



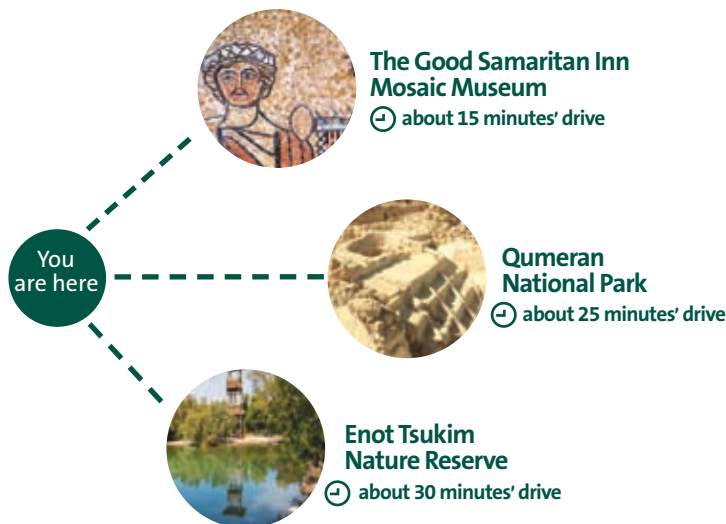
# En Prat Nature Reserve

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En Prat Nature Reserve, Tel: 04-6820238

## More Touring Routes

A trail marked in green begins at Alamit Ruins near the gate to the community of Almon and connects to the trail marked in blue in the En Prat Nature Reserve.

A trail marked in red begins at the entrance gate to Almon, continues along the access road to the reserve and from there east to En Mabo'a.

A trail marked in blue starts near the reserve ticket booth and continues to the pump house.

Another trail marked in blue splits off from the red trail about 500 meters east of the concrete building and continues east in the Prat streambed until it meets Wadi Mikhmarsh.

A trail marked in black begins at the community of Adam (Geva Binyamin) and goes down to Wadi Mikhmarsh to its meeting place with the Prat Stream.



Palm Pool

## Remnants of the Past

In antiquity, the inhabitants utilized the water for both drinking and irrigation. Along the stream you can see the remains of the ancient waster system: an aqueduct, which consists of segments of cut stone, built during the Hasmonean period (the second century BCE) to channel water to the Hasmoneans' 'winter palaces' near Jericho. This waterway was also used in the Roman and Byzantine periods, and in the seventh century a wide aqueduct made of clay pipes was built on the foundation of the Hasmonean system. In 1919, members of the Husseini family, who worked the lands near the stream, built a concrete aqueduct atop the ancient channels from En Mabo'a, via En Qelt and 'Aqabat Jaber and the surrounding fields.

Abundant water and easy passage in the region have attracted inhabitants to the area around the Prat Stream since antiquity. Remains of past settlements and of Byzantine monasteries dot the length of the stream. Three monasteries are still in use, one of which, the Faran Monastery, is near En Prat.

Downstream, above the northern bank, is the tell known as Fara Ruins. An archaeological survey in 1968 found remains of settlement here from the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age, the period of Israelite settlement in the country. Finds included potsherds, a large wall and a burial ground. Based on the survey, it was suggested that this is the biblical city of Parah (Joshua 18:23) allocated to the tribe of Benjamin. However, Parah may also be the same as the place called "Ephrath" in Genesis 35:19, which has been identified at Kubur Bani Israil, between Pisgat Ze'ev and Adam. Three rectangular fieldstone structures were found at that location, apparently constructed in the fifth millennium BCE. Some biblical scholars believe that Kubur Bani Israil is the "Ephrath" mentioned in Genesis 35:19 as Rachel's burial place, which was only later identified near Bethlehem, where it is now marked.

Remains of a water-operated flour mill can be seen east of Fara Ruins, on the ascent to the Faran Monastery.

## Vegetation

En Prat Nature Reserve is located in the transition area between the Mediterranean zone to the west and the Judean Desert to the east. Its location has blessed it with a variety of plants, both Mediterranean and arid-land types. Among them are true watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*), which grows in clumps at the water's edge to a height of around 20 cm and whose leaves taste like a sharp radish, and water mint (*Mentha longifolia*), which is a perennial plant with a woody base that grows in thick clumps and reaches a height of one meter. Its bluish-purple, closely packed flowers look like long stalks of grain. Another typical plant is blue water speedwell (*Veronica anagallis-aquatica*) a perennial whose hollow stalks grow in the water. The stalks are topped by blue flowers that bloom beginning in spring and throughout the summer. Also to be found is fool's watercress (*Apium nodiflorum*), which looks like watercress but whose leaved taste differently, recalling carrot or celery. Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) is a perennial grain that grows very tall (from 2.5 to 5 meters), with leaves spaced in two rows along its hollow stem. The

## Please observe the following rules for yourself and future visitors.

- The flora, fauna and inanimate objects are protected natural assets – do not harm them, not even for study purposes. No fishing!
- Do not damage the antiquities!
- Do not climb on buildings!
- No entry to caves!
- Walk only on marked trails!
- Caution! The pool areas are slippery!
- Do not drink the spring water!
- Swimming is allowed only in authorized and marked wading pools.
- Climbing is allowed only at marked and authorized places!
- To reserve guided tours and climbing activities, call the Israel Alpine Club: 050-5881391 or 02-5709580
- Campfires are allowed only at authorized and marked locations in the eucalyptus grove, and only in grills.
- Entry and visits of the reserve are permitted only during opening hours!
- Please keep the area clean; throw garbage into the bin.
- Visitors planning to hike toward En Mabo'a must coordinate their hikes with the INPA hiking coordinator, telephone \*3639

## Visiting hours:

Summer (April–September) daily 8 A.M.–5 P.M.

Winter (October–March) daily 8 A.M.–4 P.M.

Last entrance one hour before closing time.

On Fridays and holiday eves the reserve closes one hour earlier than the above.

The gate is locked when the site closes; vehicles may be removed only the next day.

To reserve guided tours, and for more details, call \*3639 from any phone.

## Welcome to En Prat Nature Reserve

**“And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying:  
‘Take the girdle that thou hast gotten, which is upon thy loins, and  
arise, go to Perath, and hide it there in a cleft of the rock.’ So I went,  
and hid it in Perath, as the Lord commanded me.”**

(Jeremiah 13:3–5)



Prat Stream

En Prat (Ayn Fara), the largest of the three most important perennial springs in the Prat Stream, has given its name to the entire stream. The two other main springs are En Mabo'a and En Qelt. The stream is divided into three sections, each with its own name in Arabic. The upper section is Wadi Fara, the middle section is Wadi Fawar and the lower section is Wadi Qelt.

The Prat Stream flows all across the northern Judean Desert from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance of 28 km, from 770 meters above sea level to the Jordan River, at 395 m below sea level. On the way, it cuts through the layered limestone anticlines of the Judean Desert, creating canyons and high cliffs. Thanks to the abundance of water, particularly rich aquatic vegetation flourishes near the stream, which is home to fish, mollusks and crabs. Amphibians, mammals, reptiles and various species of birds 'make their living' from the stream and its nearby vegetation.

People have inhabited the area of the Prat Stream since antiquity. The remnants of settlements, monasteries and palaces are scattered along the stream, as are signs of stream-based cultivation. For example, a number of aqueducts were found along the stream, the earliest of which dates to the Hasmonean period (the Hellenistic period, the second century BCE) and the most recent from the modern era, and ancient roads along the stream once linked Jerusalem and Jericho.

## Nearby Sites

Genesisland – a hospitality tent for special events and camel-riding is located near the community of Alon. The Good Samaritan Museum is near the Alon road, and the St. George Monastery is near En Qelt.

## The Water in the Stream

The springs of the Prat Stream produce an impressive volume of water due to the geological structure of the Judean Mountains. The abundant rain that falls on these mountains seeps underground and flows east from the watershed (near Neve Ilan–Ramat Razel) through the layers of rock. The water emerges anywhere the continuity of the rock layers is interrupted. The Prat Stream canyon, where the springs burst forth to create a beautiful year-round stream, is one such place.

En Prat, which emerges into a natural rock pool, has a volume of approximately 1,500 cubic meters a day. Two more large springs emerge farther downstream: En Mabo'a (Fawar) and En Qelt.

In 1927, the British began pumping the water of En Prat, and later En Mabo'a and En Qelt as well, to homes in northern and eastern Jerusalem. The system drew the water from the spring to a series of sedimentation and filtration pools, and from there, an electric pump 'pushed' it up the mountain to Jerusalem. In 1970, pumping from the springs stopped after East Jerusalem began to receive its water from the Yarkon Springs northeast of Tel Aviv. Since then, the water has flowed naturally through the stream. The remnants of the pump houses and the pipes can still be seen in the reserve. The main pump house has been renovated and today houses the reserve's offices.



The stream



Persian buttercup (*Ranunculus asiaticus*)

stem ends in a white, brush-like flower. Narrow-leaved reedmace (*Typha domingensis*) and oleander (*Nerium oleander*) – a green bush that grows as tall as two meters – also flourish. The oleander sports attractive pink blossoms that bloom in late spring and summer, but its branches and leaves contain a milky white liquid that is very toxic! Above the stream banks grows Christ-thorn jujube (*Ziziphus spina-christi*), a thorny tree with multiple trunks that can spout to as much as six meters tall. Its crown is thick, its leaves are elliptical, its small yellow flowers appear in spring and summer and it bears tasty, edible fruit. On some jujube trees you can spot acacia strap flowers (*Loranthus acaciae*), with their prominent red blossoms, a species that is nourished by the tree.

Orchard species also grow in the reserve, planted by the local inhabitants who cultivated their fruit. Among them are fig, pomegranate, date and citrus. The eucalyptus grove was planted by the British.

Plants with roots strong enough to penetrate crevices in the cliff are nourished there by pockets of soil. Among them is caper (*Capparis spinosa*) with its egg-shaped leaves at the base of which is a pair of very sharp thorns. Its pink-white flowers are very large, have a number of stamens and are edible as buds. Its fruit resembles an elongated grape. Another plant with strong roots is the Syrian golden-drop (*Onosma orientalis*), which grows in a rounded cluster that somewhat conceals its blue flowers with their yellow spots and whose leaves are hairy.



Narcissus (*Narcissus tazetta*)



Bristly hollyhock (*Alcea setosa*)



Other rock plants are typically Mediterranean: goldy-locks (*Chiliadenus iphionoides*) with its long, particularly redolent leaves and its cone-shaped flowers, and ferns – scaly spleenwort (*Ceterach officinarum*) and lip fern (*Cheilianthus pteridiorides*).

At summer’s end, the maritime squill (*Urginea maritima*) flowers in the reserve. After the first rain, the crocus (*Colchicum spc.*), and the winter crocus (*Crocus hyemalis*) appear. Wildflowers bloom abundantly in winter and spring, including narcissus, yellow asphodel (*Asphodeline lutea*), anemone (*Anemone coronaria*), Persian buttercup (*Ranunculus asiaticus*), cyclamen (*Cyclamen persicum*), stinking chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*) and spring groundsel (*Senecio spc.*).

## Animals

The faunal world at En Prat is very rich. Some species live in the water or on or around the stream banks, and some live in the surrounding cliffs.

### Mollusks

The most common mollusk is the smooth melanopsis (*Melanopsis buccinoidea*), a snail that is very sensitive to the amount of oxygen in the water, and dies when the balance is disturbed (due to pollution). Crabs such as *Potamon potamios* feed on minnows and fish, the latter including *Capoeta damascina*, *Orthrias jordanicus* and the swordtail (*Xiphophorus helleri*).

### Amphibians

Listen for the croaking of tree frogs (*Hyla savignyi*); charming little creatures that feed on insects among the aquatic plants where they spend most of their time. They are green-gray in color with a dark line on each side of their face. Green toads (*Bufo viridis*) and non-poisonous water snakes are among the other species that live in the water.

### Birds



A pool in the reserve

Among the birds in the reserve are the white-breasted kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) with its turquoise, brown and white coloring, which feeds on the crabs and amphibians, and the small, long-legged kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), whose coloring is turquoise, brown, white and orange and dines on small fish. The desert wheatear (*Oenanthe deserti*) can also be seen, along with Tristram’s grackle (*Onychognathus tristramii*), which is black with orange-daubed wings. Rock doves (*Columba livia*), as their name implies, live among the cliffs. Various kinds of ravens can also be found, including fan-tailed ravens (*Corvus frugilegus*), brown-necked ravens (*Corvus ruficollis*) and the common raven (*Corvus corax*). The noisiest avian in the reserve is no doubt the jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*), a dark, cave-dwelling species of raven. It is very sociable, hunts in flocks and is monogamous for life. Jackdaws have become very widespread in recent years, competing with other species for food and habitat.



Kestrel

Among the raptors in the En Prat reserve are diurnal species such as the kestrel (*Falco tinniculus*) and Bonelli’s eagle (*Hieraaretus fasciatus*) which are endangered species in Israel and nest in Wadi Mikhmash (a tributary of the Prat). Nocturnal raptors include Hume’s tawny owl (*Strix butleri*), a medium-sized, light-colored bird with a large head and yellow eyes, which feeds on small rodents and insects, and the little owl (*Athene noctua*), which nests in the walls flanking the road leading down to the reserve.



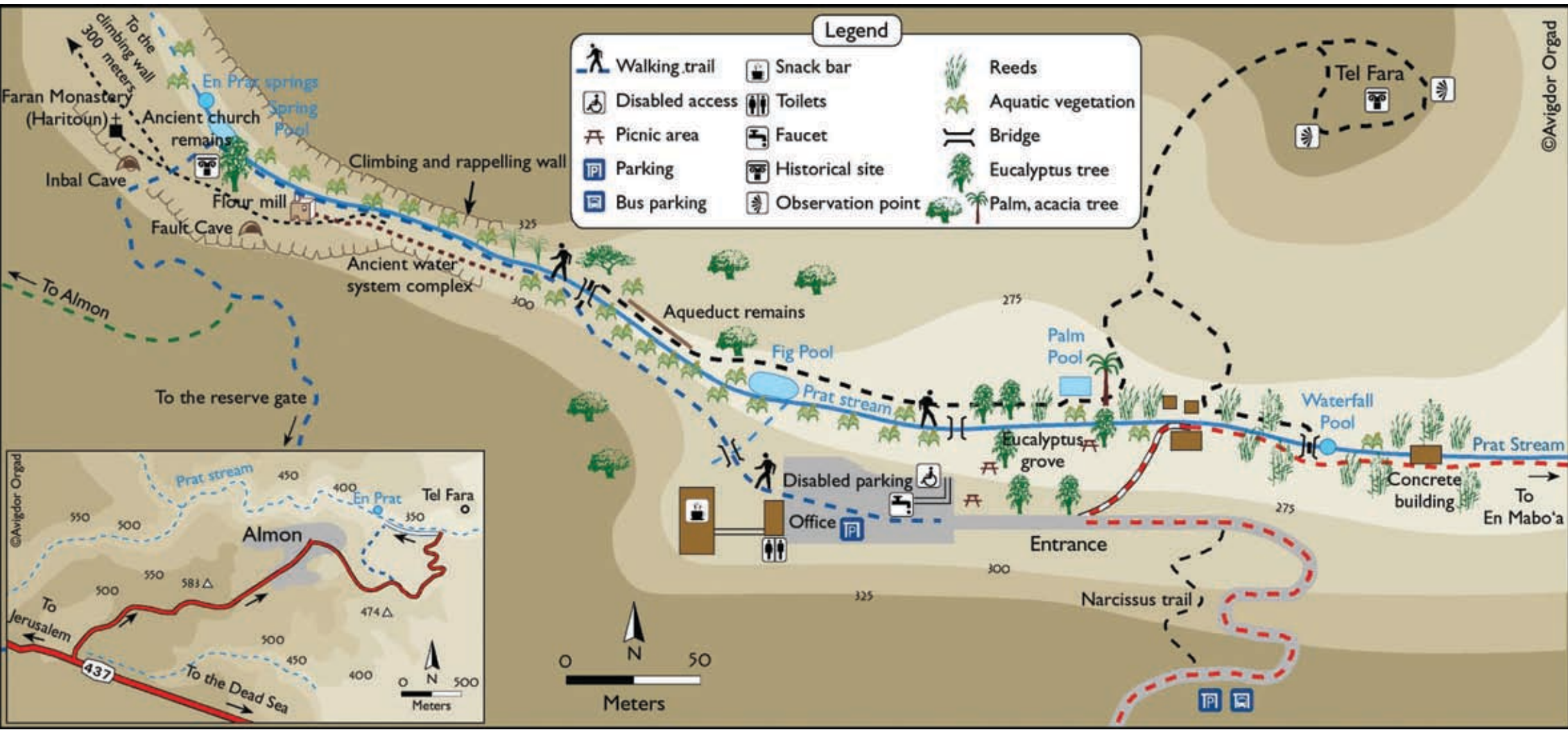
Kestrel

### Reptiles

Most of the reptiles in the reserve are arid-land species, including the Schokari sand-racer (*Psammophis schokari*) a slender, speedy brown-yellow serpent with four dark stripes lining its body from head to tail, the Arabian tiger-snake (*Telescopus dhara*), diadem snake (*Spalerosophis diadema*), sawscale viper (*Echis coloratus*), agama (*Agama sinaita*) and pale agama (*Agama palida palida*). The pale agama, a small, plump lizard with a broad head and stripes across its back and legs, is active during the hot hours of the day, feeding on grasshoppers, praying mantises and other ground-crawling insects.

### Mammals

A herd of gazelles (*Gazella gazella*) grazes regularly along the road to the reserve and at sunset heads for the water, feeding on grass along the stream banks. The red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), with its long, white-tipped tail, is active mainly at night. Small holes where Indian crested porcupines (*Hysrtix indica*) have dug up bulbs are the telltale signs of the presence of that prickly resident of the reserve. Syrian hyrax



Gazelle

(*Procavia syriaca*) live in the cliffs and seek shelter in the crevices. They have round bodies, small ears, and brown fur with a yellowish stripe down their backs. They are diurnal and are nourished by plants, mainly acacia and Christ-thorn jujube. They live in herds consisting of several families.

### Desert Monasticism

The proximity to the holy city of Jerusalem of the Judean Desert, with its numerous natural caves, springs and abandoned Second Temple-period fortresses, drew monks seeking seclusion, and fostered the development of monasticism and monasteries. In the early monastic communities each hermit-monk kept to his own cave, meeting his fellow monks rarely, by chance or necessity. Later, the meeting places became centers of community life on a shared economic basis. The Faran Monastery within the reserve is believed to be the first monastery in the Judean Desert. It was founded by the famed monk Haritoun, who established two other monasteries in the region. Haritoun was born in Asia Minor and came to Jerusalem on pilgrimage in the fourth century CE following religious persecution. According to Christian tradition, while he was on his way from Jerusalem to the site of Jesus’ baptism at the Jordan River, he was attacked by robbers who imprisoned him in a cave along the Prat Stream. A snake that crawled into the cave injected its venom into the robbers’ wine and they died after drinking it. In 330 CE Haritoun built the Faran Monastery (funding it with the robbers’ plunder) around the cave above En Prat in which he was held prisoner. Each monk who lived in the monastery kept to his own cell, meeting with the others only on Saturdays and Sundays for prayer. When the Persians conquered the country from the Byzantines in 614 CE, they killed the monks and laid waste to the monastery.

The Russian Orthodox Church eventually bought the land from the Ottoman Turks and built a new building over the Byzantine ruins. The Faran Monastery was abandoned in the 1980s. In the 1990s a monk



The hyrax wall



The Faran Monastery

named Anaopheri came here from Belarus and began to restore the site. One again, monks have taken up residence in cells within caves in the cliff overlooking the stream. Haritoun’s traditional cave-prison is now a church, adorned with icons. The monks live modestly; they do not use electricity or eat meat. At night, they read by the light of oil lamps. They bake their own bread and draw water from rain-water cisterns. Sharp-eyed visitors can spot remnants of the Byzantine church surrounding the tomb of Haritoun, in a small cave in the heart of the monastery. Visits to the monastery are permitted by calling ahead: 052-5399075.

### How to reach the reserve

From Pisgat Ze’ev: Drive toward Pisgat Ze’ev and turn right toward the Hizma checkpoint. Pass through the checkpoint, continue on road 437 to a left (north) turn to the community of Almon. Enter the gate and drive about one kilometer. Turn right (east) and follow the signs along a road leading to the reserve gate and the adjacent ticket booth. From there, drive carefully down the winding road, built along the route of the old British Mandate road, to the parking area. Notice the Mandate-era bridges and walls along the road.

From road 1 (the Jerusalem-Dead Sea road): Take road 1 toward the Dead Sea. At the traffic light after the gas station at Mishor Adumim, turn left (west) to road 437. Continue along this winding road and turn right (north) to the community of Almon. From there, continue as described above.



## Touring Routes

You can choose from among three routes in the reserve:

#### Trail for persons with physical disabilities

Access for the physically disabled leads from the parking lot to the picnic area, in the shade of eucalyptus trees and overlooking the stream.

#### Short loop trail to the monastery and the spring (about 500 meters long; 30 minutes’ walk)

Head west from the parking lot and follow the trail marked in blue toward the restored pump house. To visit the Faran Monastery (on days and hours it is open), leave the blue trail and climb the steps to the monastery. Along the steps, on the left, you will notice a ruined aqueduct and remains of a flour mill on the right. As you continue to climb, you will see the Shever (Fault) Cave – a cave created after the fall of a huge rock. **Do not enter the cave due to fear of tick-borne relapsing fever.**

Notice the many natural caves in the cliffs across from you. Continuing up the steps, you will see the opening of another, very large cave on the left. It is called the Inbal (Bell Clapper) Cave, due to the shape of

the entrance. To the right of the opening you can see a small window carved into the rock. It is unclear who used this cave, but many such caves were probably used as stables or shelter for hermits, who adapted entrances and interiors to their needs. Continue climbing to the monastery gate. From there, you have a view toward the cliff on the other side of the stream, which also has hermits’ caves. After visiting the monastery, return to the blue trail and go down toward the stream. On the way down, notice the remains of a Greek Orthodox church below you on the right.

You have reached En Prat, the uppermost spring of the Prat Stream.

This is the western boundary of the part of the reserve that is open to the public, and the end of the marked trail. **Caution! Slippery rocks!**

Return along the stream. You will skirt remains of the church you saw from above. A few dozen meters farther along, join the trail that goes up to the steps leading to the monastery. When you see the pump house ahead of you on the right, and just before the terrace on the left, leave the blue trail and turn left (north) to the trail marked in black. Cross the stream on the small bridge and follow the black trail along the lower terrace. You will pass remains of an aqueduct on your left and near a giant fig tree next to the Te’ena (Fig) Pool. You can wade in the pool, which was restored by the reserve personnel. Notice the two smaller pools on the other side of the stream – the Bustan (Orchard) Pools. Go down to the lower terrace and continue along it toward the eucalyptus grove, where the short trail ends.

#### Long loop trail toward Tel Fara (about 1,250 meters; about two hours’ walk, recommended for winter and spring)

The long trail continues from here, opposite the eucalyptus grove. Keep to the terrace and follow the trail marked in black east as far as the date palms and a stone building (another pump house). From there, turn left (north) to the steps that lead to the Dekel (Palm) Pool. This pool was built by the British to hold the water of the small spring that emerges here. The pool once had a concrete roof to prevent pollution. **Swim at your own risk! The pool is deep!**

Notice a niche in the rock to the left of the pool, one of many used by hermits. Return to the trail and go down the steps. At the bottom, turn left (east) behind the pump house toward another palm tree. Pass the palm tree on the right and go down a step toward a lemon tree, where a view of the stream awaits.

Continue on the trail leading up to the Abu Os Ruins, where you can see an ancient lime pit and a ruin where remains were found from the Chalcolithic period (4500–3500 BCE). The trail passes to the right of the lime pit. From here you can go around the ruin and back down to the stream, or continue climbing on the trail – a short but somewhat steep ascent – to Fara Ruins. Remains were unearthed on the tell from the Early Bronze Age, when it is believed a large city stood here. You can see a ruined wall and beyond it, the remnants of a cemetery. Finds from the Byzantine period were also unearthed in the area.

The tell affords a beautiful view eastward toward the agricultural terraces once cultivated by the inhabitants, toward the continuation of the Prat Stream and the communities of Alon, Kfar Adumim and Nofe Prat. To the west you can see the area of the stream from which you came, the monastery and the British road leading down to the stream.

Return via the same trail to Abu Os Ruins and from there, down toward the stream, toward HaRo’im (Shepherds) Spring and two buildings, one of which was used for water storage and the other for pumping. Continue east along the stream, crossing it on a small bridge. Keep going east for a few more meters on the trail marked in red to the lovely lookout over a small waterfall cascading down from the Mapal (Waterfall) Pool. If you continue a little farther east along the red trail, you’ll notice a small concrete building that was apparently used to measure the volume of water and was part of the British water system.

The red trail crosses En Prat and continues upstream to En Mabo’a.