

ASIA · HISTORY · SACRED SITES · FOOD · CITY BREAKS · DESERT · BEACHES

 Israel

Israel squeezes Mediterranean beaches, desert canyons and some of the world's most significant religious sites into a country roughly the size of Wales. Jerusalem's Old City holds places sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims within a few walled blocks, Masada and the Dead Sea lie within a couple of hours' drive, and Tel Aviv supplies Bauhaus streets, beaches and superb food.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Israel.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 22 July 2026.

 CAPITAL Jerusalem	 CURRENCY Israeli new shekel (ILS) £1 ≈ ₪4.14	 LANGUAGE Hebrew, Arabic English, Russian	 BEST TIME Mar–May, Oct–Nov
 DAILY BUDGET £75–£350 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, H 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 5h direct ~£300–£700 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

Israel is compact enough that a fortnight covers its core, but the contrasts are sharp. A first trip usually splits between Jerusalem, for the Old City, Yad Vashem and the Israel Museum, and Tel Aviv, for beaches, Bauhaus architecture and Jaffa's old port. From either, day trips reach the Dead Sea and Herod's cliff-top fortress at Masada. With more time, head north to Haifa's Bahá'í Gardens, crusader Acre and the Sea of Galilee, where many Christian sites cluster, or south through the Negev to Makhtesh Ramon and the Red Sea resort of Eilat. Jerusalem's status and Israel's borders remain internationally disputed, and politics colours many conversations.

Israel is expensive: Tel Aviv ranks among the world's costliest cities, and hotels, restaurants and car hire are priced to match. Shabbat shapes the week; from Friday afternoon to Saturday evening most public transport stops and much of Jerusalem closes, while Tel Aviv's cafés and bars stay busy. Bag checks at stations and malls and thorough airport security are routine. People tend to be direct, informal and keen to talk, and English is widely spoken. It suits history lovers, food lovers, pilgrims and walkers, but the political situation can shift quickly, so check the FCDO travel advice before booking and again before you go.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

SACRED SITE

Jerusalem's Old City

Inside Suleiman the Magnificent's 16th-century walls, the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Al-Aqsa compound lie minutes apart across four quarters. Go early, dress modestly and walk the ramparts for rooftop views.
- 2

HISTORY

Masada

Herod's palace-fortress on a sheer-sided mesa above the Dead Sea, where Jewish rebels made a last stand against Rome in AD 73–74. Climb the Snake Path before dawn or take the cable car; it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

3

NATURE

Dead Sea

The lowest land on Earth, more than 430 metres below sea level, where salt-thick water makes floating effortless. Ein Bokek has hotels and free public beaches, and nearby Ein Gedi adds a spring-fed oasis with waterfalls and ibex.

4

HISTORY

Acre (Akko) Old City

A UNESCO-listed port whose Ottoman walls, mosques and caravanserais sit on top of a remarkably intact crusader city. Explore the Knights' Halls and the Templars' Tunnel, then eat fish and hummus by the harbour.

5

NATURE

Makhtesh Ramon

A vast erosion crater about 40 km long in the Negev highlands. The visitor centre on the rim at Mitzpe Ramon overlooks hiking and jeep trails, and dark skies make it one of Israel's best stargazing spots.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Tel Aviv

≈ 4.3 million people

A beach city of white Bauhaus apartment blocks, Carmel Market, cycle lanes and late-night bars, with ancient Jaffa and its flea market at the southern end of the seafront promenade.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Jerusalem

≈ 1.2 million people

Holy to three faiths and unlike anywhere else, with the walled Old City, Mahane Yehuda market, Yad Vashem and the Israel Museum, home of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Allow at least three days.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Haifa

≈ 1.1 million people

Israel's main port climbs Mount Carmel in terraces; ride the Carmelit underground funicular, walk the Bahá'í Gardens and eat in the Arab quarter of Wadi Nisnas. A handy base for Acre and Galilee.

Figures are metropolitan areas (Tel Aviv covers the whole Gush Dan conurbation). Jerusalem's figure includes East Jerusalem, whose annexation by Israel is not recognised internationally.

When to go to Israel

Best time: **Mar–May, Oct–Nov.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

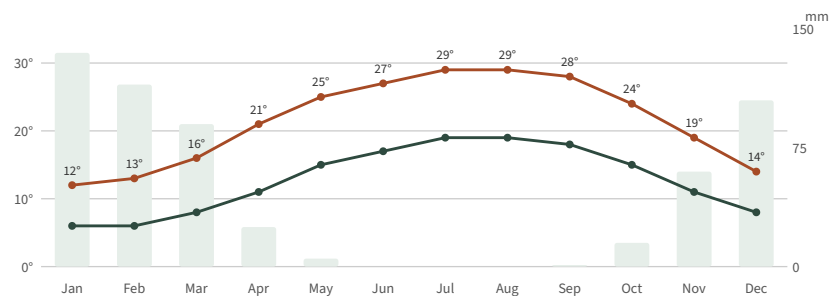
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Jerusalem

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Mar–Apr	Passover (Pesach) The spring festival of liberation brings family seders, bread vanishing from many shops and restaurants, and Israelis on holiday; book hotels and national-park campsites well ahead.
Sep–Oct	Sukkot A week-long harvest festival after Yom Kippur, when families eat in leafy sukkah booths on balconies and outside restaurants; parks and hotels are packed, and businesses close on its first and last days.
Dec	Hanukkah Eight nights of candle-lighting, usually in December, when menorahs glow in windows across Jerusalem and bakeries sell sufganiyot, jam-filled doughnuts, by the trayful.

How much does Israel cost?

SHOESTRING £75 per person / day ≈ ₪311 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £170 per person / day ≈ ₪704 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £350 per person / day ≈ ₪1,449 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Shakshuka Eggs poached in a spiced tomato and pepper sauce, brought from North Africa by Jewish immigrants and now a breakfast institution, served in the pan with bread.	Hummus Served warm and silky at specialist hummusiyas, topped with whole chickpeas, tahini or ful beans and scooped up with pitta; many places close by mid-afternoon.	Sabich An Iraqi-Jewish pitta sandwich of fried aubergine, hard-boiled egg, salad, tahini and amba, a tangy mango pickle; a Tel Aviv street-food staple.
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Getting around

Israel Railways links Ben Gurion Airport with Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and the north, and the fast line runs between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in about 30–40 minutes. Frequent buses cover the rest; pay with a Rav-Kav card or a payment app, and plan journeys with Moovit. Shared sherut taxis fill gaps, including on some routes during Shabbat. Hire a car for the Negev, Dead Sea and Galilee; Gett is the main taxi app.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE ⏏ ⏏ C H 230V — bring a UK-to-C/H adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 101 Fire: 102 Police: 100 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +972	TIME ZONE UTC+2 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Service is usually not included, so check the bill and leave 10–15% in restaurants and cafés. Round up taxi fares and tip guides at the end of a tour.

ETIQUETTE

Cover shoulders and knees at holy sites, and respect the separate men's and women's areas at the Western Wall. Don't photograph ultra-Orthodox residents on Shabbat; Israeli directness in conversation is normal, not rude.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Ben Gurion Airport (TLV), Tel Aviv; Ramon Airport (ETM), Eilat

Visas & entry for Israel

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Israel without a visa as a tourist. On entry, visitors get permission to stay for up to 3 months. However, if you are a dual national, read the dual nationals guidance for more information.

If you work in Israel without the proper permissions, you can be detained and deported. This process could take several months.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Measles

Polio

Rabies

Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Israel

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Thu 22 Apr 2027	Pesach
Wed 28 Apr 2027	Seventh day of Pesach
Wed 12 May 2027	Independence Day
Fri 11 Jun 2027	Shavuot
Sat 2 Oct 2027	Rosh Hashanah
Sun 3 Oct 2027	Rosh Hashanah
Mon 11 Oct 2027	Yom Kippur
Sat 16 Oct 2027	Sukkot

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Hebrew

ENGLISH	HEBREW	SAY IT
Hello	שלום	<i>shah-LOHM</i>
Thank you	תודה	<i>toh-DAH</i>
Please	בבקשה	<i>beh-vah-kah-SHAH</i>
Excuse me	סליחה	<i>slee-KHAH</i>
How much is this?	כמה זה עולה?	<i>KAH-mah zeh oh-LEH</i>

Know before you go

Check the FCDO travel advice before booking and again before you travel; it covers Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on separate pages and can change at short notice.

Plan around Shabbat: from Friday afternoon to Saturday evening most trains and buses stop, many Jerusalem shops and restaurants close, and Saturday-night tables fill fast.

Allow about three hours for international departures from Ben Gurion; security staff question passengers before check-in, and calm answers with your itinerary to hand speed things up.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.