

# Welcome to Israel

impressions, Israelis will welcome expats with open arms and a warm heart.

For those expats who are art and music lovers, Israel offers some excellent museums. The two leading museums are 'Israel Museum' in Jerusalem and the 'Tel Aviv Museum'. Adjacent to the Tel-Aviv Museum you will find the Opera House of Israel and the theatre centre. If you prefer to watch a unique opera performance, you may want to travel to the famous Masada Mountain located in the heart of the Judean Desert. Taking place every June, it's a magnificent experience under the desert sky.

At the beginning of 2013, the famous Israel's Philharmonic Orchestra (which has just celebrated its 75th Anniversary) will return to the renovated Mann Auditorium.

For those who believe that there are tanks and armed soldiers on every corner of the streets in Israel, you can indeed see troops, tanks, planes and other military equipment, but only on Israel's Independence Day when the Army opens its bases to the public. You may also notice many soldiers riding the buses and trains on Sunday mornings and Thursdays afternoons – these people are travelling back to their bases (usually on Sundays) or heading back home (mostly on Thursdays).

Despite the constant political and military conflicts in the Middle East, Israel is one of the leaders in the region in terms of economics, industry, trade and science.

The number of international companies moving to Israel is growing every year (and to name just a few: Intel, Motorola, Siemens, Alstom, Unilever, Schlumberger, Google, Nestlé, Microsoft, GAP, H&M and so many others).

Tourism is also on the rise. A new 'open sky' agreement between Israel and the EU was signed recently and will enable many more European airlines (including low budget) to fly to the country.

Israel, despite so many unjustified fears and misunderstandings, is an excellent expat destination. Israel's economy is very strong and still shows impressive growth every year, despite the global crisis.

Everyday events such as eating out, going to the cinema and going shopping have high costs. According to different global surveys (Mercer, Economist,

**Welcome to Israel! In a four page country profile, we look at two views of this fascinating place of diversity, beginning with this article submitted by the Corporate Resources Group**

etc.) Israel is one of the most expensive countries in the world – and yet you will find it very difficult to reserve a seat in restaurants, theaters and at the opera.

Many supermarkets are open until midnight or even 24 hours a day. This is very appealing to many expats. Such standards, however, are only accessible to those with significant financial resources.

The young generation of the expat community in Israel can enjoy the fantastic campus of the American International School based some 20 km north of TLV. Two excellent French schools are available as well.

During after school activities, children have a large choice of different activities (sport, art, etc.) Distances between activity venues are short and – contrary to what is thought – there is no problem for older children to go by themselves to their friends and neighbors or simply to ride their bicycles.

The main issue for any expat family is finding the right accommodation in Israel. Expats with the right budget (not necessarily always

that high) can live in fantastic locations such as north Tel-Aviv, Kfar Shmariahu and Herzlia Pituach in close proximity to the beach (15 minutes' drive north of Tel-Aviv and home for most diplomats, expats and some of the wealthiest families in Israel).

The buildings in Central Tel Aviv are mostly old fashioned, built quickly to accommodate Jews fleeing from Europe so comfort elements like large rooms and balconies were not among the priorities at the time. Do not forget to stroll in the narrow streets of the 'White City', built in the Bauhaus style and protected by UNESCO.

Only newly-renovated or newly-built accommodation has balconies and master bedrooms with en suite bathrooms.

Due to heavy demand from younger couples, students, expatriates, staff of embassies and others for accommodation

within the Tel Aviv area, it has become one of the most expensive cities in the world. In many cases you get very little for what you pay; most of the older buildings have only two bedrooms.

The price range for one unfurnished, unrenovated bedroom apartment (about 60 sq m) could go between US\$ 1000 - US\$ 1500 per month, subject to the location of the apartment.

A similar sized apartment, nicely renovated or in a new building, will rent for US\$ 2,300-3,000 US\$ per month. The maintenance cost in these buildings could be much higher too; you may need to add US\$ 300 – US\$ 500 for every additional bedroom.

High demand may also make the landlords 'tougher' and lease negotiation is a challenge when closing a good deal for your expat client. It is hard to convince landlords to agree on the 'diplomatic clause' allowing early termination of the lease, although most landlords today are familiar with the term.

The situation in the neighboring city of Herzlia Pituach is similar, but it offers only self-standing villas suitable for families and all apartments (very small and only suitable for singles and couples) are located in the resort area of the marina.

In other major cities of Israel, including Jerusalem, Haifa and Beer Sheba, there is a different problem – demand is much lower, but rental availability of decent properties suitable for accommodating expats and their families is very limited.

In recent years, many modern tower blocks with excellent facilities (24/7 concierge, fitness room, swimming pool and high standards) are being built in different suburbs. Prices may become a little more affordable as they are located outside the city centre.

All in all, the foreign expat will find Israel as a very modern country, with a very high level of IT services, excellent communication facilities, modern banks, a large variety of food and fashion (with local and almost all the famous international brands/chains) and warm, friendly people – even if sometimes they might seem a bit noisy or rude! [www.crg-ltd.co.il](http://www.crg-ltd.co.il)



**ASCENDING:** The number of international companies moving to Tel Aviv is growing.