



# Lower Galilee & Sea of Galilee

## الجليل الاسفل وبحيرة طبريا

### הגליל התחתון והכינרת

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#### Best Places to Eat

- » Havat HaYatzranim (p203)
- » Rida Café (p196)
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- » Yisrael's Kitchen (p211)
- » Tchelet (p221)

#### Best Places to Stay

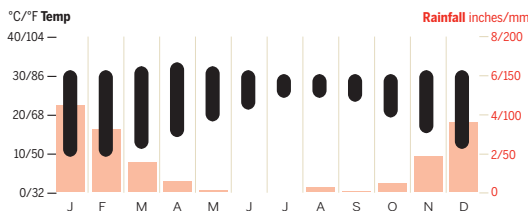
- » Fauzi Azar Inn (p195)
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#### Why Go?

Blessed with ancient stone synagogues, archaeological sites associated with Jesus's ministry, and rugged hills cloaked in wildflowers in spring, the Lower Galilee – the part of northern Israel south of Rte 85 (linking Akko with the Sea of Galilee) – is hugely popular with hikers, cyclists, Jewish and Arab Israeli families on holiday, Tel Aviv epicureans and, of course, Christian pilgrims. Green, lush and chilly in winter (the perfect time for a hot-spring dip) and parched in summer (you can beat the heat in the Sea of Galilee), this is where Jesus of Nazareth is believed to have lived, preached and have performed some of his most famous miracles. But these days even Nazareth is much more than a place of Christian pilgrimage – it now boasts one of Israel's most sophisticated dining scenes. The shimmering Sea of Galilee (in Hebrew, the Kinneret), too, juxtaposes holiday pleasures with archaeological excavations linked to Jesus's ministry.

#### When to Go

##### Nazareth



**Dec–Mar** Mt Gilboa is carpeted with daffodils, red poppies and, in March, purple Gilboa irises.

**Jul–Sep** Oppressively hot at the Sea of Galilee and in the Beit She'an Valley.

**Early Dec & early May** The twice-yearly Jacob's Ladder Festival brings music to Ginosar.

## REALLY, REALLY HOT

The hottest temperature ever recorded anywhere in Asia, a sizzling 53.9°C (129°F), was registered at Kibbutz Tirat Tzvi (8km south of Beit She'an) on 21 June 1942.

## Visiting Jenin

» The Gilboa Regional Council, in the Jezreel Valley, and the municipality of the West Bank city of Jenin are working together to improve cross-border 'peace tourism', especially for Christian pilgrims. For details, see <http://hagilboa-tour.com/en/gilboa-jenin>.

## West Bank Crossing

» To travel through the Separation Fence between the Lower Galilee and Jenin, use the Israel Defence Forces (IDF, the national army) **Jalameh (Gilboa) Crossing** ([www.cogat.idf.il/1362-en/Cogat.aspx](http://www.cogat.idf.il/1362-en/Cogat.aspx)), 10km south of Afula along Rte 60.

## Resources

- » Regional Council Tourism Information: [www.ekin.net.co.il](http://www.ekin.net.co.il)
- » Ministry for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee: [www.gogalilee.org](http://www.gogalilee.org)
- » Travelujah: [www.travelujah.com](http://www.travelujah.com)
- » BibleWalks.com: [www.biblewalks.com](http://www.biblewalks.com)

## The Red Line

In newspapers, on the radio and on TV, Israelis follow the water level of the Sea of Galilee at least as closely as they do stock-market indexes. As winter rains flow into the lake, news reports follow its progress towards full capacity (208.8m below sea level), while in summertime, the lake's descent towards (and sometimes even below) the 'red line' (213m below sea level) – beyond which pumping may adversely impact water quality – generates news flashes and, at times, screaming, doomful headlines.

To find out the current state of the lake, stop by the **Water Level Surveyor** (Medid; southern end, Yigal Allon Promenade; ☉24hr), a 5m-high sculpture shaped like the land surrounding the Sea of Galilee. The digital readout is accurate to 1cm.

## THE JESUS TRAIL

The 65km Jesus Trail ([www.jesustrail.com](http://www.jesustrail.com)) takes walkers from Nazareth's Church of the Annunciation to Tabgha and Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. Along the way, it passes through Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Bedouin and Druze communities and a gorgeously varied landscape: rugged hills, olive groves, forests and clifftop lookouts. Highlights include Christian holy sites, ancient synagogues, a Crusader-era battlefield and Nebi Shu'eib, the Druze religion's most important shrine.

Walking the entire trail, which is marked with orange blazes, usually takes four days, but shorter sections can be enjoyed as day hikes. Provided you have decent shoes and plenty of water, the route is suitable for all ages and abilities. Camping is an option, and there are plenty of accommodation options along the way, ranging from B&Bs to top-end hotels. The itinerary and GPS waypoints are available on the excellent website, or you can purchase two first-rate guides: *Hiking the Jesus Trail* by Anna Dintaman and David Landis, and *Jesus Trail and Jerusalem* by Jacob Saar.

## Sea of Galilee Stats

- » Surface area when full: 170 sq km
- » Length of shoreline: 53km
- » Maximum depth: 44m
- » Volume of water when full: 4.3 cu km
- » Average surface water temperature in February: 14.7°C
- » Average surface water temperature in August: 28.6°C
- » Supplies one-quarter of Israel's water needs
- » Elevation of the 'upper red line' (above which there's a danger of flooding): 208.8m below sea level
- » Elevation of the 'lower red line' (below which water quality and lake ecology may be compromised): 213m below sea level