



Israel & the Palestinian Territories

Includes »

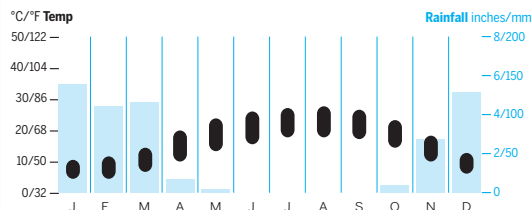
Jerusalem.....	187
Mediterranean Coast.....	206
Tel Aviv.....	206
Jaffa.....	216
Haifa.....	219
Akko.....	223
Lower Galilee & Sea of Galilee.....	226
Upper Galilee & Golan Heights.....	234
Dead Sea.....	240
Eilat.....	245
West Bank & Gaza Strip.....	249
Ramallah & Al-Bireh.....	250
Understand Israel & the Palestinian Territories.....	256
Survival Guide.....	266

Why Go?

At the intersection of Asia, Europe and Africa – geographically, culturally and even botanically – Israel and the Palestinian Territories have been a meeting place of cultures, empires and religions since the dawn of history. Cradle of Judaism and Christianity, and sacred to Muslims and Baha'is, the Holy Land offers visitors the opportunity to immerse themselves in the richness and variety of their own religious traditions, as well as to discover the beliefs, rituals and architecture of other faiths. Distances are short, so you can relax on a Mediterranean beach one day, spend the next floating in the mineral-rich waters of the Dead Sea or rafting down the Jordan River, and the day after that scuba diving in the Red Sea. Hikers can follow spring-fed streams as they tumble towards the Jordan, discover verdant oases tucked away in the arid bluffs above the Dead Sea, and explore the multicoloured sandstone formations of Makhtesh Ramon.

When to Go

Jerusalem



Best for Nature

- » Ein Gedi (p240)
- » Makhtesh Ramon (p244)
- » Hula Valley (p237)
- » Red Sea Snorkelling (p247)

Best for Culture

- » Israel Museum (p198)
- » Tel Aviv's theatres (p213)
- » Tsfat's art galleries (p235)
- » Ramallah (p250)

Feb–Apr Hillsides and valleys are carpeted with wildflowers; the ideal season for hiking.

Jul–Aug Warm and dry in Jerusalem, humid in Tel Aviv, infernal at the Dead Sea and Eilat.

Sep–Oct Jewish holidays generate a spike in domestic tourism – and room prices.

Connections

For onward travel to Egypt, the only crossing currently open to travellers is at Taba, on the Red Sea 7km south of Eilat. If you're heading to Jordan, you have three options: Allenby/King Hussein Bridge, just east of Jericho; the Jordan River/Sheikh Hussein crossing, 30km south of the Sea of Galilee; or the Yitzhak Rabin/Wadi Araba crossing, 4km northeast of Eilat/Aqaba. Travel to the Gaza Strip may be possible from Egypt.

ITINERARIES

Ten Days

Spend three days exploring the wonders of **Jerusalem**, then take the slow train to **Tel Aviv** and spend a couple of days in cafes, at museums, cycling, and on the beach. Rent a car, if you can, and head north, spending two days at the **Sea of Galilee** and hiking at **Yehudiya** or **Banias**. Finally, drive west to **Haifa** to visit the gorgeous **Baha'i Gardens**, then down the coast to the ancient ruins of **Caesarea**. From Tel Aviv, fly home or head by bus to **Eilat** and, via the Taba border crossing, to **Sinai**, Egypt.

Two Weeks

From **Jerusalem** take a day trip below sea level to **Qumran**, where the Essenes hid the Dead Sea Scrolls, and to **Masada**, where Jewish Zealots defied the Roman legions. Then head south to friendly, engaging **Bethlehem** and the troubled city of **Hebron**. To the northeast there's **Mt Tabor**, with its inspirational views, and **Nazareth**, Jesus' boyhood stomping ground. Continue northeast to the **Sea of Galilee** and to spiritual **Tsfat** (Safed), centre of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism).

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Amba** Iraqi-style mango chutney
- » **Bourekas** Flaky Balkan pastries filled with Bulgarian cheese, spinach or mushrooms
- » **Challah** Braided bread traditionally eaten by Jews on the Sabbath
- » **Cholent** A heavy meat and potato stew simmered overnight and served for Sabbath lunch
- » **Labneh** Thick, creamy yoghurt cheese, often smothered in olive oil and sprinkled with zaatar
- » **Sabich** A pita pocket filled with fried eggplant, boiled potato, hard-boiled egg, tahina, amba and freshly chopped vegies
- » **Schug** Yemenite hot chili paste
- » **Zaatar** A spice blend that includes hyssop, sumac and sesame seeds

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Israeli new shekel (NIS or ILS)
- » **Mobile Phones** Generally excellent 900/1800 MHz cell-phone coverage
- » **Money** ATMs widely available in Israel, less so in the Palestinian Territories
- » **Visas** On-arrival visas available to most nationalities

Fast Facts

- » **Capitals** Jerusalem (I), Ramallah (PT)
- » **Country Codes** 972 (I), 972 or 970 (PT)
- » **Languages** Hebrew and Arabic (I), Arabic (PT)
- » **Official Names** State of Israel, Palestinian National Authority
- » **Populations** Israel 7.8 million, West Bank 2.7 million, Gaza 1.7 million

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	3.90NIS
Euro Zone	€1	5.0NIS
Jordan	JD1	5.33NIS
UK	UK£1	6.12NIS
USA	US\$1	3.78NIS

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Resources

- » **Israel Nature & Parks Authority** (www.parks.org.il)
- » **This Week in Palestine** (www.thisweekinpalestine.com)
- » **Israel Ministry of Tourism** (www.goisrael.com)