

TRANSPORTATION

Israel's public transportation is convenient and reasonably-priced. Tourists arriving at the Ben Gurion International Airport are approximately 16 miles (22 km) from the center of Tel Aviv and 34 miles (55 km) from Jerusalem. Traffic is generally very congested in the mornings and late afternoon/early evenings Sunday thru Thursday - especially between and within Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. To access public transportation from the airport, take the elevator to the lowest level. Destinations include Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Netanya, and Haifa.

BUS: The most popular form of public transportation in Israel is the bus. **Egged** operates the bulk of the bus transportation. Call 03-694-8888. Very affordable!

TRAIN: **Israel Railways** is a convenient and inexpensive train service between several cities. 08-633-1222. The **Jerusalem Light Rail** has 23 stops at popular destinations in Jerusalem, including the Old City. Call 072-256-4333. During heavy traffic times, the train is by far the fastest mode of transportation. *Note:* Israel Railways and most bus lines are closed on Jewish holidays. On Shabbat, they stop operating early Friday afternoon and resume Saturday evening.

FLIGHTS WITHIN ISRAEL: **Arkia**, Israel's domestic airline, offers affordable commuter flights between Eilat & Tel Aviv and Eilat & Haifa.

TAXI: Taxis are also popular, although more expensive. By law, fares are charged within the city according to the meter reading. You can avoid unnecessary haggling and tension by requesting the driver turn on his meter. Drivers may attempt collecting a fixed price – which will likely be a higher price. However, if you prefer to pay a fixed price, make sure to confirm the rate quote prior to service, and refuse to pay more if asked! Taxi drivers are not tipped in Israel. Fares between cities are fixed by the Ministry of Transportation. Taxis can be ordered in advance by telephone or flagged down on main streets.

SHARE TAXI (SHERUT): A "share taxi," known as a **sherut**, is an economical alternative to a conventional taxi. Smaller than buses, sheruts take their passengers on regular bus routes, offer flexible scheduling, and depart when their 8-10 seats are filled. Some, not all, sheruts operate on Saturdays. The **Nesher Airport Shuttle** is a great bargain, operating between Ben Gurion Airport and Jerusalem. Nesher is designed to carry airline passengers and their baggage, and they will deliver you straight to your Jerusalem destination. Call 072-264-6059 for more information. Most Jerusalem hotels will book a Nesher for you to return to Ben Gurion Airport. Be sure to arrange this service at least two days prior to departure for preferred booking time.

RENTING A CAR IN ISRAEL: If you are not part of an organized tour, you may want to rent your own car and visit wherever you want at your own pace. You must be 21 years of age or older and in possession of an international driver's license. Rental car companies are in all of Israel's major cities, as well as the Ben Gurion Airport. Reserving a car in advance, before you leave home, is to your advantage. The longer you wait to reserve your car, the higher the price. Typically, you will get the best price if you reserve your car two to three months prior to your departure for Israel, preferably three months.

A good **GPS** is vital to make your way through Israel. Most car rental companies offer GPS systems, and two popular GPS/traffic applications, **Google Maps** and **WAZE** (developed by Israelis), are available for free on most smartphones and tablets.

Driving caution: Be aware that Israeli drivers typically are quite aggressive drivers; many even reckless. Defensive driving is imperative; be vigilant and on the alert for swerving cars and mopeds. Allow impatient drivers to pass, and use your horn as needed. It really works!