

KEREN HAYESOD – UNITED ISRAEL APPEAL

2nd ANNUAL ISRAEL NATIONAL TRAIL MISSION

Two levels of difficulties – Advanced and beginners

29 October–3 November 2017



The Israel National Trail (Hebrew: Shvil Yisrael) is a 620 mile (1,009 km) hiking trail that crosses Israel from south to north. Beginning in the resort town of Eilat on the Red Sea, it runs north to Dan, near the Lebanese border, linking the extraordinary variety of Israel's landscapes and human mosaics. The trail blazes through a variety of natural and human landscapes, exposing hikers to Israel's many eco-systems and habitats. National Geographic magazine called it one of the "holy grails of hikes."

Sunday, 29 October – Welcome to Israel!

- 15:00–17:00 Pickup from Tel Aviv and from Ben-Gurion Airport
» Travel to the Dead Sea area
- 19:30–20:00 Mission opening & Briefing
- 20:00–21:00 Dinner
- 21:00–21:30 **Talk by Nir Lahav, Director of the Social Activism Unit,**
The Jewish Agency for Israel
- Overnight: Hod Hamidbar Hotel, Dead Sea**

Monday, 30 October

- 06:00–06:30 Breakfast
- 07:00–14:00 **The Ein Gedi Nature Reserve**
Located on the eastern edge of the Judean Desert, on the shore of the Dead Sea, Ein Gedi is an oasis of spectacular beauty, varied landscapes and botanical gardens. The Nature Reserve covers a large area that includes Wadi Arugot and Wadi David. Our trail route includes a long, steep climb up high cliffs and then a long, steep descent. After bathing in cool freshwater pools, we will go up the Zeruya Ascent and go down the Ha'Isiyyim Ascent to Wadi Arugot for another refreshing dip.
» The trail includes sharp climbs and swift descents
- Length of hike: Approximately 12 km (we will have two groups with two levels of difficulty)
- Hiking time: 7 hours
- 14:30–15:00 Lunch at the hotel
- 15:00–18:00 Refreshing afternoon at the hotel:
 - Spa
 - Private beach on the Dead Sea
 - Thermo-mineral pools with hot water straight from the depths of earth
- 19:30–20:30 Dinner
- 20:30–21:00 Presentation: by geologist Eli Raz, Dead Sea and Arava Research Center
- Overnight: Hod Hamidbar Hotel, Dead Sea**



Tuesday, 31 October

- 04:30–13:00 **Masada**
This iconic landmark has become a symbol of the determination of the Jewish people to be free in their land. Originally built by King Herod as a desert hideaway atop an isolated rock cliff, Masada was the site of the dramatic stand by 960 Jews who fled there following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. After a three-year siege by the Romans, the Jewish defenders chose mass suicide, rather than face slavery and abuse at the hands of the Romans. We will walk to Masada at dawn and before sunrise, will climb the Snake Path that winds around to the top of the mountain. There, archaeological remains tell the story of heroism and determination. We will witness sunrise against the spectacular backdrop of the Dead Sea, with Jordan's Moab Mountains in the distance. After descending the mountain, we will continue walking along the He'etekim Cliff to the breathtaking Tze'elim Canyon with its striking desert landscapes.
» The trail includes sharp climbs and swift descents
- Length of hike: Approximately 10 km (we will have two groups with two levels of difficulty)
Hiking time: 8 hours
- 13:00–14:30 Refreshments and lunch at the Inbar Hotel, Arad
- 15:00–17:00 **Youth Futures Project in Arad: Empowering the Next Generation**
The revolutionary Youth Futures mentoring program, supported by Keren Hayesod-UIA, provides personalized attention, positive social experiences and educational enrichment for children-at-risk, primarily from the periphery. This year, the program empowered 5,000 at-risk youth and their families, enabling them to develop their strengths and bridge scholastic, social, and cultural gaps.
- 19:00–20:30 Dinner in Ashkelon
- Overnight: **Holiday Inn Hotel, Ashkelon**

Wednesday, 1 November

- 06:00–06:30 Breakfast
- 06:30–11:30 **The Shfela**
A range of rolling hills lying between the Coastal Plain and the Judean Hills, the Shfela is a haven of greenery and tranquility. But in the past, the area, which includes some of Israel's most ancient settlements, witnessed dramatic historic battles that determined the fate of the entire nation. We will hike in the Ella Valley to the excavations at Hirbet Kaifeh, believed to be the ancient city of Shaarayim, site of King David's winter palace. From there we will proceed to the battlefield where David slew Goliath. We will then visit the archaeological/prehistoric site of Horvat Sokha and Tel Azekah, the remains of a Biblical city that was one of the strongholds of the Kingdom of Judah.
- Length of hike: Approximately 12 km
Hiking time: 5 hours
- 12:00–13:00 **Atachlit Ethiopian Cultural Center and Farm: Casting Roots in Israel**
This innovative community project, supported by Keren Hayesod-UIA, helps older olim from Ethiopia integrate into Israeli life while retaining their traditional agricultural way of life. You'll meet elders of the community and hear their personal stories of how they walked thousands of kilometers to reach Israel, until they were finally airlifted to safety in a series of daring IDF rescue operations.
- 13:00–14:30 Lunch - Ethiopian style
- 15:00–17:00 **Beit-Guvrin National Park – "The Land of 1,000 Caves"**
Beit Guvrin National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, encompasses the ruins of Maresha, one of the important towns of Judah during the time of the First Temple, and Beit Guvrin, an important town in the Roman era (called Eleutheropolis). The manmade caves were used for thousands of years as quarries, burial sites, storerooms, stables, hideouts, dovecotes, cisterns, bathhouses, places of worship and other purposes.
- 16:00–17:00 Unique evening experience
- 19:00–20:30 Dinner at the hotel
- Overnight: **Hotel Yearim, Ma'ale HaHamisha**

Thursday, 2 November

06:00–06:30 Breakfast

07:00–12:00 **The Judean Hills**

The Judean (or Jerusalem) Hills, the low mountain ranges surrounding Jerusalem to the north, west, and south, abound with rolling expanses, caves, vegetation and wildlife, and are rich with historical and archaeological sites. We will hike through several landmark locations en route to Jerusalem.

Castel

The Castel National Park commemorates one of the key battles of the War of Independence. During the Arab siege of Jerusalem in 1947, armored convoys that brought essential supplies to the beleaguered city were victims of sniper fire and ambushes from the Arab stronghold of Castel. The Hagana launched Operation Nachshon to break the Arab blockade, and after a bloody battle in which 49 fighters fell, succeeded in wresting control of the strategic site.

Ein Sataf

Pine and cypress forests line the terraced slopes Ein Sataf (Sataf Spring), a place of unusual natural beauty. The area has been cultivated for thousands of years. Today olives, figs, and pomegranates are grown here, through methods used in ancient times.

Ein Kerem

Ein Kerem is a tranquil picturesque village with narrow, cobbled streets and charming courtyards, surrounded by green hills and the breathtaking landscapes. It is home to many artists and artisans as well as Christian religious sites.

Length of hike: Approximately 11 km

Hiking time: 6 hours

12:00–13:30 Lunch in the field

13:00–14:00 **Mt. Herzl Military Cemetery, Jerusalem**

We will hike to Jerusalem, where we will culminate our journey on Mt. Herzl. As Israel's main military cemetery as well as the official burial place for national figures, the history of the Jewish state poignantly unfolds here. We will conclude the day that began with the War of Independence at the military section or at Yitzhak Rabin's (z"l) grave.

14:00–15:00 Ceremony on Mt. Herzl

15:30–18:30 Rest and enjoy Jerusalem

19:00–22:00 **Dinner and festive closing event in Blaustein Hall, Beit Shmuel**

Overnight: **Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Jerusalem**

Friday, 3 November

07:00–07:30 Breakfast

Summary of mission

» Transportation to Ben-Gurion airport and Tel Aviv

END OF MISSION

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