

Welcome to Ma'ayan Harod National Park

Ma'ayan Harod (the Harod Spring) is the westernmost of a group of large springs flowing from the foot of Mount Gilboa. The spring flows from fault lines that cross the Gilboa range on a northwest-southeast axis.

The Harod Spring emerges from Gideon's Cave at a discharge rate of approximately 360 cubic meters per hour and its water, with a salinity level of 283 mg. chorine per liter, is sweet and delicious. The blooming park surrounding the spring is a major regional visitor attraction.

A Bit of History

Ma'ayan Harod is mentioned in the story of Gideon's selection of soldiers to fight the Midianites. *"Early next day, Jerubbaal – that is, Gideon – and all the troops with him encamped about En-harod, while the camp of Midian was in the plain to the north of him at Gibeath-moreh"* (Judges 7:1). As the Bible tells it, 32,000 men initially answered Gideon's call to arms, but after a preliminary selection, he was left with 10,000.

God then ordered Gideon to take the troops down to the water, where God would *"sift them"* (Judges 7:4). Then the Lord said to Gideon, *"set apart all those who lap up the water with their tongues like dogs from all those who get down on their knees and drink."* Now those who lapped the water into their mouths by hand numbered three hundred. Then the Lord said

to Gideon, *"I will deliver you and I will put Midian into your hands through the three hundred lappers; let the rest of the troops go home."* (Judges 7:5-8). Through this test, Gideon was able to identify the most alert men – the "lappers." With the aid of these 300 "commandos," Gideon defeated the Midianites in a surprise night attack.

In 1260, Ma'ayan Harod was the scene of the Battle of Ayn Jalut (the Arabic name for the spring), when the Mameluke Sultan Kotuz put a stop to the Mongolian takeover of Europe and Asia with a victory considered one of most significant in world history. A month after the battle, one of Kotuz's commanders, Baibars, murdered Kotuz and appointed himself sultan.

In 1920, Yehoshua Hankin, known as the "redeemer of lands," who had previously bought lands in Hadera and Rehovot, purchased 35,000 dunams from the Arabs in the Jezreel Valley. With this transaction, contiguity of Jewish land ownership was created between the Jezreel Valley and the Beit She'an Valley to the east.

In 1921, pioneers of the Labor Battalion established Kibbutz Ein Harod on land Hankin had purchased near the spring. They became the first settlers in the mosquito-infested swamps of the Jezreel Valley. A few years later, groves were planted near the spring and on the surrounding hills. The kibbutzim of Tel Yosef, Beit Alfa, and Geva were also founded at this time, as was Moshav Kfar Yehezkiel. The draining of the swamps and the establishment of communities here were symbols of the return of the Jews to their land.

Yehoshua Hankin and his wife Olga also decided to settle in the Jezreel Valley, and in 1932 they began to build their home above Gideon's Cave on the slopes of Mount Gilboa. A Tiberias engineer named Tetzlamsky and a Tel Aviv architect, Yosef Ben-Or, joined forces to build the house, which was completed in 1936. The house was built in the International, or Bauhaus style, with its distinctive straight lines, horizontal windows, and circular stairwell leading to the flat roof, which afforded a magnificent view of the newly acquired lands of the valley. A group of pioneers known as Kvutzat Hugim, who were living in Ein Harod and Beit Hashita while waiting for land to establish their own community, helped in the construction.

The Hankins were never to live in their new home; Olga took ill and died in 1942, at the age of 90. She was buried in a tomb quarried next to the house. An avenue of cypresses leads to the tomb, the entrance to which is marked by marble pillars and a decorative iron gate.



The Hankin tomb

West of the house and the tomb stands a memorial to the residents of the Jezreel Valley who fell in Israel's wars. The memorial and the tomb's iron gates were designed by artist and sculptor David Palumbo.

Yehoshua Hankin decided that his house would become a museum telling the story of land purchases and settlement in the Jezreel and Harod valleys, and to establish a meteorological station here. In 1936, David Ashbel, a meteorologist from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, opened the station. It remained in operation for two years, but had to be closed down due to the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939. A worker from the Ein Harod quarries looked after the house and the tomb until events made it impossible for him to stay on. Yehoshua Hankin died in 1945 at the age of 80, and was buried next to his wife.

Hankin, a visionary and a romantic, became a symbol of pioneering, resourcefulness, and action at the beginning of Jewish settlement.

The Hankin house was one of 50 historic sites selected for preservation on Israel's 50th anniversary. The government, the Jewish National Fund, the Council for the Restoration and Preservation of Historic Sites in Israel, the Gilboa Regional Council, and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority all took part in the work.



The Hankin Museum





What Will you Find at Ma'ayan Harod National Park?

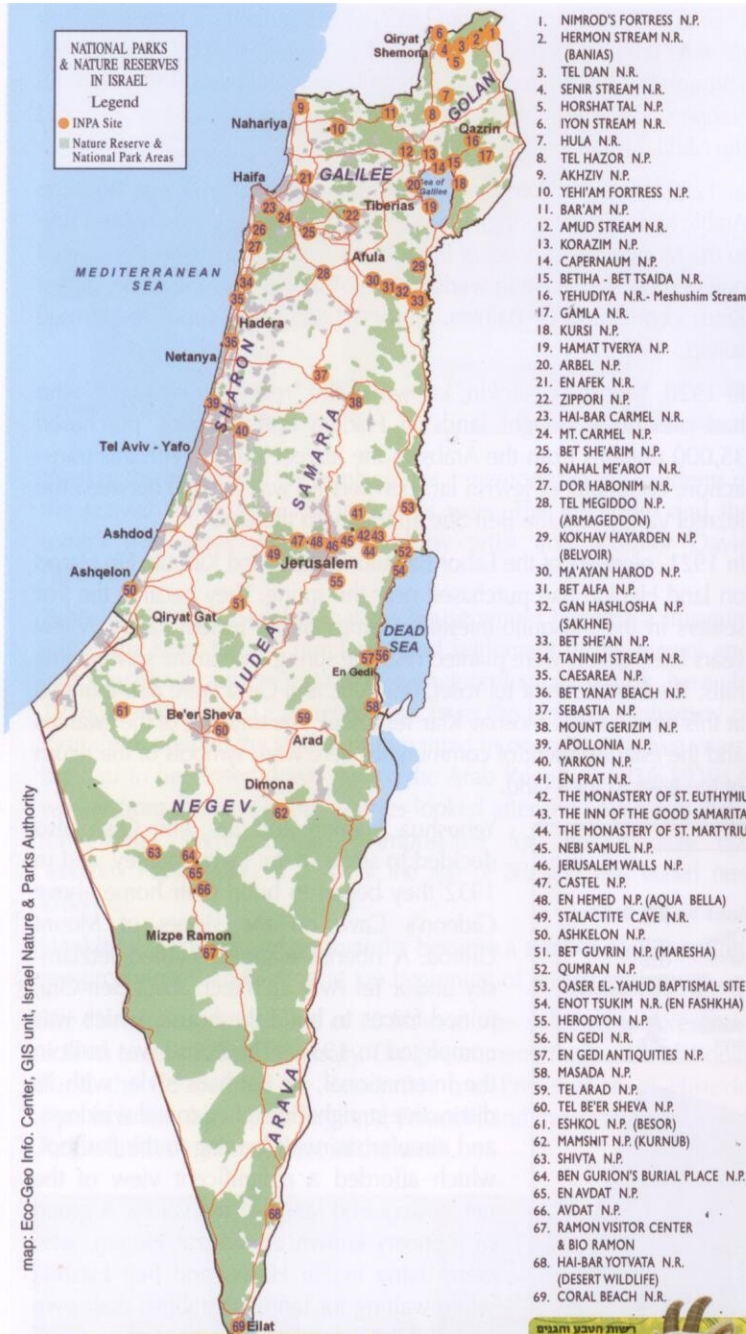
The Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the Gilboa Regional Council have carried out large-scale development work in the park. Visitors will find lawns, shade trees, a swimming pool, sports and play equipment, a dressing room, and toilets. (Groups may stay overnight by prior arrangement.)

The nearby Ma'ayan Harod Youth Hostel offers air-conditioned family accommodations with showers and toilets in each unit. At the western end of the park is a 6,000-seat amphitheater.

For more information: Phone: 04-6532211; Fax: 04-6531136



Photos: David Einav
English: Miriam Feinberg Vamosh
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Information
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Yours, Artzi



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