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ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Israel and the Palestinian Territories is extremely varied and caters to all proclivities and pockets. We order our listings according to prices, based on the cost of a double room in high season (July and August). Budget listings, under US\$95 (350NIS), include independent guesthouses, some hostels and lower-end hotels. Midrange accommodation costs between US\$95 and US\$145 (350NIS to 550NIS) and consists of three-star hotels, boutique hotels, zimmers (wooden cabins) in the north and Christian-operated hospices. The top end, over US\$145 (550NIS), includes even plusher boutique hotels and larger hotels of generally four-star standard and upward.

Note that Israel's accommodation costs swoop and soar spectacularly with the seasons. July and August is considered the highest season, as well as holiday weeks such as Passover and Rosh Hashanah. In popular getaway areas such as the Galilee, the Golan Heights and Eilat, prices take a steep hike on weekends, when many countryside hotels, guesthouses and zimmers impose a two-night minimum stay. Some city hotels, meanwhile, impose a seven-night minimum stay throughout the summer months.

In contrast, accommodation prices in the Palestinian Territories remain quite constant year-round, the only exception being in Bethlehem, where accommodation costs rise during Christmas and Easter. Be sure to book well in advance if you're planning on travel at these times.

B&Bs, Guesthouses & Zimmers

All over Israel you'll find accommodation in B&Bs, guesthouses and zimmers (especially prevalent in the Galilee and Golan), most falling into the midrange category. Facilities at B&Bs and guesthouses vary from simple rooms with shared facilities to self-contained studio apartments with kitchenettes, cable TV, jacuzzi and stunning views. Zimmers are usually small, comfortable log cabins, most nowadays equipped with TV, cable, jacuzzi and a kitchenette. You'll find all three by keeping an eye out for signs posted in the street. For B&Bs check the website of the **Home Accommodation Association** (www.bnb.co.il); for zimmers, check out www.weekend.co.il (Hebrew only) or www.zimmeril.com for complete lists of the myriad available.

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out lonelyplanet.com/hotels. You'll find the true, insider low-down on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

PRACTICALITIES

- Daily (except Saturday) English-language newspapers include *Ha'aretz* (www.haaretzdaily.com) and the *Jerusalem Post* (www.jpost.com). In East Jerusalem, you can pick up the weekly, Palestinian-produced *Jerusalem Times*. The *Jerusalem Report* is a biweekly magazine covering current affairs.
- Tel Aviv's best station for English- and Hebrew-language rock music is 102FM. In Jerusalem, English news can be heard at 10pm on 88.2FM. English news and music is played sporadically on 100.7FM (Tel Aviv), 98.4FM (Jerusalem), 97.2FM (Haifa) and 94.4FM (Tiberias). The short-wave BBC World Service (1323 kHz) broadcasts news in English, as does the Voice of America (1260 kHz). Israel National Radio streams on the web at www.kol-israel.com. For Palestinian music, listen to Angham Radio (www.radioangham.com, in Arabic).
- Israel's three public TV channels feature plenty of English-language programming with Hebrew subtitles. These are supplemented by the Arabic-language Jordan TV. Nearly all hotels and guesthouses also have cable TV, which carries CNN, Sky and BBC World.
- The predominant video format in Israel is PAL.
- Electric power is 230V, 50Hz AC. The sockets are designed to accommodate two- and three-pin, round plugs (European standard).
- Israel, the West Bank and Gaza all follow the international metric system.

Guesthouses are also plentiful in the Palestinian Territories, and make a good-value change from hotels or hostels. Bethlehem, in particular, has some nice, characterful guesthouse options.

Bungalows & Beach Huts

Down Sinai way, backpackers will delight in the sometimes ramshackle but always cheap bungalows and beach huts scattered along the sands. They are incredibly basic – a palm-front shelter with a floor of carpets and cushions from as little as E£20 per person.

Camping

Camping grounds (with amenities such as running water, shower blocks and electricity) are dotted here and there across Israel, but they are not as plentiful or as cheap as you might expect. Wilderness and beach camping is very limited, though there are some great organised tent sites on the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee (p267). Elsewhere, keep an eye out for signs forbidding wild camping, or ask park staff at nature reserve information offices for advice. There are currently no options for camping in the Palestinian Territories.

Hostels & Hospices

Israel has an extensive network of roughly 30 official Hostelling International (HI)

hostels, all of which are clean and well appointed. For more on HI hostels, check the website of the **Israel Youth Hostels Association** (www.iyha.org.il/eng).

Alongside official HI hostels, there is a growing number of independent hostels – some excellent, some lacklustre. The **Israel Hostels Network** (www.hostels-israel.com) is an excellent resource linking more than 40 of these outfits and allowing you to book rooms or dorms online.

In Jerusalem, in particular, a similar price and experience is to be had at one of its numerous pilgrims hostels, servicing mainly, but not solely, religious travellers and usually run by a religious body. These lack the oomph of independent, more high-spirited hostels, but are a secure and solid-value way to stay in the Old City. See p147 for listings.

Hotels

Israel's hotels have come a long way in the last five years or so, with the gap between high-end chains and low-end flop houses slowly being filled by small, chic upper-midrange options. In addition, luxurious boutique hotels are springing up at a fair pace to cater to the top-end traveller tired of checking in for another corporate night's sleep.