



The Negev הנגב הנقب

Includes »

Arad	305
Be'er Sheva	305
Around Be'er Sheva	310
Sde Boker	311
Mitzpe Ramon	315
The Arava	321
Eilat	323
Around Eilat	332

Best Places to Eat

- » Neot Semadar Inn (p323)
- » Haksa (p320)
- » Ginger Asian Kitchen & Bar (p330)
- » Last Refuge (p330)
- » Chez Eugene (p320)

Best Places to Stay

- » Green Backpackers (p319)
- » Kibbutz Lotan Guesthouse (p322)
- » Desert Lodge (p315)
- » Orchid Reef Hotel (p328)
- » Kfar Hanokdim (p305)

Why Go?

The Negev Desert, often bypassed by travellers hurrying to Eilat, is much more than just sand. Look closely between the rocks of the wadis (valleys) and you will find water and even wine. The Negev Highlands region is also home to so many vineyards that it now has its own wine route. Today, ecologists from all over the world come to the kibbutzim of Sde Boker and the Arava to study solar energy and water treatment. But this isn't new. Two thousand years earlier, the Nabataeans cultivated grapes and practically invented desert irrigation, which can still be seen at the ancient ruins of Shivta, Mamshit and Avdat.

This region, comprising 62% of Israel's land mass, may seem sparse but it offers a world of adventure, including mountain hikes, camel treks, 4WD desert drives and Red Sea diving. Yet perhaps the biggest secret of the Negev is Makhtesh Ramon, a crater-like wilderness, which feels like another planet.

When to Go

Eilat



Mar–May, late Sep–Nov The best time for desert treks; sunny at daytime but cold at night.

Aug The Red Sea Jazz Festival adds coolness to a sweltering Eilat summer.

Dec–Feb A rare rainstorm can cause fleeting waterfalls to appear at Wadi Zin, Sde Boker.

The Negev Highlights

1 Step back more than 2000 years by exploring the Nabataean hilltop ruins of **Avdat** (boxed text, p314)

2 Trek across the Wadi Zin desert valley to the freshwater spring of Ein Akev near **Sde Boker** (p313)

3 Sample some fine Negev merlot on the **Wine Route** (p307) in the Negev Highlands between Be'er Sheva and Mitzpe Ramon

4 Witness millions of years of evolution beneath your feet from the lookout at **Makhtesh Ramon** (p316)

5 Learn about ecodesign, try water shiatsu and go birdwatching on the Arava sand dunes at **Kibbutz Lotan** (p321)

6 Sleep in a *tukul* (Ethiopian-style tepee) at the foot of the ruined city of **Mamshit** (boxed text, p314)

7 Jump and splash on the Red Sea waves as you try kitesurfing in **Eilat** (p326)

