



COLLER / TAU

DOING BUSINESS IN ISRAEL

SHORT PROGRAM REPORT FOR MAY 2018

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Introduction

This report is structured to serve the dual intent of summarizing the experience as well as providing useful information / lessons learned for others interested in participating in the program.

The report is separated into four main parts: preparations, travel & accommodations, program events, and additional activities.

Preparations

Preparing for the trip was straight-forward / conventional for an international trip; there were no special items to address outside of readings.

VISA Process

No VISA is required for Canadian citizens / permanent residents traveling to Israel. Uncertain if exchange students with a different status require one.

Insurance

At the suggestion of other Schulich students, I investigated and discovered that I was covered for 1 million CAD worth of medical care for up to 15 days of travel by my credit card (Scotiabank/VISA). My recommendation for others would be to inquire by calling their credit card company to confirm (like I did) or seek supplementary insurance with a third party for comparable coverage (e.g., most Canadian banks will offer some sort of insurance even if you don't hold any accounts with them).

Packing

I used a spreadsheet to track what to bring based on other students' suggestions (who participated in the same program) and online travel blogs. The major categories included: weather-appropriate clothing, toiletries and medical items, electronics (laptop, phone, headphones), and documentation. Documentation included acceptance letters from both schools, a printed copy of the itinerary/agenda, and a printed copy of my medical insurance policy (all of which I carried in my backpack at all times throughout the trip).

I also downloaded all available documentation (from my application to the latest agenda) to my phone, both for offline personal reference and in case customs wanted to see additional documentation (though customs ultimately never inquired).

I arrived with a backpack and a carry-on, but for 10 days it was a rather tight-fit with the carry-on – it prevented me from bringing gym clothes, which I later regretted as mentioned later, and

made it difficult to bring back gifts. My recommendation would be to use a mid- or large-size luggage instead.

Currency

Israel's currency is the Israeli New Shekel (ILS) – one CAD was worth approximately 2.74 ILS at the time of the trip. I chose to extract most of my cash for the trip at the airport (partly out of being pressed for time) before leaving, but this came a high cost of roughly \$44 on \$200 worth. ATM's are common in Israel, so outside of bringing some for the first taxi ride, it is recommended to extract cash locally from a bank card (though Interac isn't supported where I went; I had to use my VISA, still cheaper than the airport).

Readings

The program requires that all articles, cases, and a book (i.e., "Start-Up Nation") be read ahead of time. Each reading can be completed in 30 minutes or so and the book is just over 200 pages in English. Most students read on their flight; I chose to read ahead of time, so I could sleep on the flight.

Travel & Accommodations

Travel was relatively straight-forward, and accommodations were fully taken care of by the program coordinators.

Flight / Arrival

I purchased my flight tickets 6 weeks in advance to aim for the lowest price. My flight there included a layover, which in hindsight I would try to avoid (i.e., target a direct flight) as over a day was lost to travel and time-zone shifting (Israel is 7 hours ahead of Toronto). My layover in Frankfurt also forced me to undergo additional security checks (on top of those completed at Pearson) to proceed to Israel specifically.

At the airport, attendees helped direct me to a taxi as well as provide an official quote to the city to prevent overpaying on arrival with the taxi.

Hotel

Accommodations were paid for through the program fee. I stayed with all the other students at the Art Plus Hotel near the beach (and 30 minutes coach ride from the school). The hotel included an above-average breakfast spread and a happy hour from 5 to 7 PM, which offered wine and some light snacks for all to partake. I bunked with a roommate (default option); the room was adequate for the purpose of sleeping there (most time was spent away from the hotel anyways).

Although I didn't personally explore the rest of the hotel, it also had a spa, workout room, and a small rooftop patio. The staff there were extremely friendly and helped us choose/coordinate our after-class trips in the city.

Commuting

All school-related travel is achieved by a personal coach bus for the students. For other activities in the city you can walk (my preferred method), rent an electric bike, or use a taxi. If using a taxi, it is highly recommended to use the "Gett" app to hail, secure a quote, and hold the driver accountable (myself and others encountered taxis that refused to turn on the meter and would try to upsell/misquote – the app avoids this issue).

Departure

The security check leaving Israel is surprisingly more involved than entering the country. While this entailed only some supplementary questioning as part of the standard process for myself, others were pulled aside for more in-depth questioning. It is recommended that you arrive 3 hours ahead of the departure time at the airport for this reason.

Program Events

The program has on average 10 hours-worth of activities each day split relatively equally between classroom sessions, company visits, and extra-curricular/group activities, though the precise composition will vary from day to day (and commute soaks up some additional time each day).

Most weeknights and the one weekend within the 10 days were made free for the students to coordinate their own activities. All activities defined on the agenda included food (lunch/dinner; breakfast was free at the hotel) and associated transportation via a personal coach bus.

Refer to Appendix A for the agenda.

Deliverables

Besides in-class activities, the only other deliverables were two essays (one due during the trip and one due immediately after).

Class Composition

The program consisted of roughly 40 students. I was the only student from Schulich but there were two others from Rotman. The majority of the rest of the students were from various US schools, though some were international from regions like Singapore. The academic and professional background of students were well-varied, making networking worthwhile.

Classroom Sessions

The classroom activities were quite varied and focused on multiple themes: country origins, source of entrepreneurial spirit in the culture, first-hand accounts of start-up endeavours, negotiation tactics for Israeli businesses, trends in technology, and others.

Each class was taught by a different professor from the school, each with a distinct teaching style. In general though, classes were structured as conventional lectures, with some group activities and Q&A sessions during / after the lecture.

Company Visits

The company visits ranged from large companies founded in Israel (i.e., Netafim) to incubators, social start-ups, multi-nationals, and tech start-ups, making for a varied composition. Most visits included some presentations, some showcasing if possible, and Q&A sessions.

Extra-Curricular Activities

To help show different aspects of business and culture in Israel, the program agenda also included tours, dinners (i.e., a showcase of the “Eatwith” platform and “Blackout” – a dinner in the dark), and museum trips. These served to reinforce some of the content from the classroom and company visits.

One day was dedicated to Jerusalem, which is a must-see when visiting Israel.

Additional Activities

Most weeknights and the one weekend were left free for students to explore the city on their own.

Weeknights

A group chat was formed on WhatsApp by the program staff before arrival to help students communicate and coordinate with one another. Choosing to explore the city more, myself and some of the other students used TripAdvisor and Google (Yelp isn’t used much there) to find the best hangout spots to spend our free time. Kuli Alma is the top recommendation, with Tedder.fm as a close second for a relaxing spot to socialize.

Weekend

For the weekend, I choose to visit Masada (a fortress ruin) and the Dead Sea one day and explore the city on my own the next. An alternative is a two-day trip to Jordan for Petra (famous tomb/religious site) and Wadi Rum (a scenic desert oasis/attraction). The former was approximately \$150 CAD while the latter 2-day trip was approximately \$520 CAD (including an overnight stay in a tent).

The choice is a matter of preference, but after comparing experiences with the other program attendees I believe the two-day trip is more interesting, though much more expensive and requires passing customs into another country (i.e., Jordan).

Conclusions

Some informational notes aside, this is a trip I would highly recommend.

Budgeting Considerations

With a roommate, the upfront cost of the trip was \$2300 USD (\$3000 CAD). If a single room is preferred, an additional \$1000 USD (\$1300 CAD) is required. This covers most meals and everything defined in the agenda.

In terms of cash, I brought \$200 CAD worth initially, but I had to extract \$200 CAD more for various cab rides, meals, and other activities I participated in. I used my credit card (VISA) wherever possible to avoid withdrawing more cash.

Not including gifts, I spent an estimated \$600 CAD on the trip in addition to the \$3000 CAD paid up-front. Most of this was discretionary, as I wanted to explore as much of the city and culture as time could afford.

Lessons Learned

Beyond the specific lessons learned already mentioned, I would suggest two things (relatively minor).

First, for the deliverables, try to complete them during the commutes if you are able to. This will free up some more time for weeknights.

Second, try and coordinate with others ahead of time for social activities. Some students came together from one school, and already had some large plans set in place, which made coordination easier in some cases, and again freed more time to actually participate.

General Impressions

Overall, I was very pleased with the experience. Up-front the agenda doesn't appear to be logically organized, but all activities from the classrooms to the companies to the social events are all related in some way and form a very vivid picture of what the business and civil cultures are like in the country (which are very closely interrelated). Although the focus is on innovation and entrepreneurship, the emphasis is less on teaching you the topics in their general form, and more on how they fit the context of the country and the technology industry, which is very appropriate for the trip and valuable for anyone with a tech or entrepreneurial interest. And although it's an intensive 10 days, it's very well-paced and balanced such that there is still time to enjoy all Israel has to offer.

Appendix A | Agenda

See following pages.

Doing Business in Israel

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: The Israeli model

Spring 2018



Doing Business in Israel

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: The Israeli model

Spring 2018

Academic director

Udi Aharoni Tel: +972-3-6407314 e-mail: udia@post.tau.ac.il

Course coordinators

Idit Admon Tel: +972-54-2222636 e-mail: iditadmon@tauex.tau.ac.il

Hila Rachmani Tel: +972-50-2230961 e-mail: hilara@tauex.tau.ac.il

Smadar Hayek Tel: +972-52-2658510 e-mail: smadar.hayek@gmail.com

Teaching Assistant

Shir Mor e-mail: shir252@gmail.com

Program dates: Monday, May 21st - Tuesday, May 29th, 2018

Accommodation: the students will be accommodated at the **Art Plus Hotel** in Tel Aviv.

Program structure: the program consists of classes and workshops, company visits, tours of Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Jerusalem.

Credits: 3 credit units

Language of instruction: English

Background:

The dramatic shift to an innovative and entrepreneurial high-tech orientation that the Israeli economy has undergone in recent decades has not only been acknowledged globally. It has also contributed to the prosperity of areas such as agriculture, pharmaceuticals and the ecology. Many factors can be said to have led to Israel's high-tech success, some of which have to do with the hostility of the external environment, the lack of natural resources, and the so-called collective Israeli personality – ingenious, tough and adaptive. Be that as it may, entrepreneurship and innovation have come to be regarded as integral parts of the Israeli economic mindset, and the many successful IPOs and M&As of Israeli start-up companies

have turned our small country into a world leader in certain high-tech areas. Indeed, many of today's global players started their operations in the local Israeli economy.

As with leaders, a predisposition is needed, but there is certainly room for nurturing born entrepreneurs. It is with this in mind that we propose the present program of studies, which, amongst other things, is designed to provide participants with exposure to the models, theories and practical approaches to entrepreneurship and innovation that Israeli professionals and academics have developed over the years.

Program description:

The program will frame the central aspects of doing business in Israel within the context of the country's booming high-tech economy and the emergence of global Israeli companies.

It will offer a unique synthesis between state-of-the-art academic studies and practical, hands-on experience with the Israeli high-tech industry and its leaders.

Program objectives:

The emphasis in the program will be on understanding the dynamics of the Israeli entrepreneurial environment and on analyzing Israeli innovative companies at different lifecycle stages. Students will be expected to develop a top management perspective of a high-tech company and focus on formulating a competitive business-level strategy for it.

Course materials:

- Dan Senor and Saul Singer Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle, Twelve (2009)
- Case study
- Articles

Students are required to have read all the materials prior to their arrival!

Case:

ACE (Applied Cognitive Engineering) - a small Israeli company specializing in computer-based cognitive simulation training based on a special training method developed for Israeli combat pilots, was established in the summer of 2003 (Collier School of Management Case).

Articles:

Dr. Eyal Benjamin

Howard H. Stevenson & David E. Gumpert The Heart of Entrepreneurship

<https://hbr.org/1985/03/the-heart-of-entrepreneurship>

Course assignments:

All students are required to read the course textbook (*Start-up Nation*) the relevant articles and cases prior to the first class meeting. Each student will submit by e-mail a short case analysis during the course, and a final case analysis to the course's teaching assistant according to the course schedule.

Course grade:

Case analysis (should not exceed three pages)	30%
Final case analysis (should not exceed six pages)	70%

The DBI team wishes you a pleasant stay in Israel and an enjoyable program!

Agenda

Day	Hours	Topic	Lecturer / Comments	Where
Monday May 21 st		Breakfast		At the hotel
	09:10	Meeting Idit & Hila		Hotel lobby
	09:20-10:00	Drive to the University		
	10:00-10:30	Program opening	Udi Aharoni, DBI Director	Recanati Building, Room 252
	10:30-11:45	The Israeli High-Tech Industry	Dr. David Zvilichovsky	Recanati Building, Room 252
	11:45-12:00	Break		Recanati Building, Room 402
	12:00-13:15	The Israeli High-Tech Industry	Dr. David Zvilichovsky	Recanati Building, Room 252
	13:15-14:30	Lunch	Meeting Idit & Hila at the classroom	
	14:25-16:15	Meet Hila & Smadar outside the food court.	orientation tour at the university	
	14:45-16:15	Visit to <u>Beit Hatfutso</u> the Museum of the Jewish People		On campus
	16:15-16:30	Walk to class & break		Recanati Building, Room 402
	16:30-17:45	Vision, meet Reality.	Tzameret Fuerst, Co-Founder PrePex	Recanati Building, Room 252
	17:45-18:30	Drive to Dinner		
	18:30-21:00	Opening dinner		<u>Eatwith</u>
	21:00-21:20	Drive back to the hotel		
	Dress code for the day: casual			
		Breakfast	At the hotel	
	09:20-10:00	Pick up from the hotel and drive to the University	Outside the hotel	
	10:00-12:00	Israel at a Glance	Prof. Uriya Shavit	Dan David

Tuesday, May 22 nd				building, Room 302
	12:00-13:10	Lunch		
	13:10-14:40	Managing Negotiations: Practical Tools & Strategies	Dr. Hila Dotan	Dan David Building, Room 302
	14:40-14:50	Break		On campus
	14:50-16:00	Managing Negotiations: Practical Tools & Strategies	Dr. Hila Dotan	
	16:00-16:30	Drive to Tel Aviv		
	16:30-18:45	Tour of Tel Aviv - Jaffa		
	18:45-19:00	Drive back to hotel		
	Free night			
	Dress code for the day: casual			
Wednesday, May 23 rd		Breakfast		At the hotel
	08:30-09:30	Pick up from the hotel and drive to Kibbutz Magal		
	09:30-11:30	Visit to Netafim company		Agricultural company
	11:30-12:30	Tour of Kibbutz Magal		Cultural tour
	12:30-13:30	Israeli lunch		At the kibbutz dining room
	13:30-14:45	Drive to Haifa		
	14:45-16:30	Visit to Takwin Lab		
	16:30-18:00	Drive back to Tel Aviv		
	18:00-21:00	Israeli cooking workshop		
	21:00-21:20	Drive back to the hotel		
	Dress code for the day: casual			
		Breakfast		At the hotel
	08:30-09:15	Pick up from the hotel and drive to the University		
	09:15-10:30	Case study analysis - Ace	Danny Dankner	Dan David Building, Room

Thursday May 24 th				302
	10:30-10:45	Break		
	10:45-12:45	Entrepreneurship & intrapreneurship	Dr. Eyal Benjamin	Dan David Building, Room 302
	12:45-14:00	Lunch		On campus
	14:00-14:30	Drive to company		
	14:30-16:30	Visit <u>sFBI</u>	Enon Landenberg, CEO	Rishpon
	16:30-17:00	Drive back to the hotel		
	Free night			
	Dress code for the day: casual			
Friday & Saturday May 25 th & 26 th	Free Weekend			
Sunday May 27 th	08:30-10:30	Pick up from the hotel and drive to Beer Sheva		
	10:30-12:30	Visit <u>Cyber Park</u>		Beer-Sheva
	12:30-14:00	Drive to Rishon Le-Zion		
	14:00-15:15	Lunch at restaurant		
	15:15-15:20	Walk to company		
	15:20-17:20	Social Entrepreneurship in Israel: Visit to <u>Call Yachol</u>	Dr. Gil Winch	Rishon Le-Zion
	17:20-17:45	Drive to Jaffa port		
	17:45-20:00	Dinner	Dinner in the Dark	<u>BlackOut</u>
	20:00-20:20	Drive back to the hotel		
	Dress code for the day: casual			
Monday May 28 th		Breakfast	At the hotel	
	08:20-09:00	Pick up from the hotel and drive to the university	Outside the hotel	
	09:00-10:30	Meeting an Israeli	Moti Radomski	Dan David Building, Room

		entrepreneur		302
	10:30-10:45	Break		
	10:45-12:00	Born Global	Udi Aharoni	Dan David Building, Room 302
	12:00-13:15	Lunch on campus		On campus
	13:15-14:15	The disruptive power of big data technologies: the start-up nation perspective	Prof. Gal Oestreicher-Singer	Dan David Building, Room 302
	14:15-14:30	Break		
	14:30-15:30	The disruptive power of big data technologies: the start-up nation perspective	Prof. Gal Oestreicher-Singer	Dan David Building, Room 302
	15:30-15:50	Drive back to the hotel		
	Free night			
	Dress code for the day: casual			
Tuesday May 29 th		Breakfast	At the hotel	
	08:20	Pick up from the hotel	Outside the hotel	
	09:30-17:30	Touring Jerusalem, including lunch <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kotel – Western Wall – the holiest site in the world for Jews.• Roof top view of the Dome of the Rock and El Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in the world for Moslems.• Church of the Holy Sepulcher, place of the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus according to Christian tradition. And more		
	17:00-19:30	Farewell dinner		
	19:30	Drive back to the hotel		
	Dress code for the day: casual, comfortable. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walking shoes (several hours of walking during the day), hat, sun screen• Requirements for entrance to the holy sites: covered shoulders & long pants for men and long pants/skirt for women			
Wednesday May 30 th	Flight back home			

Doing Business in Israel – Assignments:

Case study preparation:

Each student will submit (by email) a short case analysis according to the course schedule and a final case analysis to the course's teaching assistant.

ACE case analyses should be submitted by mail to the course's teaching assistant shir252@gmail.com by **Thursday, May 24th, 09:00.**

Final case analyses should be submitted by mail to the course's teaching assistant - shir252@gmail.com by **Friday, June 15th**

Course grade:

- ACE case analysis (should not exceed **four pages, 1.5 space, font 12**).
- Final case analysis (no more than **six pages 1.5 space, font 12**).
- **Papers must be submitted in WORD format only.**

Questions for ACE:

1. Analyze ACE's global competitive environment.
2. What are ACE's core resources, capabilities and competences?
3. What are your main recommendation to ensure ACE's growth in the next 5 years and what are the main risks?

Final Assignment questions:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Israel?
2. What is the competitive advantage of Israel and will it be sustainable for the next ten years?
3. What are the pros and cons of developing Israeli giant companies like Teva, Check Point vs. developing small start-ups companies like ACE or other start-up companies you visited, from two perspectives: the entrepreneurs' perspective, the Israeli macroeconomic perspective?

Appendix A: Short Bios

DBI Director:

Udi Aharoni

Udi Aharoni is the General & Academic Director of Lahav Executive Education at the Collier School of Management and a lecturer of the School's MBA and EMBA strategy, global strategy and innovation strategy courses. In addition, he is the director of the Eli Hurvitz Institute for Strategic Management at the School.

Course coordinators:

Idit Admon

Idit Admon is the International Programs Manager of all international activities at the Collier School of Management. She holds an undergraduate degree in political science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Smadar Hayek Ganon

Smadar Hayek Ganon is the International Programs coordinator of the program. She holds an undergraduate degree in political science and east Asia from the Tel-Aviv University.

Hila Rachmani

Hila Rachmani is the Student Exchange & International Cooperation Manager at the Collier School of Management. She holds a graduate degree in Diplomacy from Tel Aviv University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Faculty members (in alphabetical order):

Dr. Eyal Benjamin

Dr. Eyal Benjamin is a four-time serial entrepreneur with a background in ICT and automotive ventures. Specializing in strategic-innovation, he is a scholar and head of the StartHub entrepreneurship center at the Tel Aviv-Yaffo Academic College. He earned a PhD. from the Swinburne University of Technology, Australia.

Danny Dankner

In 2001, Danny Dankner established Ace (Applied Cognitive Engineering), a start-up company that developed a computerized system for training and improving the cognitive skills needed for executing a specific task or performing in a given job, through the use of a video game designed to improve decision making under stressful conditions. He holds an LL.B. from Tel Aviv University and an MBA from the Coller School of Management at Tel Aviv University.

Moti Radomski

Co-Founder & CEO, Mamaya Inc - the world's first automated social media agency for online merchants. Moti has over 20 years of experience with products that make a change.

In 2005, he co-founded YaData, a marketing data-mining company, which was acquired by Microsoft three years later. Prior to that, he played key roles in product management, sales and R&D for various technological companies.

Prof. Gal Oestreicher-Singer

Prof. Oestreicher-Singer is part of the Management and Information Technology Group. Her research focuses on the effects of social media, consumer engagement and peer influence on electronic commerce outcomes and on the business models of content websites.

Her work has been published in the top journals in the fields of both Information Systems and Marketing. She is the recipient of several prestigious awards, most recently the AIS Sandy Slaughter early career award. She serves on the editorial boards of MIS Quarterly, Information Systems Research and Management Science. She received her Ph.D. from New York University in 2008, and holds degrees in law and electrical engineering from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University.

Prof. Uriya Shavit

A senior lecturer at the Department for Arabic and Islamic Studies and the Program for Religious Studies at Tel Aviv University, Prof. Shavit specializes in the study of Muslim minorities and democratization processes. He is the author of five books and 20 articles in these fields.

Dr. Gil Winch

Dr. Gil Winch is a clinical and organizational psychologist who has worked with the biggest companies in the Israeli economy for over 15 years. In 2001, he founded Tandem Consultants, an organizational consulting company. A few years later, after learning about the severity of unemployment among people with disabilities in Israel, he began researching and developing a unique managerial model that could bring about a profound change in the employment of such people.

In early 2008, Dr. Winch founded Call Yachol, a free market social business that hires primarily chronically unemployed individuals with severe disabilities, as a proving ground for his model. To date, his unique managerial model has enabled the return of hundreds of chronically unemployed severely disabled individuals to the workforce, helping them reach full productivity and allowing them to earn regular wages in a free market job.

Dr. David Zvilichovsky

Dr. David Zvilichovsky received his Ph.D. in Economics as well as an M.Sc. in Computer Science from Tel Aviv University. His current research interests include Innovation & Growth, CrowdFunding, Entrepreneurship, Networks & Platforms, Bubbles, and the Internet Economy.

Dr. Zvilichovsky has been involved with the Israeli high-tech industry for over 20 years, working with industry leaders such as Comverse, Scitex and Electric Fuel. He co-founded IPHighway, a pioneer in the Network QOS space and was an executive at the Robo-Group during its IPO on both the Nasdaq and the Tel Aviv Stock Exchanges.

Over the years Dr Zvilichovsky has served as a board member and advisor in the areas of venture capital, technology innovation and early stage ventures. He also served as a special economic advisor to the national economic council at the Israeli Prime Minister's Office during the 2008 market crisis. Dr. Zvilichovsky teaches courses in economics, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

Israel General Information**Languages**

Hebrew and Arabic are the official languages of Israel and English is a compulsory subject in school. Most Israelis speak at least a bit of English. All commercial and street signs are written in both Hebrew and English and often in Arabic as well.

Currency

The local currency in Israel is the New Israel Shekel (NIS), which can be obtained at almost all local exchanges. For more information about the NIS and the current exchange rate, visit the Bank of Israel's website at <http://www.bankofisrael.co.il>

Electricity

Electrical current in Israel is 220 volts AC, single phase, 50 Hertz. Most Israeli sockets are of the three-pronged variety but many can also accept some European two-pronged plugs. Adapters are required for American plugs.

Dress code during your cultural tours

If touring, please take into consideration that you may be visiting a variety of holy sites; the dress code at these sites is strict and modest: covered shoulders and long pants for men and long pants/skirt for women. We also recommend wearing comfortable shoes.

Time zones

Israel is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

Weather

Israel's climate is Mediterranean in the north and arid in the south. In summer, average temperatures are in the range 65°-90°F (18°-32° C) over most of the country. Winters are usually mild, with temperatures on the coastline averaging 57° F (14°C). Temperatures in Jerusalem and the north of Israel are about 6° C lower and in the south of Israel and at the Dead Sea 9°C higher (72°F).

We strongly recommend that you check the weather forecast before packing at www.weather.com.

Israel at a glance

Israel is not only the name of the country; it is also a people. The history of the Jewish people and its roots in the Land of Israel span approximately 35 centuries. During this long history, the cultural, national and religious identities of this land were formed. The State of Israel was established in 1948, renewing Jewish independence almost 2,000 years after it was lost with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.

Full Country Name: The State of Israel

Area: 22,000 sq. km; about the size of New Jersey

Population: 8.8 (it has grown 11 times since the state was found in 1948)

Capital City: Jerusalem

Education: 11 years compulsory.

Literacy rate: 95% (female 93%; male 97%).

Religion(s): Judaism, Islam and Christianity, Druze

Major political parties: Likud, Kulano, The Jewish Home, Agudat-Israel, Shas

President: Rubi Rivlin

Prime Minister: Binyamin Netanyahu

Flag Description: White with a blue hexagram (six-pointed linear star) known as the Magen David (Shield of David) centered between two equal horizontal blue bands near the top and bottom edges of the flag, symbolic of a Jewish prayer shawl.



Population

Approximately 76 % of the country's population is counted as Jewish. Since 1989, nearly one million immigrants from the former Soviet Union have arrived in Israel, making this the largest wave of immigration since independence. In addition, almost 50,000 members of the Ethiopian Jewish community have immigrated to Israel. Thirty-six percent of Israelis were born outside Israel. Of the non-Jewish population, about 80% are Muslims, 10% are Christian, and about 10% are Druze.

Cultural life

With a population drawn from more than 100 countries on five continents, Israeli society is rich in cultural diversity and artistic creativity. Israel boasts more than 120 museums, including the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls along with an extensive collection of regional archaeological artifacts, art, and Jewish religious and folk exhibits.