Make sure it covers any emergency evacuation. In case of an accident or another mishap, you will contact **100** (police) and they, if required, can ask the emergency rescue unit to arrive by helicopter. In some places in the desert and numerous other places on the trail, emergency rescue operations can be carried out only by helicopters. Please make sure that such events, including transportation to hospitals by any vehicle, are covered by your medical insurance.

## Weather

Most rainy days are in December, January and February – about 70% of the yearly rainfall. March and November have about the same amount of rain (~13% each). October and April ~2%, May to September almost no rain. Humidity is high (50-70%) in summer except for the desert.

## Average temperatures - C°

Month	Kiryat Shemona	Tzefat	Tel Aviv	Jerusalem	Arad	Mizpe Ramon	Eilat
January	9 - 16	5 - 10	10 - 18	7 - 13	7 - 14	7 - 13	10 - 21
February	10 - 17	5 - 11	11 - 18	7 - 14	7 - 16	7 - 15	12 - 23
March	11 - 20	7 - 15	13 - 20	9 - 17	9 - 19	9 - 18	15 - 26
April	13 - 22	11 - 20	15 - 23	12 - 22	12 - 24	12 - 23	18 - 31
May	17 - 28	15 - 26	18 - 25	16 - 26	15 - 29	15 - 27	23 - <b>36</b>
June	19 - <b>34</b>	18 - 29	22 - 28	18 - 28	17 - 32	18 - 29	25 - <b>39</b>
July	21 - <b>36</b>	20 - 31	24 - 30	20 - 30	19 - <b>34</b>	20 - 31	27 - <b>41</b>
August	22 - <b>36</b>	20 - 30	25 - 31	20 - 30	19 - <b>34</b>	19 - 31	27 - <b>40</b>
September	20 - 30	18 - 28	23 - 30	18 - 28	18 - 31	18 - 28	25 - <b>37</b>
October	19 - 29	16 - 24	20 - 27	16 - 25	16 - 27	16 - 25	22 - 33
November	12 - 24	11 - 18	15 - 24	13 - 20	13 - 22	12 - 20	16 - 28
December	9 - 18	7 - 13	12 - 20	9 - 15	9 - 17	9 - 16	12 - 23

## Planning

For the daily weather forecast in Israel [check this link](#).

Rain radar (Hebrew only): <http://www.govmap.gov.il/app12>

### National holidays in Israel

Most stores and supermarkets are closed on Saturdays and holidays. On Fridays and holiday eves, stores are open until 2-3 p.m. Restaurants, coffee shops, cinemas, theaters and shopping centers outside cities and towns are open on Saturdays and holidays except on Yom Kippur.

Holiday	2017	2018	2019
Passover day 1	April 11	March 31	April 20
Passover day 7	April 17	April 6	April 26
Independence Day	May 2	April 19	May 9
Shavuot	May 31	May 20	June 9
Rosh Hashana	September 21	September 10	September 30
(Jewish New Year)	September 22	September 11	October 1
Yom Kippur	September 30	September 19	October 9
Sukkot day 1	October 5	September 24	October 14
Sukkot day 8	October 12	October 1	October 21

### Emergency calls

If you need to make an emergency call for a rescue operation, in the desert or any other part of the trek, please call **100** (police). They will contact the emergency rescue unit in the area which is on standby 24/7. If your cell phone does not receive or transmit a signal, try to get to higher ground. Service providers in remote areas are able to assist too. For a list service providers look in the Desert section. You can also contact **02-6222211** (24/7) in an emergency situation. They will contact the field inspector in your area and assist you if necessary. Below is a list of hospitals from north to south:

City	Hospital		Tel. number
<b>Kiryat Shemona</b>	-	Emergency room	04-6943333
<b>Zefat (Safed)</b>	Ziv	General	04-6828811
<b>Tiberias (Poriya)</b>	Poriya	General	04-6652211
<b>Afula</b>	Ha'emek	General	04-6494165
<b>Haifa</b>	Rambam	General	04-8542222
<b>Haifa</b>	Bnei Zion	General	04-8359210
<b>Haifa</b>	Carmel	General	04-8250633
<b>Hadera</b>	Hillel Yoffe	General	04-6304396
<b>Tel Aviv</b>	Tel Hashomer(Sheba)	General	03-5303030
<b>Tel Aviv</b>	Ichilov (Suraski)	General	03-6973232
<b>Petah Tikva</b>	Rabin medical center	General	03-9377011
<b>Jerusalem</b>	Shaarei Zedek	General	02-6555111
<b>Jerusalem</b>	Hadassa Mt. Scopus	General	02-5844333
<b>Jerusalem</b>	Hadassa Ein Karem	General	02-6777222
<b>Be'er Sheva</b>	Soroka	General	08-6400111
<b>Eilat</b>	Yoseftal	General	08-6358022

In all other places if you need to contact emergency rooms or an ambulance, please call emergency medical assistance **101** and indicate the nearest city nearest to your location or let them know the area you are hiking.

## Planning

### Money issues

Credit cards are usually accepted. However, for some services you have to pay cash only: Taxi, water caching service (in the desert), some B&B and many low cost accommodations. Withdrawing cash is mostly from ATMs. If for some reason the ATM doesn't like your credit card and you are in a town or city, go to a bank which is almost always next to the ATM. Most of the trail goes near small towns, kibbutzim or places without a bank or an ATM. Below is a list, from north to south, of cities and towns on or very close to the INT, with banks and/or ATM and the relevant map number. Most post offices [PO] have banking services with lower commissions but no ATMs. Many gas stations [GS] have ATMs. Here is a list with map numbers:

Kiryat Shemona 1	Nazareth 10	El'ad 20	Arad 33
Safed (Tzfat) 5	Isfiya 12	Latrun – Alonit 23	Midreshet Ben Gurion – [GS] 40
Migdal, [PO] 6	Zikhron Yaacov 14	Jerusalem Map C.	Mizpe Ramon 43
Tiberias 6	Hadera 15, 16	Beit Guvrin [GS] 27.	Sapir 46
Yavne'el 7	Netanya 17	Kama B [GS] 29.	Yotvata 15 km north of Elifaz Map G.
Kfar Tavor 8, 9	Hertzliya (Arena mall) 18	Dvira junct. [GS] 29	Eilat 56
Natzeret Illit 9	Tel Aviv 19	Meitar[PO] & bank 30	

For daily exchange rates please [click here](#).

### Camping out

Outside a nature preserve there are no restrictions on camping out. While in Nature preserve, camping is allowed in designated areas only. There are no personal safety issues involved in camping out in any part of Israel. However, it is recommended to keep your backpack inside the tent at night. If you leave the tent at home, please make sure that your backpack is close to you at all times. **Don't leave cash, passport, credit cards, camera or a cell phone in your backpack when camping out. Please put them inside your sleeping bag.** You can attach a string with a small bell or two to your backpack and tie it to your hand. Hikers rarely complain about stolen backpacks and valuables. However, better safe than sorry.

### Your backpack and what's inside it

**The first rule is: Make your backpack as light as possible.**

**The second rule is: Don't make it too heavy.**

**The third rule: Oh well, it's the same as the first two...**

Any experienced hiker is aware of the problems associated with carrying too much weight. Reducing the weight of your fully loaded backpack becomes a matter of taking out a few grams of your tooth paste, packing a small bar of soap or only half of it or using ultralight gear.

**When hiking in the Negev you will need a minimum of 5.5-6 liters / day of water for drinking and cooking purposes.** I assume that you will hike in the desert approximately 22-24 km (14-15 miles) on an average day. If you plan on hiking longer distances, more water is required. If you want to take a quick half a liter "shower," that's more water. I've skipped the "shower & co." in the desert while camping out. In the northern part of the trek you can fill about 3-4 liters of water in the morning and refill during the day. However, a few days in the north part require 5 liters of water a day. **I've always filled 5 liters every morning, in the north too.**

**A simple rule of thumb to follow:** Take everything you believe is essential, things that you can't leave home without them, including your AMEX. If the total weight of your fully loaded backpack is more than 9 kg (~20 pounds), excluding water, food, hiking poles and your shoes, it is too heavy.

## Planning

Or maybe it's time to buy a lighter backpack? 60 liters backpack is sufficient. Some people have hiked with a 50-liter backpack.

Good hiking **shoes** are mandatory – I'd say good high hiking shoes. I've seen people hike with their jogging Nikes or Reeboks. I don't recommend it. Gore-Tex shoes are not necessary in Israel unless you hike in winter. There are only two days where you need to cross a water stream. Take lightweight, water-resistant sandals, or crocs, and you will use them every night too. Make sure that your crocs are suitable for an outing in Tel Aviv. Not every color is suitable for an evening with Zubin Mehta conducting an Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO) concert. I love classical music, and while hiking through Joshua Park along the Yarkon River, I made a stop for a concert at the Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv, home of the IPO. Perlman was playing Beethoven.

A **tent** is important, but it has a weight toll. I have hiked in the desert from Eilat to Arad from mid-March to early April without a tent. In Winter there are some places in the desert where the minimum night temperature drops to 0° C. Such nights are not too frequent. This is your minimum temperature consideration when looking for a sleeping bag. Hiking in groups makes it easier to share the weight of a tent, cooking equipment, first aid, this Guide or other stuff (Welsh for stuff).

**Mosquito net:** Mosquito repellent does a good job. Flies in the desert are annoying. Use the mosquito net when taking a break during day time.

**Gloves:** You will need them only in winter. If you are cold at night, protect your hands with your extra pair of socks. They will do a good job.

Cool evenings and mornings: I took a **fleece** jacket with me. It weighs about 500 grams (I'm XL). It did a great job as a pillow too.

**Rainy days:** March is the only month when rain is a problem on the trail, and mainly in the north, **unless you hike in winter**. I took a **rain cover for my backpack**. I used it twice. As for myself, the rain was so "heavy" that half an hour after it stopped I was dry. There was one day in April at Amud junction (Zomet Amud), when hiking was impossible. It was raining cats and dogs. Other than that I had no problems with rain. **When you make your plan, take a few days of rain delays into consideration.**

**Sunny days:** You will need proper sun protection. Long sleeves are great, sun screen is obligatory, SPF 30 or higher. Use it generously on any unprotected area of your skin. Protect your eyes. Don't hit the road without sunglasses.

**Cooking equipment:** The most suitable cooking equipment for local weather conditions runs on butane gas. If your equipment does not fit local refill tanks, you can buy a universal adapter. Kovea gas stoves, and similar, fit local refill tanks. Alternatively, consider buying a gas stove in Israel.

**Hiking poles and other equipment:** Please search the web for poles if you don't have them. Don't forget a flashlight. A Leatherman is nice to have but it is quite heavy...

### List of suggested gear

1. Backpack 50-65 liters (+10). (Larger backpacks tend to fill fast...)
2. Lightweight rain cover for your backpack (~100 gm).
3. Hiking poles.
4. Hiking shoes. (Don't hit the road with new shoes, break them in...)
5. Sandals / crocs.
6. Hat. It will protect your head during cooler evenings too.
7. Bandanna.
8. Sunglasses.
9. Sun screen (30 SPF minimum)
10. 3-5-liter camel pack.
11. Additional water (if required) can be carried in plastic bottle(s) outside the backpack.

## Planning

12. Cellular phone.
13. Lightweight tent or TARP. (Many locals don't carry a tent.)
14. Mattress (Inflatable mattresses are suitable only if you take a tent with you).
15. Sleeping bag (5 C). In winter consider a warmer one.
16. Small towel.
17. 1 Pair of pants + zipper in the knee area.
18. 1 Pair of shorts (optional).
19. Bathing suit. (Red Sea, Dead Sea, Mediterranean, Lake of Galilee).
20. 2 Shirts. I had long sleeves; they provide better sun protection.
21. 3 Pairs of socks (Smartwool).
22. 3 Pairs of underwear.
23. Fleece jacket.
24. Mosquito net.
25. Lightweight raingear, **in winter**.
26. Flashlight.
27. 10 m utility rope (~3-4 mm in diameter).
28. Gas stove - butane is best. Don't bring you alcohol stove.
29. Cookware (lightweight).
30. 1 spare gas container in the desert. Buy in Israel.
31. Plastic plate & cup.
32. Knife, Fork, Spoon.
33. Can opener (The best military invention ever: P-38 or P-51).
34. Water purification tablets, **optional**. (I did not take them). In the south water is not always of adequate purification quality. North of Arad, potable water is accessible at least every 15 km.
35. Toilet paper.
36. Plastic bags to take your litter with you.
37. Mosquito and insect repellent.
38. Small soap bar (or half of it).
39. Personal care stuff (in a plastic zip lock bag, they are lightweight).
40. Small plastic mirror.
41. First aid kit (see below).
42. A needle for treating blisters. Sterilize by flame before applying.
43. Any medication that you need.
44. Relevant parts of this guide.
45. Compass (optional).
46. Camera.
47. Binoculars (optional).
48. Pen.

## Gear, sporting and outdoor stores

If you forgot something at home or you need to buy butane gas look for a Rikoshet store or Lametayel. In Azrieli Center (Tel Aviv) there is a Rikoshet store (Tel:03-6956862). In Tiberias (Tel: 04-6584252), Haifa, Jerusalem, Be'er Sheva and Eilat (Tel: 08-6339938) the Rikoshet stores are conveniently located. Lametayel in Tel Aviv is on Dizengoff Street and in Be'er Sheva, 5 minutes from the train station.

## Gas refill canisters

The most popular gas is Butane in puncture or screw top canisters. They are available along the trail. Here is a list of stores close to the INT from north to south:

**Kiryat Shemona:** Hagor camping store, Nofit Hermon center. From Nehemia shopping center (at the junction of route 90 & 99) go east on route 99. After 2 km turn right and arrive to Nofit Hermon center. Tel: 04-8242323.

**Migdal:** Days 6 & 40s. On the trail, Tzomet Hilik. 054-6345555.



## Planning

**Tzemakh:** Days 7 & 39s. Rikoshet camping goods. Mool Kinneret shopping center. 2 km east of Yardenit on route 90. Tel: 04-8114657

**Beit Yanai:** Days 14 & 33s. Stop Market, at M Haderekh shopping center. Five minute walk from Beit Yanai beach east route 2. Open 7 days a week. Tel: 09-8669333.

**Tel Aviv:** Rikoshet camping & gear store at Azrieli center. The train stops by the Azrieli center. In Tel Aviv take a bus. Tel: 03-6956862.

**Tel Aviv:** Maslul camping & gear store. 44 Bugrashov st. Tel: 03-6203508.

**Meitar:** Days 25 & 21s. 2 km off the INT. Gohari store, village center: 08-6510380.

**Mizpe Ramon:** Days 35 & 11s Super Bamidbar, 1 Tzia street town center. Tel: 08-6339938.

**Sapir:** Days 38 & 9s. Yaniv grocery store. Tel: 050-5676599

**Be'er Ora:** Days 44 & 2s. Grocery store. Daily 06:30-21:00. Fri. to 15:00. Sat. in the evening only. Tel.: 052-2626548.

**Eilat:** Rikoshet coming & gear store. The BIG shopping mall. City center. Tel: 08-6339938.

## First aid

The information below is based on information at the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) web site, and *Medicine for the Backcountry; A Practical Guide to Wilderness First Aid* by Buck Tilton, M.S. and Frank Hubbell, D.O. And Karen Berger's book *Hiking the Triple Crown; How to Hike America's Longest Trails*.

Generally, getting outdoors and into the wilderness is a healthy thing to do – both mentally and physically. But accidents do happen and it's important to know how to handle them. In this section, you'll find information on:

- First-aid and wilderness first-aid courses and books
- Building your first-aid kit
- Cell phones

Learning the basics of first-aid is your responsibility. The best way to learn is to take a course with a reputable agency. A basic first-aid course will cover what to do if you're faced with wounds, broken bones, burns, and more. CPR training isn't usually part of a basic first-aid course but it's worth making the extra effort to learn it as well. Keep in mind that most first-aid classes are designed to teach you what to do in the "real" world and may not cover wilderness situations. For information in the USA, about where you might be able to find a wilderness first-aid course, ask your local Red Cross or outdoor retailer, or check with one of the following groups:

- Solo Wilderness First Aid: <http://www.soloschools.com>
- University of California at Berkeley, Youth and Outdoor Programs  
<http://calbears.berkeley.edu>
- Hit the trail: Information about useful wilderness first-aid books  
<http://www.hitthetrail.com/books/firstaid.php>

## First-Aid kit suggestions

Below you'll find some suggestions for your first-aid kit. Please be advised that this is not an exhaustive list. Medical needs vary greatly, so too do first-aid kits. When assembling your kit, consider your personal needs, the needs of your travel companions, weather, terrain, and the length of your journey.

- A few adhesive strips. The ones about 1 by 3 inches work in most situations. Water resistant adhesives tend to last longer and stay on better.
- A few sterile gauze pads, around 4 inches by 4 inches. These can be used to cover larger ouchies or can be cut down for smaller wounds. They can also be used to clean wounds.

## Planning

- A roll of athletic tape. Use it to hold down gauze, prevent blisters and temporarily repair equipment (For the tough-skinned, duct tape works well for these purposes as well).
- Tincture of benzoin compound. Benzoin helps dressings stick to the skin better.
- An irrigation syringe for cleaning wounds.
- Wound closure strips for pulling together the sides of a clean wound that gapes open.
- An individually wrapped sanitary napkin. Lightweight and inexpensive, sanitary napkins make great compresses for badly bleeding injuries.
- Povidine-iodine for cleaning around wounds or disinfecting water.
- Moleskin and/or 2nd Skin for preventing and treating blisters.
- A few tablets of a painkiller. Tylenol, aspirin or ibuprofen.
- An elastic wrap or Ace bandage that can be used to compress strains and sprains or to hold a compress on a bad bleed.
- A couple of safety pins to secure the elastic wrap, repair rips in clothing, or (once sterilized) to drain a blister.
- A few mild antihistamine tablets like Benadryl to help relieve allergies, the itch of insect bites, or cold symptoms.
- Hydrocortisone for insect bites, heat rashes, and poison ivy.
- A couple of tablets of Immodium and/or Pepto-Bismol for diarrhea.
- Antimicrobial ointment
- Scissors and tweezers, these may be part of your pocketknife.
- Lip balm
- More potent medications for specific problems
- Rubber gloves (optional).
- Phone numbers of the closest emergency, or call 100 (police). They will contact a rescue team if necessary.

Other items can and should be added to your kit depending on where you'll be hiking (north, south or both), the time of year, and, of course, personal needs and preference.

## Cell phones

US and European cell phones can be used in Israel, ask your service provider. It may be cost effective to rent a cell phone where incoming calls are free, and you've prepaid minutes while traveling. In Israel, almost everywhere in the country, cell phones work, except in remote places. If you have rented a cellular phone with rechargeable minutes, make sure you have sufficient minutes before you start hiking. You can buy the SIM card in Israel. All three major cellular companies - Pelephone, Cellcom and Partner - have service centers in any city in Israel or at Ben Gurion airport after exiting customs.

## Hiking shoes and backpack repair

**Hadera** (Map 16) **Zlot**: Backpack and shoe repair. 31 Hanassi street Hadera. Tel: 04-6322303. Same day service. About a mile from the Hadera train station. 5 minutes by bus or taxi from the train station.

**Be'er Sheva** – (Map F) **Hayachfan**. Backpack and shoe repair. Uniko Passage, in the Downtown area. Same day service. Tel: 08-6278287. Daily: 08:00-13:30, 16:00-19:00. Tuesday and Friday: 08:00-13:45.

## Planning

### Transportation, accommodations and miscellaneous

#### From Ben-Gurion airport to Dan or to Eilat

**Heading north to Dan and Mount Hermon:** Take a train (05:00-23:20 every 40 minutes to Tel Aviv), bus or taxi to Tel Aviv.

By train & bus from Tel Aviv, go to Haifa's Lev Hamifratz station. Walk to the Egged bus terminal, and take bus #500 or #501 to Kiryat Shemona.

By bus from Tel Aviv to Kiryat Shemona: #842 and #845 ~3.5 hours. #841 is a slow bus ~4.5 hours. Kiryat Shemona is the place to buy food for the first three days.

From Kiryat Shemona to Dan and to Majdal Shams: Take bus #58 at: Sun-Thu: 10:30, 12:35, 15:05, 17:35, 19:20. Fri: 10:05, 12:00, 13:30. Sat: 21:30. From Dan to Majdal Shams the bus departs ~5 minutes later.

**Going South to Eilat:** Book a flight from Ben Gurion airport to Eilat. Fares are \$20-80 one way. Take a train (05:00-23:20, every 40 minutes to Tel Aviv), bus or taxi to Tel Aviv.

From Tel Aviv Central Bus station to Eilat: #390 and #394, from 06:30 to 17:00 every 1.5 hours and then at 23:59. The ride is 5-5.5 hours. In Eilat you will buy all your needs for the first few days. There is a Rikoshet store in Eilat too.

**Starting in the area of Tel Aviv:** Take a train, bus or taxi to Tel Aviv. If you need to buy camping gear or additional hiking equipment, take the train to Tel Aviv Hashalom station. Walk up to the Azrieli shopping centre. The Rikoshet store is by the entrance on your left side. From the Azrieli center take a bus or taxi to Joshua Park, or you can take the train north to the Tel Aviv University station, which is near Joshua Park. The trail passes through Joshua Park. When exiting the train station, go out through the tunnel to your right. Walk from the train station to Joshua Park, south of the parking lot cross the street. After another 200 meters you hit the trail. If you get to the Yarkon River, turn back and look for the trail markers; they are 10-20 meters north of the river. Going west you'll reach the sea shore after 2-3 kilometers. The trail goes north from there. Going east for approximately 2 km. in Joshua Park, you go by the Ayalon shopping mall. It's a good place to shop for food & water.

**Need to spend a night or two in Tel Aviv before heading north or south:** Check the accommodations. [Abraham Hostel](#) is one of the better options.

#### Domestic flights, train, bus and taxi service

For flight schedules from Ben-Gurion airport to Eilat check: <http://www.arkia.com> , <http://www.elal.com/en> .

For train schedules and fares, check at: <http://www.rail.co.il/EN>

Egged bus schedules and fares: <http://www.egged.co.il/eng>

There is no bus or train service on Saturdays and holidays, except buses to and from Eilat.

Taxi: When you ride a taxi always ask to turn on the meter. It is cheaper than fixed price rides. Only with long distance rides over 50 km, use a fixed rate ride.

## Planning

### Trail Angels and other accommodations

#### **Trail angels:**

[http://shvil.wikia.com/wiki/INT\\_Trail\\_Angels](http://shvil.wikia.com/wiki/INT_Trail_Angels)

#### **Low cost accommodations:**

[http://shvil.wikia.com/wiki/Services\\_on\\_the\\_INT#List\\_of\\_low\\_cost\\_accommodations](http://shvil.wikia.com/wiki/Services_on_the_INT#List_of_low_cost_accommodations)

**Bed & Breakfast:** It is not budget lodging.

[http://shvil.wikia.com/wiki/INT - Bed & Breakfast](http://shvil.wikia.com/wiki/INT_-_Bed_&Breakfast)

### Storing of small packages / clothes

It is advised to bring only what you need for the hike. If you need an extra shirt and a pair of jeans for the days after the hike, you can ask at the hotel / hostel where you spend the first night and they will store it for you.

### No litter policy

As indicated, a no-litter policy is enforced in nature preserves. Most of the areas you will be hiking are in nature preserves. Disposing of garbage is allowed only where litter collection tanks are available. Many night camps in the desert do not have garbage collection tanks. Take your litter with you. Make a few holes in the plastic bottles and put them on your utility rope, or tie the bottles onto your backpack. Put all other litter in a plastic bag. When you get to a place with litter collection tanks, get rid of your garbage there.

**In the north:** Dig a hole and bury your feces. Do not burn the toilet paper definitely when it's dry when the risk of fire is high. Dispose of the toilet paper in the nearest trash bin. **In the desert:** There's no need to dig a hole the feces decomposes fast. Don't cover the feces with stones. And you can burn the toilet paper.

### Restricted access zones

In the desert and a few other places you will occasionally pass near warning signs marked with red on a yellow background. These signs indicate a military training zone and firing zones. Do not cross them!

### In a nature preserve

You will be hiking through nature preserves. In the desert the trail goes mostly through nature preserves. North of the Small Crater there are two major nature preserves: Carmel Nature Preserve and Mt. Meron Nature Preserve. There is only one place the trek goes through a nature preserve where entrance is not free of charge. It's in the northern part of the trek at Snir. While in a nature preserve there are few rules to follow:

1. Camping out is allowed only in designated areas Night Camps [NC]. This is strictly enforced by local rangers.
2. If you hike in nature preserve and do not intend to camp out in a NC, you must leave the nature reserve 1 hour before sunset.
3. It is forbidden to collect branches, dry branches or any other part of a tree or bush to start a camp fire.
4. Setting a camp fire is allowed only in designated camping areas.
5. A no-litter policy is enforced.

## Planning

6. Please do not leave open cans with sharp edges. They may cause injuries to wild animals.
7. A designated camping area may be marked by a sign or several stones surrounding the area.
8. While camping out in the desert, please do not stay near water reservoirs. Animals come to drink there at night. Your presence will disturb them.
9. Canyoning or rock climbing are forbidden except in designated areas.
10. When looking for a NC in the desert, never set your tent in a low point. In case of rain or a flash flood, it's the worst place to set a tent.
11. Wild flowers are protected species, please do not pick them, enjoy nature. Please take nothing but pictures and leave only your footprints.
12. Please help us in the [Leave No Trace](#) initiative that we are promoting in Israel.

## Wildlife

When you hike you will meet animals who live in the area: ibex in the south, oryx, jackals, boars, wolves, foxes, deer, rabbits, rock hyrax, reptiles, falcons and eagles are all part of the trail. Enjoy them. **Don't camp out near water sources in the desert**, you will disturb animals that come to drink at night.

## Hiking the trail with a dog

[Check this link on the INT forum](#).

## How do I know I'm not lost?

The INT markers are: White, Blue and Orange together with a single red, black, green or blue. It's not easy to get lost. Just follow the INT all the way. A few simple rules of thumb to consider: If you don't see the trail markers for more than 10 minutes (make it 15 on some long straight sections of the desert), look for one. There are very few reasons for not spotting a trail marker: Either you took a wrong turn, you've missed a few markers because you were enjoying the view, or a few markers were covered by spring blossoms. If you can't find the markers, go back to the last place you've seen one, look at the map and make sure you know where you are.

## The Desert

The Negev desert is without any doubts the most beautiful part of the INT. If you have only few weeks to hike don't miss the desert. You can hike the desert in any direction from November to mid-April. The best time to hike in the desert is early February to Late March. The desert section is ~400 km (250 mi) long from Arad to Eilat.

North of Arad, food and water are not a logistical problem. You will hike near villages, kibbutzim and small towns almost every day. South of Arad you need to arrange for potable water and a food supply. Proper planning is the key to safety. You can do it yourself or use a logistics center that will provide you with potable water and food in all relevant places in the desert.

## Camping, caching water and food.

Most of the desert is a nature reserve and camping out at night camps is allowed only in designated areas at night camps. The maps include the locations of all night camps. They are also mentioned at the end of each daily hike description. Please refer to the maps and text.

**Apart from villages and kibbutzim the most reliable water source in the desert are private water caches. We recommend using them. All other water sources in the desert are not 100% reliable.**

You will need to contact a caching service ([http://shvil.wikia.com/wiki/Services\\_on\\_the\\_INT](http://shvil.wikia.com/wiki/Services_on_the_INT)), prepare the food and water for each SP, packed in a way that animals won't dig it out. **Double wrap all food in nylon**. After properly covering the cached supply, it is very important **to draw a small map** of the area where you've cached food and water and take a picture too. Please make

## Planning

your own markers so you will not spend too much time looking for your dinner when you get there. The caching trip for all SPs (Arad to Eilat) will take two days. This is part of the fun. Share a ride for caching water and food in the desert and logistical support (4X4). Below you will find a list of water caching service.

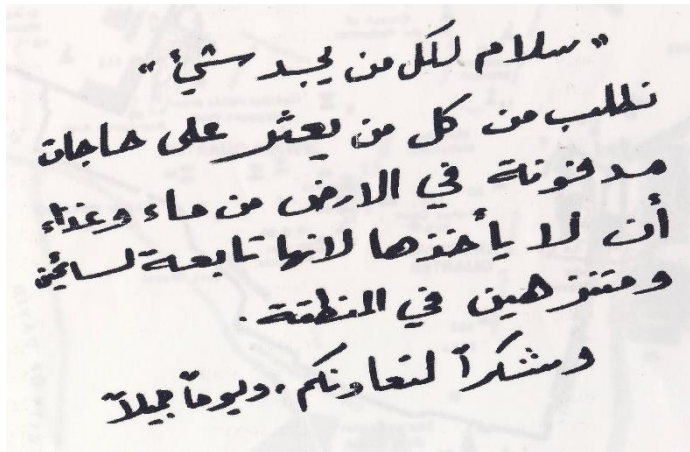
You will need to cache water and food in the ground ahead of arrival at all SPs. It is advised to cache water and food in some distance (100-200 meters) from a NC. At sensitive SPs (2, 3, 16) double check that your cache is not easily found by other people. Take a picture and draw a map of the area where you've cached water and food. **Avoid caching food and water in a potential flood area.** Below you'll find a **sample map**. You can also put a label on your cache indicating that it belongs to you. Remember to include your name and contact information. Here is a recommended text in English, Hebrew and Arabic. Just scan the label and use it. [A cache label file is published on the forum.](#)

**What you have "found" belong to hikers that need it to continue their trip. Please do not open it or take it with you.**

**Thank you and have a great day**

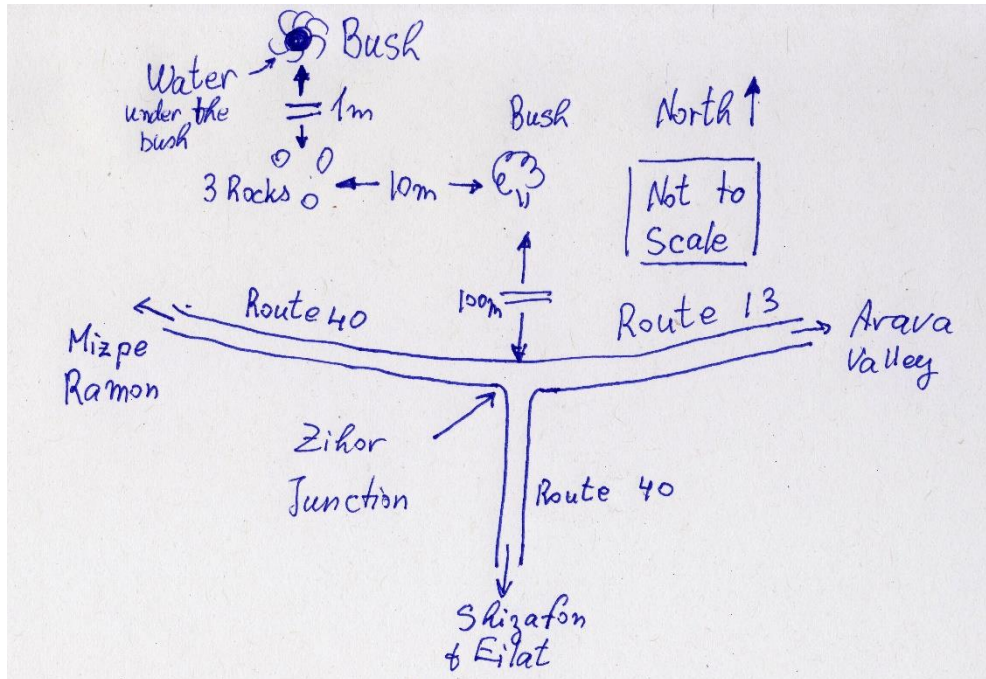
הדברים שמצאת שייכים למטיילים הזקוקים להם להמשך הטיול שלהם. בבקשה אל תפתח ואל תקח דבר.

תודה רבה ושיהיה יום נפלא.



**Sample map of a water cache**

## Planning



### Supply points – water caching points

Below is a list of towns, villages, kibbutzim, khans (caravanserais) and supply points on the trail, on your way from Arad to Eilat. If you plan to stay in one place for several nights, the supply points indicate a drop off and/or pick up place by taxi or jeep. Some supply points are also the water caching points which are indicated on the maps.

1. **Arad** (hotels, inn, hostel, B&B, supermarket, cinema, shopping mall). Bus to the Dead Sea. Map 33.
2. Be'er Efe NC at Nahal Heimar on route 258. Map 34.
3. Meizad Tamar NC on route 25. Map 35.
4. Small crater gap at the exit of the Small Makhtesh NC. Map 36.
5. Top of Small Makhtesh NC – route 227. Map 37.
6. Ein Yorkeam NC on route 206 might be windy and noisy. Map 38.
7. Oron plant (water only). Map 38.
8. Mador NC. Map 39. **4x4 only.**
9. Yeroham (off trail 15 km, supermarket). Map E, north of map 38.
10. Midreshet Ben-Gurion (B&B, supermarket, restaurant, camping). Map 40.
11. Keren Akev NC. Map 40. **4x4 only.**
12. Akev NC Map 40. **4x4 only.**
13. Ein Akev parking. Map 40. **4x4 only.**
14. Ein Zik NC. Maps 40, 41. **4x4 only.**
15. Sharav NC. Map 41. **4x4 only.**
16. Hava NC. Map 41. **4x4 only.**
17. Mizpe Ramon (B&B, youth hostel, hotels, supermarket, restaurants). Map 43.
18. Gevanim NC off route 40. Map 44.
19. Be'erot Khan. 15 km south south-east of Mizpe Ramon. (Ramon Crater). Map 44.
20. Gev Holit NC. Map 45. **4x4 only.**
21. Tzvira NC. Map 45. **4x4 only.**
22. Ein Yahav (off trail 10 km. supermarket). Northeast of maps F and 46.
23. Sapir (B&B, mini-market). Map 46

## Planning

24. Tzofar, Spice Road Khan. (B&B, mini-market, McDonald's). Map 46.
25. Barak Night Camp. Map 48.
26. Paran (5 km off trail), B&B pick up and drop off (fee) from Zihor Junction and Nahal Barak are available. Supermarket. Map 48.
27. Paran Night Camp. Map 49. **4x4 only**
28. Zihor Night camp. 2 km west of Zihor junction (routes 40 & 13). Map 50 north.
29. Shitim (Desert Ashram) food and budget lodging. Map 50 south.
30. Shizafon junction & Kibbutz Neot Semadar (water, 2.5 km off the trail), Map 51
31. Shahrut, Camel Riders camp, 1.5 km north of Shahrut. Map 52.
32. Yotvata – 15 km north of Timna, supermarket, restaurant. Accessible by bus from Elifaz and Timna). Map G, east of 52<sup>nd</sup>.
33. Elifaz – 2 km from Timna, B&B. Map 54.
34. Timna Park & restaurant. Map 54.
35. Raham Etek Night Camp. Map 55.
36. Be'er Ora – Map G, east of 55<sup>th</sup>.
37. Shehoret Canyon Night Camp. Map 55.
38. Yehoram Night Camp on road 12. Map 56.
39. **Eilat**. Snorkeling, scuba diving and many tourist activities. All your hiking needs are available in Eilat. Map 56.

### Problematic water caches

In few places along the trail, there have been numerous reports of stolen caches. Water is usually not stolen. The reports were at: Be'er Efe (2), Meizad Tamar (3) Mador (8) and Hava Night Camp (16). It is recommended to have the telephone number of a taxi in Dimona or in Arad or to arrange to bring water to Be'er Efe or Meizad Tamar in the case your cache has vanished. For Mador and Hava NC contact Haim Berger or Suleiman or Muhammad Zanon (telephone numbers are provided below). **Do not cache anything but water at the above places.**

### Service providers & logistical support in remote places

Various points on the trek can be accessed only with 4x4 vehicles. During the hiking season the National Parks Authority employees visit most of the areas as part of their duty. They can be relied upon if one needs **emergency** help such as water supply or contacting a rescue unit in the area. When planning your trip make sure that water is brought to you at remote points of the trek. Such are supply points 8 Mador NC, 16 Geve Hava NC and 20 Gev Holit NC. Supply point 24 Nahal Barak can be accessed by regular cars too. Taxi service is not available in the area of Nahal Barak.

Service providers will bring water and food too. They can also take your backpack from one SP to another. All you will have to carry is your daily water supply and food. Please inquire when making your order. Other services are available on request, please inquire for specifics. It is recommended to contact one or more service providers by e-mail during the planning process and inquire about availability and pricing.

Here is a list of 4x4 service providers in the desert. The people mentioned below provide additional services in the desert: Organized tours in the desert, taking your backpack between NCs, and more.

1. Haim Berger: Cell: 054-5343797. Tel: 08-6532203; E-mail: negevjeep@gmail.com
2. Yoram Zvik (Yerooham) : Cell: 054-4761761; E-mail: yzvik@netvision.net.il
3. Muhammad Zanon : Cell 050-5278128.
4. Amir Gadnaor: Tel.: 08-6375876. Cell: 052-3351357. E-mail: gadnaor@zahav.net.il.
5. Harel Zelcer: Cell: 052-2739779. E-mail: rl\_z@walla.com
6. Suleiman: 8 km west of the trail (Hava NC 16) close to route 40. Tel: 077-5170016.

When ordering service in remote places it is important to specify the exact location you want the water / food. Service providers are not available 24/7. They are involved in other activities in the desert. You need to order the service at least 48 hours prior to arrival at a supply point. Last-minute orders may not be accepted, due to the nature of some remote areas that require



## Planning

coordination of an entry to a specific area with local civil and/or military authorities. **Payment is cash only.**

### Supermarkets & grocery stores

In **Midreshet Ben-Gurion** (SP 10) the supermarket is open Sunday-Thursday 8:00-19:00, Friday 8:00-14:00. In **Ein Yahav** (SP 22), Sapor (SP 23), **Tzofar** (SP 24), **Paran** (SP 26) above, supermarkets are open 8:00 to 13:00 and 16:30 to 21:00 (20:00 in Tzofar – SP 24). **Be'er Ora** (SP 36, 3 km off the INT) 07:00-21:00; Friday 07:00-15:00. On Tuesday some of them are closed in the afternoon & evenings.

### Taxi service

The alternative to water caching is using a taxi or 4x4 services to bring water and food to SPs. At some supply points along the trail you can dispose of your garbage. Please use the taxi or 4x4 for this purpose. Put your litter in a closed plastic bag before handing it to the driver. In all SPs that are accessible by taxi, make sure you've contacted a taxi at least 48 hours prior to arrival. Not all taxi drivers in the Negev speak English. **Always ask the taxi driver to turn on the meter. It is cheaper.**

**Arad: Eli Levi** (24/7): Arrives to Be'er Efe on route 258, Meizad Tamar on route 25 and the bottom of the Small Makhtesh (SP 4) . **Telephone #s:** 052-2889579 ; 08-9953791.

**Dimona:** The gap at the bottom of the Small Makhtesh, Meizad Tamar, Oron, Ein Yorkeam, top of the Small Makhtesh. **Uzi:** 052-3557105 (24/7); **Yosi:** 050-6435420 (24/7).

**Mizpe Ramon: Tuba** (van service). He will take food and water to Saharonim NC on road 40, and Zihor Junction. Tel: 052-6500666 (cell). *Not available: Sun-Thu 05:15-08:30, Fri-Sat: 06:00-08:30.*

**Eilat :** Yehoram NC on road 12. Shehoret canyon is accessible by taxi and regular cars too. Some taxi drivers will drive only on route 90, the main route from Eilat to the north. Shehoret canyon is about 4 km east of route 90. **Victor** drives to Shehoret Canyon and to Yehoram NC. Cell: 052-2797752

### Water caching - do it yourself

If you join a group for the water caching trip with a guide, the cost is reasonable: ~\$500/trip which is split among several hikers. The guides know where to cache water, they have the tools for digging. You have to buy water and have your hiking and caching plan ready.

For those who don't want to use a guide for the water caching trip, you can do it yourself. You will need to rent a car, have a pickaxe and a shovel. Some trail angels will provide you the tools. You will need the [INT guide](#) that includes all the maps for the trip. *Have also a small lock with you.* The following caching plan is based upon the day hike description in the guide. **You can cache food too, but please make sure that all food is double wrapped in nylon to prevent animals from digging out the food.** Between Arad and Mizpe Ramon it is recommended to cache only water. Food is sometimes stolen by locals at some locations. **Bedouin will never take your water.** In the rare event that water is stolen, mostly by irresponsible, dehydrated hikers, contact one of [the guides](#) and they will bring you water. Take the empty plastic bottles with you to the next disposal site. Always cache water at higher ground and not at a bottom of a wadi. A sudden flash flood will remove the cache and you won't find it. It is important to cache in a hidden place, especially at problematic places.

See the full list of supply points (SP) which is also the list of water caching points. (NC – night camp). The complete tour Arad–Eilat–Arad, including the driving on dirt roads, is ~650 km. You

need two days to complete the caches. The cost of a do it yourself caching tour: Car rental \$100-200(2-3 days) + gas ~\$100 + two caches with 4x4 ~\$100.

In some places you can call a taxi and they will bring you water. Cost in parentheses indicates an approximate cost of the taxi (January 2016) and does not include cost of water. Taxi drivers may charge extra for buying the water. The average cost of mineral water ~NIS 1.5 /liter. Ein Gedi is the cheapest brand (NIS 1/liter) (January 2016).

Always cache an extra amount of water. I'd say 3-4 liters extra for each hiker / day. It is recommended to make the caching trip when you arrive in Arad or few days before. Do not cache before you start the hike in Dan, you never know if you'll complete the hike as planned.

### **Renting a car in Arad**

There is no rental car office in Arad. The nearest is Hertz by the Dead Sea. It is ~25 minutes drive from Arad. They will deliver the car to Arad free of charge: Sunday to Thursday at 07:45 and at 17:30 and on Friday at 07:45 and 14:30. If you ask for delivery in Arad at any other time of the day there is a delivery charge of \$40. On Saturday the office is closed.

Make sure you provide Hertz a copy of your driver's license and your passport with the entry stamp to Israel. You can do that at the Hertz office at the Ben Gurion airport immediately after your entry to Israel. Hertz Dead Sea office: Tel: +972-86584530; Cell: 054-3999020; Fax: +972-89973679; E-mail: suzi@hertz.co.il

**A pickaxe and a shovel:** In Arad there are several trail angels. Arie Shiff will provide you the digging tools so you don't have to buy them. When you complete the caching trip just bring the tools back to Arie. Please check the [trail angels list](#) for contact details. Pickaxe is required for digging.

**Renting a car in Eilat** is easy. Both Avis (+972-8-6373164) and Hertz (+972-8-6375050) have offices as well as local companies.

**Digging tools:** If you stay at [The Shelter Hostel](#) they will provide you with a pickaxe and/or a shovel. Just bring the tools back when you complete the caching trip.

### **North to South**

1. Start in Arad and go east on route 31 (Map 33 & Map E). On route 258 turn right and south. The first water cache is at Be'er Efe (SP 2 – map 34) which is the end of day 30. The Night Camp is on the east side of the road, but you can cache on the west side too. Alternative: [A taxi from Arad](#) can bring you water (~NIS 80 - January 2016). A second alternative: There is a quarry about 3 km west of Be'er Efe and you can refill water there. The quarry is closed on Saturdays.
2. Continue south on route 258 and turn left at route 25 (Map E). After about 5 km you arrive at Mezar Tamar which is your second water cache (SP 3 – map 35). Alternative: [A taxi from Dimona](#) can bring you water(~NIS 100). Make the cache.
3. Go back west on route 25 (Map E). After approximately 15 km, turn left and south on route 206. Continue for ~9 km and turn left and east on route 227 towards the small crater (Makhtesh Katan). It is a narrow road, drive carefully. Continue east for about 12 km when the road turns right and down. **DO NOT** turn right but rather continue straight on a dirt road which is the INT. You will arrive at the Small Makhtesh NC (Makhtesh Katan) NC (SP 5 – map 37) after about 500 meters. This is your next cache. Alternative: There is water in a tank by a small military base at the top of the hill. A [taxi from Dimona](#) can bring you water (NIS ~150) or use a private water cache (Haim Berger).
4. Go back west on route 227 (Map E). **DO NOT** go left and down. On route 206 turn left and south. Continue south about 4 km until you've reached the gate of Oron plant. At the gate there is a parking lot and a locker. You can leave food for 2 days in the locker. Use the small lock that you've brought with you. You can refill water here.

5. The next cache is at Mador NC (map 39) and it is accessible by 4X4 only. You can use one of [the guides \(strongly recommended\)](#) to bring you water (~NIS 200-250), or carry water supply for two days from Oron to Midreshet Ben Gurion (35 km) which is not easy. The day from Oron to Mador is the most difficult day on the trail because of Mt. Karbolet (day 35). Planning a long day is also quite difficult. You'll have to be one of those extremely fast hikers in order to get from Oron to Midreshet Ben Gurion in one day.
6. The next stop is in Mizpe Ramon which is ~65 km drive. Go back on route 206 and after ~ 3 km turn left and north on route 225 that goes to Yerooham. This is a scenic drive in the Large Crater (Maktesh Gadol). In Yeroham cross the small town and at the west exit turn left and south on route 204 towards Sede Boker, Mizpe Ramon and Eilat. At a road junction take route 40 and continue straight to Mizpe Ramon.
7. The next cache is accessible by 4X4 only: Hava night camp. Contact one of the guides when you arrive at Midreshet Ben Gurion to arrange for a water drop (~NIS 200-250). The alternative is carrying water for two days (~54 km) from Midreshet Ben Gurion). (~12 liters).
8. In Mizpe Ramon continue south to Eilat on route 40 (Map F). Go down to Ramon Crater. It's a scenic drive. Cross the crater and approximately 13.5 km after leaving Mizpe Ramon you arrive at the INT that crosses route 40. Turn left on a dirt road (Gevanim) which is a green trail (maps 43 & 44) and drive slowly for approx. 3 km until you arrive at Gevanim NC (Map 44). There are two alternatives for caching water here: Call a taxi in [Mizpe Ramon](#) and he will bring you water to route 40 (~NIS 120). Or spend the night in Be'erot Khan which is 3 km north of the night camp (map 44).
9. The next water supply point is accessible by 4x4 only. It is the Gev Holit NC (map 45) at the end of day 40. Please [check here](#) for service providers.
10. Your next water cache is west of the Zihor junction Tzomet Zihor (Map F & map 50 north). Continue south on route 40 for approximately 45 km. The old path of the INT goes along this road. Approximately 2 km west of the Zihor junction the INT crosses route 40 (map 50 north). You can cache water in the area of the night camp. There is another night camp, ~4 km north of this point on the INT which is accessible by 4x4 only.
11. The next water cache is at Barak night camp on route 90 (maps 48 & F). Continue east on route 40 (Map F) and at the Zihor junction take route 13 east (do not turn right and south on route 40). After ~14 km you arrive at route 90. If you have to cache water at Barak NC turn left and north, (if not turn right and south). Drive north for ~20 km. After 8.5 km you pass the entry road to Paran. Continue further north for another 10 km and you'll see a brown sign pointing left and west at Nahal Baraq. Turn left on a dirt road (map 48). Drive approx. 1 km until you arrive at the night camp.
12. The next water cache is by the Shehoret Canyon NC. If you've cached water at Barak Night camp go back to route 90, turn right and drive south for 103 km (Maps F & G). If you did not cache water at Barak night camp, you have to turn right from route 13 and go south for 73 km. The entry road to Shehoret Canyon is 9 km south of Be'er Ora. There is a brown sign that points west to the Shehoret Canyon. This cache is not 100% required. *If you are hiking from north to south you arrive at the Shehoret NC in perfect hiking shape. If you question your ability to complete the hike to Yehoram night camp: Make the cache now. If you arrive here at mid-day you'll refill water and continue the hike.* Go west on a dirt road. The road is marked with [blue](#) markers. After approx. 2.5 km you arrive at a fork and turn left onto a [green trail](#) which is also a dirt road. The [blue trail](#) goes right to the Amram pillars. Continue the drive on the [green trail](#) and arrive at the Shehoret Canyon and the INT after an additional 3.5 km on the [green trail](#). (Map 55) On your way you will pass the night camp on your left side. Make the cache and go back to route 90.
13. Your last water cache is at Yehoram night camp on route 12. Use map G and map 56. Go to Eilat and turn right on route 12 north. Yehoram night camp is about 8 km north of Eilat. There is a brown sign that points east to Mt. Yehoram. The night camp is immediately off the road on your right. Make the cache and go back to Eilat.

## South to North

1. Start in Eilat. Your first water cache is at Yehoram night camp on route 12. Use map G and map 56. Go to Eilat and turn right on route 12 north. Yehoram night camp is about 8

km north of Eilat. There is a brown sign that points right & east to Mt. Yehoram. The night camp is immediately off the road on your right. Make the cache and go back to Eilat.

2. The next water cache is by the Shehoret Canyon NC. This cache is not 100% required. *When hiking from south to north you arrive at the Shehoret NC on the second day of the hike. Many hikers are still not in perfect hiking shape, and won't be able to hike the full distance on that day. For this reason it is recommended to cache water here. If you arrive here at mid-day you'll refill water and continue the hike.*

From Eilat take route 90 north. Drive about 8.5 km. There is a brown sign that points left & west to the Shehoret Canyon. *A left turn here is impossible. Continue for another 3 km north and make a U turn south. Arrive at the brown sign and go west on a dirt road. The road is marked with blue markers. After approx. 2.5 km you arrive at a fork and turn left onto a green trail which is also a dirt road. The blue trail goes right to the Amram pillars. Continue the drive on the green trail and arrive after an additional 3.5 km at the Shehoret Canyon and the INT. On your way you will pass the night camp. Make the water cache. Go back to route 90, turn right and go south. Make a U turn after ~2 km and go north.*

3. The next water cache is at Barak night camp (map 48). Drive north on route 90. (use maps G and F). Go north for ~105 km. You will pass on your way route 40 and **13**. Only if you skip the Barak water cache turn left on route 13 and continue to the next cache at Zihor junction. Otherwise continue north and pass by the entry road to Paran. ~10 km after Paran you'll see a brown sign pointing left and west at Nahal Barak. Turn left on a dirt road (map 48). Drive approx. 1 km until you arrive at the night camp.
4. The next water supply point is accessible by 4x4 only. It is the Gev Holit NC (map 45) at the end of day 9s. Please [check here](#) for service providers.
5. Your next water cache is by the Zihor junction. Go back to route 90 turn right and south (use map F). Drive about 20 km until you've reached route 13. Turn right and west. Drive ~14 km and arrive at the Zihor junction. Continue straight on route 40 for approx. 2 km where the INT crosses route 40 (map 50 north). You can cache water in the area of the night camp. There is another night camp ~4 km north of this point on the INT. It is accessible by 4x4 only.
6. The next cache is Gevanim NC. (Use map F). Drive north on route 40 for approx. 45 km. The old path of the INT goes along this road. When you arrive at Mif'ar Gevanim (map 43) turn right on a dirt road which is a green trail. Drive slowly for approx. 3 km until you arrive at Gevanim NC (Map 44). There are two alternatives to caching water here: Call a taxi in [Mizpe Ramon](#) and he will bring you water to route 40 (~NIS 120). Or spend the night in Be'erot Khan which is 3 km north of the night camp (map 44). Go back to route 90.
7. The next water cache is at Hava night camp and is accessible by 4x4 only. You can use one of [the guides](#) (strongly recommended) to bring you water (~NIS 350), or carry water supply for two days from Mizpe Ramon to Midreshet Ben Gurion to Oron ~54 km.
8. The next cache is at Mador NC (map 39) and it is accessible with 4X4 only. You can use one of [the guides](#) (recommended) to bring you water (~NIS 250), or carry water supply for two days from Midreshet Ben Gurion to Oron ~35 km. The day from Midreshet Ben Gurion to Mador NC (day 14s) is relatively easy. When you get to Mador NC you will carry water for one day on Mt. Karbolet. Day 15s is the most difficult day on the trail. Planning a long day from Midreshet Ben Gurion to Oron (35 km) is extremely difficult. You'll have to be one of those very fast and very fit hikers in order to get from Midreshet Ben Gurion to Oron in one day (35 km).
9. Your next stop is in Oron which is ~65 km drive. (Use map E). From Mizpe Ramon go north on route 40. Drive by Midreshet Ben Gurion and continue north. At a road junction continue straight to Yerooham on route 204 (**do not** turn left on route 40 to Be'er Sheva). In Yerooham turn right on route 225 and cross the small town. Go down to the Large Crater (Makhtesh Gadol), it is a scenic drive. Cross the crater, arrive at route 206 and turn right. Go south for ~3 km and arrive at the Oron plant (map 38 west). At the gate there is a parking lot and a locker. You can leave in the locker food for 3 days. Use the small lock that you've brought along. You can refill water here.
10. Next cache is by the small crater (Makhtesh Katan) - use map E. Go north on route 206 and after ~6 km at the brown sign, turn right and east on route 227. Go towards the Small Crater (Makhtesh Katan). Drive on this scenic road ~12km. At the top of a climb, route

227 goes right and down. **DO NOT** turn right. Go straight on the dirt road which is the INT. You will arrive at the Small Makhtesh NC (Makhtesh Katan) NC (SP 5 – map 37) after about 500 meters. This is your next cache. Alternative: There is water in a tank by a small military base at the top of the hill. A [taxi from Dimona](#) can bring you water (NIS ~140), or contact Haim Berger.

11. Next cache is Mezad Tamar (SP3, map 35). Use map E. Go back west on route 227 (**DO NOT** turn left and south). On route 206 turn right and north. Continue north ~9 km until you've reached route 25. Turn right and east and drive on route 25 for ~15 km. After 10 km you pass by route 258. Continue east for another 5 km and arrive at Mezad Tamar. A brown sign points left and north to Mezad Tamar. Make the cache.
12. Next cache is Be'er Efe (SP2, map 34). Go back and west on route 25 (use map E). After ~5 km, turn right and north on route 258 (map E). Go north ~11 km and arrive at Be'er Efe. To the night camp turn right on a narrow road. You can cache water on the west side of the road. Alternative: [A taxi from Arad](#) can bring you water (~NIS 100). A second alternative: There is a quarry about 3 km west of Be'er Efe, you can refill water there. The quarry is closed on Saturdays.
13. To Arad: Go back to route 258 (Map E). Turn north and drive for ~10 km until you reach route 31. Turn left and west. You will arrive in Arad after a short drive of 6.5 km. There are [trail angels](#) in Arad where you can spend a night.

## Hiking the desert without caching water

Hiking without caching water is a very reasonable option. It requires being fit and carrying water for 1.5-2 days, several times. Alternatively use private water caches. For private water caches you must contact the following people at least 3 days prior to your planned arrival, to make sure they have water buried there for you. Contact:

**Haim Berger:** Cell: 054-5343797. E-mail: [negevjeep@gmail.com](mailto:negevjeep@gmail.com). NIS 150/cache. If you use 6 of his caches you get 3 additional caches for free. He caches water in all places between Be'er Efe (SP 2) to Yehoram (SP 38).

**Amir Gadnaor:** Cell: 053-4438166 / 052-3351357. Einat: 052-8376332.

E-mail: [gadnaor@zahav.net.il](mailto:gadnaor@zahav.net.il). NIS 55/cache. He caches water in 4 places : Zihor (SP 28 map 50 north) Be'er Milhan (map 53), Shehoret NC (SP 37 map 55), Netafim (close to Yehoram NC, SP 38).

The total cost of crossing the desert while carrying water for one day, and using private caches / taxi service is approximately ~NIS 1000 (~\$250).

If you want to avoid the expense you need to carry water for 1.5-2 days 4 times. I'd give the idea of carrying more water a positive thought. In this way you are completely independent. The heavy load is during the first hours of the first day (out of two). If you are in very good physical shape you can also plan on hiking [longer days](#) and eliminate / reduce the number of days with a heavy load of water. After it rains you can purify water by filtering and / or boil water accumulated in pits. See the plan below. Day numbers are from [the INT guide](#). Always [check the forum](#) for updates.

## From Arad to Eilat

1. **Day 28** - Arad to Be'er Efe - Carry water for one day. On week days (Sunday-Friday) refill water at the quarry which is 2 km south off the trail at km 21.0 of the day. On Saturdays and holidays: Call a taxi from Arad Tel.: 052-2889579 and they will bring water to Be'er Efe. Cost of the taxi is ~ NIS 100 + cost of water. If you want to save the cost of the taxi you can take water for **1.5-2 days** from Arad. Refill in Mezad Tamar.
2. **Day 29** - Be'er Efe to Mezad Tamar - It is an easy and short day, ~18 km and mostly flat. When you arrive to Mezad Tamar you have to call a taxi from Dimona or Arad and they

will bring water to Mezad Tamar ([tel. numbers are here](#)). There is a gas station and a convenience store ~12 km east of Mezad Tamar on route 90 (map E). To get there you need to hitchhike. Haim Berger caches water in the area.

3. **Days 30 + 31** - Mezad Tamar to Oron: There is water for hikers in a tank by the end of day 30. The tank is located by the entry to a small military base. The faucet extends outside the fence. Or use a private water cache at the night camp by the end of day 30. Contact Haim Berger. Or contact a taxi in Dimona they will bring you water. Or carry water for two days until you arrive to Oron. In winter only: Option to filter & purify water in Ein Tzafit. You must verify there is water in the pit. Ein Tzafit is located ~300 meters upstream in Nahal Tzafit at km 2.7 of day 30.
4. **Days 32 + 33** - Oron to Midreshet Ben Gurion: Use a private water cache at Mador night camp. Contact Haim Berger. Or carry water for 1.5-2 days. Day 33 is an easy one and can be completed in 5-6 hours.
5. **Days 34 + 35** - Midreshet Ben Gurion to Mizpe Ramon: Carry water for 2 days from Midreshet Ben Gurion to Mizpe Ramon (54 km). Or use a private water cache at Hava night camp. Contact Haim Berger. After it rains: Purify water in Hava pits which are on day 35, ~0.5 km west of the INT @ km 2.5.
6. **Day 36** - Mizpe Ramon to Gevanim night camp (/Be'erot Khan): Before leaving Mizpe Ramon make sure that at Gev Holit (end of day 37) there is water supply. [Check this link](#). From Mizpe Ramon take water for one day. Refill in Be'erot Khan which is 2.5 km north of the trail from the night camp.
7. **Days 37 + 38** - Be'erot Khan to Zofar (Sapir): Use a private cache at Gev Holit. Contact Haim Berger. Or carry water for 2 days. Only if you are very fit, hike on the first day 29 km to Tzvira NC (km 10.6 of day 38) and carry water for 1.5 days. From Tzvira NC to Sapir it is 11 km.
8. **Day 39** - Zofar to Barak night camp. 23 km mostly flat and easy. By the end of this day you can hike or hitchhike to Paran (extra 5 km from Barak night camp) to refill water or hitchhike from route 90. If you don't go to Paran you need to carry water for two days until you arrive at Zihor night camp and use a private water cache.
9. **Day 40** - Barak night camp to Zihor: Carry water for 1.5 days until you arrive to Shitim. At Zihor night camp there is a water cache which is maintained by Haim Berger. Next water is available in Shitim, 12 km south of Zihor.
10. **Day 41**: Zihor to Shizafon: Refill in Shitim 1 km east off the trail at km 12 of the day. At Shizafon junction there is a restaurant which is open until 7 PM. They have water. 2 km east of the junction in Neot Smadar you can refill water.
11. **Day 42**: Shizafon to Shahrut - Carry water for 1 day. Refill at the Camel riders camp north of Shahrut. Contact: Amir Gadnaor.
12. **Day 43**: Shahrut to Timna (Elifaz) - Carry water for 1 day. Carry water for 1.5 days in case you plan to arrive at the gate of the Timna park after it's closed (16:00 between Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup>. 17:00 rest of the year). If you plan on hiking to Elifaz you need water for 1 day only. Amir Gadnaor keeps a private cache by Be'er Milhan at ~ km 20 of the day. You can refill on your way from Shahrut.
13. **Day 44**: Timna park to Raham-Etek night camp - Refill water in Be'er Ora. It is 2.5 km east of the trail. Refill for 1-2 days. Call Zohar in Be'er Ora: 052-5664107 (small fee).
14. **Day 45**: Raham-Etek night camp to Yehoram night camp - If you carry water for two days no need to refill water. If you carry water for one day there are several options: Contact Amir Gadnaor he maintains a water cache in Shehoret NC and Yehoram NC. Call Victor in Eilat (taxi) 052-2797752 he will bring water to Yehoram night camp. Pay for the taxi and water.
15. **Day 46**: Welcome to Eilat.

## From Eilat to Arad

1. **Day 1s:** Eilat to Yehoram night camp - It's recommended to carry water for one day only. Call Amir Gadnaor. He maintains a water cache in the area. Or arrange with Victor (taxi) while in Eilat. Tel.: 052-2797752, he will bring water to Yehoram night camp. Pay for the taxi and water. Only if you are in a very good physical shape and a fast hiker, carry water to Shehoret Canyon night camp. At Shehoret night camp Amir Gadnaor has a private cache of water.
2. **Day 2s:** Yehoram night camp to Raham-Etek night camp - Carry water for one day only. Refill in Be'er Ora. Call Zohar in Be'er Ora: 052-5664107 (small fee).
3. **Day 3s:** Be'er Ora to Elifaz - Carry water for one day. Refill in Timna park or in Elifaz.
4. **Day 4s:** Elifaz to Shaharut - Carry water for one day. Refill in Shaharut at the Camel riders camp. Contact: Amir Gadnaor.
5. **Day 5s:** Shaharut to Shizafon - Carry water for one day. Refill at the restaurant at Shizafon junction (open until 7:00 p.m.) or in Neot Smadar which is 2 km from the junction.
6. **Day 6s:** Shizafon to Zihor - Carry water for one day. Refill: Shitim - it's 1 km east of the trail at km 15. In Shitim make sure you have water for 1.5 days until you get to Barak night camp. At Zihor night camp there is a water cache maintained by Haim Berger -054-5343797.
7. **Day 7s:** Zihor to Barak night camp - By the end of the day you can hike to Paran (extra 5 km from Barak night camp) to refill water or hitchhike from route 90. If you don't go to Paran you need to carry water for **2 days** until you arrive to Zofar.
8. **Day 8s:** Barak night camp to Zofar. Carry water for one day.
9. **Day 9s:** Zofar to Gev Holit night camp - Carry water for **2 days**. Refill is possible in Sapir, 1.5 km off the INT.
10. **Day 10s:** Gev Holit to Gevanim night camp. Refill in Be'erot Khan which is 2.5 km north of the trail from the night camp.
11. **Day 11s:** Gevanim night camp to Mizpe Ramon: Carry water for one day.
12. **Day 12s+13s:** Mizpe Ramon to Midreshet Ben Gurion - Carry water for **2 days**. The total distance is 54 km. Refill in Midreshet Ben Gurion. Or use a private water cache at Hava night camp. Call: Haim Berger. After it rains the water in Hava pits is good for purification (day 12s, km 24).
13. **Day 14s+15s:** Midreshet Ben Gurion to Oron - Carry water for **2 days** or use a private water cache in Mador night camp. Contact: Haim Berger.
14. **Day 16s:** Oron to Small Crater - Carry water for 1 day. There is a water tank for hikers which is located by the entry to a small military base. The faucet extends outside the fence. Or use a private water cache at the night camp. Contact: Haim Berger. Or contact a taxi in Dimona they will bring you water. Or carry water **2 days**.
15. **Day 17s:** Small crater to Mezad Tamar - Carry water for 1 day. At Mezad Tamar call a taxi from Arad or Dimona. Tel. numbers [are here](#) . There is a gas station and a convenience store ~12 km east of Mezad Tamar on route 90 (map E). To get there you need to hitchhike. Haim Berger caches water in the area.
16. **Day 18s:** Mezad Tamar to Beer Efe: Take water for one day. There is a quarry 2.5 km west of route 258. You can refill water until 17:00 on Sunday-Thursday. During weekends and holidays call a taxi from Arad : 052-2889579 and they will bring water to Be'er Efe. Cost of the taxi is NIS 80 + cost of water.
16. **Day 19s:** Beer Efe to Arad. Carry water for one day.



## Hiking plan in the desert for very fit hikers

The following hiking plan is only for hikers who can hike up to 40 km a day. Very few hikers are that fit. If you plan your own hike do not camp out in the desert but in designated night camps. At most night camps, there are private water caches "PWC". Please use them as they are the most reliable water source in the desert.

Short Legend:

**+5** - In order to refill water please add 5 km (roundtrip) to the total distance of the section.

\* Day 3 Alternate – Makhtesh Katan to Mador NC – **35 km**. Refill water in Oron.

\* Day 4 Alternate - Mador NC to Midreshet Ben Gurion – **20 km**.

**\*\*** Water in Ein Shaviv , Ein Hava and Ein Netafim is not guaranteed. In summer and fall or after a drought chances are low(/er) to have water in springs.

## North to South

1. Arad to Mt. Komot NC - **30 km + 5 km**. Day 29: km 6.1. Refill water on week days only in the quarry which is off the INT at km 22.5 of day 28 (**+ 5 km**). At Be'er Efe NC there is a PWC.
2. Mt. Komot NC to Makhtesh Katan NC - **33 km**. (End of day 30). Water: Water tank by the military base. Military base (not guaranteed, they have an order not to give water to hikers). PWC.
3. Makhtesh Katan NC – Oron (Day 31) - **20 km\***.
4. Oron – Midreshet Ben Gurion (Days 32 & 33) - **30 km\***. After Nahal Afran take a right turn on a black trail at ~km 15.0 of day 32. Rejoin the INT at km 3.5 of day 33.
5. Midreshet Ben Gurion to Hava NC (Day 34) - **27 km**. PWC. Take 1 liter extra water for the next morning. In Ein Shaviv it's possible to refill water**\*\***
6. Hava Night camp – Mizpe Ramon (Day 35) – **27 km + 2** to Ein Hava**\*\*** to refill water in the spring. After flash floods, one can purify water in Hava pits. (No detour).
7. Mizpe Ramon to Gevanim NC (Day 36) – **24 km + 5** (20 km **+5** if you take the green trail down from Mizpe Ramon green trail) PWC. **+ 5** to Be'erot Khan to refill water.
8. Gevanim NC – Sapir – (Day 38: km 19.3) **38 km + 1**.
9. Sapir – Barak NC – (End of day 39) **30 km**. PWC or hitchhike to Paran for water.
10. Barak NC – Zihor NC (End of day 40) **30 km** carry extra 1-2 liters of water for the following morning or use a PWC in Zihor.
11. Zihor – Shizafon (Day 41) – **28 km** Refill water in Shitim (Desert Ashram). I hiked the easy section between Zihor to Shizafon in 7 hours. At km 12 of day 42 there is a night camp. If you are fit enough to get to there before sun set I'd give it a try (**40 km**).
12. Shizafon – Be'er Metek NC (Day 43: km 15) - **36 km**. Refill water at the Camel riders' khan (AMIR) (Day 42 km 22) 1.5 km north of Shaharut. **Due to the increasing number of hikers and events of vandalism, the people of Shaharut have requested not to enter the village. Please respect their privacy. Please use the Camel riders' khan north of the village.**
13. Be'er Metek NC - Raham Etek NC (End of day 44) – **27 km + 8 km**. Refill water in Timna Park camping (Day 44: km 5.7). To Be'er Ora turn east at km 12.8 of day 44. (**+ 8 km**).
14. Raham Etek NC to Yehoram NC - **23 km** (End of day 45). Water: Private water cache at Shehoret NC (day 45 at km 12.7 and 0.5 km off the INT). Ein Netafim **\*\*** spring
15. Yehoram NC – Eilat – **14 km**.



## South to North

In the North to South direction you get to Arad after you've hiked ~600 km. In the south to north direction it is a different story. We recommend that you come in a much better physical shape. The first 14 km are strenuous with a total of ~1000 meters climb. The next 35 km to Elifaz are not easy as well. We recommend hiking from Eilat to Barak NC as described in the guide. It is a 7 day hiking and then you can take a day off in Paran. From Barak NC you can reverse the order of the north to south direction.

## Day hikes

In this chapter, you will find a short description of the best day hikes in Israel arranged by geographical area from north to south. Section hikers who prefer to stay in one place for several nights and hike along sections of the trail can choose to stay in the areas listed below. Accommodations are listed at the end of the guide.

### Kiryat Shemona area

1. Dan to Tel Hai – Follow **day 1** from Dan. Take a taxi to Dan in the morning.
2. Tel Hai to Yesha fort – Follow **day 2**. A taxi will take you back. You can reverse the direction of the hike (recommended).

### Safed (Tzfai) area

1. Mount Meron to Ein Koves – Follow **day 5**. Take a taxi from Tzfai to the top of Mount Meron. By the end of the day call the taxi to pick you up from Ein Koves; it's a short drive from the Tzfai city centre.
2. Ein Koves to Migdal – Follow **day 6**. Reach Ein Koves by taxi. From Migdal a taxi will take you back to Tzfai, or take a bus from Migdal Junction to Rosh Pina and transfer to the bus to Tzfai. The trip by bus is approximately 1 hour long.

### Tiberias area

1. Migdal to Tiberias (half a day) – Follow **day 7** to Mizpe. Take a taxi or bus to Migdal and follow the directions south to Mt. Arbel and Mizpe.
2. Mizpe to Yardenit – Follow **day 7** from Mizpe to Poria and **day 7+8** from Poria to Yardenit. Take a taxi or bus to Mizpe and hike south to Yardenit. Return to Tiberias by taxi or bus.

### Nazareth area

1. Mt. Tabor to Mesh'had – Follow **day 9** from the top of Mount Tabor. Take a taxi to the start of the hike.
2. Mesh'had to Zippori and Ha'Movil Junction. Follow **day 10** to Ha'Movil Junction. Don't miss the visit of ancient Zippori (~2 hours). Take a bus back to Nazareth or arrange for pick-up by taxi.

### Haifa - Isfiya area

1. Tahanat Hanezirim to Isfiya – Follow **day 11**. Take a taxi to Tahanat Hanezirim and hike to Isfiya.

### Zikhron Ya'akov, Caesarea area

1. From Zikhron Ya'akov to Caesarea follow **day 14**. Return by taxi.

## Tel Aviv area

1. Netanya to Tel Aviv. Follow **day 16**. Arrive by bus and/or taxi to Netanya and continue on the sea shore to Tel Aviv. You can also hike from Herzliya to Tel Aviv (half a day).
2. Tel Aviv to Tel Afek. Follow **day 17** to Tel Afek. Take a bus or taxi to Joshua (Yarkon) Park and start the day there. Come back by bus (on Route 483), or taxi.

## Jerusalem Trail and vicinity

Parts of the Jerusalem trail are included in the INT alternate routes. Please download at the following link: <http://israeltrail.myfastforum.org/forum54.php>

1. Tzova to Even-Sapir includes John in the Desert Monastery. Follow **day 20** from Tzova. Arrange for pick-up from Even-Sapir by taxi back from Sapir.
2. Even-Sapir to Bar Giora. Follow **day 21** from Ein Hindak. Pick-up by taxi from Bar Giora.

## Desert: Arad area

1. Meizad Tamar to top of Hamakhtesh Hakatan (the Small Makhtesh). Follow **day 30**. Drop-off at Meizad Tamar and pick-up by the end of the day by taxi from Arad. Always ask to turn on the meter it is cheaper.
2. Top of Small Makhtesh to Ein Yorkeam. Follow **day 31** to Ein Yorkeam. Drop-off at the small Makhtesh, pick-up from Route 206.

## Desert: Midreshet Ben-Gurion area

1. Ein Akev and back to Midreshet Ben-Gurion – 15 km. From Midreshet Ben-Gurion, go down the route towards Ein Avdat. At the bottom make a left turn east on a red trail and hike about 3.5 km in Nahal Zin. Make a right turn south on a blue trail and after 1 km reach Ein Akev. The water is deep and cold in winter and spring. Go back on the blue and red trails.
2. Upper Ein Avdat and back – 8 km. From the bottom of the serpentine, follow the road west to Ein Avdat. Follow the signs in the magnificent oasis to upper Ein Avdat. Take the reverse route back.
3. **Two-day hike:** Midreshet Ben-Gurion to Mizpe Ramon. Follow **days 34-35**. Arrange for luggage transfer to Mizpe Ramon with a taxi or jeep (from Mizpe Ramon).
4. There are additional hikes in the area. Inquire at the local field school.

## Desert: Mizpe Ramon area

1. Mizpe Ramon to Gevanim (route 40). Follow **day 36** to Route 40. Before leaving, arrange a pick-up from Route 40 with a taxi or jeep from Mizpe Ramon.
2. **Two-day hike:** Mizpe Ramon to Midreshet Ben-Gurion. Follow **days 12s and 13s**. Arrange with a taxi or bus for luggage transfer from Mizpe Ramon.
3. For additional hikes inquire at the visitors' centre or at the Hi Bar.

## Desert: Paran area

1. Follow the directions of **day 40** to Nahal Paran. Drop off in Nahal (Wadi) Barak and pick-up service from Nahal (Wadi) Paran south of Vardit Canyon (4X4 only).

## Eilat area

The three day-hikes in the Eilat area start on route 12 near Yehoram Night Camp. Reach the starting point by taxi from Eilat. Please keep the driver's contact information with you. To return to Eilat by the end of the day, contact to pre-arrange this with the taxi driver.

1. Yehoram to Eilat: Follow the directions of **day 46**.
2. Yehoram Night Camp to Eilat via Mt. Shelomo. Follow **day 46a**.
3. Mt. Yehoram to Shehoret Canyon and Route 90. Follow **day 2s**. From Shehoret Canyon continue east to Route 90. It's approximately 5 km. The area of Shehoret Canyon is busy with tourists. Chances for a ride to Eilat and/or Route 90 are reasonable. From Route 90 contact a taxi from Eilat.
4. Take a bus or taxi to Elifaz and follow **day 44** from the Timna gate. Get back to Eilat by bus or taxi from Be'er Ora (2.5 km east of the INT).

## Recent INT changes and guide updates

All trail and guide updates are posted on the forum. [Please check here](#).

## INT alternate routes

Some maps have marked alternate routes. The alternate routes are not marked with the regular INT marker (white, blue, orange). **Do not hike the alternate routes if the detailed description is not provided. It is particularly important in the desert.**

Alternate routes can be downloaded here: <http://israeltrail.myfastforum.org/forum54.php>