

Hamat Gader – Relax with Crocodiles

Hamat Gader is a natural spa in the Golan Heights – it is located near the borders of Israel, Syria and Jordan, on the south east part of the sea of Galilee. The mineral rich spring water is warm and relaxing.



History

In the Roman times, Hamat Gader was popular as a recreational site. The bath complex's construction began in 2nd century by the Roman legions, garrisoned at Gadara city. It was the second biggest bathhouse in the whole of the Roman Empire. Up to today, Roman ruins still stand at the site. However, major changes were made to the already existing structure in the Muslim period. This offers the site two distinct construction periods.

In the 7th century, some of the structures were damaged by an earthquake but were restored by Umayyad caliph, a ruler from Damascus. The baths were eventually abandoned in the ninth century and they became covered by a thick silt layer.

At the site, there is a 2000-seat Roman theater which was constructed in the third century CE. A large synagogue was also constructed in the fifth century CE.

Recreation, relaxation and activities

The natural spa, Hamar Gader, combines attractions as well as recreational activities for couples, groups and families. The site was opened to the public in the year 1977 and is operated jointly by four kibbutzin from the area of Southern Golan. These are Mevo Hama, Afik, Kfar Harvur and Meitzar.

With the natural spa's water getting to 122°F, it is pumped to two outdoor pools where visitors can enjoy its curative nature. The water is believed to speed up the renewal of cells, relieve digestive as well as urinary track diseases.



Visitors to the spa can take their time to see the magnificent halls preserved at the site which are a combination of social and curative experience. This is one reason why the natural spa has been a tourist resort for a long time. The young as well as those who are young-at-heart can enjoy themselves at the massive water slides culminating into a dizzying bowl. Also you can engage in a variety of spa treatments.

The central bath complex has various facilities and attractions which offer soothing as well as relaxing effect to the body. With some spacious pools that are filled with water emerging from deep in the earth, the spa has medicinal and curative properties. The waters circulate naturally after every few hours.



Crocodile Farm

After enjoying their soak in the natural spa, visitors can explore on-site crocodile farm. Established in 1981, it is the largest crocodile farm in the Middle East. It has a stock of 120 alligators which were imported from Florida. There have been additional species that have been brought to the farm over the years. Currently, it includes crocodiles from Africa as well as Caimans from South America. There are now around 200 crocodiles of different ages inhabiting the farm. The mature crocodiles live in an open area that simulates their habitats. Visitors can view the crocodiles sunning themselves or wallowing in the water from a safe distance on a bridge.

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