Destination Guide for Israel



Overview

Destination Guide Content

Destination Risk Levels

- Low Medical Risk for Israel
- Medium Travel Risk for Israel
- High Travel Risk for Border region with Lebanon

Northern areas within four miles (7km) of border with Lebanon: HIGH

There has been a sharp reduction in aerial attacks in northern Israel since the implementation of the Hizbullah-Israel ceasefire in December 2024. However, the ceasefire remains fragile, and a breakdown could result in a resumption of hostilities. Should this occur, areas within four miles (7km) of the border with Lebanon would be particularly susceptible to potential rocket and artillery fire.

Standing Travel Advice

- Defer all travel to areas of Israel within four miles (7km) of the borders with Lebanon, the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories) and Syria.
- Travel to all other areas of Israel can resume.
- Ensure you have full confidence in the security of your accommodation by selecting rooms within proximity to onsite air-raid shelters.
- Understand the immediate actions to take upon hearing air-raid warnings and remain aware of the location of the nearest air-raid shelter. The length of an air-raid siren represents the amount of time one has to enter a secure space. When in a secure space, remain there for at least ten minutes. If another air-raid warning is heard during this time, remain inside the secure space for a further ten minutes.
- Follow official directives, including any local emergency and evacuation procedures, movement restrictions, curfews and road closures
- Ensure you have access to verified information provided in a timely manner to enable tactical-level decision making. Stay aware of the prevailing security environment and maintain constant

- situational awareness.
- Avoid all gatherings due to the risk of violence.
- There is an underlying risk of terrorism. Minimise time spent in the vicinity of likely targets, such as religious gatherings, public transport, military and government premises and personnel and poorly secured and densely populated public areas.
- Exercise caution while driving as driving standards in the country are generally poor.
- Download the Israel Home Front Command mobile app.

Jerusalem

- Avoid public transport. If using public transport is unavoidable, business travellers should remain alert to their surroundings; when waiting for transport, they should stand behind any bollards or cement cubes present and away from individuals with overt displays of religious identity.
- Exercise caution in and around the Old City. Seek the latest security information prior to accessing the site and exercise caution when entering this area through the most high-profile access points such as Herod's, Jaffa and especially Lions and Damascus gates. We advise avoiding, wherever possible, visits to the Old City on Fridays and on religious holidays.
- Larger groups should consider using the services of a security consultant/experienced local guide for the duration of the visit.
- Exercise heightened vigilance in public areas around potential militant targets. These include religious sites, security force personnel and members of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, who may be specifically targeted.
- Travel to locations in East Jerusalem outside of the Old City, Sheikh Jarrah and French Hill neighbourhoods should be kept to a minimum. The Jabel Mukaber, Silwan and Abu Tor neighbourhoods, in addition to other locations such as Jewish settlements and areas adjacent to Salah Ed-Din Street should only be accessed after business travellers have ensured the situation in the area is calm.

For travel from Israel to the West Bank (Palestinian Territories)

- Exercise caution when transiting through border checkpoints between Israel and the West Bank due to the risk of violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian protesters. Treat the security forces with patience and respect.
- Ensure you have flexible travel plans as any security incident occurring in the vicinity of checkpoints with Israel in the West Bank can result in either the temporary closure of these crossings and/or significant delays.
- Carry your passport at all times for identification checks.
- Border crossing opening hours are liable to change during Jewish holidays. Ensure that
 checkpoints are operational prior to travel and allow additional time for security checks at border
 crossings during such periods. Further information on land crossing points can be found at the
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website.

Golan Heights

- Defer all travel to Israeli-occupied Golan Heights within High Risk areas.
- Travel in the vicinity of the demilitarised buffer zone should be for essential purposes only.
- Travel to all other areas of Golan Heights can resume.

- Mines and unexploded ordnance pose a risk in some rural areas. Be alert for signs indicating areas of danger.
- Follow all instructions issued by authorities and be prepared for temporary movement restrictions.

Active Alerts (5)

Advisory

18 March 2025 at 13:57

Monitor developments linked to resumption of Hamas-Israel hostilities, status of ongoing Hizbullah-Israel ceasefire (Revised)

Location: Israel, Palestinian Territories

Category: Conflict

Situation:

Monitor developments linked to the resumption of Hamas-Israel hostilities in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories) and the ongoing Hizbullah-Israel ceasefire in Lebanon. The Israeli army earlier on 18 March carried out major air and artillery strikes across Gaza. We continue to advise against all travel to Gaza and areas of Israel within four miles (7km) of its borders with Lebanon, Gaza and Syria. The future of the Hamas-Israel ceasefire agreement is now uncertain, while the Hizbullah-Israel truce remains fragile. All travel to Israel and the Palestinian Territories should be subject to a comprehensive review.

Advice:

Inbound business travellers

- Defer all travel to Gaza and areas of Israel within four miles (7km) of the borders with Lebanon, Gaza and Syria.
- Defer all travel to Jenin, Tulkarm and Tubas governorates in the West Bank (Palestinian Territories).
- Normal travel to all other areas of Israel and Bethlehem, Jericho and Ramallah governorates in the West Bank can resume.
- Essential travel can resume to the rest of the West Bank.

In-country workforce

Israel and the West Bank

- Workforce in Israel and the West Bank should strictly adhere to the below precautions:
 - Ensure you have full confidence in the security of your accommodation by selecting rooms within proximity to onsite air-raid shelters.

- Understand the immediate actions to take upon hearing air-raid warnings and remain aware of the location of the nearest air-raid shelter. The length of an air-raid siren represents the amount of time one has to enter a secure space. When in a secure space, remain there for at least ten minutes. If another air-raid warning is heard during this time, remain inside the secure space for a further ten minutes.
- Follow official directives, including any local emergency and evacuation procedures, movement restrictions, curfews and road closures.
- Ensure you have access to verified information provided in a timely manner to enable tactical-level decision making.
- Understand the situation remains fluid and can escalate at short notice, requiring swift action.
- Adhere to your organisation's preparedness protocols in the event of escalation necessitating evacuation or internal relocation.
- Download the Israel Home Front Command mobile app.

Gaza

- If safe, those ordered to evacuate to established so-called humanitarian zones by the Israeli army, including in Khan Younis (Palestinian Territories), can do so. Civilians can also return to northern Gaza as outlined in the ceasefire agreement.
- Do not approach Gaza's borders with Egypt and Israel. The Israeli army has warned people not to approach the security perimeters to the east and south of Rafah (Palestinian Territories).
- Those seeking to cross to Egypt via the Rafah crossing should not attempt to do so until the Egyptian and Israeli authorities allow it.
- Shelter in place if you are in immediate proximity to ongoing armed clashes, air raids or artillery shelling, and prepare to move as soon as feasible.
- If unable to relocate, prepare to shelter in place for extended periods of time with limited potential for support. However, remaining in areas under siege for potentially weeks or months will pose serious risks due to the increased potential of impact by military targeting, infrastructure damage, shortages of essential goods and the suspension of public services.
- Monitor and follow further official announcements. Remain informed of the latest updates.

More Detail:

Impact in Israel

Rocket attacks on Israel and air-raid sirens had significantly reduced in frequency during the ceasefire to date. However, the Yemen-based Houthi rebel group has threatened retaliation against Israel if the latter violates the ceasefire with Hamas. Earlier on 18 March, the Israeli Defense Forces said that it intercepted a missile outside Israeli territory, which was reportedly fired from Yemen by the Houthis. Iran and its allied militant groups in Iraq have supported the truce but also warned they would attack Israel if violations were reported.

The risk of militant attacks in Israel remains high and is likely to increase following the resumption of airstrikes in Gaza. Late on 20 February, bombs detonated on three empty buses in Tel Aviv district (Israel), causing no casualties. The incident prompted a security operation, during which undetonated bombs were discovered on two other buses.

Meanwhile, anti-government protests in Israel will persist while Israeli hostages continue to be held by Hamas in Gaza. Such demonstrations (see related alert) have been held regularly for more than a year in protest at the government's handling of the Gaza conflict and hostage negotiations.

Further planned resumptions of commercial flights will occur in tandem with the level of observance of the ceasefires.

Impact in West Bank

The ceasefires have allowed the Israeli army to refocus its resources on operations in the West Bank. On 21 January it launched the so-called 'Iron Wall' operation against alleged militants in Jenin, Tubas and Tulkarm (all West Bank). Further such activity in the West Bank is likely in the coming weeks and months.

A high risk of Palestinian militant attacks persists in the West Bank, particularly around checkpoints and settlements. Pro-Palestinian demonstrations linked to the Hamas-Israel ceasefire are also likely.

Impact in Gaza

On 18 March, Israeli airstrikes targeted Hamas-linked sites across Gaza. Explosions and structural damage were reported in Abasan al-Kabira, Al-Mawasi (both Khan Younis), Bureij, Nuseirat (both Deir al-Balah) and Zeitoun (Gaza City). Meanwhile, Israeli artillery shelling was reported across northern Gaza and near Rafah City in the south. More than **400** people have reportedly been killed and hundreds of others injured thus far. The casualty figures are expected to rise. The airstrikes followed Israeli cuts to power supply and aid in Gaza.

Context

Hamas-Israel ceasefire

Israel claimed it had mounted the air and artillery strikes in response to Hamas' refusal to release the 59 living and deceased Israeli hostages it holds. However, Hamas is demanding that Israel engages in talks to permanently end the conflict. The group has strongly condemned the latest Israeli military action and holds Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu responsible.

As such, the ceasefire agreement has not advanced beyond the first phase, which commenced on 19 January. Following the expiry of the first phase on 1 March, Israel proposed extending it. Meanwhile, Hamas and Israel threatened each other with a resumption of conflict, alleging failure to meet conditions of the truce.

The initial three-phase ceasefire was implemented on 19 January. A total of 33 living and eight deceased Israeli hostages were handed over to Israel during the first phase. In exchange, at least 1,900 Palestinian prisoners were released by Israel.

Hizbullah-Israel ceasefire

The ceasefire agreement implemented on 27 November 2024 called for Hizbullah fighters to evacuate the area south of the Litani river in southern Lebanon. They were to move north, with Lebanese troops taking their place. Meanwhile, Israeli forces were required to completely withdraw from southern Lebanon.

However, the Israeli army has maintained a presence at five posts in southern Lebanon beyond the latest agreed implementation date of 18 February. Hizbullah said it would not accept another extension and threatened Israel for remaining in Lebanon beyond the agreed date. Since 27 November 2024, local sources in Lebanon have reported more than 800 Israeli ground and air attacks in violation of the ceasefire, inflicting more than 60 casualties.

Assessment:

Following the 18 March airstrikes in Gaza, the security environment, particularly in areas near the Israel-Gaza border, will be volatile **over the coming weeks**. Hamas has warned of repercussions, including with regard to the remaining hostages' fate. Meanwhile, Israel has said it will increase its use of military force in Gaza in the coming weeks if conditions for the hostages' release are not agreed.

Despite the Hizbullah-Israel ceasefire holding, the continued presence of Israeli forces in southern Lebanon makes the agreement fragile. A definitive breakdown in the Hamas-Israel ceasefire agreement on both sides, increased attacks on Israel and the associated impact on airspace and airports would raise the security risks substantially. However, due to Hamas and Hizbullah's diminished capabilities, the likelihood of a large-scale escalation prompted by either group is low. Hizbullah is likely to respond to any major Israeli violation of ceasefires by conducting sporadic attacks.

Israel maintains it will use force to prevent Hizbullah operatives from re-entering southern Lebanon. Tensions will persist over the safety of residents in northern Israel, as this is an outstanding war goal and major security concern for Israel.

The status of the Hamas-Israel ceasefire agreement, particularly the return of hostages, remains uncertain. Neither Israel nor Hamas have definitively abandoned the deal. However, Hamas appears to view the latest airstrikes as signalling Israel's withdrawal from the ceasefire. Consequently, this ongoing volatility is likely to increase regional tensions in the coming weeks.

Escalatory triggers inside Israel

- The resumption of large-scale rocket fire from Hizbullah into Israel's territory.
- A further large-scale attack by Iran on Israel, either directly or through proxies.

- The large-scale withdrawal and evacuation of foreign diplomatic staff in Israel.
- Several high-impact, simultaneous or co-ordinated militant attacks in Israeli population centres.
- Ground-level incursions by fighters across Lebanese, Syrian, Gaza or West Bank demarcation lines.
- A prolonged closure of Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV, Israel) is reported simultaneously with the closure of Israel's borders with Jordan.

Notice

18 March 2025 at 06:27

Expect, avoid further anti-government protests in coming weeks

Location: Israel

Category: Protest/Rally, Road disruption

Situation:

Expect disruption around further anti-government protests **in the coming weeks** and avoid such events as a precaution. Following the resumption of Hamas-Israel hostilities in the Gaza Strip early on 18 March, Israeli hostage families have called for protesters to gather in Jerusalem at Yaka Square. We expect protests related to Israeli hostages to intensify **over the coming days**. The police have previously used water cannon to disperse related gatherings. Any ensuing disturbances would pose incidental risks to bystanders.

Advice:

- Liaise with local contacts for information on any related protests in your area and avoid them as a precaution. The risk of unrest increases in the evening hours.
- Expect localised traffic disruption around demonstrations. If travelling near one, ensure routes are clear prior to setting out and allow additional time for journeys.
- Expect a heightened police presence around protests and follow all official directives. Leave an area at the first sign of unrest.
- Monitor our Israel alerts for updates.

More Detail:

Details of known protests are listed below (local time). The list is not exhaustive, and additional gatherings are possible in other locations:

18 March

• **Tel Aviv** (Tel Aviv district): From **19.30** at Habima Square and from **20.00** at 'Hostages Square' (outside the Tel Aviv Museum of Art).

19 March

• **Jerusalem**: From **08.00** at Motza towards the government quarter. Participants will then march to the Prime Minister's residence and set up tent camps.

22 March

• **Tel Aviv**: From **20.00** at Hostages Square.

Impact

Demonstrators have previously blocked traffic on major roads, including the Ayalon Highway and Highway 2. Other frequent protest locations have included public squares, plazas and government buildings, as well as the prime minister's official and private residences in Jerusalem and Caesarea (Haifa district).

The following list of common protest locations is not exhaustive:

Haifa

- Haifa Auditorium
- Horev Center

Jerusalem

- Chords Bridge
- Denya Square
- Knesset
- The Rehavia neighbourhood, including Beit NaHassi, Beit Aghion and Azza Street
 35

Tel Aviv

- Ayalon Highway
- 'Democracy Square'
- Dizengoff Square
- HaBima Square
- 'Hostages Square'
- Kaplan Street
- Menora Mivtachim Arena

Context

On 16 March, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced his intention to dismiss the Israel Security Agency (also known as Shin Bet) chief Ronen Bar, sparking calls for protests. Opposition leaders have said that they will petition against the decision in the High Court of Justice. Large-scale protests previously erupted in response to the dismissal of former defense minister Yoav Gallant on 5 November 2024.

Meanwhile, Israel resumed airstrikes in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories) on 18 March, marking a resumption of hostilities between Hamas and Israel. This comes after negotiations to extend the 19 January Hamas-Israel ceasefire were stalled due to disagreements over the conditions for the release of Israeli hostages (*see related alert*). Anti-government protests associated with the Israeli government's handling of hostage releases following the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel have been ongoing for over a year.

Protests often take place every Saturday night in Tel Aviv and other urban centres. They have featured calls for Netanyahu's resignation and the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza. Large nationwide protests and general strikes have also previously been organised in response to announcements of hostages' deaths.

Notice

17 March 2025 at 08:22

Monitor regional developments amid US operations in Yemen, sanctions targeting Iran

Location: Mid East & N Africa

Category: Conflict, Diplomatic issue

Situation:

Monitor developments amid heightened regional tensions linked to the US operations in Yemen. At least 53 people were killed in a series of airstrikes on Houthi-linked targets. The US vowed to continue military operations in Yemen until Houthis' attacks on shipping lanes passing through the Red Sea cease. This comes as the US pursues a 'maximum pressure' campaign against Iran to prevent it from developing its nuclear capabilities and sponsoring its allies across the region. On 9 March, the US decided not to renew a sanctions waiver allowing Iraq to purchase electricity from Iran – a move that will have repercussions for both countries.

Advice:

- Closely monitor regional developments. Ensure that escalation plans are updated and rapidly implementable.
- Israeli and US nationals present in countries across the Middle East and North Africa should exercise caution and maintain a low profile amid heightened tensions.
- Minimise time spent in the vicinity of all diplomatic missions across the region, particularly those of Israel and US, as a precaution. Refrain from discussing the situation.
- Liaise with local contacts to stay abreast of potential demonstrations planned in your vicinity. Avoid all gatherings as a precaution.
- Remain informed of the latest developments via verified sources, including International SOS alerts, diplomatic missions and local contacts. Do not act upon

unverified information.

More Detail:

Impact

The airstrikes on 15 March targeted areas under Houthi control, including the capital Sanaa. US officials stated that several Houthi senior figures were among those killed. The group has not confirmed this yet. In retaliation, Houthis launched an attack targeting the US aircraft carrier and accompanying warships in the Red Sea and vowed to continue target US vessels in the area.

Amid the escalation of tensions, the US has demanded for Houthis to stop their attacks against vessels passing through the Red Sea and for Iran to cease its support for the group. This comes as the US escalates pressure against Iran. The US's decision not to extend the waiver puts additional pressure on Iranian economy already battered by sanctions, as well as on Iraq's electricity sector. Iraq is still able to purchase Iranian gas used by most of Iraqi power plants. Over 40% of Iraq's electricity is generated by the gas imported from Iran.

Outlook

Regional tensions will remain heightened in the coming weeks between the US, Iran and its regional allies. Further airstrikes targeting Houthi positions and interests are expected across Yemen. Meanwhile, maritime disruption of the shipping lanes passing through Bab al Mandeb Strait is expected to persist, as Houthis have indicated their intent to continue their attacks targeting US and Israel-linked vessels there.

Houthi operations remain linked not only to military operations against their targets, but also to the developments around the Israel-Hamas ceasefire. If tensions continue to escalate, Houthis may resume attacks directly against Israel likely prompting retaliatory airstrikes.

Despite heightened tensions, the risk of Houthis attempting to strike US and allied interests elsewhere, for instance neighboring Saudi Arabia or the UAE, remains low. Houthis have in the past issued warnings for both countries against them supporting any military operations that would target group's interests. Nevertheless, Houthis have refrained from targeting either throughout the months-long hostilities and maritime disruption in the Red Sea.

These developments will continue to evolve against the background of broader tensions between US, Israel and Iran. We expect the US to continue pursue the 'maximum pressure' campaign against Iran to undermine the country's ability to develop nuclear capabilities and fund its regional allies. A knock-on effect from the associated tensions will be felt across the rest of the region. Tensions will escalate in Iraq if the US decides to restrict Iranian gas imports to the country.

Context

There has been a lull in Houthi operations following the introduction of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire in January. However, the group has threatened to resume attacks against Israeli vessels in response to suspension of aid delivery into the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories). This came amid a stalemate in Israel-Hamas peace talks.

Against the background of these developments, US-Iran tensions, including those linked to Iranian nuclear program, have persisted. The US in February introduced additional sanctions targeting Iran's energy exports, the main source of income for the country. Also in February, Iranian flights to/from Lebanon have been banned to prevent Iran from sending financial aid to Hizbullah.

Advisory

11 March 2025 at 20:44

Monitor developments amid Hamas-Israel, Hizbullah-Israel ceasefires

Location: Israel, Palestinian Territories

Category: Conflict

Situation:

Monitor developments amid the Hamas-Israel ceasefire in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories) and the Hizbullah-Israel ceasefire in Lebanon. Defer all travel to Gaza and areas of Israel within four miles (7km) of the borders with Lebanon, Gaza and Syria. The fragility of both agreements highlights the fluidity of the situation as it is liable to change at short notice. All travel to Israel and the Palestinian Territories should be subject to a comprehensive review.

Advice:

Inbound business travellers

- Defer all travel to Gaza and areas of Israel within four miles (7km) of the borders with Lebanon, Gaza and Syria.
- Defer all travel to Jenin, Tulkarm and Tubas governorates in the West Bank (Palestinian Territories).
- Normal travel to all other areas of Israel and Bethlehem, Jericho and Ramallah governorates in the West Bank can resume.
- Essential travel can resume to the rest of the West Bank.

*In-country workforce*Israel and the West Bank

- Workforce in Israel and the West Bank should strictly adhere to the below precautions:
 - Ensure you have full confidence in the security of your accommodation by selecting rooms within proximity to onsite air-raid shelters.
 - Understand the immediate actions to take upon hearing air-raid warnings and remain aware of the location of the nearest air-raid shelter. The length of an air-raid siren represents the amount of time one has to enter a secure space. When in a secure space, remain there for at least ten minutes. If

- another air-raid warning is heard during this time, remain inside the secure space for a further ten minutes.
- Follow official directives, including any local emergency and evacuation procedures, movement restrictions, curfews and road closures.
- Ensure you have access to verified information provided in a timely manner to enable tactical-level decision making.
- Understand the situation remains fluid and can escalate at short notice, requiring swift action.
- Adhere to your organisation's preparedness protocols in the event of escalation necessitating evacuation or internal relocation.
- Download the Israel Home Front Command mobile app.

Gaza

- If safe, those ordered to evacuate to established so-called humanitarian zones by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), including in Khan Younis (Palestinian Territories), can do so. Civilians can also return to northern Gaza as outlined in the ceasefire agreement.
- Do not approach Gaza's borders with Egypt and Israel. The IDF has warned people not to approach the security perimeters to the east and south of Rafah (Palestinian Territories).
- Those seeking to cross to Egypt via the Rafah crossing should not attempt to do so until the Egyptian and Israeli authorities allow it.
- Shelter in place if you are in immediate proximity to ongoing armed clashes, air raids or artillery shelling, and prepare to move as soon as feasible.
- If unable to relocate, prepare to shelter in place for extended periods of time with limited potential for support. However, remaining in areas under siege for potentially weeks or months will pose serious risks due to the increased potential of impact by military targeting, infrastructure damage, shortages of essential goods and the suspension of public services.
- Monitor and follow further official announcements. Remain informed of the latest updates.

More Detail:

Impact in Israel

Rocket attacks and air-raid sirens have significantly reduced during the ceasefire implementations. The Yemen-based Houthi rebel group has threatened retaliation against Israel if they violate the Hamas-Israel ceasefire. Iran and its allied militant groups in Iraq have supported the ceasefire but also threatened Israel if violations are reported.

The risk of domestic attacks remains high within Israel even during a successful ceasefire. Late on 20 February, three buses exploded in Tel Aviv district. The buses were empty at the time, and no one was injured. The incident prompted a security operation that uncovered undetonated bombs on two other buses. Additionally, antigovernment protests in Israel will continue throughout the hostage-release process. These protests have been held regularly for over a year due to public dissatisfaction with the Israeli government's handling of the conflict in Gaza and hostage negotiations. Further planned resumptions of commercial flights will occur in tandem with the level of observance of the ceasefires.

Impact in West Bank

The ceasefires have allowed the IDF to refocus its resources on security operations in the West Bank. As a result, they launched the so-called Iron Wall operation against alleged militants across Jenin, Tubas and Tulkarm (all the West Bank) on 21 January following the implementation of the Hamas-Israel ceasefire. Further IDF operations against militants in the West Bank are likely amid the ceasefires.

A high risk of domestic attacks remains in the West Bank, particularly around checkpoints and settlements. Pro-Palestinian demonstrations linked to the Hamas-Israel ceasefire are also likely.

Impact in Gaza

Infrastructure in Gaza was extremely damaged and will require extensive rebuilding efforts. As per the first phase agreement of the Hamas-Israel ceasefire, more than 300,000 people have travelled to northern Gaza during the ceasefire, and aid trucks have entered through Gaza-Egypt corridors. Any violations on either side could prompt a breakdown of the ceasefire and a return to conflict.

Context

Hamas-Israel ceasefire

The three-phase ceasefire was implemented on 19 January. A total of 25 Israeli hostages and eight bodies were released during the first phase. In exchange, at least 1,900 Palestinian prisoners were released. The IDF withdrew from the eastern area of the Netzarim Corridor bisecting Gaza from east to west on 9 February. While the IDF is also required to gradually withdraw from populated areas of Gaza, it will maintain a presence in the so-called Philadelphi Corridor (Gaza-Egypt border) and a buffer zone along the Gaza-Israel border.

Israel has proposed extending the first phase following its expiry on 1 March in a bid to release the remaining 59 hostages and bodies. Israel has since turned off electricity and blocked all aid into Gaza until Hamas agrees on the conditions. Mediators have consistently attempted to assist with mitigating disagreements, while both Hamas and Israel have threatened one another with a resumption of conflict if conditions are not met.

On 4 February, US president Donald Trump announced the US would take ownership of Gaza and relocate Palestinian locals. This was met with heavy criticism from Hamas, Hizbullah and other state and non-state actors. The Arab League announced a counter plan to Trump's announcement during a summit in Cairo, outlining emergency relief, rebuilding infrastructure and long-term economic development in Gaza, without relocating Palestinians.

Hizbullah-Israel ceasefire

The ceasefire agreement implemented on 27 November 2024 aimed to see Hizbullah fighters are to evacuate the area south of the Litani river in southern Lebanon and move north, with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) taking their place. The Israeli forces were also required to completely withdraw from southern Lebanon.

The original deadline for these conditions was 26 January and was extended to 18 February. Israeli forces have since announced that they will maintain their presence at five posts in southern Lebanon past the ceasefire expiry date. Hizbullah has stated that they will not accept another extension and have threatened Israel for remaining in Lebanon past the agreed date. Since 27 November 2024, local sources in Lebanon have reported more than 800 Israeli ground and air attacks in violation of the ceasefire, with more than 60 casualties.

Assessment:

The security environment will remain extremely fragile **over the coming months** as the Hamas-Israel and Hizbullah-Israel ceasefires remain implemented. A political breakdown of truces, increased attacks on Israel and associated impacts on airspace and airports would raise the security risks substantially.

However, due to Hamas and Hizbullah's diminished capabilities, the likelihood of a large-scale escalation prompted by either group is low. Hizbullah is likely to respond to any major Israeli violation of ceasefires by conducting sporadic attacks.

Israel maintains it will use force to prevent Hizbullah operatives from re-entering southern Lebanon. Tensions will persist over the safety of residents in northern Israel, as this is an outstanding war goal and major security concern for Israel.

If the ceasefires continue and all agreements are successfully implemented, regional tensions will be significantly reduced.

Escalatory triggers inside Israel

- The resumption of large-scale rocket fire from Hizbullah into Israel's territory.
- A further large-scale attack by Iran on Israel, either directly or through proxies.
- The large-scale withdrawal and evacuation of foreign diplomatic staff in Israel.
- Several high-impact, simultaneous or co-ordinated militant attacks in Israeli population centres.
- Ground-level incursions by fighters across Lebanese, Syrian, Gaza or West Bank demarcation lines.
- A prolonged closure of Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV, Israel) is reported simultaneously with the closure of Israeli borders with Jordan.

Expect disruption, respect cultural sensitivities during Islamic holy month of Ramadan (Revised)

Location: Worldwide Travel

Category: Religious event

Situation:

Expect disruption and respect cultural sensitivities during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan **until 29 March** (dates can vary slightly between countries and branches of Islam). Large public gatherings will take place near religious sites during this period. Exercise vigilance as there is an increased risk of road accidents, opportunistic crime and Islamist extremist attacks. Account for reduced working hours introduced by local public and private businesses during Ramadan. The holy month will be followed by Eidal-Fitr public holiday which marks the end of Ramadan.

Advice:

- Be respectful of religious and cultural practices. Refrain from eating, drinking or smoking outside or in public in daylight hours during the month of Ramadan.
- Prepare for difficulties associated with securing appointments as business hours are shortened during Ramadan. Reconfirm all meetings prior to setting out.
- Adopt extra caution while undertaking road travel during Ramadan, particularly during the evening rush hour before Iftar (the fast-breaking evening meal). Ensure that you can communicate with your local and international support network in the event of an accident. Be patient and respectful during any interactions with the security forces.
- Remain vigilant near potential targets for crime and/or militant attacks. These include crowded public spaces, religious buildings, popular tourist sites, symbolic foreign interests and government and security force personnel and facilities.
- This advice is not exhaustive. The nature of observance, cultural sensitivities and penalties for consuming food and beverages in public during Ramadan differs from country to country. Contact your nearest Assistance Centre for country- and profile-specific advice prior to travel.

More Detail:

Impact

Road traffic accidents typically increase during Ramadan due to exhaustion caused by fasting. As such, there is a need to exercise additional caution during road travel. Business hours are shortened during Ramadan to various extents depending on the country. Non-Muslims are also generally expected to refrain from eating, drinking, smoking and chewing gum in public during daylight hours.

Expect heightened security, such as vehicle checks and the deployment of additional security force personnel around major transport hubs, religious sites and government buildings.

Outlook

Developments in Gaza (Palestinian Territories) will continue to drive regional tensions. Associated pro-Palestinian demonstrations may take place in some countries across the region, including near US and Israeli diplomatic interests.

On 27 February, the US embassy in Jerusalem stated it is prohibiting its workforce and family members from entering the Old City on Fridays during Ramadan. It also warned US citizens to take enhanced precautions during this period. Israel and other countries may impose further travel restrictions and warnings in other areas of Israel and the West Bank (Palestinian Territories).

Israel announced they will be implementing safety restrictions at the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Security incidents over restrictions on access have occurred during Ramadan in previous years and have resulted in clashes. Any security incidents or operations would stoke already heightened regional tensions.

Islamist extremist groups, such as Islamic State (IS), have traditionally increased the frequency and intensity of their operations around the end of Ramadan. The risk of such attacks is higher in countries such as Iraq and Syria where IS maintains an active presence. The security forces in these countries may lack capabilities in certain areas, creating security gaps that IS may exploit.

Context

The dates of Eid-al-Fitr celebrations depend on when Ramadan ends and could last until either **1** or **2 April**.

Destination Guide for Israel



Before You Travel

Destination Guide Content

Visa Requirements

IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

British

Passport Required Yes

Visa Required No

Return Ticket Required Yes

Australian

Passport Required Yes

Visa Required No

Return Ticket Required Yes

Canadian

Passport Required Yes

Visa Required No

Return Ticket Required Yes

USA

Passport Required Yes

Visa Required No

Return Ticket Required Yes

Visas

Starting from 1 January 2025, visitors from visa-exempt countries are required to obtain an ETA-IL (Electronic Travel Authorization) to enter the state of Israel. This is valid for two years and allows business travellers and foreign nationals to stay for up to 90 days per visit.

Eligibility for ETA-IL can be checked here.

Nationals of countries mentioned in the chart above do not require visas for stays of up to 90 days. All other foreign nationals can check the government website to see if their nationality is eligible for visa-free travel. Immigration officials issue restricted entry visas that permit travel either only to the Palestinian Territories or only to Israel and Jerusalem. This means that business travellers with a so-called Palestinian Territories-only visa who wish to cross into Israel after visiting the West Bank (Palestinian Territories) will be required to exit and then re-enter Israel to seek a so-called Israel-only visa. People should always remain polite and co-operative with the security forces. Arguing with officials is likely to be counter-productive.

Starting from 1 January 2025, visitors from visa-exempt countries are required to obtain an ETA-IL to enter Israel. An approved ETA-IL permits stays in Israel for up to 90 days per visit. Information on the scheme and eligibility can be found on the official website.

All those travelling to Israel must have a valid visa or ETA-IL approval before they start their journey. Obtaining an ETA-IL is liable to be faster and easier than obtaining a visa. Israeli citizens or holders of an Israeli identity number do not need to apply for an ETA-IL.

The ETA-IL system is currently open for application submissions as a pilot program. During the pilot phase, which will continue until January 2025, applications will be voluntary and exempt from fees. After this, a fee of 25 New Israeli Shekels (approximately \$7) will be charged.

Procedures

There is a two-lane custom transit system at Ben Gurion Airport and at border crossing points — the 'red' channel is for passengers with goods that need to be declared and the 'green' channel is for those who do not need to make any declarations. Security checks involve intensive questioning and at times complete baggage searches. If possible, people should carry a letter in Hebrew written by a senior member of their company management in Israel explaining that the traveller is a known and trusted member of the company. The letter should also contain a local phone number where the authorities can directly contact an Israeli national to answer any queries. People can request that the authorities not seize their mobile phone while it is unlocked. They should ask that the phone be inspected via the X-ray machine and mention that they are satisfied if it is examined in their presence. Laptops and other electronic devices can be taken for inspection and it is therefore advisable to ensure that sensitive documents be removed from computers. People whose passports show visas for Iran and some Arab states will experience increased attention, going from additional questioning to intense scrutiny in the case of Iran, but such visa stamps will not affect entry to the country. Anecdotal evidence suggests people perceived to be of Arab or Muslim descent may be questioned for longer periods of time than other visitors. People have reported being subjected to lengthy questioning and physical searches, as well as being denied consular assistance and access to lawyers.

Entry/Exit Requirements

Entry/Exit requirements

Business travellers must possess a passport valid for at least six months beyond the intended date of departure, along with an onward or return ticket and proof of sufficient funds. Security officials at Ben Gurion Airport (TLV) may inspect laptop computers and other electronic devices. They are also allowed to request access to people's email accounts and deny them entry if the individual refuses. There are no restrictions on the import and export of currency. Amounts of more than 50,000 New Israeli Shekels (NIS) (approx. \$13,142) or more when entering or exiting Israel by air and NIS12,000 (\$3,155) if entering or exiting by land are required to be declared.

People who have publicly called for boycotting Israel or any area under its control may be denied visas, residence permits or entry into the country.

An effective approach to mitigate inconvenience during check-in procedures and security screening is to arrange an escort on arrival and departure, which can be done via logistics providers at Ben Gurion Airport. This usually involves an escort from the plane to a taxi or hotel, depending on the level of service. People leaving the country are advised to arrive at the airport at least three hours before departure.

Some Arab countries, such as Lebanon or Yemen, will deny entry to people with an Israeli visa in their passport or other evidence of travel to Israel, such as stamps from Jordanian or Egyptian border posts. Israeli immigration authorities no longer stamp passports at Ben Gurion Airport. Instead, separate 'stay' and 'exit' permits are issued at arrival and departure. Overland travellers who do not wish to have an Israeli visa stamped in their passport can request the visa on a separate piece of paper, though immigration officials sometimes fail to co-operate with such requests. People who visit both Israel and Arab countries frequently may find it easier to have two passports.

Cultural Tips

CULTURAL ISSUES AND ETIQUETTE

- Avoid discussing topics of politics and religion.
- Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jewish communities tend to be socially conservative. Some may abstain from physical contact with members of the opposite sex, including handshakes. If your counterpart appears religous it is advisable not to extend your hand for a handshake if you are unsure of their acceptance.
- Do not photograph military or police installations or personnel. Visitors who do so may have cameras confiscated and be harassed by the authorities. If in doubt, avoid photography.
- Public transport, shopping areas, restaurants and other businesses across the country may close down for the Jewish weekly holiday of Sabbath (Shabbat), which runs from Friday afternoon to Saturday evening.
- During Shabbat, in predominantly Orthodox areas (especially in Jerusalem), visitors should avoid using any electronic device (mobile phone, computer etc) on the streets or in the presence of Jewish Orthodox people as they might react aggressively.
- On Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Day), which falls in late April or early May, a siren is blown for two minutes for all pedestrians and vehicles to halt

- and observe silence in reverence to the victims of the Holocaust. A siren is also blown for two minutes on Yom Hazikaron (Memorial Day), which also falls in late April or early May, to commemorate soldiers killed in conflicts and victims of political violence.
- There are no legal restrictions for LGBTQ+ individuals. Societal attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community are highly varied; violence is rare but may be more likely in rural than in urban settings. Although coastal cities are very tolerant and there is an active and supportive LGBTQ+ community, especially in Tel Aviv, attitudes towards members of the LGBTQ+ community vary. Jerusalem and areas associated with the ultra-Orthodox community, such as Bnei Brak, are generally more culturally conservative.

Getting There

METHOD OF ARRIVAL

Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV), Central district), which serves the cities of Tel Aviv (Tel Aviv district) and Jerusalem (Jerusalem district), is the country's main airport. Ramon International Airport (ETM), near Eilat (both Southern district), is the second busiest airport in the country.

Airlines practice variable security standards. You may wish to consult the European Commission's website for a list of airlines banned within the EU and the US Federal Aviation Administration's website for a database of aviation accidents and statistics.

By land

There are several road crossings with Jordan: the <u>Allenby Bridge</u> near Jericho (also known as the King Hussein Bridge); the <u>Jordan River</u> (Sheikh Hussein Bridge) crossing in the north near Beit Shean and the <u>Yitzhak Rabin</u> Border Terminal near Eilat. Foreign nationals should avoid the Allenby Bridge crossing at times of heightened tensions and use one of the two alternative crossings. Although road travel to and from Egypt is possible via the <u>Menachem Begin</u> Border Terminal near Eilat, air travel is more convenient for business travellers. These border crossings remain closed over Yom Kippur and other major Jewish holidays. Further information on land crossing points can be found on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs <u>website</u>.

By sea

Haifa (Haifa district) is the major port and caters to international cruise traffic. Private yachts can use marinas in Tel Aviv and Ashdod (Southern district).

Procedures

There is a two-lane custom transit system at Ben Gurion Airport and at border crossing points — the 'red' channel is for passengers with goods that need to be declared and the 'green' channel is for those who do not need to make any declarations. Security checks involve intensive questioning and at times complete baggage searches. If possible, people should carry a letter in Hebrew written by a senior member of their company management in Israel explaining that the traveller is a known and trusted member of the company. The letter should also contain a local phone number where the authorities can directly contact an Israeli national to answer any queries. People can request that the authorities not seize their mobile phone while it is unlocked. They should ask that the phone be inspected via the X-ray machine and mention that they are satisfied if it is examined in their presence. Laptops and other electronic devices can be taken for inspection and it is therefore advisable to ensure that sensitive documents be removed from computers. People whose passports show visas for Iran and some Arab states will experience increased attention, going from additional questioning to intense scrutiny in the case of Iran, but such visa stamps will not affect entry to the country. Anecdotal evidence suggests people perceived to be of Arab or Muslim descent may be questioned for longer periods of time than other visitors. People have reported being subjected to lengthy questioning and physical searches, as well as being denied consular assistance and access to lawyers.

Getting Around

BY AIR

The short distances involved in travelling around Israel mean that it is generally quicker to travel by road unless visiting the Southern Negev (Eilat), when it may be faster to fly. El Al Israel Airlines is the national carrier. Eilat (ETH) and Ovda (VDA) airports in Eilat, and Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV) in Tel Aviv are the country's main air hubs.

BY ROAD

Exercise caution while driving as driving standards are poor. Those intending to self-drive must have a valid driving licence; an international driving permit is not required. Traffic drives on the right. Israeli roads and highways are generally well maintained but congested, particularly in urban areas. Road speed radars are installed on many roads and fines for speeding are high. Road signage is posted on major roads in three languages: Hebrew, Arabic and English. Use of mobile phones while driving is illegal. Wearing seat belts is compulsory for all occupants.

It is mandatory for all vehicles to drive with their headlights switched on at all times on intercity highways from 1 November until 31 March. It is also mandatory for all drivers to carry fluorescent vests with them at all times and they are required to wear these vests whenever they step out of their vehicles to make repairs or change tyres.

There have been a number of security incidents along Route 443 - known as Ma'ale Beit Horon (Bethoron Ascent) - which connects Tel Aviv and Jerusalem through the Palestinian Territories. These include stabbings, shootings, vehicle-ramming attacks and reports of stones and Molotov cocktails being thrown at cars. Exercise caution when using this route and other routes passing through the West Bank, or use Route 1 instead.

Minefields are common in areas bordering Lebanon and Syria. Checkpoints are common for travel to the Palestinian Territories and vehicles need to comply with orders to stop. Procedures at checkpoints with the Palestinian Territories and border crossing terminals in areas near Jordan and Egypt are subject to frequent changes.

BY TAXI

Taxi services are generally reliable and can be flagged down on the road or booked via telephone. All registered taxis have meters, but taxi drivers may not always use them. Make sure that the meters are on or agree to a fixed rate before entering the vehicle.

Sheruts (shared taxis) are not suitable for business travellers as they do not drop people at specific locations and do not always adhere to road safety standards. The app-based ride-hailing service Gett is a comparatively suitable option.

BY TRAIN

The rail network is modern and extensive. Israel Railways operates regular services which connect major cities, including Afula, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Rail services are reliable and comfortable, though trains do not operate during Shabbat and major Jewish holidays. Palestinian groups have in the past sabotaged railway lines, though no passenger trains have been derailed and no significant attacks on trains have been reported.

BY OTHER MEANS

Buses are the most common mode of public transport in the country. Several companies offer local and long-distance services, with Egged being the largest operator. Long-distance buses operate between central bus stations in various cities. However, foreign nationals and business travellers are advised to hire a local driver and car for journeys within the country, whether within cities or for travel outside main urban centres. Moving buses have been targeted in stone-throwing or Molotov-cocktail attacks.

Most transport services stop operations from Friday afternoon to Saturday evening during the weekly Jewish holiday of Sabbath. Foreign nationals should constantly reassess transport options. Short-term business travellers and foreign nationals should avoid the use of public transport altogether during times of heightened communal tensions.

Business Women

BUSINESSWOMEN

There are a few specific security concerns for businesswomen. Female travellers should dress conservatively if passing through ultra-Orthodox Jewish areas. In Tel Aviv district, the main ultra-Orthodox area is the city of Bnei Brak. In Jerusalem, these are Mea Shearim and the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. Women should also dress conservatively at religious sites.

Working Week

WORKING WEEK

- Working week: Sunday to Thursday.
- Banking hours (varies depending on bank): 08.30-14.00, Sunday to Thursday and 16.00-18.00 on Mondays and Thursdays; on Fridays banks are open until 12.00.

• Office hours: 08.30-18.00, Sunday to Thursday.

Language & Money

LANGUAGE

Hebrew and Arabic are the official languages, while English and Russian are also widely spoken.

MONEY

The official currency is the New Israeli Shekel (NIS), which can be exchanged at airports on departure but is difficult to sell outside Israel.

Credit cards, such as Visa, MasterCard and American Express, are widely accepted in hotels, shops and restaurants. ATMs are widely available.

Tipping

TIPPING

It is customary to tip hotel staff such as bell-boys and concierges. At restaurants, customers are expected to tip about 10%-12% if the bill does not include a service charge. Taxi drivers are usually not tipped unless they help with carrying luggage.

Geography & Weather

GEOGRAPHY

Israel is located in the Middle East, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It is bordered by Lebanon in the north, Syria in the north-east, Jordan in the east, and Egypt in the south-west across the Negev. Israel is divided into six administrative units, also called districts or mehozot. These are Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and the Northern, Central and Southern districts. Tel Aviv is Israel's internationally recognised capital and most foreign embassies are located there, though most Israeli government buildings are located in Jerusalem, which Israel views as its capital. Eilat, Haifa, Beersheba and Ashdod are other major cities.

CLIMATE

Climate overview

- The country's northern and coastal areas have hot, dry summers and cool, rainy winters.
- The eastern and southern areas have an arid climate.
- October to early May is the rainy season, with rain peaking in the December-February period.
- Monitor the website of the Israel Meteorological Service for weather updates and warnings.

Flooding

- Heavy rain during the winter months (November-March) can cause flooding in some northern areas.
- Flash floods can occur in low-lying and coastal areas, particularly around the Judean Desert and Dead Sea.
- Flooding can cause road closures.

Earthquakes

- Israel is located in a seismically active zone.
- A majority of the earthquakes are minor and rarely cause any damage.

Bush and forest fires

- The country is vulnerable to bush and forest fires, some of which are started intentionally.
- Such fires usually occur between April and November, though incidents have also taken place outside of this period.
- Forest fires can affect residential areas, leading to road closures and evacuations of residents.

International Dialing & Power

DIALLING CODES

Country Code 972

IDD Prefix (International Direct Dialling) 00; 012 (Golden Lines); 013 (Barak LTD); or 014

NDD Prefix (National Direct Dialling) 0

COMMUNICATIONS

The telephone system in Israel is efficient. Mobile phone coverage is excellent; the main networks have roaming arrangements with providers in most other countries. The main mobile network providers are Pelephone, Cellcom, Partner, Hot Mobile, Golan Telecom and we4G. The Palestinian Jawwal and Ooreedoo can be used in Israel, while and Partner can be used in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories). Internet access is easily available. The postal service is slow but reliable.

Information Security

Israel has a relatively benign cybersecurity landscape as the local cyber-crime ecosystem lacks the capability to execute high-impact attacks on organisations. However, the authorities have recorded a steady increase in cyber-crimes in recent years. According to the Israel National Cyber Directorate's annual report, there was a 43% increase in cyber incident reports in 2023 as compared to 2022. Nonetheless, the overall majority are untargeted hacking incidents and fraud against private individuals. Non-native cybercriminal groups from the broader MENA region and Russia, however, have targeted Israeli organisations. Since 2012, the Butterfly hacker group undertook commercial espionage against companies in the country, while the Ukrainian-based Cobalt hacker group is believed to have targeted Israeli financial institutions. Business travellers working with local partners should exercise caution, follow standard precautions and ensure they are using upto-date anti-virus software.

Upon arrival to the country, laptops, mobile phones and data storage devices can be taken for inspection by the security forces at the airport or border crossing. It is advisable to remove all sensitive documents before travel. Members can request that the authorities do not seize their mobile phone while it is unlocked.

Surveillance and tracking activities by authorities remain a concern for pro-Palestinian activists. Although the 1979 Secret Monitoring legislation limits surveillance activities against individuals, Israeli security and law-enforcement agencies can be authorised to conduct secret monitoring on grounds of national security.

Advice

- Minimise the number of devices you bring into the country and avoid carrying sensitive data.
- Log out of any social media accounts or potentially sensitive apps prior to your arrival in the country. Avoid posting on social media when in-

- country or sharing details of your location with those who are not need-to-know.
- Keep devices on your person as much as possible. If unattended, ensure devices are powered down. If using hotel safes, secure them with a secondary device.
- Ensure anti-virus software is up to date prior to travel and conduct a thorough check of all devices post-trip
- Use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to protect communications and secure data. Always familiarise yourself with the legal status of any VPN or application in your destination country prior to travel.
- Use the 'forget network' setting upon your return if you connected to any public Wi-Fi networks while travelling.
- Obtain profile-specific advice taking into account your industry and position in the company.

ELECTRICITY

This is the most common plug type used:

Calendar

Holidays & Security Dates

2025

30 Apr - 01 May Yom Ha'atzmaut Independence Day

Public holiday. Localised traffic disruption nationwide due to related events.

2026

01 Jan New Year's Day

In many countries, if this holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, a public holiday is declared for the following Monday.

07 Jan Orthodox Christmas Day

21 Jan Tu B'Shevat

The day that marks the beginning of a "new year" for trees.

Destination Guide for Israel



Medical

Destination Guide Content

Medical Care

Excellent

Standard of Health Care

Israel has a high standard of medical care. International standard, tertiary-level care is available in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Most other cities have referral hospitals with all specialities available.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance 101 Fire service 102 Police 100

Contact International SOS for help with your medical situation. Contact us

Hospitals & Clinics

Hadassah University Medical Center, Ein Kerem

Category: Hospital

Address: Kalman Yaakov Man Street, Jerusalem, Jerusalem

Phone: 97226777111

Email: mhazmanot@hadassah.org.il

Rambam Medical Center

Category: Hospital

Address: 8 Aliya Second Street, Haifa, Haifa District

Phone: 97247772338

Email: d_shwartzman@rambam.health.gov.il

Soroka Medical Center

Category: Hospital

Address: Post Office Box 151 Rager Street, Beer Sheva

Phones: 97286400023,

97286400550

Email: madar@clalit.org.il

Sourasky - Tel Aviv Medical Center

Category: Hospital

Address: 6 Weizman Street, Tel Aviv

Phones: 97236973426,

97236974254

Emails: info@goralassist.com,

medtour@tlvmc.gov.il, ichilov-int@tlvmc.gov.il

Vaccinations

Hepatitis A

Many travel health professionals recommend hepatitis A vaccination for all travellers regardless of destination, especially those who are at higher risk (see US CDC), such as gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, people who use illicit drugs or those with liver disease.

Hepatitis B

Recommended for health care workers and anyone who may have a new sexual partner, share needles or get a tattoo or body piercing.

Many travel health professionals recommend hepatitis B vaccination for all travellers and international assignees, regardless of destination.

Typhoid fever

Recommended for adventurous and long-term travellers, especially those who will:

- Visit friends and relatives.
- Eat from local vendors or restaurants.
- Be exposed to conditions of poor sanitation.
- Visit smaller cities or rural areas.

Routine Vaccinations

Influenza

Influenza occurs in:

- Temperate southern hemisphere: April to September.
- Temperate northern hemisphere: November to March.
- Tropics: year-round.

Annual vaccination is recommended. Vaccination is especially important for people at higher risk of severe disease. People who are at higher risk for severe disease include:

- People over the age of 65.
- People with underlying health conditions.
- Pregnant women.

Measles-Mumps-Rubella

Vaccinations against measles, mumps and rubella are routine in childhood, and are usually available as a combined vaccine "MMR". See routine childhood vaccination schedules: Australia, Canada, Europe, USA, UK All adults should ensure they are immune to these diseases before they travel abroad. If unsure of your immunity, consult your health professional. You may need to be vaccinated.

Polio

Vaccination against polio is routine in childhood in many countries. See routine childhood vaccination schedules: Australia, Canada, Europe, USA, UK

All adults should ensure they are immune to the disease before they travel abroad. If unsure of your immunity, consult your health professional. You may need a *primary vaccination* or a *booster*. Booster recommendations vary by country.

Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis

Vaccinations against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis are routine in childhood.

See routine childhood vaccination schedules: Australia, Canada, Europe, USA, UK

All adults should ensure they are immune to these diseases before they travel abroad. If unsure of your immunity, consult your health professional. You may need a *primary vaccination* or *booster*. Booster recommendations vary by country.

Varicella

Varicella (chickenpox) vaccinations are included in the routine childhood immunization schedule of some countries. See routine childhood vaccination schedules: Australia, Canada, Europe, USA, UK

All adults should ensure they are immune to varicella before they travel abroad. If unsure of your immunity, consult your health professional.

Malaria

None

Health Threats

Rabies

Rabies is a viral disease contracted when bitten or scratched by an infected (rabid) animal, often a dog. Once it enters the body, the virus travels along nerves and causes paralysis. As it reaches important organs like the spinal cord and the brain, it causes coma and death.

In countries where rabies is present in animals or bats, ALL animal / bat bites, scratches and licks to broken skin must be treated seriously. Rabies vaccination is very effective in preventing rabies, even after a bite/scratch by a rabid animal.

Rabies vaccination

Pre-exposure vaccination is often recommended for expatriates and long-term visitors to destinations where rabies is present. It's especially recommended if quality medical care may not be available after being bitten or scratched by an animal. Pre-exposure treatment can be especially useful for children, since they may not tell their parents that they have been bitten/scratched.

Pre-exposure vaccination makes it easier to treat a bite or scratch. That's important because some types of rabies treatment can be in short supply in many countries, even in cities.

If bitten, scratched or licked (on broken skin) by an animal:

- Immediately cleanse the wound with soap and water and a povidoneiodine solution if available.
- Seek medical advice from a qualified source or your assistance company.
- Notify local health authorities immediately. You may need post-exposure vaccination, even if you have had pre-exposure vaccination. (THIS CAN BE LIFE SAVING.)

Rabies exists in wild and domestic animals.

Leishmaniasis

Leishmaniasis is a disease caused by a parasite that can infect humans, dogs, rodents and other small animals. It is transmitted by sandflies that bite mainly between dusk and dawn and can occur in both rural and urban environments. Sandflies breed quickly in unsanitary conditions, and the spread of the disease is exacerbated by war, chronic food shortages and urbanisation activities like deforestation and building of dams and irrigation systems, changes in temperature, heavy rainfall and population movement. The disease can manifest in one of the three forms, cutaneous (is the most common form and causes skin ulcers), mucocutaneous (is a rare form which affects the inner parts of the nose and mouth) or visceral (which is the more severe form and can lead to death). There is no vaccine or drug to prevent leishmaniasis.

Prevention

The only way to avoid leishmaniasis is to prevent sandfly bites.

- Minimise outdoor activities from dusk to dawn- this is when sand flies are most active.
- Use protective clothing and insect repellent.
- Consider using an insecticide-treated bed net with *fine mesh* if there are sandflies in your living quarters. The standard bed nets used to prevent malaria are not effective, as sandflies are about one-third the size of mosquitoes and can fly through the malaria nets.
- Note that sandflies are small and do not make noise while flying. This makes it difficult to determine whether they are in your environment. Their bites cause mild symptoms and might not be noticed.

In Israel, cutaneous leishmaniasis is consistently present in the Jordan Valley, Dead Sea shore, central Negev and Sinai border. The highest number of cases is reported between June and October.

Visceral leishmaniasis is reported in the Judean foothills of central Israel and the Galilee Region of northern Israel. Sporadic cases have been reported from the Western Galilee area.

West Nile Virus

Primarily a disease of birds, West Nile virus (WNV) can infect humans. The most common route for a human infection is via mosquitoes. The mosquito feeds on an infected bird or other animal, then bites a human and introduces the virus into their body.

Most people who get WNV develop no symptoms. Of the 20 percent who do get ill, most develop mild symptoms 3-14 days after being bitten: fever, head and body ache, nausea and vomiting. Sometimes the lymph nodes swell or a rash appears on the trunk.

In fewer than one percent of all human cases, the person develops a serious, possibly fatal, infection. Symptoms may include high fever, headache, stiff neck, disorientation, muscle weakness, tremors and paralysis. The brain and membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord may get inflamed, which can cause coma and death. Patients who recover from a serious WNV infection may suffer permanent brain damage.

There is no specific treatment for the disease, or vaccine to protect against it. To avoid infection, prevent mosquito bites in areas where the virus circulates. Wear long sleeves and long pants, and use insect repellents.

Outbreaks of human WNV occur annually in Israel. The transmission season occurs typically between June and November.

Travellers diarrhoea

Travellers' diarrhoea is the most common travel-related illness. It usually occurs within the first week away from home. It is spread through contaminated food and water.

Prevention is through choosing safe food and water, and paying attention to hygiene. Select food that is thoroughly cooked while fresh and served hot. Avoid undercooked or raw meat, fish or shellfish. Avoid salad and raw vegetables unless you can wash them with clean (treated) water and you peel them yourself.

Unless you are certain that the tap water is drinkable - choose bottled water and beverages, avoid ice.

Typhoid fever

Typhoid fever is a serious infection caused by *Salmonella typhi* bacteria. People are infected through ingesting contaminated food or water. Choosing safe food and water and vaccination reduces the risk of developing the disease.

Symptoms usually begin one to three weeks after exposure. Although typhoid fever is often called a diarrhoeal disease, some patients do not have diarrhoea. Persistent, high fever is typical. Other early symptoms are flu-like: body aches and pains, weakness, loss of appetite and a continuous dull headache. A rash with pink spots may appear on the chest and abdomen of some patients. In severe cases, perforation of the bowel can cause severe bleeding or infection in the abdomen, which can be fatal.

Typhoid is treated with antibiotics. However there is a growing problem of antibiotic resistance. "Extensively drug-resistant" (XDR) typhoid is present in some locations and does not respond to many of the antibiotics which are usually used against typhoid, making preventive measures even more important.

HIV, Hepatitis B and C, and STIs

HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C are spread by contact with bodily fluids (especially blood and semen).

- unprotected sex,
- needle sharing during IV drug use, or
- unsafe blood or medical/dental instruments.

Genital herpes (HSV), genital warts (HPV), gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and most other sexually transmitted diseases are spread by genital contact.

Prevention:

- In many countries, hepatitis B is now a routine childhood immunisation and need not be repeated. All non-immune travellers should consider vaccination.
- Always use new condoms (preferably brought from your home country).
- IV drug users should not share needles.
- Avoid having tattoos or piercings done.
- In healthcare settings, make sure that needles and syringes are sterile and not shared between patients.
- Call International SOS or your corporate medical department if you are hospitalised.
- Be aware of your risk when assisting anyone with an injury. Protect yourself from contact with bodily fluids.
- Seek medical attention within 24 hours if you accidentally come into contact with someone else's bodily fluids.

Food & Water

Generally safe

Food Risk

Food in hotels and restaurants is generally safe. Avoid street vendors.

Water and Beverages

Tap water in most cities and towns is treated and can be directly consumed.

- In many locations water is fluoridated.
- Some rural and remote areas may be served by untreated water sources such as wells or streams. Extra water safety precautions should be taken in these areas.
- When drinking bottled water or carbonated beverages, ensure that the seal is intact.
- If bottled water is not available, water that you treat yourself should be safe for consumption. (If you plan to visit remote locations, consider carrying supplies of bottled water/purification mechanisms).

Destination Guide for Israel



Security

Destination Guide Content

Personal Security

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- Defer all travel to areas of Israel within four miles (7km) of the borders with Lebanon, the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories) and Syria.
- Travel to all other areas of Israel can resume.
- Ensure you have full confidence in the security of your accommodation by selecting rooms within proximity to onsite air-raid shelters.
- Understand the immediate actions to take upon hearing air-raid warnings and remain aware of the location of the nearest air-raid shelter. The length of an air-raid siren represents the amount of time one has to enter a secure space. When in a secure space, remain there for at least ten minutes. If another air-raid warning is heard during this time, remain inside the secure space for a further ten minutes.
- Follow official directives, including any local emergency and evacuation procedures, movement restrictions, curfews and road closures
- Ensure you have access to verified information provided in a timely manner to enable tactical-level decision making. Stay aware of the prevailing security environment and maintain constant situational awareness.
- Avoid all gatherings due to the risk of violence.
- There is an underlying risk of terrorism. Minimise time spent in the vicinity of likely targets, such as religious gatherings, public transport, military and government premises and personnel and poorly secured and densely populated public areas.
- Exercise caution while driving as driving standards in the country are generally poor.
- Download the Israel Home Front Command mobile app.

Jerusalem

 Avoid public transport. If using public transport is unavoidable, business travellers should remain alert to their surroundings; when waiting for transport, they should stand behind any bollards or cement cubes present and away from individuals with overt displays of religious identity.

- Exercise caution in and around the Old City. Seek the latest security information
 prior to accessing the site and exercise caution when entering this area through
 the most high-profile access points such as Herod's, Jaffa and especially Lions and
 Damascus gates. We advise avoiding, wherever possible, visits to the Old City on
 Fridays and on religious holidays.
- Larger groups should consider using the services of a security consultant/experienced local guide for the duration of the visit.
- Exercise heightened vigilance in public areas around potential militant targets. These include religious sites, security force personnel and members of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, who may be specifically targeted.
- Travel to locations in East Jerusalem outside of the Old City, Sheikh Jarrah and
 French Hill neighbourhoods should be kept to a minimum. The Jabel Mukaber,
 Silwan and Abu Tor neighbourhoods, in addition to other locations such as Jewish
 settlements and areas adjacent to Salah Ed-Din Street should only be accessed
 after business travellers have ensured the situation in the area is calm.

For travel from Israel to the West Bank (Palestinian Territories)

- Exercise caution when transiting through border checkpoints between Israel and the West Bank due to the risk of violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian protesters. Treat the security forces with patience and respect.
- Ensure you have flexible travel plans as any security incident occurring in the vicinity of checkpoints with Israel in the West Bank can result in either the temporary closure of these crossings and/or significant delays.
- Carry your passport at all times for identification checks.
- Border crossing opening hours are liable to change during Jewish holidays. Ensure that checkpoints are operational prior to travel and allow additional time for security checks at border crossings during such periods. Further information on land crossing points can be found at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website.

Golan Heights

- Defer all travel to Israeli-occupied Golan Heights within High Risk areas.
- Travel in the vicinity of the demilitarised buffer zone should be for essential purposes only.
- Travel to all other areas of Golan Heights can resume.
- Mines and unexploded ordnance pose a risk in some rural areas. Be alert for signs indicating areas of danger.
- Follow all instructions issued by authorities and be prepared for temporary movement restrictions.

Crime

Limited to hot spots

CRIME

Israel's most densely populated areas are prone to opportunistic crime. However, levels of street crime are low, with pickpocketing and theft posing the main concerns for business travellers, notably in touristy areas. Burglaries in affluent areas and car thefts have also been reported. International assignees should ensure that residential complexes have an effective security mechanism. While not specifically targeted, foreign nationals who do not take standard security measures are vulnerable to criminal activity. Israel is presently experiencing a major crime wave of violent incidents in its minority Arab community. These groups frequently engage in fights over territory and for control of criminal activities. Assassination attempts – which often take the form of small-scale car bombings and other low-level explosions – are a favoured tactic in such disputes. These primarily target rival gangs and other criminal elements. Foreign nationals are unlikely to be directly impacted, though any such incident will pose incidental risks to bystanders.

Terrorism

Moderate indirect risk to foreign nationals

TERRORISM

Israel experiences regular terror attacks, which target both the Israeli security forces and civilians. Despite this, the threat to business travellers from terrorism is primarily incidental and the risk posed is mitigated by the level of preparedness of the security forces and low level of small arms proliferation among the general public. Increases in attacks are often heralded by an increase in Israeli-Palestinian tensions over the status of the al-Aqsa mosque on Temple Mount (al-Haram al-Sharif) in Jerusalem, among other grievances.

Such incidents usually take the form of stabbings, car-ramming attacks and shootings, although bomb attacks – both caused by suicide bombers and remote explosive devices – are possible.

Stabbings constitute one of the most common forms of terror attack in Israel. On 3 July 2024, two people were injured in a stabbing incident near Big Karmiel shopping centre in Karmiel (Northern district). On 31 March 2024, two stabbing attacks took place. In one, three people were wounded in the Gan Yavne mall (Central district). In the other, an off duty Israel Defense Forces (IDF) officer was stabbed in the central bus station of Beersheba (Southern district) before the assailant was shot and killed by another soldier. On 14 March, an IDF soldier was stabbed in an attack at a petrol station at the Beit Kama junction (Southern). The attacker was originally from the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories).

Car ramming attacks are also common and are often combined with other means of attack such as stabbings or shootings. On 14 July 2024, four people were injured in a car ramming attack at a bus station in the Nir Tzvi junction of central Israel. On 22 April 2024, two assailants hit three people with a car in the Romema neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and then attempted to open fire with a makeshift gun, which malfunctioned. On 3 April, an attacker struck four police officers with a vehicle in Kochav Yair (Central district), and then attempted to stab officers stationed at the Kochav Yair crossing, before being shot by security forces. On 29 January, an attacker ran his car into an IDF soldier in Haifa (Haifa district) before attempting to attack him with an axe. The attacker was apprehended and shot.

Shooting attacks are less common but are likely to affect bystanders at random. On 16 February, a gunman opened fire on bystanders at a bus station at the Re'em Junction near Kiryat Malachi (Southern), killing two people and injuring four others. On 30 November 2023, two gunmen withdrew guns from their car and began shooting at passers-by in West Jerusalem, killing three civilians. The two gunmen were then shot by armed civilians.

Bombing attacks are increasingly uncommon, though can pose a substantial incidental risk nonetheless. On 19 July 2024, one person was killed and eight were injured following a fatal explosion at the intersection of Ben Yehuda and Shalom Aleichem streets, near the US Embassy Office in Tel Aviv.

Social Unrest

SOCIAL UNREST

Since the events of 7 October 2023, demonstrations related to the release of hostages, demands for the resignation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the service of ultra-Orthodox Jews in the military have been staged regularly. These have resulted in the frequent disruption of road traffic in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Protests over socio-economic or political issues, such as corruption scandals involving political figures, are frequent in major cities. They are usually well policed and peaceful, though demonstrations over sensitive issues, such as perceived discrimination by Arabs or Ethiopian Jews, for example, can descend into unrest and result in localised travel disruption. Gatherings have been staged outside the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem and at Tel Aviv's Rabin and Habima squares.

Communal disturbances are common in Jerusalem, where relations between Jewish and Arab communities can be subject to tension. Communal unrest tends to spike in the wake of any move by the Israeli government perceived as discriminating against Arab communities in particular. The announcement of new settlement construction in Jerusalem, evictions of Palestinian residents, or access restrictions to holy sites can trigger protests and related unrest. Protests over a reported increase in crime-related killings in Arab-Israeli communities occurred in June 2023. Communal violence and protests can pose indirect risks to bystanders, though any incidents are usually quickly contained and rarely affect the main urban commercial centres.

Conflict

CONFLICT

Gaza-based militant groups

Conflict between Gaza-based militant groups and Israel is common. Most incidents have involved the firing of large volumes of unguided rockets into Israel. Conflict between Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories) based groups and Israel is particularly likely during times of heightened political tensions between Israel and Palestinians.

In a major escalation, the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas carried out a complex attack on 7 October 2023. The assault involved high-volume rocket barrages fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel and kidnappings of and attacks on civilians in Southern district. More than 1,400 people, including foreign nationals, were killed and more than 3,300 others injured in the attacks, which targeted a music festival and multiple residential communities. Hundreds of people were also taken hostage.

Unguided rocket attacks on locations within 25 miles (40km) of the border with Gaza occur with varying degrees of frequency and intensity. These rockets most frequently target Sderot and Hof Ashkelon, Shaar Hanegev and Eshkol regional councils, but may also target cities further afield such as Ashdod and Beersheba (all Southern district). Most rockets are short-to-medium range and land in open areas or are intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defence system. However, rockets occasionally strike infrastructure in urban centres in southern and central areas, resulting in damage and sometimes injuries. Various militant groups in Gaza, most notably Hamas, also possess long-range rockets capable of hitting major urban centres in central Israel, as demonstrated during the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas in July-August 2014, May 2021 and since October 2023, when rockets were fired at Tel Aviv and areas south and north of it.

Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system and the unguided nature of these rocket launches largely mitigate the impact of such attacks, which often trigger retaliatory Israeli airstrikes, and less frequently escalate into full-fledged Israeli military operations in Gaza. The risk posed by rocket fire from Gaza is far higher in areas close to the Gaza Strip. The longer a rocket spends in the air, the easier it is to detect and intercept and the longer people have to respond to an air raid siren and find shelter. For this reason, casualties from rocket barrages fired from the Gaza Strip towards Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are rare.

East Jerusalem

The status of the Old City in East Jerusalem continues to be a controversial issue, with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority claiming sovereignty over it. The disputed Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount complex witnesses periodic localised unrest, usually involving Palestinians and the Israeli security forces. Such unrest typically occurs after Friday prayers or during times of heightened communal or political tensions. The disputed status of Temple Mount, recurrent IDF interventions in Arab areas as part of anti-terrorist operations and the construction of homes for Jewish settlers are all expected to continue fuelling sporadic unrest in East Jerusalem.

Arab, Muslim states

Israel has diplomatic relations with several regional neighbours, including Jordan and Egypt, though Israel technically remains at war with neighbouring Lebanon and Syria. Amid Israel's operations targeting Hamas in response to the October 2023 attacks, cross-border hostilities re-emerged between Israel and the Lebanon-based Shia Muslim Hizbullah movement. Risks posed by cross-border fighting prompted the IDF to announce that it would evacuate residents of 28 communities located within 1.2 miles (2km) of the Lebanese border.

Since 1967, Israel has maintained an occupation of the Golan Heights after having annexed the territory in the Six Day War. An agreement of disengagement was signed between Israel and Syria in 1974, ending the Yom Kippur War that began in 1973. The agreement established an area of separation between Israel and Syria and put in place the UN Disengagement Observer Force to supervise the maintenance of the ceasefire.

Lebanon

Since the onset of Israel's military actions inside the Gaza Strip in October 2023, rocket fire from Lebanon into Israel and Israeli artillery fire and air strikes into Lebanon have taken place regularly. Most rocket strikes into northern Israel fall in areas within 6 miles (10km) of the border, though Lebanese factions do possess weapons capable of striking Israel's main population centres. On 27 July 2024, at least 12 people were killed and 29 others were injured in an attack that occurred at a football pitch in the Majdal Shams area (Northern district) in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. The Israeli authorities attributed the attack to the Lebanon-based Shia Muslim Hizbullah movement. On 27 September, an Israeli airstrike on Beirut killed Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who had led the group since 1992. On 1 October, Israel launched a ground operation in southern Lebanon against Hizbullah targets, marking a further escalation in the ongoing conflict.

Iran

Iran maintains an arsenal of ballistic missiles capable of striking Israel and pursues a foreign policy openly hostile to Israel. In an unprecedented attack on 13 April 2024, Iran fired around 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles, and more than 120 ballistic missiles toward Israel. Israel claimed to have shot down 99% of the incoming weapons and only one person was directly injured in Israel.