



This trail is one of 17 paths or trails that deal with the issue of water and peace building between Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian communities that share a common water source. The routes were planned during 2007 in the framework of the "Good Water Neighbors" project in cooperation with community representatives as well as the municipalities

**The goals of the trails are to:**

- Raise public awareness of shared water and environment concerns of the communities
- Promote cross border cooperation for solving environmental problems
- Develop the potential for local eco-tourism

The "Good Water Neighbors" project was established in 2001 by "EcoPeace / Friends of the Earth Middle East" in order to promote local cooperation efforts to protect the shared water and environment between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority.

**"EcoPeace / Friends of the Earth Middle East" is a regional environmental organization that works out of 3 offices, Tel Aviv, Amman and Bethlehem to promote cooperative efforts to protect our shared environmental heritage.**

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- Specific information on the neighbors trails: <http://www.foeme.org/publications>

**Guided tours on the Neighbors Trails take place once every three weeks. To sign up, please write to: [info@foeme.org](mailto:info@foeme.org)**



Friends of the Earth Middle East  
ידידי כדור הארץ המזה"ת



## Neighbors Path



# Tamar

### Background

The Tamar Regional Council includes the communities of Kibbutz Ein Gedi, Neve Zohar, Neot Hakikar and Ein Tamar - approximately 1,200 residents altogether who earn their living mainly through agriculture and tourism. Across the border on the southern end of the Dead Sea lies the South Ghors Municipality of Jordan, consisting of several smaller agricultural communities: Ghor Safi, Ghor Mazraa, Ghor Haditheh and Ghor Fifa. The total population of the South Ghors Municipality is approximately 40,000.

The desert landscapes of the Dead Sea have undergone tremendous changes over the last few decades, threatening the area's unique characteristics. Communities from both sides of the Sea are directly affected by the mismanagement of the Jordan River - Dead Sea ecosystem, resulting in the rapidly receding Dead Sea waters and the proliferation of sinkholes. These changes have severely damaged the environment and contributed to the economic problems in this region.

This route, prepared for you by residents of the area with the support of "Friends of the Earth Middle East", exhibits the unique natural features and heritage of the region. Our Jordanian neighbors are operating a neighbor's path as well and we will observe their communities as we proceed with this tour. We hope that after participating in this tour, all of you will fully realize the importance and urgency to start and /or join our efforts in saving this remarkable spot on the globe.



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### 1 Sinkholes and the Receding Dead Sea Level

Observation Point south of the Ein Gedi Sulphur Springs parking lot. Enter through dirt road, suitable for any type of car.

Since 1900 the Dead Sea has receded by 30 meters; today it measures 420 m below sea level. The construction of the National Water Carrier in Israel and the King Abdullah Canal in Jordan has contributed to the rate of decline that today stands at 1-1.2 meters per year. The Ein Gedi Spa, built on the shores of the Dead Sea in the early 80's, must now transport its visitors by train for more than 1 km to reach the beach. The rapidly declining water level rates have created huge holes in the ground – called sinkholes. Sinkholes started appearing in the south of the Dead Sea and spread quickly to the north while simultaneously deepening and enlarging existing holes. Today approximately 1,700 sinkholes are registered at 30 different sites, from Neve Zohar in the south to Einot Zukim in the north. A similar phenomenon exists in Jordan, mainly in the southern area.



## The Path's Stations



### 2 Massada

The lower palm tree parking lot at the foot of the mountain.

On the southeastern side of the Dead Sea one can see the "Lisan", a peninsula that once divided the Dead Sea into the deeper northern basin and the shallower southern basin. Today the Lisan is the southern border of the sea, as the waters in the southern basin have completely dried out and hence water needs to be artificially pumped into the evaporation pools of the Dead Sea factories - on the Israeli as well as on the Jordanian side.

Opposite us, on the Jordanian side of the sea, is the village of Mazra'a. Most of the inhabitants depend on agriculture for a living; however, due to the increasing presence of sinkholes, many farmers have already had to abandon their land.

### 4 Mt. Sedom

Continue, passing the shed, stop at the roadside near "Lot's Wife" pillar near the entrance to Sedom Cave

Mt. Sedom resulted from the rising of an underground salt block. The peak of the mountain is 165 m below sea level and 230 m above the Dead Sea. Mt. Sedom continues to rise at an annual rate of 5 mm. On the other side of the sea we can see the Jordanian village of El Safi and Wadi Zered (Wadi Hasa in Arabic) - the boundary between the Moab Mountains to the north and the Edom Mountains to the south. Further along on Road no. 90, one can see the structures and former living quarters of the potash company's first workers who came to the region in 1934. Further on are the modern Dead Sea Works.

### 3 Evaporation Pool 5 – Rising of the pool floor

North of the Sheraton Hotel at the southern tip of the Ein Bokek Hotels. Sign to pumping station Moriah.

The Israeli and Jordanian industries that exploit the evaporation of water to harvest its salt and minerals, are responsible for 30% of the decline of the Dead Sea. From the pool walls, one can see that the water level in the pool is higher than the ground floor of the hotel! Every year 20 cm of salt and mineral deposits accumulate at the bottom of the pool, constantly raising the water level. The nearby pumping station we see constantly pumps out water that threatens to flood the foundations of the hotels.

This is an example that shows how the lack of an integrated management plan for the Dead Sea has led to conflicting interests between the tourist and industrial sectors in the region.



### 5 Lookout from Amir Philosoph observation point

To the right of the road to Moshav Neot Hakikar and Moshav Ein Tamar. right after the bridge crossing Nahal Zin a trail leads to the top of a marl hill.

South of the last evaporation pool to the east of the road one can see what's left of the Zin salt marshes, the "Sabcha". This fertile area is evidence of shallow groundwater and many small springs on the outskirts of the marsh. The salt marsh is an oasis of life for unique and sensitive species. During migration season, the area serves as an important resting place and breeding ground for migratory birds, some of them quite rare. Most of the salt marsh area has been converted into agricultural land or has been flooded for use as evaporation ponds by the Dead Sea Works. As a result, this very special eco-system faces severe irreversible damage. Two endemic fish species live in the waters of the salt marsh. Due to unsustainable development practices in the area, these species are already extinct on the Israeli side, and are threatened of extinction on the Jordanian side. Inhabitants of the area, with the help of FoEME, are trying to find the appropriate and most effective way to preserve the remaining natural salt marshes.



### 6 The Arava Dam

One enters Moshav Neot Hakikar, driving all the way up to the greenhouses adjacent to Nachal Arava. Continue up with the road - and turn right to the dam.

The dam was built to protect the agricultural fields from excess flood water. As the border between Israel and Jordan in this area is defined as the middle of the Arava valley, the dam pushed the border further east and enlarged the agricultural areas in Israel. In the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994, the 2 countries agreed to exchange land for water. From the dam, we can see the markers of the new international border between Israel and Jordan in the riverbed. Despite the proximity of the border, an official border crossing doesn't exist. People in the area are promoting the need for an international border crossing in the area to increase social and commercial connections on both sides of the border and to support local tourist enterprises around the Dead Sea.

Neot Hakikar and Ein Tamar have plenty of tourist attractions to offer: rural and agricultural enterprises, galleries, restaurants and guest rooms. Local residents will be happy to guide you to all the hidden jewels of the area!

