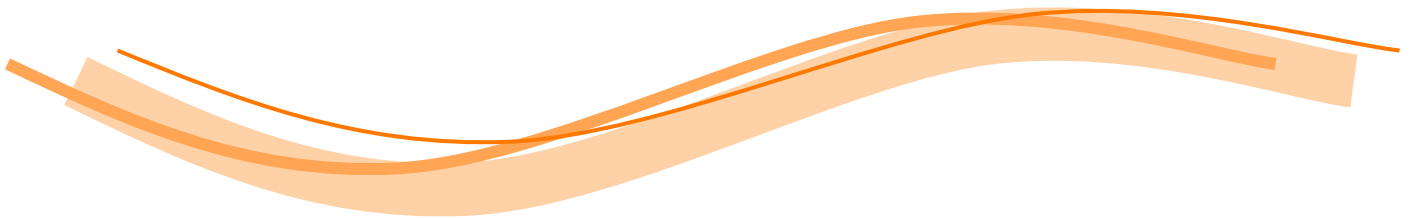




ISRAEL & TRANSAT





ISRAEL	<p>For more than 3000 years Israel has been a number one desired vacation destination for everyone - including the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Turks, French and other visitors who have landed ships on her shores, or crossed her borders on land.</p> <p>Israel is not simply a destination for spiritual renewal. It has fascinating history, culture, spiritual heritage, picturesque beauty and welcoming people. No wonder it is an increasingly popular destination for Canadians.</p> <p>A diverse, compact nation – it's less than 500 km north to south, or just a seven hour drive from the Golan Heights in the North to the Southern Red Sea Resorts of Eilat. And Jerusalem's archaeological and religious sites are just one hour from The Dead Sea - the lowest place on earth and a natural spa.</p> <p>Jerusalem to Tel Aviv can be driven in 45 minutes, Jerusalem to the Dead Sea in one hour, and crossing the country east to west – from the Mediterranean coast to the Jordan River Valley - takes less than 2 hours.</p> <p>And Israel is easy to get to, as Transat begins a new service from Montreal to Tel Aviv direct, with easy connection from Toronto in summer 2017 from June to October.</p> <p>Transat also has a full range of options to see the best of Israel. There are city based packages in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem; multi city packages that combine both; a guided tour of the whole country; and combo tours that are based in the two cities and have guided excursions to the surrounding sights.</p> <p>The second segment of these notes details the Transat range of vacation options in Israel.</p>
Location	<p>Israel is situated in Western Asia, located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It borders Lebanon in the north, Syria in the northeast, Jordan and the West Bank in the east, Egypt and the Gaza Strip on the southwest, and contains geographically diverse features within its relatively small area.</p>
Geography	<p>The sovereign territory of Israel, excluding all territories captured by Israel in 1967, is approximately 20,770 square kilometers in area. The total area under Israeli law, when including East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, is 22,072 square kilometers and the total area under Israeli control, including the military-controlled and partially Palestinian-governed territory of the West Bank, is 27,799 square</p>

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	<p>kilometers.</p> <p>Despite its small size, Israel is home to a variety of geographic features, from the Negev desert in the south to the mountain ranges of the Galilee, Carmel and toward the Golan in the north. The Israeli Coastal Plain on the shores of the Mediterranean is home to seventy percent of the nation's population. East of the central highlands lies the Jordan Rift Valley, which forms a small part of the 6,500-kilometer Great Rift Valley. The Jordan River runs along the Jordan Rift Valley, from Mount Hermon through the Hulah Valley and the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, the lowest point on the surface of the Earth. Further south is the Arabah, ending with the Gulf of Eilat, part of the Red Sea.</p> <p>Unique to Israel and the Sinai Peninsula are makhteshim, or erosion cirques. The largest makhtesh in the world is Ramon Crater in the Negev, which measures 40 by 8 kilometers.</p>
Name	<p>Israel is a Biblical given name. The patriarch Jacob was given the name Israel after he wrestled with the angel. Commentators differ on the original literal meaning. Some say the name comes from the verb <i>śarar</i> ("to rule, be strong, have authority over"), thereby making the name mean "God rules" or "God judges". Other possible meanings include "the prince of God" (from the King James Version) or "fights/struggles". Jacob's descendants came to be known as the Israelites, eventually forming the tribes of Israel and ultimately the kingdom of Israel, from whence the name of modern day Israel.</p>
Population	<p>Israel's population was an estimated 8.7 million, of whom 75% are Jews. Arab citizens of Israel comprise 21% of the country's total population.</p>
Language	<p>Israel has two official languages, Hebrew and Arabic. Hebrew is the primary language of the state and is spoken by the majority of the population, and Arabic is spoken by the Arab minority. Many Israelis communicate reasonably well in English, as many television programs are broadcast in this language and English is taught from the early grades in elementary school. As a country of immigrants, many languages can be heard on the streets.</p>
Currency	<p>The basic unit of currency is the New Israel Shekel (NIS). As at April 2017, \$1 Canadian = 2.7 NIS</p> <p>The shekel is divided into 100 agorot, and the smallest denomination you will encounter is a copper-colored 5-agorot coin, but these are hardly in circulation anymore. There are 10-agorot copper-colored coins, and larger, copper 50-agorot (half-shekel) coins, all useful for bus fare. The 1-shekel coin is a tiny silver button-like object that is extremely easy to lose.</p>
Tipping	<p>Tip 10% in restaurants or cafes, unless a service charge is already added to your bill. Taxi drivers do not expect tips unless they have helped you load or carry luggage. An extra NIS 5 (\$2) per bag is fair.</p>

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	Leave NIS 5 (\$2) per person per day for your hotel maid, more if she has given you extra help.
Government	Israel operates under a parliamentary system as a democratic republic with universal suffrage. The President of Israel is the head of state, but his duties are limited and largely ceremonial. A Parliament Member supported by a majority in parliament becomes the Prime Minister, usually the chairman of the largest party. The Prime Minister is the head of government and head of the Cabinet. Israel is governed by a 120-member parliament, known as the Knesset. Membership of the Knesset is based on proportional representation of political parties, with a 2% electoral threshold, which commonly results in coalition governments.
Documentation	Passports are required that are valid for at least six months from the date they enter the country - but no visa is needed for Canadians.
Time zone	Israel is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time, and 10 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time. When it's 7pm in Israel, it's noon in Toronto. Normally, Israel is 7 hours ahead of Eastern Time, but because Israel has its own unique dates for going on and off daylight saving time, there is often a period of 1 or 2 weeks in the spring and a month in September or October when there's only a 6-hour time difference between EST and Israel.
Health	For travellers to Israel, no special vaccinations are necessary unless you are coming from an area of epidemic or infection. Water is drinkable throughout Israel. There are modern health care facilities available, but always remember to travel with insurance cover.
Safety tips	The Canadian Government website addresses traveller safety in Israel with: "There is no nationwide advisory in effect for Israel. However, you should exercise a high degree of caution as the security situation may change rapidly." Avoid border areas - as you would do in the US/Mexico areas. Go to http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/report_rapport-eng.asp?id=135000 for the latest information.
Etiquette	Follow the advised rules at Muslim, Jewish, and Christian holy places, and be especially respectful about closing times. Men must wear head coverings at Jewish synagogues and holy places; women must dress very modestly when visiting any religious site; shoes must be removed and left outside when entering a mosque; alcohol must not be carried or drunk in public in Muslim areas. It can be very interesting to listen to the political views of Israelis or Palestinians you meet as you travel, but these days, it's a good idea not to respond with an opposing view or engage in political arguments. Similarly, it can be fascinating to learn about the religious practices and beliefs of others, but ecumenicalism and tolerance are not strong points of any Middle Eastern society. Unlike in the West, people who are

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	<p>virtually strangers will often ask what religion you belong to. It's considered rude (or at least, suspect) to be evasive or not to respond, but it's a good idea not to go into detail about your own religious beliefs and practices.</p> <p>Photography: be aware of restrictions about photographing military or police installations. In Israel, taking photographs is forbidden at the Western Wall on the Sabbath and many holidays. Be aware that religious Jews, Muslims, and Christians usually do not want to have their pictures taken, especially when they are at prayer. Be very discreet if you want to include them in your photos.</p>
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CLIMATE	
General climate	<p>Temperatures in Israel vary widely, especially during the winter. The more mountainous regions can be windy, cold, and sometimes snowy; Jerusalem usually receives at least one snowfall each year. Meanwhile, coastal cities, such as Tel Aviv and Haifa, have a typical Mediterranean climate with cool, rainy winters and long, hot summers. The area of Beersheba and the Northern Negev has a semi-arid climate with hot summers, and cool winter but with fewer rainy than the Mediterranean climate.</p> <p>The Southern Negev and the Arava areas have Desert climate with very hot and dry summers, and mild winters with few days of rain. The highest temperature in the continent of Asia (53.7 °C) was recorded in 1942 at Tirat Zvi kibbutz in the northern Jordan river valley.</p> <p>From May to September, rain in Israel is rare. With scarce water resources, Israel has developed various water-saving technologies, including drip irrigation.</p> <p>Israelis also take advantage of the considerable sunlight available for solar energy, making Israel the leading nation in solar energy use per capita (practically every house uses solar panels for water heating).</p>
Today's weather	It is 26 C and sunny in Tel Aviv on 12 th April 2017
Best time to visit	<p>The Israeli seasons are different from those in the North America and western Europe. Basically there are two seasons: winter (late Oct to mid-Mar), which is cool to cold and when the rains occur; and summer (Apr-Oct), which is warm to hot and virtually rain-free. Winter in Israel starts with showers in October and continues through periodic heavy rainfalls from November to March. Swimming is out in the Mediterranean during this time, except during occasional heat waves, although at times you can swim in Eilat and The Dead Sea in the winter. The Israeli winter doesn't normally involve snow, except for Mount Hermon on the Golan Heights. There could be occasional flurries in Jerusalem and the Upper Galilee (and the chance of a heavier snowfall two or three times a decade in Jerusalem).</p> <p>During February and the beginning of March, the entire country seems</p>

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	<p>to turn green from the winter rains, and wildflower displays in the Galilee and the Golan regions are truly spectacular. By late March, the flowers and the green will have faded. In the months that follow, the heat gathers intensity, reaching its peak in July and August, when the only relatively cool spots are Jerusalem (at night) and the high mountains around Safed. The landscape is dry and parched by May, but by September temperatures falls off a bit.</p> <p>Israel also experiences hot, dry desert winds at the beginning and end of the summer, although a hamsin can occur anytime from March to November. A hamsin (or sharav) heat wave means you must cut back on rushing around: plan to be in air-conditioned museums, in the shadowy depths of a bazaar, or in the water during midday, and make sure you add to your water intake. Also, be sure to wear a hat and slather on sunscreen.</p> <p>In winter, cold rain systems move in from the north. Because they are prevented from continuing south by the constant tropical highs over Africa, these storms can stall over Israel for days until they rain themselves out. Lots of warm socks, layered clothes (including a fleece liner), and a good raincoat and portable umbrella are what you need if you visit in winter. If you find a few days of your trip hampered by constant rain, your reward will be the chance to visit pine forests near Jerusalem and in the Galilee as fragrant and misty as those of the Pacific Northwest. In late winter, you'll see the countryside carpeted with wildflowers and a rare, fragile veil of greenery.</p>
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GETTING AROUND	
Getting There	<p>Transat has a new daily service charter air service direct from Montreal to Tel Aviv beginning 18th June to 29th October 2017 on Sundays and Wednesdays with connection to Toronto on Wednesdays. Flight time is 9 hours from Montreal and 10 hours from Toronto.. Air Canada and El Al also have scheduled services to Tel Aviv.</p>
Cities	<p>Tel Aviv Tel Aviv, often called "the city that never stops," was the first modern Jewish city built in Israel, and is the country's economic and cultural centre. It is a lively, active city with entertainment, culture and art, festivals, and a rich nightlife.</p> <p>Situated on a 14 kilometre-long strip on the Mediterranean seacoast, Tel Aviv extends beyond the Yarkon River to the north and the Ayalon River to the east. Hundreds of thousands of workers, visitors, tourists, and partygoers move about the city each day until the early hours of the morning, seeking out the city's nightclubs, restaurants, and centers of entertainment.</p>

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Tel Aviv began its history in Jaffa (Yafo) - the ancient 3,000-year-old adjoining city that lies to its southwest. The current Old City of Jaffa was built during the Ottoman Empire and its stone houses and narrow alleyways now house the picturesque artists' quarter and tourist centre. Among the main attractions of Old Jaffa are Gan HaPisga - the Summit Garden with its restaurants, galleries, shops with Judaica, and unique atmosphere, the seaside promenade and walls of the old city, the visitors' centre in the old courtyard, and the fishing port.

There are also several important Christian sites in Old Jaffa such as the Church of Saint Peter, which dates back to the 17th century, the house of Simon the Tanner where Peter had his vision of the non-kosher animals, and the tomb of Tabitha, whose righteous deeds enabled Peter to raise her from the dead. Around Jaffa there is the Ottoman clock tower, a vibrant flea market that is always worth visiting, and the Ajami neighbourhood.

In 1909 sixty-six Jewish families who resided in Jaffa established the first neighborhood of what would later become the city of Tel Aviv. The neighborhood, called "Akhuzat Bayit" (homestead) was originally within Jaffa. In 1910 it was renamed Tel Aviv, and the neighbourhood began to expand. Other new neighbourhoods were added until it eventually became the centre of the Yishuv - the Jewish settlement in Palestine at the time. It was in Tel Aviv, on May 14 1948, that David Ben Gurion declared the independence of the State of Israel.

The former Akhuzat Bayit neighbourhood, which extends between Montifiore Street and Yehuda HaLevi, is the historical nucleus of Tel Aviv. To the west is the neighborhood of Neveh Tsedek, which was the first Jewish neighbourhood to be established outside Jaffa in 1887. This neighbourhood was renovated in the 1980s and today it is a picturesque and charming neighbourhood where many of the original houses are still standing.

There are many buildings in the neighbourhoods surrounding Akhuzat Bayit that were built in the eclectic style that was popular in Tel Aviv in the 1920s. Clusters of buildings built in this style can be found on Nakhlal Binyamin and in the "heart of the city" - the triangle between Shenkin Street, Rothschild Boulevard, and Allenby Street. Tel Aviv hosts a wide range of architectural styles which were influenced by various schools of architecture - among which was the International Bauhaus style. The central portion of Tel Aviv - which is known as "The White City" - contains the largest group of buildings in the world built in the International Bauhaus style.

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For this reason the White City has been declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO. This style originated in Germany and was based upon clean geometric shapes and asymmetry, and flourished from the 1930s until the establishment of the State. It soon attracted other city architects as well.

The White City extends from Allenby Street to the south to the Yarkon River to the north, and from Begin Boulevard to the east to the sea. There are large concentrations of buildings of this style on Rothschild Boulevard and in the area of Dizengoff Center. Park HaYarkon is in the northern part of the White City on the banks of the Yarkon River and the Tel Aviv port lies at the northwest corner and has a large concentration of entertainment centres, nightclubs, and restaurants.

Tel Aviv is Israel's centre for culture and entertainment. The city has more than 20 museums, the most important of which are the Land of Israel (HaAretz) Museum and the Tel Aviv Art Museum. Other Tel Aviv museums include the Museum of the Diaspora, the Israel Defense Forces History Museum, the Etzel Museum, the Haganah Museum, the Palmach Museum, The Lekhi Museum, and the Nachum Guttman Museum.

The city hosts the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and the Israeli Opera Company, as well as most of the national dance and theatre companies.

Tel Aviv is also the national centre for night life and entertainment and is filled with night clubs featuring music of all types, dancing, restaurants, pubs, coffee houses, discotheques, movie theatres, auditoriums, and concert halls.

The beachfront of Tel Aviv has bathing beaches and a romantic waterfront promenade.

Tel Aviv's important historical sites include Bialik House, Ben Gurion House, Dizengoff House, the old cemetery on Trumpeldor Street, and Reuven House. Nature lovers can visit the garden at Abu Kabir, HaYarkon Park, and the Botanical Gardens near Tel Aviv University. Families with children can enjoy an action-filled amusement park. Eleven of the city's churches, monasteries, and mosques, such as Saint Peter's Church and the Franciscan Monastery, are located in Jaffa. Vacationers in Tel Aviv can lodge at any of the dozens of hotels, boarding houses, and youth hostels scattered throughout the city.

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These offer every type of accommodation ranging from luxurious rooms to simple, pleasant lodging.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is a city of overwhelming emotions, a city that promises a religious and spiritual experience, excitement and pleasure, interesting tours and entertaining adventures. Here, alongside Jerusalem's fascinating historic and archeological sites, there are amazingly modern tourist attractions for all lovers of culture, the arts, theatre and music, architecture and gastronomic delights.

At Jerusalem's heart is the Old City, which is surrounded by a wall and divided into four quarters - Jewish, Armenian, Christian, and Muslim. Inside the walls are the important holy sites of the three major religions: the Western Wall, which is holy to the Jews, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. The Western Wall plaza is visited by millions of worshippers. Here, at the base of the massive wall that is a remnant of the Holy Temple, prayers are offered and notes containing heartfelt wishes are wedged between the crevices.

Surrounding the Western Wall are other important Jewish sites - the Western Wall Tunnels, the unique Davidson Center, the Jewish quarter with its magnificent Cardo and David's Citadel, towering proudly in its beauty. South of the Old City is the City of David, from which the ancient Can'anite and Israelite Jerusalem grew. This is a fascinating site with amazing findings that provide an unforgettable experience.

Jerusalem is also very important to Christianity, as Jesus Christ lived and died here. The Christian quarter alone houses some 40 religious buildings (churches, monasteries and pilgrims' hostels).

One of the most prominent and important sites in the Christian quarter is the Via Dolorosa, the "Way of Sorrows," Jesus' final path, which according to Christian tradition led from the courthouse to Golgotha Hill, where he was crucified and buried. Many pilgrims come to Jerusalem to follow Jesus' footsteps along a route that starts in the Muslim Quarter, at Lions' Gate, and passes the 14 stations of the cross, ending at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Several of the most important Christian relics are housed in this church, including the anointing stone (on which Jesus' body was laid before his burial) and Jesus' grave. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is a pilgrimage site for millions of Christians from all over the world.

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Southwest of the Old City is Mt. Zion, where the Dormition Abbey was built on the site Christian tradition believes Mary spent her last night. The abbey was built about 100 years ago and in the basement there is a statue of the sleeping Mary. Beside the abbey is the Room of the Last Supper, where Jesus ate his last meal.

East of the Old City is the Mount of Olives, where there are other important Christian sites, and several churches: The Ascension, Pater Noster, Dominus Flevit, Mary Magdalene, Gethsemane, Lazarus and Abraham's Monastery. According to Christian tradition, Mary's tomb is in the Kidron Valley, below the Mount of Olives.

Apart from the holy places throughout the Old City, there are several charming sites that are well worth visiting. There is the wonderful market, which is one big sensual celebration. Here you can buy Armenian-style decorated ceramics, beautiful strings of beads, authentic clothing, embroidered cushions, colorful wool carpets, candles and amazing glassware, and countless different souvenirs.

From the promenade along the tops of the Old City walls you can look out over the Old City and the New City. Tours along the walls are a wonderful nighttime activity, too, when the city's lights sparkle making the sights even more unforgettable. The Armenian Quarter has its own unique charm and is well worth visiting.

The construction of the new city's Jewish neighborhoods began in the late 19th century. Some of the neighbourhoods have retained their original picturesque charm, and wandering among the houses is a real pleasure. Some of these neighbourhoods are Even Yisrael, the German Colony, Yemin Moshe, Me'a She'arim, Makhane Yisra'el, Nakhla'ot, Nakhalat Shiv'a, Ein Karem, Komemi'ut, Rekhavia, the Bukharian Quarter and the Ethiopian Quarter.

There are many other interesting and unique sites from different periods throughout the city, such as Armon HaNatsiv and the Promenade, Ammunition Hill, Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum, Mishkenot Sha'ananim, the Monastery of the Cross, Elias Monastery and the YMCA building. Among the more modern sites are the Supreme Court, the Israel Museum, the Biblical Zoo, the Knesset, Mt. Herzl, Makhane Yehuda market, with its unparalleled variety of exciting sounds, colors, flavours and aromas.

Young people who like to go out in the evenings will love Jerusalem's main nightlife regions: the German Colony, the Ben Yehuda pedestrian

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	<p>mall, Nakhalat Shiv'a, Shlomtsiyon HaMalka Street, and the Russian Compound.</p> <p>Museum lovers will be delighted to discover that Jerusalem is dotted with dozens of museums full of rich exhibits, such as the Israel Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Bloomfield Science Museum, Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Rockefeller Museum, the Bible Lands Museum, the Islamic Art Museum, the Old Yishuv Court Museum, the Armenian Museum and the Museum of Italian Jewish Art.</p> <p>Children will enjoy the Time Elevator (an interactive, three-dimensional presentation on the history of Jerusalem), the spacious Biblical Zoo, Ein Ya'el - which offers workshops in Biblical arts and crafts, the Armon HaNatsiv tunnels, the beautiful botanical gardens and the hands-on interactive exhibits at the Bloomfield Science Museum.</p> <p>Since Jerusalem is a city that has become home to people from many different faiths, traditions and ethnic groups, the city's culinary culture offers something for everyone. Alongside Bohemian gourmet restaurants you will find eateries where the food is cooked slowly over ancient stoves, coffee shops with style, ethnic restaurants, fast food stands and bars that come to life in the evening hours. In addition to an abundant variety of dining opportunities, Jerusalem also has many different types of tourist accommodations, from luxury hotels to inexpensive youth hostels.</p>
Distances	<p>This is not a large country. Travel times between cities and regions are short: Jerusalem to Tel Aviv can be driven in 45 minutes, Jerusalem to the Dead Sea in one hour, and the country east to west – or from the Mediterranean coast to Jordan river valley - in less than 2 hours.</p> <p>Tel Aviv to Jerusalem: 59 kms Jerusalem to Eilat: 307 kms Tel Aviv to Haifa: 95 kms</p>
Shabbat	<p>Shabbat, or Saturday, is the Jewish holy day of the week. Shabbat starts on Friday afternoon/evening and ends on Saturday evening. All public offices in Israel are closed on Shabbat, as are most private businesses such as stores. In most cities, public transportation (trains and buses) does not operate. In mainly secular cities, like Tel Aviv, a lot of the restaurants and cafes are open but throughout the country, many restaurants are closed. It is recommended to check in advance if you are planning on visiting a specific location. Radio and TV broadcasts operate as usual.</p>
Trains	<p>Israel Railways has expanded and improved the train service in recent years. Trains run more frequently to more destinations, there are more</p>

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	<p>train stations in the major cities, and the trains are more comfortable. Students and senior citizens can receive discounts by showing a student card or ID.</p> <p>Because of heavy traffic on many of the roads, travel by train is recommended whenever possible. Trains run from Tel Aviv to most of the large cities from Nahariya in the north to Dimona in the south, including Jerusalem and Ben Gurion airport.</p> <p>Train tickets can be purchased at the ticket booth or vending machine at the station. Seats can also be reserved in advance.</p> <p>There is refreshment service that includes hot and cold drinks, snacks, and sandwiches on most trains.</p> <p>Trains do not run on Shabbat or on Jewish holidays.</p> <p>Website: www.rail.co.il</p>
Car Rental	<p>Most international car rental companies and local companies have offices in the large cities and at Ben Gurion Airport. It is recommended to reserve a car in advance from abroad.</p> <p>To rent a car in Israel the driver must be over 21 years of age, and must hold a valid international driver's license and an international credit card.</p> <p>Driving in Israel is on the right-hand side of the road. Israel has an extensive road system and clear signage in most places (in Hebrew, English, and Arabic). It is a little more difficult to find your way in the large cities, but streets and roads are marked, and you can use a map or ask for directions.</p>
Buses	<p>Buses are the most popular form of public transport in Israel for both local transport and intercity trips. The Egged bus company operates most of the intercity bus lines, as well as the local service in most of the large cities and towns. Local and intercity transport in the Gush Dan area (Tel Aviv and the surrounding suburbs) is provided by the Dan bus company. Bus service in Be'er Sheva and Nazareth is provided by private companies. The fare for all bus lines is reasonable, the buses are comfortable and usually air conditioned, and there is regular, frequent service.</p> <p>Tickets can be purchased at the ticket booths in the central bus station in each city or town, or from the driver. Most of the bus lines do not run on Shabbat or on Jewish holidays. Service ends on Friday afternoon and resumes Saturday evening.</p>
ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>Hotels are the most common option and are located throughout the country offering convenient and comfortable accommodations. Many of them are close to urban tourist centres, while others are located in rural areas adjacent to nature and hiking sites. There are also boutique hotels that are meticulously designed to the smallest detail to make your vacation even more festive and special. Spa hotels offer guests</p>

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	<p>additional luxuries such as massages and treatments in a romantic atmosphere amidst beautiful scenery.</p> <p>If you prefer to lodge in natural surroundings, you can choose one of the thousands of guestrooms (usually called tsimmers by Israelis who picked up the German name), or bed and breakfast accommodations in the mountains or the countryside. Tsimmers offer attractive, well equipped accommodations where you can enjoy a quiet, pastoral atmosphere and a beautiful panorama.</p> <p>If you prefer more simple lodging, there are youth hostels and field schools. These are located near urban centres or adjacent to nature reserves and are simple and comfortable.</p> <p>Visitors who love the quiet and the outdoors, and who want to be close to nature and to hear the sound of rustling leaves can enjoy rustic camping with a tent and sleeping bags. Campers will experience the thrill of cooking and eating outdoors and sleeping under the stars. Israel's beautiful campgrounds make camping out a truly spiritual experience.</p> <p>Christian hostels and monasteries offer visitors another type of spiritual experience. These lodgings are located near Christian holy sites. The monks and nuns receive visitors with hospitality and warmth, and invite visitors to pray and to learn about life in the monastery.</p>
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LIFESTYLES	
Families	<p>Most Israeli tourist attractions are geared to the fact that Israelis hardly go anywhere without their children. Many have special kids' activities, particularly during Passover and Sukkoth, and many of the best kid-oriented sites are in the Galilee region. Here's a suggested itinerary:</p> <p>Day 1: Lower Galilee Your first stop can be the biblical tel of Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley, less than two hours from Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. Learning becomes fun at this mound with 25 buried cities, especially at Megiddo's 9th-century BCE water tunnel. Next, head for the Beit Alfa synagogue mosaic in the eastern Jezreel. The ancients made the floor a series of pictures in stone that everyone, then and now, can relate to. A short imaginative film depicts the artists who created the floor and the elders who commissioned it. Water fun awaits you at the springs of Gan Hashlosa (Sakhne). You can then hop over to Tiberias for a fish dinner on the Kinneret Lakeside promenade. Or, if you're planning to eat meals at your accommodations, stop at the supermarket to pick up the fixings.</p> <p>Day 2: Upper Galilee Nature lovers, especially those who go for birds, should start out at the Hula Nature Reserve to enjoy the stroller and wheelchair-friendly trails and the visitor center's multi-sensory presentations "Uforia". The</p>

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	<p>reserve is a world-class ornithology attraction during migration season (for updates, go to www.birds.org.il). Your next stop can be Banias, with hiking trails, a waterfall and remains of Herodian structures. The cashier will give you the English-language brochure and map and help you decide what traile to take. Then drive to the foothills of Mount Hermon and the medieval Nimrod's Castle where lots of nooks and crannies are waiting to be explored, along with a breathtaking view from the stronghold tower. For a less archeology and more action, spend the afternoon kayaking the Jordan River in season, or at the Manara Cliff, with its cable-car, zip line, rock-climbing wall, rappelling and mountain-slide coaster cars.</p> <p>Day 3: Western Galilee</p> <p>Those who want a romantic stroll can begin the day with a visit to charming Rosh Pina, with galleries and a gift shop selling honey, spices and other regional products along the restored 19th-century street. For the younger set, the visitors' centre has an excellent audio-visual presentation and reconstructed home. A beautiful drive will bring you to Safed, the center of Kabala, for a fascinating round of synagogue and gallery visits. The Hameiri House brings alive the story of Safed over the past 200 years with real items of daily life on display. A fun afternoon is on the agenda at nearby Bat Ya'ar, which caters to kids with pony rides, a rope-park, bowling in the nature with wooden pins and balls, and archery. The Bat Ya'ar restaurant is a great place for dinner. Then, time to turn in for your last Galilee night.</p> <p>Day 4: Out to the Coast</p> <p>Today you can explore the Mediterranean Coast. Start out at Rosh Haniqra, where an exciting cable car ride takes you down to caves carved by the sea. Down the coast, you can stop at the Achziv beach, also known as "Banana Beach" (with an entrance fee and more services) or the more basic, but free, Betzet Beach. Acre is another highlight further south. You can walk on the ancient ramparts and through the market, and the kids will love the mystery of the underground Crusader-era Knights Halls. At the old prison the family can hear about the heroes of the underground that helped bring the State of Israel into being. A shorter visit to Acre or forgoing the swim will give you time for Beit She'arim and the burial caves of ancient Jewish leaders. An early dinner and walk down the restored main street of 19th-century Zichron Ya'akov is a great way to end the day.</p>
Romance	<p>There are so many romantic locations in Israel, it's difficult to choose...Here are some suggestions: a medieval Crusaders castle; a desert sunrise in the Negev; a boat trip on the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba; holding hands while floating up right in the Dead Sea...</p> <p>A stroll along the Tel Aviv Promenade is a wonderful way to see the city's Mediterranean beaches, spectacular port and legendary sunsets</p>

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	<p>with your sweetheart. The romantic Neve Tzedek neighbourhood, with its pretty little streets and charming historic buildings, can also be explored on foot and is a great place to grab a bite. From there, the sights, sounds and intriguing wares of the Carmel Market are just minutes away.</p> <p>Weddings can be arranged in many venues in Israel, but they should be planned well in advance and a wedding planner is recommended.</p>
Genealogy	<p>The Jewish Diaspora Museum</p> <p>The unique displays of the Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora showcase Jewish experience from the exile after the destruction of the First Temple 2,600 years ago to the present. Six themes (or “gates” as the museum calls them) serve as the museum’s pathways to better understanding Jewish experience the world over: Family, Community, Faith, Culture, the Jewish people among the nations, and the return to the land of Israel.</p> <p>Unlike ordinary museums, the Diaspora Museum’s displays are not chronological, and most of the artifacts on display are not of intrinsic value. Rather, they are replicas that highlight the complex fabric of Jewish life. One example is Sabbath candlesticks or lamps, which take on various forms in different Jewish ethnic groups, but all hark back to the ancient tradition of Jews everywhere to welcome the Sabbath at home with illumination.</p> <p>An introduction to the richness of Jewish ethnicity begins with the first display you see, which opens the Gate of the Family: changing slides that show “Jewish faces” from all over the world. Among the displays at the Gate of Community are models of community institutions and films on Jewish communities the world over.</p> <p>The Gate of Faith contains 18 synagogue models, including the pagoda-like house of prayer from Kaifeng, China and Frank Lloyd Wright’s 1954 ultra-modern Beth Shalom in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania.</p> <p>The Gate of Culture highlights art, education and languages, and at the Feher Jewish Music Center, you can listen to Jewish music of all varieties and see videos about Jewish music (now undergoing digitalization). The Feher data base includes music from India, Spain, Libya, Greece, Morocco, and elsewhere, and over 5,000 names of conductors, composers, poets, authors, singers, translators, musicologists and more, from the roots of Jewish music to the twenty-first century. Among the entries are those some might consider obscure (but fascinating), such as Acan Moses de Zaragoza, a 14th century poet known for his treatise in verse on chess, to the well-known Maestro Leonard Bernstein, hearing his composition for the Jewish prayer before sleep, Hashkivenu, his conducting of Aaron Copland’s Appalachian Spring and other masterpieces.</p> <p>“Among the nations” is a section devoted the relationship between</p>

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	<p>Jews and other faiths and cultures, while the Return to Zion tells the story of Zionism including its effect on individual families. Here you'll find a "family tree" – showing two imaginary extended families from different corners of the Jewish world and how some of their members came to live in Israel.</p> <p>As visitors mount the stairs from one level to another, they see a memorial column with myriad lights, recalling the dark episodes of Jewish history.</p> <p>For those seeking to put everything together in terms of the time-line of Jewish history, the Chronosphere is a theatre presentation that takes you step by step through the story.</p> <p>Among additional highlights is the excitement of looking up family names and places of origin on computer and receiving a print-out to take home, the Jewish Genealogy Center for further research, and fascinating changing exhibitions.</p> <p>www.bh.org.il/index.html</p>
Zoomers	<p>Transat's Bible Land tour is an excellent way for Zoomer travellers to experience many of the highlights of Israel and to see what to come back for the next time! See these Travel Notes below for more details.</p>

UNIQUES	<p>The Kibbutz</p> <p>Israel's kibbutz communities, nestled in its most scenic and fertile landscapes, are one of its best-known Israeli "products," representing a unique, rural way of life whose historic hallmark is sharing. The kibbutz movement began around the turn of the 20th century when groups of young pioneers from Eastern Europe decided to combine their commitment to egalitarianism and their love of nature and working the land with their Zionist creed. These first kibbutzniks, as members of these communities are called, founded Degania on the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee, which is still blooming and going strong.</p> <p>Today there are approximately 270 kibbutzim throughout the country. Interestingly, as famous as the kibbutz movement is, only about 1.5% of Israel's population has chosen this way of life, making it an even more special phenomenon you'll want to learn more about when you visit. Their role has certainly been the inverse of their small numbers – it is impossible to imagine Israel without the kibbutz contribution to agriculture, industry, as a first home for immigrants and, in the early years, in defense of its borders.</p> <p>Many say the kibbutz secret of success has been its willingness to change with the times. More than a generation ago, for example, they gave up the idea of children sleeping in group quarters watched over by kibbutz caregivers, which in the old days was considered essential to</p>
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	<p>maximize working hands. And today, some kibbutzim have decided to foster greater individual enterprise, while continuing to share elements of their cultural and social lives. Still others have kept the traditional framework of a redistribution of the resources of all members.</p> <p>Since all kibbutzim began as farms, they are located in Israel's most beautiful regions. That makes them an alluring destination for visitors, and many operate hotels and/or bed-and-breakfast facilities, craft shops, galleries and other attractions and tourist services. In fact, visitors who want both to meet these unusual folks and enjoy their hospitality can plan their entire Israel trip staying overnight only at kibbutzim. With lots of room to run around outdoors, kibbutz accommodations are great for families with young children. Some kibbutzim run tours of their community, and boast museums of their pioneering days and/or the heritage sites and artifacts found right on their land.</p> <p>An unforgettable opportunity to get acquainted with kibbutz life, to make life-long friends among the kibbutzniks and other people from around the world, and to see Israel at the same time is by volunteering on one of 30 or so kibbutzim for a minimum of two months and a maximum of six months. If you love green pastures and waterscapes, you may look for a kibbutz volunteer program in northern Israel's Hula Valley or near the Sea of Galilee. In contrast, there are dramatic desert landscapes in the Negev or the Arava, where you can help make the arid land bloom. For further information and various conditions for volunteers visit http://www.kibbutz.org.il/eng</p>
<p>Surprising</p>	<p>The Dead Sea</p> <p>The Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth in any land mass (417 meters below sea level). The quantity of water that evaporates from it is greater than that which flows into it, such that this body of water has the highest concentration of salt in the world (340 grams per liter of water).</p> <p>It is called the Dead Sea because its salinity prevents the existence of any life forms in the lake. That same salt, on the other hand, provides tremendous relief to the many ailing visitors who come here on a regular basis to benefit from its healing properties.</p> <p>The Dead Sea can also be called "the lowest health spa in the world." Sea salts are produced from the southern section for industry, and in the northern section promote tourism and good health. The composition of the salts and minerals in the water are what make it so unique and beneficial for the body.</p>

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	<p>The seabed also has deposits of black mud that is easy to spread on the body and provides the skin with nourishing minerals. As if that were not enough, the bromide in the air is also beneficial to the body's systems, thus making the Dead Sea a provider for good health and healing for vacationers from all over the world.</p> <p>It is a truly unique national treasure. The western shore is dotted with organized beaches and bathing areas that provide convenient access to the water. Beside two of the therapeutic beaches (Neve Zohar and Ein Bokek) large tourism centres have been established, providing the most pampering tourism services.</p> <p>You will find dozens of hotels, hostels and guest houses, restaurants and shopping centres, as well as surprising tourism enterprises that offer a wide range of challenging activities (jeep and bicycle tours, camel tours and Bedouin hospitality, rappelling and more), alongside art and cultural activities (galleries and artists' studios), and of course the unique agriculture, adapted to the local climate.</p> <p>The Dead Sea is on the edge of the Judean Desert, a hot, barren region at the foot of Ha-He'etkim cliff, which has also become an important center of desert tourism. The coastline is dotted with many springs, surrounded by wild plant life. The special combination that has formed in this place, between desert landscapes and oases with plentiful water, plants and animals, attracts both the eye and the heart and draws many tourists to sites such as Mt. Sdom, Nakhal Darga, the Ein Gedi nature reserve and the Einot Tsukim (Ein Fashkha) reserve.</p> <p>Alongside these breathtaking natural sites there are also some purely historic sites of considerable importance in Israel's past, which preserve the ancient charm of this area. Among the most prominent sites are the Massada fortress, ancient Ein Gedi and the Qumran cave site where ancient scrolls were found, including the Dead Sea scrolls, which offer some insights into early Christianity and the Essenes sect that lived at the site and is considered the beginning of Christian monasticism.</p>
History	<p>The Land of Israel, known in Hebrew as Eretz Yisrael, has been sacred to the Jewish people since Biblical times. According to the Torah, God promised the Land of Israel to the three Patriarchs of the Jewish people. On the basis of scripture, the period of the three Patriarchs has been placed somewhere in the early 2nd millennium BCE. According to Biblical evidence, the first Kingdom of Israel was established around the 11th century BCE. Subsequent Israelite kingdoms and states ruled intermittently over the next thousand years, and are known from various extra-biblical sources.</p>

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	<p>Between the time of the First Kingdom of Israel and the Muslim conquests of the 7th century, the Land of Israel fell under Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Sassanian, and Byzantine rule. Jewish presence in the region dwindled after the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt against the Roman Empire in 132 CE. Nevertheless, Jewish presence in the Land of Israel remained continuous and the Galilee became its religious centre.</p> <p>The Mishnah and part of the Talmud, central Jewish texts, were composed during the 2nd to 4th centuries CE in Tiberias and Jerusalem. Following years of persecution at the hands of Byzantine rulers, the Jews revolted in 610 CE, allying themselves with the Persian invaders. After capturing Jerusalem, the Persians and Jews killed thousands of Christians and destroyed many churches. The Byzantine emperor Heraclius recaptured Jerusalem in 628–629 CE, and was responsible for the massacre and expulsion of the Jews.</p> <p>During the initial Muslim conquests, in 635 CE, the Land of Israel, including Jerusalem, was captured from the Byzantine Empire. Control of the region transferred between the Umayyads, Abbasids, and Crusaders throughout the next six centuries, before falling in the hands of the Mamluk Sultanate, in 1260. In 1516, the Land of Israel was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, which ruled the region until the 20th century.</p>
Books	<p>Lonely Planet's Israel and the Palestinian Territories is an excellent and comprehensive guide to this destination: http://shop.lonelyplanet.com/israel-and-the-palestinian-territories/israel-and-the-palestinian-territories-travel-guide-8/</p>
1000 Places to See Before You Die	<p>Patricia Schulz has a number of entries for Israel in her book:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christmas in Bethlehem The Dead Sea Israel Museum, Jerusalem Masada Museum of the Diaspora, Tel Aviv Old Acre (Akko) The Old City, Jerusalem
Must Sees	<p>Israel has nine UNESCO World Heritage sites, an impressive number for a small country:</p> <p>Bahá'i Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee The Bahá'i Holy Places in Haifa and Western Galilee are inscribed for their profound spiritual meaning and the testimony they bear to the strong tradition of pilgrimage in the Bahá'i faith. The property includes</p>

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the two most holy places in the Bahá'í religion associated with the founders, the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Acre and the Shrine of the Báb in Haifa, together with their surrounding gardens, associated buildings and monuments. These two shrines are part of a larger complex of buildings, monuments and sites at seven distinct locations in Haifa and Western Galilee that are visited as part of the Bahá'í pilgrimage.

Biblical Tels - Megiddo, Hazor, Beer Sheba

Tels (prehistoric settlement mounds), are characteristic of the flatter lands of the eastern Mediterranean, particularly Lebanon, Syria, Israel and eastern Turkey. Of more than 200 tels in Israel, Megiddo, Hazor and Beer Sheba are representative of those that contain substantial remains of cities with biblical connections. The three tels also present some of the best examples in the Levant of elaborate Iron Age, underground water-collecting systems, created to serve dense urban communities. Their traces of construction over the millennia reflect the existence of centralized authority, prosperous agricultural activity and the control of important trade routes.

Caves of Maresha and Bet-Guvrin in the Judean Lowlands as a Microcosm of the Land of the Caves

The archaeological site contains some 3,500 underground chambers distributed among distinct complexes carved in the thick and homogenous soft chalk of Lower Judea under the former towns of Maresha and Bet Guvrin. Situated on the crossroads of trade routes to Mesopotamia and Egypt, the site bears witness to the region's tapestry of cultures and their evolution over more than 2,000 years from the 8th century BCE—when Maresha, the older of the two towns was built—to the time of the Crusaders. These quarried caves served as cisterns, oil presses, baths, columbaria (dovecotes), stables, places of religious worship, hideaways and, on the outskirts of the towns, burial areas. Some of the larger chambers feature vaulted arches and supporting pillars.

Incense Route - Desert Cities in the Negev

The four Nabatean towns of Haluza, Mamshit, Avdat and Shivta, along with associated fortresses and agricultural landscapes in the Negev Desert, are spread along routes linking them to the Mediterranean end of the incense and spice route. Together they reflect the hugely profitable trade in frankincense and myrrh from south Arabia to the Mediterranean, which flourished from the 3rd century BC until the 2nd century AD. With the vestiges of their sophisticated irrigation systems, urban constructions, forts and caravanserais, they bear witness to the way in which the harsh desert was settled for trade and agriculture.

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Masada

Masada is a rugged natural fortress, of majestic beauty, in the Judean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea. It is a symbol of the ancient kingdom of Israel, its violent destruction and the last stand of Jewish patriots in the face of the Roman army, in 73 A.D. It was built as a palace complex, in the classic style of the early Roman Empire, by Herod the Great, King of Judaea, (reigned 37 – 4 B.C.). The camps, fortifications and attack ramp that encircle the monument constitute the most complete Roman siege works surviving to the present day.

Necropolis of Bet She'arim: A Landmark of Jewish Renewal

Consisting of a series of catacombs, the necropolis developed from the 2nd century AD as the primary Jewish burial place outside Jerusalem following the failure of the second Jewish revolt against Roman rule. Located southeast of the city of Haifa, these catacombs are a treasury of artworks and inscriptions in Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew and Palmyrene. Bet She'arim bears unique testimony to ancient Judaism under the leadership of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, who is credited with Jewish renewal after 135 AD.

Old City of Acre

Acre is a historic walled port-city with continuous settlement from the Phoenician period. The present city is characteristic of a fortified town dating from the Ottoman 18th and 19th centuries, with typical urban components such as the citadel, mosques, khans and baths. The remains of the Crusader town, dating from 1104 to 1291, lie almost intact, both above and below today's street level, providing an exceptional picture of the layout and structures of the capital of the medieval Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem.

Sites of Human Evolution at Mount Carmel: The Nahal Me'arot / Wadi el-Mughara Caves

Situated on the western slopes of the Mount Carmel range, the site includes the caves of Tabun, Jamal, el-Wad and Skhul. Ninety years of archaeological research have revealed a cultural sequence of unparalleled duration, providing an archive of early human life in south-west Asia. This 54 ha property contains cultural deposits representing at least 500,000 years of human evolution demonstrating the unique existence of both Neanderthals and Early Anatomically Modern Humans within the same Middle Palaeolithic cultural framework, the Mousterian. Evidence from numerous Natufian burials and early stone architecture represents the transition from a hunter-gathering lifestyle to agriculture and animal husbandry. As a

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	<p>result, the caves have become a key site of the chrono-stratigraphic framework for human evolution in general, and the prehistory of the Levant in particular.</p> <p>White City of Tel-Aviv -- the Modern Movement Tel Aviv was founded in 1909 and developed as a metropolitan city under the British Mandate in Palestine. The White City was constructed from the early 1930s until the 1950s, based on the urban plan by Sir Patrick Geddes, reflecting modern organic planning principles. The buildings were designed by architects who were trained in Europe where they practised their profession before immigrating. They created an outstanding architectural ensemble of the Modern Movement in a new cultural context.</p>
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SPORTS ACTIVITIES	
Golf	<p>Although not a noted golfing destination, there are a couple of courses that are well reviewed on http://www.worldgolf.com :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caesarea Golf & Country Club P. O. Box 4858, Caesarea 30889, Israel - Gaash Golf Club Kibbutz Gaash, 60951, Israel
Fishing	<p>There are many centres along the Mediterranean and the Red Sea that rent and sell fishing tackle. Fishing in the Red Sea is limited to specific spots, since it is a protected area.</p>
Horse riding	<p>Seeing Israel from the saddle can take you on a trail through Mount Hermon's alpine summer meadows; to the Galilee's hidden beauty spots with the lake as its centrepiece; to the Golan, where you and your mount will enjoy the sparking streams; and on a sunset ride along the beach or the cliffs overlooking the Mediterranean (an unforgettable way to celebrate a romantic or other milestone).</p> <p>Another beautiful sunset horseback experience awaits you at Mitspe Ramon in the Negev, overlooking the amazing Ramon Crater, Israel's "Grand Canyon."</p> <p>Western riding has always had a special appeal in Israel, and these are the saddles and style you'll find at many commercial stables. Varying age limits for children usually apply, although some stables offer rides in the ménage for the younger set.</p> <p>The Israel Equestrian Federation, which organizes activities for all age groups, holds a number of local competitions each year, including show-jumping and dressage. Israel also has some 30 centres that specialize in therapeutic riding, and have sent enthusiastic competitors</p>

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	<p>to the Paralympics.</p> <p>Combine your love of horseback riding, or try it for the first time, with a bed-and-breakfast stay in the Galilee and the Negev, where the locals will show you the best trails.</p> <p>Israel Equestrian Federation: www.ief.org.il</p>
Hiking	<p>The country has many touring and hiking routes through a variety of surroundings - green mountains and rivers in the north, the western seacoast, the Dead Sea - the lowest point on Earth - to the east, and deserts, mountains, and craters in the south.</p> <p>Recommended routes appear at the website for the Israel Nature Preservation Society. This site also includes maps and information about the plants and wildlife of the region.</p> <p>The site Eye On Israel has maps of all regions in the country with hiking routes. It is recommended to confer with experienced hikers before setting out.</p> <p>Weekend (www.weekend.co.il) is a website that offers all kinds of treks, nature walks, and activities throughout Israel, with coordinating, reasonably priced accommodations.</p> <p>The new Jesus Trail (www.jesustrail.com) offers a website that explains in detail beautifully planned walks that actually follow the footsteps of Jesus through the modern Galilee countryside, again with coordinating places for dining and lodging on your walking journey.</p> <p>The Israel National Trail (www.israelnationaltrail.com) provides similar, brilliantly planned information for hiking and walking throughout Israel.</p>
Cycling	<p>From a pleasant urban ride to a cross country tour, from bike paths for the whole family to extreme off road routes, Israel has something for anyone who loves to ride. You can find suggested trips on the www.goisrael.com website.</p> <p>Bike rentals are available in Israel. If you would like to bring your own bicycles, be advised that some airlines will take your bike for no extra charge. Make sure to contact your airline in advance for their specific regulations. Bicycles can be taken on buses for an additional 50%. Hiring the service of a licensed tour guide when cycling in Israel is highly recommended.</p>
Diving	<p>The Bay of Eilat in the south of the country is the northernmost point in the world where there are coral reefs. Its isolation from the ocean and geological structure has created optimal conditions for the development</p>

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	<p>of unique populations of maritime wildlife and plants. The Coral Beach Nature Reserve in the Bay of Eilat includes a narrow strip of beach and sea that contains the only coral reef in Israel. The rich variety of fish and the colourful coral reef are a rare wonder that can be enjoyed while snorkeling or diving.</p> <p>The Red Sea is considered one of the most beautiful diving sites in the world, and part of it can be seen in Eilat. Diving clubs are scattered along the coast that offer diving courses and sponsor dives accompanied by a professional diver. Snorkeling equipment is available for rent, and licensed divers can rent equipment and dive unaccompanied. Other recommended diving sites are in Haifa, Akhziv, and Rosh ha-Nikra.</p> <p>Eilat was one of my own first dive experiences and a very memorable one!</p>
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CULTURE	
Arts	<p>The art scene in Israel had its beginnings in the early part of the 20th century when the rebirth of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel was beginning to take shape.</p> <p>Israel's leading school of the visual arts – Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy of Art and Design - was established in 1906 by sculptor Boris Schatz. Named for Bezalel Ben Uri - the first artist mentioned in the Bible - its establishment is considered the first major milestone in the development of art in modern Israel.</p> <p>The first works of art to emerge from Bezalel were of a traditional Jewish and Biblical nature. Gradually, however, a modern secular ideology emerged and art disassociated from religious, Diaspora oriented traditions began to develop. This movement, known as the "Rebels of Bezalel", sought to pay homage to the Middle East and the "New Jew" by depicting the landscape and local people of the country, and its members sought to express their newfound identity as "Hebrew" rather than "Jewish" artists.</p> <p>Bezalel underwent numerous changes until it became the leading academy for art and design and moved to its present Jerusalem location on the Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University. Throughout the school's existence, Bezalel graduates have taught young artists who have pursued many new directions and broadened the landscape of local creativity to encompass other institutions, museums, and galleries both in Israel and abroad.</p>

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	<p>Israel art is displayed in museums and galleries throughout the country. Indeed, there are more museums per capita in Israel than in any country on earth. Information about current exhibits is available at: www.ilmuseums.com.</p>
Music	<p>Israeli music contains musical influences from all over the world; Sephardic music, Hasidic melodies, Belly dancing music, Greek music, jazz, and pop rock are all part of the music scene. The nation's canonical folk songs, known as "Songs of the Land of Israel," deal with the experiences of the pioneers in building the Jewish homeland.</p> <p>Among Israel's world-renowned orchestras is the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, which has been in operation for over seventy years and today performs more than two hundred concerts each year. Israel has also produced many musicians of note, some achieving international stardom. Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman and Ofra Haza are among the internationally acclaimed musicians born in Israel.</p> <p>Israel has participated in the Eurovision Song Contest nearly every year since 1973, winning the competition three times and hosting it twice. Eilat has hosted its own international music festival, the Red Sea Jazz Festival, every summer since 1987.</p> <p>Modern dance in Israel is a flourishing field, and several Israeli choreographers such as Ohad Naharin, Rami Beer, Barak Marshall and many others, are considered to be among the most versatile and original international creators working today. Famous Israeli companies include the Batsheva Dance Company and the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company.</p> <p>Israel is home to many Palestinian musicians, including internationally acclaimed oud and violin virtuoso Taiseer Elias, singer Amal Murkus, and brothers Samir and Wissam Joubran. Israeli Arab musicians have achieved fame beyond Israel's borders: Elias and Murkus frequently play to audiences in Europe and America, and oud player Darwish Darwish was awarded first prize in the all-Arab oud contest in Egypt in 2003. The Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance has an advanced degree program, headed by Taiseer Elias, in Arabic music.</p>
Films	<p>Nearly a hundred films have been shot in Israel, including – not surprisingly - a number of Biblical epics.</p>
Museums	<p>JERUSALEM MUSEUMS</p> <p>The Israel Museum</p>

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The Israel Museum is the largest cultural institution in Israel and is ranked among the world's leading art and archaeology museums. It houses encyclopedic collections including works dating from prehistory to the present day in its Archaeology, Fine Arts and Jewish Art and Life Wings and features the most extensive holding of Biblical and Holy Land archaeology in the world.

In the summer of 2010 the Museum completed a comprehensive upgrade of its 20-acre campus featuring new galleries, entrance facilities and public spaces. Among the highlights of the Museum's original campus is the Shrine of the Book, which houses the legendary **Dead Sea Scrolls**, the oldest biblical manuscripts in the world. Adjacent is the Model of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period, which provides historical context to the Shrine's presentation of the Scrolls.

The Museum's celebrated Billy Rose Art Garden is counted among the finest outdoor sculpture settings of the 20th century with works by modern masters including Jacques Lipchitz, Henry Moore, and Pablo Picasso. The Ruth Youth Wing for Art Education presents a wide range of programming and exhibition galleries.

The Bible Lands Museum

The Bible Lands Museum is located near the Israel Museum. Its exhibits include a large collection of archeological artifacts that open a doorway to ancient Mid-Eastern cultures. Using maps, sketches, Biblical quotations and priceless exhibits, the museum illustrates the ties between the various peoples of the region, visitors are led along a time line beginning in Biblical times and ending in our modern era. The museum also has a spacious garden with trees and plants that are mentioned in the Bible.

The Tower of David Museum

At the Tower of David Museum, not only do the captivating exhibits deepen your understanding of Jerusalem, its very stones are part of this city's living history. Each ancient room has been revamped to showcase a different period, allowing the tempestuous events of 4,000 years to fall perfectly into place in your mind. With each doorway you exit, you look down into the citadel's central courtyard, where archaeologists have unearthed remains dating from the Maccabees to the Middle Ages.

The museum also utilizes its unique space for multi-sensory exhibits by leading designers and artists from Israel and abroad, and for memorable private functions. Website: <http://www.towerofdavid.org.il>

Islamic Arts Museum

The Islamic Arts Museum is located near the Jerusalem Theater, and is considered one of the world's finest museums of Islamic art. The

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museum displays Islamic art from the 7th century to modern times, with artifacts from Israel, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, India, Afghanistan, Spain and Iran . The permanent and temporary exhibits include rich collections of pottery, glass, and metal work, ritual artifacts, jewelry, paintings, and tapestries. The museum also holds creativity workshops, plays and performances for children during school vacations. Guided tours are available in Hebrew, English and Arabic.

The Rockefeller Museum

The Rockefeller Museum, one of the first buildings built outside the walls of the Old City, is a branch of the Israel Museum. Its exhibits are mostly archeology, but visitors also come to admire the beautiful building itself. Originally built in the 17th century as a private home, it was in 1906 that the Jewish National Fund sought to purchase the compound for Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts. In 1919 the administration of the new British Mandate designated the site as an archeological museum.

TEL AVIV MUSEUMS

The Tel Aviv Art Museum

The permanent collection of The Tel Aviv Art Museum - the city's largest - includes over 20,000 prints and drawings, as well as paintings and sculpture by recent Israel artists, Renaissance European art and works from the Renaissance, impressionist and modern eras. The Helena Rubenstein Pavilion, with its permanent and temporary exhibits, is a remote branch of the museum located in the city center next to the Frederic Mann Auditorium and Habimah theatre.

The Land of Israel (Eretz Israel) Museum

The Land of Israel Museum contains an entire world of visual, cultural, and historical treasures. The museum collections are displayed in different pavilions devoted to glass, ceramics, coins, philately, Judaica, ethnography and folklore. The museum grounds encompass the archeological site of Tel Kasila - a Philistine port city dating back more than 3,000 years, a planetarium simulating space flight, the fire engine donated in 1948 by the City of New York to Israel's first fire brigade and a plaza with ancient mosaics and an olive press.

The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora

Also known as the Museum of the Jewish People, The Diaspora Museum is dedicated to the history of the Jewish people in the Diaspora. Located on the campus of Tel Aviv University, the permanent exhibition includes ethnic artifacts from Jewish communities throughout

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	<p>the world. Jewish life in diverse geographic regions is illustrated by means of drawings, models, video, music, photography, sound and light. A computer center enables visitors to search family roots.</p> <p>Apart from the major museums in large cities, there are high-quality art spaces in many towns and kibbutzim. Mishkan Le'Omanut on Kibbutz Ein Harod Meuhad is the largest art museum in the north of the country. Several museums are devoted to Islamic culture, including the Rockefeller Museum, which specializes in archaeological remains from the Ottoman and other periods of Middle East history, and the Museum for Islamic Art, also in Jerusalem.</p>
Festivals	<p>White Night Tel Aviv June The Tel Aviv White Night (Laila Lavan) is the biggest cultural event in the city that never sleeps. This year's roster of beach concerts and parties, special exhibitions and tours takes place all through the night in venues including the Jaffa Port, Rabin Square, Sarona Market, Hatachana, Kikar Habima, Kiryat Sefer, Gan Hahashmal and Menachem Begin Park. In addition, many eateries and stores remain open all night.</p> <p>Tel Aviv Blues Festival July The annual Tel Aviv Blues Festival boasts four days of 40 concerts in 20 different clubs and bars – all in Tel Aviv.. Many of the shows are free.</p> <p>International Puppet Theater Festival July A colourful street procession opens the annual event at the Israel Puppet Center in Holon, Israel's "Children's City." Some 30 performances by resident and international artists are planned, as well as conferences, exhibitions and workshops.</p> <p>Klezmer Music Festival August A summer favorite in the mystical northern city of Safed (Tzfat), the Klezmer festival features free, open-air performances on stages set up throughout the alleyways and lanes of the Old Jewish Quarter and Artist Quarter from 9pm to midnight each night of the festival. There will also be activities earlier in the evenings, including lessons, storytelling and magic shows for kids.</p>

ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	<p>Tel Aviv is listed in National Geographic's "top 10 Beach Cities" in the world. It's Miami Beach on the Med. Tel Aviv is the Dionysian counterpart to religious Jerusalem. In the "bubble," as it's known for its inhabitants' tendency to tune out regional skirmishes, some restaurants, discos, and clubs are open until dawn. By day, the scene shifts to the</p>

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	<p>city's promenade and 13 kilometers of beach literally steps from town. Head to wide and sandy Gordon Beach to sit in a seaside café or take a dip in the saltwater pool.</p> <p>Eilat on the Red Sea coast has some warm beaches. The bay is one of the major attractions, thanks to these beautiful beaches, the developed water sports and some of the best diving spots in the world. In the south of the city is the Coral Reserve, with splendid tropical fish among the reefs. Within the precincts of the reserve is the Underwater Observatory, with a marine museum that displays collections of fascinating sea animals. Not far from the observatory is the Dolphin Reef with its resident school of dolphins.</p>
Wildlife	<p>Israel provides a habitat for rich wildlife, including animals originating in various zoogeographical regions that surround the country. This is particularly evident among insect and bird varieties, although reptiles and mammals are also well represented.</p> <p>Israel has about 100 species of wild mammals, an impressive number in contrast to the 140 varieties of wild mammals living in all of Europe. Animals that originate in the cooler European region are found alongside mammals originating in desert regions of Arabia and Egypt with mammals that originate in Africa and in the Indian subcontinent. Although many Israeli mammals are rare or nocturnal, several are easily spotted including deer, ibex, hyrax and jackals. Among the country's zoos are the Biblical Zoo in Jerusalem, the Safari Park in Ramat Gan and the Khai Bar Reserve near Yotveta in the Arava.</p> <p>About 510 species of birds have been spotted in Israel, most of them migratory species that fly through in the fall and spring. Israel is a bottleneck on many migration paths, and millions of birds pass through in the two seasons. Migrations can be observed in the Hula Reserve, the bird site at Kibbutz Kfar Ruppim in the Beit She'an valley, as well as at the Kibbutz Lotan Bird Watching Center in the Arava and at the International Birding and Research Center in Eilat.</p> <p>At Israel's southern tip, on the coast of the Red Sea, there is a rich world of marine life, including tropical fish and colourful coral. Many can be seen at Eilat's Underwater Observatory and Marine Museum, or by scuba diving in the area.</p>
Parks	<p>The Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority was created to protect and prevent the extinction of the country's plants and wildlife; to allow the continuity of various natural habitats; and to promote Israel's history, archeology and heritage. By preserving and cultivating these sites, the Authority enables the tens of thousands of</p>

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	<p>visitors to enjoy the delightful treasures offered there. The Authority provides a service both to nature and to people by safeguarding the cultural, educational, scientific and economic resources for future generations.</p> <p>The sites undergo a complex administrative and investigative process prior to acceptance by the Authority, which currently operates 115 national parks and 380 nature reserves. Access to most sites is restricted, requiring an admission fee.</p> <p>Thanks to the Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority, visitors in Israel can see eagles nesting on the Golan cliffs; ibex and leopards in the Judean Desert; the large Bell Caves of Beit Govrin; irises in the Poleg reserve; the rare coral peony atop Mount Meron. They can enjoy the impressive diversity of natural wonders, and an encounter with unspoiled nature and with plants and wildlife which are almost extinct and for whom Israel's nature reserves are their last sanctuary.</p> <p>The national parks offer an exciting cultural adventure and an opportunity to visit magnificent historical sites, including Massada (Metsada), Caesarea (Keysarya), Beit She'an, and others that a glimpse of a wide range of ancient civilizations. These sites enable visitors to understand how people lived hundreds and thousands of years ago, while getting a close view of the places where events related in the Scriptures and history books occurred.</p> <p>For further information, visit the sites of the Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority: http://www.parks.org.il</p>
Gardens	<p>Gethsemane is a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem most famous as the place where Jesus and his disciples prayed the night before Jesus' crucifixion. It's a peaceful garden among a grove of ancient olive trees, looking back at the eastern wall of the City of Jerusalem. Remarkably, the Garden of Gethsemane still contains dozens of ancient olive trees that are 2,000 years old.</p>
Historical Sites	<p>Israel is a land full of historical sites. Here are just two of the greatest:</p> <p>Masada Masada is a lofty plateau in a spectacular desert setting overlooking the Dead Sea. It is a palace-fortress Herod the Great built to last forever, a refuge for Jewish rebels in the century of Jesus, and later for Christian monks, and a World Heritage Site. All these elements make Masada a must on any itinerary.</p>

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Less than 40 years after Jesus was crucified, at the beginning of the Great Revolt against the Romans, Jewish rebels took over Masada. In contrast to Jesus' instruction to "give to Caesar what is Caesar's", the rebels believed in zero-tolerance for Roman rule. They were surrounded by the Roman army, which left behind the most complete siege works in the world. After the Romans prevailed, the historian Josephus relates that the rebels took their own lives rather than become slaves. This act has made Masada a symbol of the human spirit's yearning for freedom. The Israel Nature and Parks Protection Authority has expertly restored Masada's fascinating ruins; the brilliant colours of the frescoes of Herod's cliff-hanging Northern Palace gleam brightly again. Masada's latest attraction is its fabulous new museum. The precious finds displayed in its nine dramatically lit rooms, along with life-size statues, help visitors picture not only the last moments of the 960 souls at Masada, but also the lives they built here.

The Western Wall

Visitors who stand at the Western Wall, looking up at the huge ancient stones – the last remnant of the Temple in Jerusalem – are almost always surrounded by people: some have come to celebrate a Bar Mitzvah, others to take pictures before a wedding, or to place a heartfelt prayer-note within the cracks between the stones. But they sense the presence not only of the here-and-now, but also of the untold numbers of people who for centuries streamed to this, the most sacred place in the world to the Jewish people.

The Western Wall was part of the most magnificent building Jerusalem had ever seen. It was one of four walls Herod the Great built to support the 1,555,000-square-foot plaza on which the Temple stood. It was almost 1,500 feet long – the rest can still be seen inside the Western Wall Tunnel. Originally it was some 90 feet high and reached some 60 feet into the ground.

But it is not because of its grand architecture that the Western Wall became an inseparable part of the Jewish People. It was Abraham who first linked the Jewish people to Jerusalem, when he offered Isaac in sacrifice on Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount, now above and behind the Wall. The rock of the offering, over which the Dome of the Rock was built in the late seventh century, is known in Jewish tradition as the Foundation Stone of the world.

King David purchased this land; Solomon's First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE; Herod expanded the Second Temple,

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	<p>which was burned by the Romans in 70 CE, except legend says, for the Western Wall.</p> <p>In the Middle Ages, the Wall received another name — the Wailing Wall, as Jews were observed here lamenting the Temple's destruction. A legend says that on Ninth of Av, the anniversary of the Temple's destruction, the dew glistening on the stones is the Wall itself shedding tears.</p>
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OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	<p>Shopping in Israel is more than acquiring things; it becomes the best way to think about your loved ones and friends at home, because you will be bringing them (and yourself) a bag, bottle, or box symbolizing the wonders you experienced. As you amble through markets, shops and galleries, you will see the incredible variety of products means you'll find something for everyone and have fun while you're doing it.</p> <p>Some of the most meaningful mementos are waiting for you at Israel's holy places in Galilee and Jerusalem. Eye-catching blue and white Armenian pottery items adorned with familiar themes from the holy places are popular as keepsakes, and useful as serving dishes. Olive wood and mother-of-pearl, crafts that are centuries old, now adorn Bibles, boxes, broaches and many other items that will keep your visit fresh in your mind and heart.</p> <p>And what better way to remember Safed, Jerusalem, Jaffa or other Judaica centers than to adorn a Sabbath and holiday table at home with a hand-embroidered Challah- or matzah-cover (lightweight and easy to pack!) or candlesticks, a Kiddush cup or Chanukkah menorah in contemporary or traditional silver, pewter, glass or pottery. Mezuzahs are the perfect housewarming present, and a prayer shawl is a life-long Bar/Bat Mitzvah keepsake.</p> <p>Israel is home to the world's largest open-air spa – the Dead Sea – and after bathing in its mineral-rich water, your skin and hair feel silky smooth. And yes, they do bottle it! You can buy a whole range of Dead Sea mineral products, all beautifully packaged, for the perfect present from Israel.</p> <p>You'll certainly want to browse the factory-outlet racks or boutiques of Israel's world-famous clothes designers while you're here. Cute 100% cotton Israeli-made baby clothes are also easy to tuck into your burgeoning suitcase and make a great shower gift. Did you walk your feet off in Israel? Before your trip ends, pick up a pair of walk-on-air sandals or shoes made in Israel, at prices that can't be beat at home.</p>

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	<p>Israeli jewelry designers star in fine stores everywhere and when you buy in Israel you're at the source. Particularly alluring are trendy bangles with their multi-colored crystals and beads in seemingly endless patterns, as well creations in fine green-blue malachite (Eilat stone).</p> <p>Israel has long been famous for its cut and polished diamonds, and the experience, knowledge and skill of its diamond experts. And as a diamond-exporting country, purchases in Israel often enjoy a price advantage. You can also tour a diamond cutting and polishing facility to learn all about the industry.</p> <p>In a country famous for cuisine from the four corners of the earth packaged food products are great to take home. There are spices like the biblical hyssop for your favorite chef, and sweet dates handsomely packaged for passing around at your office or book club, and a variety of herbal teas, honey, prize-winning wines and other products.</p>
Markets	<p>Tel Aviv Tel Aviv has entire streets with shops devoted to one particular item: spices, bridal gowns, clothing, fabrics, furniture, original gift items, fashion accessories, and galleries. In addition to these special streets such as Dizengoff, Shenkin, Herzl, Nakhlat Binyamin, and Levinsky, there are bi-weekly art fairs on Nakhlat Binyamin in the city centre, bazaars with designer clothes and crafts in the exhibition grounds and around the port area, and an annual food fair called "Ta'am ha-Ir" (Taste of the City) where one can sample a variety of foods that are available in restaurants throughout the country.</p> <p>Sarona Market: upscale shopping and dining complex surrounded by palm trees and perfect lawns. It's a great brunch spot and the best place for artisanal cheeses.</p> <p>Jaffa Flea Market: in the south of Tel Aviv, this neighbourhood has winding lanes full of boutiques selling everything from housewares to jewelry. There is also a flea market with interesting items from all over the Middle East, including Turkish rugs.</p> <p>Jerusalem The Old City is the focus of attraction in Jerusalem with its Oriental and local atmosphere, where one can purchase artifacts, ornaments made of wood, seashells, leather and straw, blown glass, and traditional clothing. The annual art fair, "Khutsot ha-Yotzer" offers both prestigious works of art and folk crafts created by Israeli artists. There are farmers' markets in the German Colony and in the moshavim surrounding the city. The historical, renovated city centre is filled with coffee shops and stores that sell gifts and souvenirs.</p>

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Nightlife	<p>Tel Aviv is a perfect city for tourists and people who love having fun. It is a bustling city of lights, saturated with a vivacious passion for life while offering every possible type of evening entertainment. Called the city that never stops, Tel Aviv lives up to this description every day of the week from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn.</p> <p>Start with a good restaurant by the sea and enjoy a romantic sunset; see a play or musical performance in the evening; watch a movie at midnight, have a drink after the movie and then go dancing until daybreak (don't forget to see the sunrise over the rooftops). Over the years Tel Aviv has become Israel's cultural centre with a vibrant night life that is as open for tourists as it is for Israelis. The city offers a host of amazing variety of cultural venues: music clubs and dance parties offer you every style of music, mixed and spun by world class DJs; movie theatres screening the current and greatest classic movies; theatres presenting classic and modern plays or amusing stand-up comedians; dance companies from Israel and around the world; music, cinema and performing arts festivals and street shows.</p> <p>There are restaurants and coffee shops that serve ethnic foods alongside gourmet dishes; dance bars and pubs where the music and drinks flow like water; art galleries for introducing young artists and established galleries displaying the works of renowned artists; a dynamic amusement park that will get your adrenalin flowing; concert halls and wide open parks where you can enjoy musical performances by musicians from Israel and abroad. These entertainment sites are scattered throughout the city, from the Florentine quarter in the south, along Shenkin Street in the city centre and all the way to Tel Aviv port, in the north. Whichever way you walk, you will find a wonderful selection of entertainment spots.</p>
Casinos	Israeli law does not allow gambling or casinos.

CUISINE	
Food	<p>Israeli cuisine comprises local dishes and dishes brought to the country by Jewish immigrants from around the world. Since the establishment of the State in 1948, and particularly since the late 1970s, an Israeli fusion cuisine has developed.</p> <p>Israeli cuisine has adopted elements of various styles of the Jewish cuisine, particularly the Mizrahi, Sephardic, and Ashkenazi styles of cooking, along with Moroccan Jewish, Iraqi Jewish, Ethiopian Jewish, Indian Jewish, Iranian Jewish and Yemeni Jewish influences. It incorporates many foods traditionally eaten in the Arab, Middle Eastern</p>

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	and Mediterranean cuisines, as falafel, hummus, shakshouka, couscous, and za'atar have become essential dishes in Israel.
Wine	<p>Israeli wine is produced by hundreds of wineries, ranging in size from small boutique enterprises to large companies producing over ten million bottles per year. Wine has been produced in the Land of Israel since biblical times.</p> <p>The modern Israeli wine industry was founded by Baron Edmond James de Rothschild, owner of the Bordeaux estate Château Lafite-Rothschild. Today, Israeli winemaking takes place in five vine-growing regions: Galil (Galilee, including the Golan Heights), the region most suited for viticulture due to its high elevation, cool breezes, marked day and night temperature changes and rich, well-drained soils; the Judean Hills, surrounding the city of Jerusalem; Shimshon (Samson), located between the Judean Hills and the Coastal Plain; the Negev, a semi-arid desert region, where drip irrigation has made grape growing possible; and the Sharon plain near the Mediterranean coast and just south of Haifa, surrounding the towns of Zichron Ya'akov and Binyamina, which is the largest grape growing area in Israel.</p> <p>The Golan Winery (www.golanwines.co.il) is one the largest and most famous wineries in Israel. Collecting 6,000 tons of grapes a year and producing wine in a state of the art wine producing centre. Golan Winery also holds a visitors centre, wine store and gourmet dining.</p>
Restaurants	<p>Almost every restaurant in Israel has menus in English. Occasionally, the spellings or translations can be a bit strange, but these can provide amusement as well as charm. Like for anywhere else in the world, research restaurants on-line or use a good guidebook, and get advice from friends or your hotel front desk about their favorites. When choosing a place to eat, select places that look clean and welcoming and where there is a large turnover of diners. Most restaurants and food stalls are open non-stop from the morning until the evening hours. Restaurants that are also bars remain open until the small hours of the night. In the major cities, especially in Tel Aviv, you can find something to eat at any hour of the day or night.</p> <p>Reservations are a must at the top restaurants – particularly in Tel Aviv. A great deal for tourists are the Business Lunches at restaurants – particularly the top-rated places – in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. These lunches are special 'prix fixe' menus with several choices – at prices a third or half of the same meal in the evening.</p> <p>Israelis generally eat later than Canadians. Lunch is usually sometime between 1 and 3 pm. And while the better restaurants are open from 6</p>

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	<p>or 7 – they don't usually become crowded until 9 pm or later.</p> <p>Tel Aviv's restaurant scene continues to offer stellar, world-class choices. The most dazzling new entry into the galaxy of luxury-level eateries is Catit (tel. 03/510-7001), where Chef Meir Adoni has created one of the richest, most lavish menus Israel has ever seen. Goocha (tel. 03/522-2886), a lively place specializing in tasty fish and seafood, and is perhaps the best new moderately priced restaurant, with branches on Dizengoff Street near the hotel district and on Ibn Givrol Street. The most important new development on the Tel Aviv dining scene is the formerly derelict, but now booming, Old Tel Aviv Port, which has become a nightly festival of promenading Tel Avivians exploring restaurants, bars, shops, and bakeries - many overlooking the sea. New places are constantly opening here, and the vast compound now hosts an interesting Friday flea market that's become a Tel Aviv institution. There are security checks at the entrances to the port area.</p> <p>The Golden Coast - The Roman and Crusader ruins of Caesarea are host to an ever-increasing number of fine restaurants overlooking the sea, where you can dine and enjoy the romantic ruins after 6pm, when the park at Caesarea officially closes. There are kosher and non-kosher choices. Helena (tel. 04/610-1018) is the best of the top-notch Caesarea choices: it's an elegant seafood restaurant with fabulous vistas, and has recently installed Amos Sion, one of the best young chefs in Israel, to oversee its kitchen.</p>
MORE INFO	<p>Canadians can head to the Israel Government Tourist Office at 180 Bloor St. W., Ste. 700, Toronto, ON M5S 2V6 (tel. 416/964-3784; www.igto.ca ; info@igto.ca).</p>
Websites	<p>Website: www.igto.ca Facebook: www.facebook.com/goisrael Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/visit_israel/ Twitter: https://twitter.com/israeltourism YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCInfG0wryFSVWcmkQ_VCFTw</p>
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<p>I have made two trips to Israel and had memorable experiences each time, visiting Jerusalem, Eilat, the Dead Sea, the Negev Desert, Bethlehem and more.</p>
TRANSAT AND ISRAEL	<p>Israel is Transat's newest destination in 2017! With direct flights from Canada and a whole range of vacation options once you get there, Transat has brought value and choice to the world of Israel vacations in 2017.</p>

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Israel Vacations Featured with Transat 2017

Transat has a new daily service charter air service direct from Montreal to Tel Aviv beginning 18th June to 29th October 2017 on Sundays and Wednesdays with connection to Toronto on Wednesdays. Flight time is 9 hours from Montreal and 10 hours from Toronto.. Air Canada and El Al also have scheduled services to Tel Aviv

Transat also has a full range of options to see the best of Israel. There are city based packages in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem; multi city packages that combine both; a guided tour of the whole country; and combo tours that are based in the two cities and have guided excursions to the surrounding sights.

Jerusalem Hotels

Dan Panorama Jerusalem
Jerusalem, Israel
Jerusalem Tower Hotel
Jerusalem, Israel
Leonardo Plaza Hotel
Jerusalem, Israel
Orient Hotel Jerusalem
Jerusalem, Israel
Primal Royal
Jerusalem, Israel
Ramada Hotel Jerusalem

Tel Aviv Hotels

Dan Panorama Tel Aviv
Tel Aviv, Israel
Hotel Rothschild 22
Tel Aviv, Israel
Isrotel Tower Tel Aviv
Tel Aviv, Israel
NYX Hotel
Tel Aviv, Israel
Port and Blue Tel Aviv Boutique Suite Hotel
Tel Aviv, Israel
Royal Beach Tel Aviv

Tours in Israel

Wonders of Israel

This fascinating tour in the heart of Israel will lead you to the discovery of the holiest sites of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Travel through the Judean Desert and swim in the Dead Sea. Explore Jerusalem and its

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	<p>mythical sites, from the Western Wall to the Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Discover Galilee and end your journey in bustling Tel Aviv, the city that never sleeps.</p> <p>Bible Land This tour in Israel plunges you into epic history. Explore Cana where Jesus performed the miracle of the wine. Visit Tabgha, the site of the miraculous Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes. Marvel at the room where the Last Supper was held, on Mount Zion. Discover the historic Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, where Judas betrayed Jesus. Float in the iconic Dead Sea. This tour delivers one surreal moment after another.</p> <p>Discover Tel-Aviv & Jerusalem Combo tours This combo tour in Israel brings history to life like no other. Stop at the famous baptismal site of Yardenit. Explore the Old City of Jerusalem. Float in the iconic Dead Sea. Yes, expect to be amazed at every turn.</p> <p>Wonders of Israel & Jordan Travel through thousands of years of history with this guided tour that will immerse you into the heart of Israel and Jordan. From Herod's ancient palace to the red-rose city of Petra to the ruins of Caesarea, you'll explore some of the most fascinating archaeological sites in the world. And you'll spend a few days in Jerusalem to discover its holy sites, souks and museums.</p> <p>Excursions in Israel</p> <p>Massada and the Dead Sea Drive via the Judean Hills to the Dead Sea and visit a Dead Sea cosmetics shop. Travel along the shores to Massada, then take a cable car to the top of Massada and visit Herod's palace.</p> <p>Biblical Highlights of The Galilee Depart for Nazareth, the town where Jesus spent his childhood, and visit the Church of the Annunciation and Church of St. Joseph. Continue to Tiberias, the lively resort town on the Sea of Galilee.</p> <p>Pearls of the Western Galilee Today, you'll embark on a tour of the pearls of the western Galilee. Travel along the coastal road to Caesarea, the ancient Roman capital and port. Enjoy a walking tour of the Roman Theatre and the archaeological ruins and excavations.</p>
Israel Tour with	If you want to tour the sites in depth then Transat has a number of

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Transat	<p>dedicated tours to help you.</p> <p>The “Discover Jerusalem and Tel Aviv Combo Tour” combines flights with a 9 days, 7 nights, tour that includes accommodation, 7 breakfasts and 20 visits to attractions and places of interest. You spend 4 nights in Tel Aviv and 3 nights in Jerusalem. There are days when you can explore on your own in each city, plus 4 days when you take guided tours to see some of the major sites.</p> <p>The “Bible Land Tour” is exclusive to Transat and all departures are guaranteed. This tour combines flights with a 9 days, 7 nights, tour that includes accommodation, 14 meals (breakfast and dinner) and 20 visits to attractions and places of interest.</p> <p>This is a motor coach tour and you stay in three different cities - 1 night in Tel Aviv, 2 nights in Tiberias on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and 4 nights in Jerusalem. The itinerary covers many of the top “must-sees” in Israel.</p> <p>Day 01 Toronto • Tel Aviv</p> <p>Flight to Tel Aviv.</p> <p>Day 02 Tel Aviv</p> <p>Arrive in Tel Aviv and transfer to your hotel. (D)</p> <p>Day 03 Tel Aviv • Jaffa • Caesarea • Megiddo • Tiberias 149 km</p> <p>Take a short walking tour of the city of Jaffa and the picturesque alleys of the old, fortified town. We’ll pass by the House of Simon the Tanner and marvel at the views from the hilltop. We’ll drive north along the coast to the ruins of Caesarea, built by Herod the Great in honour of Augustus Caesar. Then it’s off to Megiddo, an ancient city inhabited continuously for more than five millennia and recognized as the site of Armageddon. After exploring its ancient ruins, we’ll drive to Tiberias for your overnight stay. (BB/D)</p> <p>Day 04 Tiberias • Capernaum • Tabgha • Golan Heights • Tiberias 120 km</p> <p>Start the day in historic Tiberias, where Jesus lived, sojourned and preached on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Our next destination will be Capernaum, the centre of Jesus’s ministry. Then we journey on to</p>
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Tabgha, the site of the miraculous Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes, and a visit to the church with its famous mosaic floor. Then continue to the Mount of Beatitudes, the hill upon which Jesus was said to have delivered the Sermon on the Mount and picked his 12 apostles. We'll then ascend the Golan Heights for a panoramic view of Mount Hermon, the rugged plateau of the Golan Heights, and beneath it the green pastoral Hula Valley. Return to Tiberias for your overnight stay. (BB/D)

Day 05 Tiberias • Cana • Nazareth • Beit She'an • Jerusalem 233 km

Travel to Cana to visit the Wedding Church, where Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into wine. Proceed to Nazareth, where Jesus spent his childhood, and visit the Church of the Annunciation, built on the site where archaeologists believe the Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary. You'll also see Mary's Well and the Church of St. Joseph. Travel through the Jordan Valley to Beit She'an. Explore the excavations of this beautiful preserved Roman city that was destroyed in an earthquake. Continue to Jerusalem for your overnight stay. (BB/D)

Day 06 Jerusalem • Massada • Qumran • Jerusalem 273 km

Travel from the Dead Sea to Massada, situated on an isolated cliff in the Judean Desert and declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2001. Take a cable car up to the fortress, which was the last stronghold of the Jewish zealots in their war against the Romans. Visit the excavations, King Herod's palace, the synagogue, bathhouse and much more. Enjoy the breathtaking view of the Roman camps and the Dead Sea. En route to the Dead Sea, you'll visit the Qumran Caves, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. Time and weather permitting, you'll have the opportunity to float in the salty, mineral rich waters of the Dead Sea, the lowest point on the Earth's surface. Return to Jerusalem for overnight stays. (BB/D)

Day 07 Jerusalem

Start the day at Mount Scopus and enjoy the spectacular panoramic view of Jerusalem. Your tour will include the Mount of Olives, a stop at the site where Jesus first gave the Lord's Prayer, and the Garden of Gethsemane, where Judas betrayed Jesus. In the Old City, you'll see the Western Wall and the actual site of the Second Temple, the Temple Mount. Walk along the Via Dolorosa and visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Just outside the Old City is Mount Zion, where you'll visit King David's Tomb and the room of the Last Supper. (BB/D)

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	<p>Day 08 Jerusalem</p> <p>Head to Yad Vashem, the official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, established in 1953 at the foot of Mount Herzl. Then explore the picturesque village of Ein Karem, known to be the birthplace of John the Baptist. Visit the Israel Museum and see its miniature model of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period, as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls, housed in its Shrine of the Book wing. See the Knesset (House of Parliament) and the campus of Hebrew University. Then head to Bethlehem to see the Church of the Nativity and Manger Square. (BB/D)</p> <p>Day 09 Jerusalem • Tel Aviv • Toronto</p> <p>Transfer to the airport for your return flight (via Montreal). (BB)</p>
Transat Background	<p>Transat is a leading integrated international tourism company specializing in holiday travel and active in air transportation, accommodation, travel packaging and distribution. It operates mainly in Canada, Europe, Mexico and the Caribbean, with some 25 destination countries, and distributes products in over 50 countries.</p> <p>Based in Montreal, the company has 5,000 employees. Transat is firmly committed to sustainable tourism development, as reflected in its multiple corporate responsibility initiatives over the past 10 years, and was awarded Travelife Partner status in 2016. The vacation travel companion par excellence, Transat celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2017.</p>
What Transat is All About	<p>Transat offers quality vacation packages to a wide variety of destinations. Each season, the company presents a wide selection of quality products, in order to meet the diversified needs of Canadian travellers. In keeping with their mission, their employees aim to exceed vacationers' expectations in order to maintain their position as a market leader. They see their role, ultimately, to turn holiday dreams into reality: making the vacation experience one of the most memorable ever.</p>
Vacation Types	<p>Transat has it all covered: packages, cruises, hotels, flights, tours, car rentals & train travel. With a choice of over 300 hotels located in more than 50 destinations and a complete line of itineraries offered in partnership with the most prestigious cruise lines, all products offered by Transat are subject to a rigorous standard review.</p>
Transat Collections	<p>Choosing the right resort for your vacation needs is all important and to help you select the right hotel Transat have created 6 different Collections: Luxury, Distinction, Adults, Family, Solo and Sun</p>

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Savvy.

What defines a Collection?

- The vacation packages in a Collection match the type of experience you are looking for. Everything from the details of the Air Transat flights to the resort and its facilities suit the needs of a specific type of traveller.

Luxury Collection

- Designed to cater to your every whim, our prestigious Luxury Collection is the gold standard in upscale travel... with VIP inclusions for a dream vacation:

- o Free access to VIP Lounge at airports
- o Free upgrade to OPTION PLUS on board Air Transat
- o Private roundtrip transfers
- o Unlimited À La Carte gourmet dining
- o Free WIFI in room and public area

Solo Collection

- With this new collection Transat put together a group of resorts that people who like to travel alone will enjoy thanks to advantages such as a communal table for sharing meals and no single supplement.

And the big news is – no Single Supplement!

- Solo Collection Advantages include:

- o No Single Supplement
- o Communal table for sharing meals
- o Weekly Happy Hour welcoming all Transat clients
- o Free room service and free WI-FI

Sun Savvy Collection

- Transat thinks everyone should be able to enjoy the sun, and they pride themselves on providing you with the quality you want at the prices you love. Hence their new Sun Savvy Collection.

Adults Collection

- The 18+ crowd will have access to top of the line accommodations, unlimited à la carte dining and free WiFi.

Family Collection

- Their Family Collection delivers a safe, exciting time for kids - and a relaxing holiday for parents. There are a variety of activities, facilities and promotions that suit the needs of different types of family. These range from resorts perfect for families with very young children to resorts perfect for teens and big families. And then there are also Transat's new Multigenerational and Single Parent categories.

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	<p>And lastly – there is the Distinction Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distinction Collection offers exclusive perks that range from direct transfers, additional à la carte dinner reservations and complimentary WiFi access - Distinction inclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Direct roundtrip transfers between the airport and the resort o Additional guaranteed à la carte restaurant reservations o Free WIFI in the lobby o Mini-bar restocked daily o Unlimited select international drinks o Free in-room safe <p>You will also enjoy, for example, bottle of wine or local specialty in the room upon arrival, turn-down service plus lots more.</p>
Awards	<p>Transat almost routinely picks up numbers of rewards each year. Here are some of the awards they received in 2016:</p> <p>Voted Best North American Leisure Airline five years running - 2016 Skytrax Annual Airline Awards</p> <p>First place in three categories of the Agent's Choice Awards: best Tour Operator best Leisure/Charter airline for Air Transat best Overall Supplier for Service and Value</p>
Israel Brochure	<p>The Transat Israel brochure is available at your local travel agent and covers vacations in the country. An e-brochure is also available here: https://indd.adobe.com/view/bd4e1376-50b8-4741-ab48-c789a5a49dd8</p>
Newsletter	<p>Stay up to date on the latest news, travel offers, discount prices, contests and more by signing up to Transat's e-newsletter here: http://www.airtransat.com/en-CA/Newsletter</p>
Air Transat Kids Club	<p>To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created Kids Club so that young passengers can really enjoy themselves whilst onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.</p> <p>Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family can share. You can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in</p>

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	major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking-in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.
Transat Club Class	<p>Enjoy exclusive privileges such as complimentary seat selection, wider, more comfortable leather seats, a choice of gourmet meals and fine wines, priority check-in, baggage service and boarding.</p> <p>Club Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Club attendants • Attentive, personalized service • Exclusive, spacious Club cabin <p>Drinks & Snacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome cocktails • Complimentary non-alcoholic drinks, snacks and bar service <p>Club Privileges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased baggage allowance • 40 kg checked/15 kg carry-on • Exclusive, rapid check-in counter in most airports • Priority boarding • Practical travel items (on Europe flights) • Free headsets • Canadian newspapers <p>Comfort & Refinement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider, more comfortable leather seats • More leg room • Complimentary Seat Selection: call 1-877-872-6728 • Choice of gourmet meals • Choice of wine and more
Option Plus	<p>This Economy class option includes many priority privileges and services including priority check-in, priority baggage handling, an extra 10kg baggage allowance and even champagne. Here's what you get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance seat selection on roundtrip flights • Priority check-in at a dedicated counter • Priority baggage handling • Priority boarding • Complete Air Transat travel kit on flights to European destinations • Snacks from the On Board Bistro selection • Alcoholic beverages during drinks service 200ml bottle of champagne (Sun and Europe) • Supplementary baggage allowance up to 10 kg per flight segment • Wine or beer with the meal • Headsets <p>The cost is \$89-\$149 for southbound destinations and \$99-\$209 for European destinations as at April 2017</p>
Option Flex	Life doesn't always go exactly according to plan. When you book your

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	<p>dream vacation, you want to make sure you enjoy the ultimate level of flexibility should something unexpected happen.</p> <p>Option Flex with Transat gives you just that.</p> <p>Option Flex lets you:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - change your departure date, destination or hotel, up to 3 hours before departure - transfer your vacation package to a friend or family member, up to 7 days before departure - cancel your trip and get a full refund - and you won't be charged any additional fuel or currency surcharges once you've booked. <p>Benefit from these advantages for only \$49 + taxes at time of booking.</p>
Transat and Sustainable Tourism	<p>Transat recognizes the prime importance of the environment, host communities, cultural diversity, and their relationships with their employees, customers and partners. Tourism has become one of the world's leading industries. Society and communities reap the benefits, and, each year, hundreds of millions of travellers discover new countries and cultures. Transat is firmly committed to the responsible development of the tourism industry, and has adopted the following definition of sustainable tourism:</p> <p><i>"Sustainable tourism entails respect for nature, as well as for host communities and their values; it combines positive socio-economic benefits for local populations with an enriching experience for travellers."</i></p> <p>The issue of the environment, as far as Transat's own facilities are concerned, is a clear and basic target. Their environment committees have implemented concrete initiatives with regard to recycling, conservation of resources, the disposal of obsolete electronic equipment, and raising employee awareness.</p> <p>Air Transat has begun developing an environmental management system that could lead to an ISO 14001 certification in the future. To find out more, consult the Transat and the Environment sections at their website:</p> <p>http://www.airtransat.ca/en/Info/the-environment-its-everyones-business.aspx?ExitID=69&ContentType=voyageur</p> <p>Eco-responsible certified hotels</p> <p>Transat urges its hotelier partners to excel in social and environmental responsibility, and formally recognizes the efforts of accommodations that commit to certification in this area. Certified establishments must maintain performance levels to continue using such labels. The indicators used vary depending on the certification scheme, but many certification organizations have begun aligning their benchmarks with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.</p>

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	<p>To help you make an informed choice when you take your next vacation, Transat list six certifications for hotels and beaches. You can also find certified hotels by searching by destination.</p> <p>Certifications for hotels</p> <p>Biosphere Responsible Tourism</p> <p>Green Globe</p> <p>Green Key</p> <p>ISO 14001</p> <p>Travelife</p> <p>Certification for beaches</p> <p>Blue Flag</p>
Gift Certificates	<p>Here's your chance to make a loved one's dream come true. With Transat gift certificates you can offer the beauty, excitement, and wonders of the world: the South with its heavenly beaches and endless sunshine, or just a rental car. Transat gift certificates are valid on all Transat Holidays products in their brochures. They can be redeemed at a travel agent's office at the time of reservation. To order your gift certificates call 1-800-322-6649.</p>
Groups	<p>Group rates are available – as few as 10 adults make up a group. Talk to your travel agent to check the current details of Transat's group deals.</p>
Hurricane Policy	<p>Transat provide you with true peace of mind. Vacationers can travel secure in the knowledge that you will be protected should a hurricane affect your destination city in Florida, Mexico, the Caribbean or Central America. This Transat policy covers reservations for departures between June 1 and November 30 each year and is likely to be renewed in 2017 – check the website. If the conditions stipulated in the policy are met, you may choose one of these four options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel at a later date 2. Travel to another destination city 3. Travel to the booked destination city 4. Cancel with a full refund
Transat Deals	<p>Look out for special offers from Transat for vacations in Israel. You can see all their deals using this link:</p> <p>www.transat.com/en-CA/deals</p> <p>For instance, they are offering a package including return flights from Toronto to Tel Aviv, staying at the Sea Net Hotel in Tel Aviv for 8 days departing 21st June 2017 for \$1886 taxes included.</p>
To Book	<p>See your Travel Agent or contact Transat at:</p> <p>1-877-TRANSAT (1-877-872-6728) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week</p>
Websites & Social Media	<p>Website: www.Transat.com</p>

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