**General Overview: Negev and the Regional Council of Ramat HaNegev**

The Negev constitutes 60-70% of the land area of the State of Israel. Within the Negev, Ramat HaNegev is the largest regional council in Israel, constituting over 22% of Israel's land area.

The region's population includes some 6,000 citizens in 14 diverse communities, including kibbutzim, moshavim, communal villages and individual settlements.

**Point of Interest #1:**

Film explaining the R&D Agro Center (Auditorium)

What does R&D stand for? Research and Development.

R&D Agro—Agricultural Research and Development.

The purpose of the R&D Agro Centers around the country:

1. Respond to specific problems encountered by farmers, such as diseases, challenges of fertilizing, and nourishing crops, etc.
2. Provide professional guidance to improve the methods used to grow existing crops.
3. Develop new crops, which are compatible with the conditions of the region, increasing farmers' crop diversity.

“Being a Farmer in the Desert“ is a touching film portraying the daily lives of the farmers and illustrating their interactions with the R&D Center. The length of the film is 12 minutes. It is in Hebrew with English subtitles.

**Point of Interest #2:**

Interactive Display Panel

Who were the first farmers of Ramat HaNegev and what did they grow?

How did the agriculture develop in the Negev in Modern times?

Who was Yoel De Malach and what was his contribution to the development of agriculture in the Negev?

What will agriculture look like in the future?

Press each tab to watch a different short film (2 minutes long)

**Point of Interest #3:**

Lookout Point of the Region: Climate, Soil and Water

Ramat HaNegev has a comfortable yet challenging desert climate: In the summer, days are hot and dry and the nights cool. In the winter, days are cold and the nights frigid, the temperature sometimes dropping below 0 degrees Celsius. The average annual rainfall is 90 mm (10 days of rain).

The area has 2 types of soil: sand (look to the north), and Loess (look to the west), which are very different in terms of their ability to retain water: In sand, water seeps quickly, as opposed the Loess soil, which retains water for long periods of time but also gets blocked easily. Using drip irrigation, farmers can adjust their irrigation to accommodate different types of soil.

The water comes from 2 sources:

* Saline groundwater, pumped from a subterranean reservoir.
* Desalinated water from desalination plants along the Mediterranean coast.

Using a water dilution computer (a development of the Ramat HaNegev R&D Center), the farmers adjust the saline level to the crop: two pipelines from the different sources of water enter the computer on one side, while one pipeline exits on the other, allowing the farmer to pre-select the appropriate saline concentration.

**Point of Interest #4:**

Negev Products Shop

Here you will get to sample (at no additional charge) the vegetables grown at the R&D Center, and enjoy shopping from our selection of products and souvenirs made by local farmers and artists: olive oil, jojoba oil, Aragon oil, honey, wine, natural cosmetics, ceramics and more.

**Point of Interest #5:**

The French Commando Monument

The French Commando unit consisted of approximately 100 French speaking soldiers, mostly Jewish immigrants from North African countries, and some Christians supporters of Israel. The unit was part of the Palmach's 9th battalion in the Negev Brigade, which fought during the Israeli War of Independence in the years 1948–1949.

The soldiers in the French speaking unit, whose dress and language differed from that of their Israel born Palmach comrades, were called “The French Commando,” a nickname that eventually became official.

In December 1948, the French Commando joined the battles of Operation Horev and were entrusted with conquering lookout points on the Beer Sheva-Nitzana road. They suffered heavy losses of 15 soldiers. During the battles, seven of the injured members of the unit found cover under one of the train bridges, North East to Ashalim. The Egyptians discovered their hiding spot and murdered them all. When Kibbutz Revivim members came to the help the injured, they found them dead. In 1995 a memorial was inaugurated nearby to honor of the unit commemorate the battles they took part in, and preserve the memory of the fallen.

**Point of Interest #6:**

Overview of the Network of Solar Power Plants in Ashalim (Ramat Hanegev)

In 2009 the Israeli Government reached a decision that by 2020, 10% of Israel’s electricity would be produced from renewable energy sources, such as wind, water and sun.

It was decided that three solar power plants would be established in the area of Ashalim. All three plants combined would provide 2-2.5% of the electricity consumption in Israel, each using a different technology:

**PV:** A power plant with photovoltaic technology, 35 MW. Concessionaire: Ashalim Sun P.V. Company (not visible from overview)

**Plot A:** A thermo-solar power plant with trough technology. 121 MW. Concessionaire: Negev Energy Company. (You can see the rows of mirrors looking to the South-South West).

**Plot B:** A Thermo-solar power plant with Hybrid Thermo-solar Tower technology. 121 MW. Concessionaire: Megalim Company. (You can see the power plant looking to the East).

Across the highway, you can spot the highest thermo-solar tower in the world! (250 Meters tall)

This is the solar power plant run by Megalim, in a field of mirrors which extends over an area of more than 3 sq.km. At the top of the tower there is a water receptor to which the 50,600 mirrors focus sun beams. The electricity produced by the station will be able to supply electricity for approximately 120,000 homes.