



## EILAT ISRAEL

Israel is just over 260 miles long from north to south. At the far southern tip of the country visitors will find the wonderful little city of Eilat. The town looks out over the Gulf of Aqaba which stretches out for 100 miles and opens up into the Red Sea. A few miles down the western shore of the gulf is the border with Egypt. Immediately east of Eilat is the border of Jordan and the city of Aqaba. A little further down the eastern coast of the gulf is Saudi Arabia. Stand on the beach of Eilat and you can see them all.

In an ancient land Eilat is not very old. The city we see today was founded shortly after the nation's independence in 1949 and the population has grown to around 47,000. Eilat is a vibrant resort town, filled with cafés and restaurants, shops and boutiques. The waterfront promenade and the marina are bustling with tourists and locals. But one of the first things which comes to mind when many people think of Eilat is the beach.

North Beach can be as fun and as full of excitement as you want. Para-sailing, boating, jet skis, Eilat has plenty of water-sports. But if you just want to stretch out in the sun or shade and sip a cool drink then this is the place. The water is calm and clear. Swimming is great here but if you look below the surface of the water you will discover a whole other world.

If you have never had the opportunity to snorkel, then you could not have come to a better place to than Eilat to begin. This region is world renowned for its crystal water, colorful coral and abundance of sea life. And many of the reefs are very close to shore, perfect for beginners and certified SCUBA divers alike.

Visitors to Eilat will find the scenery of the Southern Negev Desert starkly dramatic. Rising up over the city like the mighty bastions of a crusader's castle, the mountains around Eilat have changed little in the past 10,000 years. It has been said, "In Israel, to be a realist you must believe in miracles". It's real easy to see what makes Eilat is one of Israel's miracles.



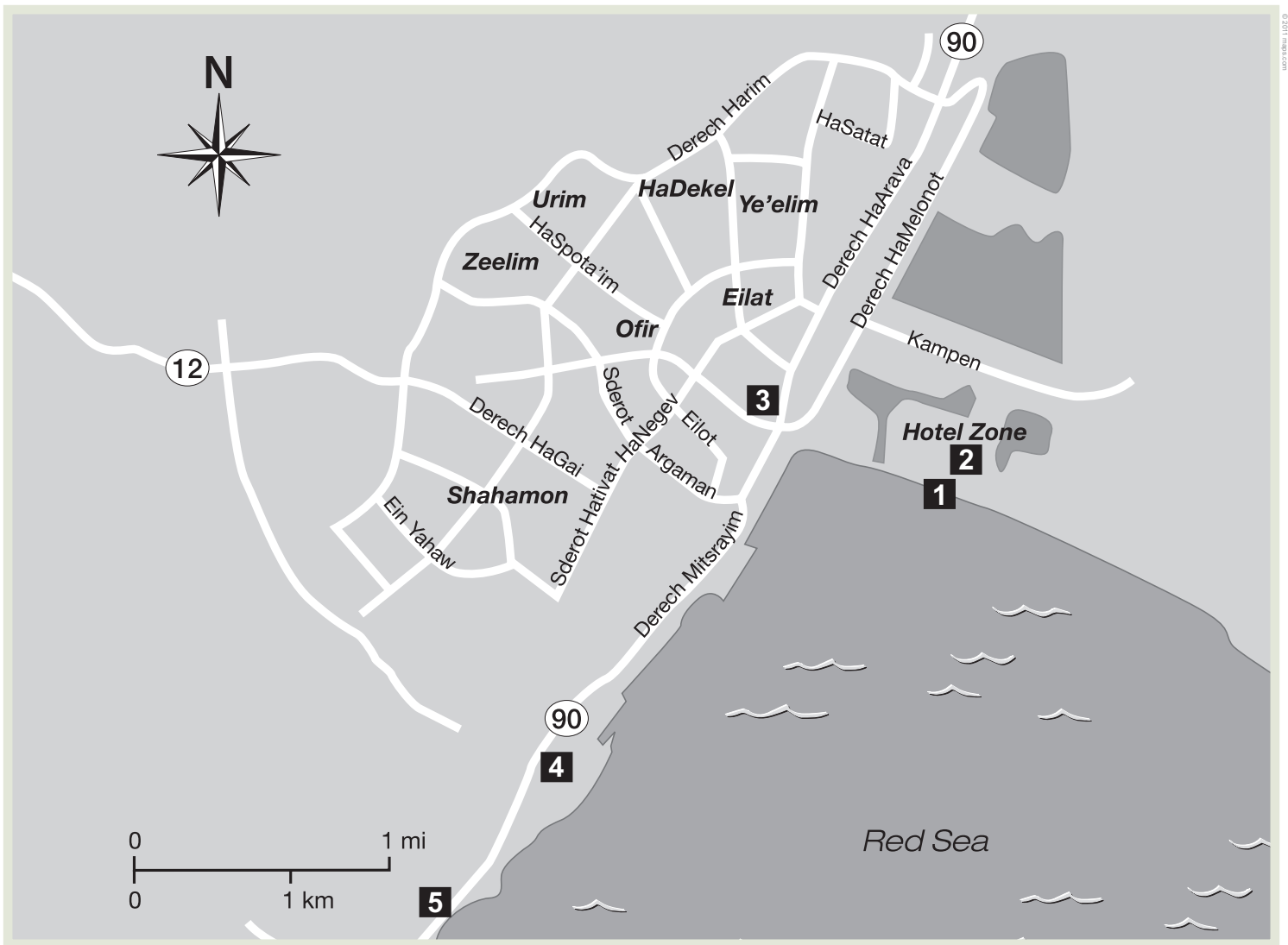
### HISTORY

Near the end of Israel's War of Independence, on the morning of March 10, 1949 members of the Negev and Golani Brigades reached a small cluster of mud-brick huts which hugged the shore of the Red Sea. Known at the time as Um-Rashrash, this was the southernmost point of Israel. To prove it, a young Israeli soldier took a bottle of dark ink and began to brush it upon a white sheet.

Archeological evidence shows people have lived and traveled along this coastal region of the Red Sea for the last 10,000 years. The copper mines were vital to the ancient Egyptians. Trade routes and pilgrims to Mecca passed through this area. The routes connected Africa, the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula to Persia and beyond.

From the ancient Egyptians to Moses and the Israelites, King David and his son King Solomon, Roman Legions and Christian Crusaders, Arabs, Turks and British, a long line of people and powers are linked to this area.

It reached a quiet crescendo on the morning of March 10, 1949. Eilat now belonged to the fledgling nation. The "Shield of King David" was soon to fly over the southernmost point of the new Israel...just as soon as the young soldier finished using ink to paint a star upon the white sheet. You see, in their haste and perhaps the fog of war, neither the brigade commander nor any of his young soldiers had remembered to bring a new flag of the new Israel. Blue ink, a white sheet, the steady hand of an artist and a long pole worked out just fine.



## EILAT PLACES OF INTEREST

**1 North Beach** is the vibrant waterfront area of Eilat. Beautiful white sand, calm clear water, beach and water sports, cafés and shopping along the promenade all combine to make this one of the most popular sites in the city.

**2 Kings City** is a biblical theme park with panoramas, interactive displays, boat caves and rides.

**3 Eilat Museum** portrays the short yet interesting history of the modern city. Beginning with the founding of the city just after the nation's War of Independence, the museum tells the story of Eilat and the beautiful natural environment which surrounds it.

**4 Dolphin Reef** is a wonderful site where visitors have the opportunity to watch and play with beautiful bottle nosed dolphins. There are quiet beaches where you can swim or just relax and soak up the sun.

**5 The Coral Beach Nature Reserve** is a great place for snorkelers to explore the same underwater world of the Red Sea which SCUBA divers have had all to themselves for many years. Snorkel gear is available for rent. The reserve has shade lounges, showers and a small snack bar. The reserve is located just a few miles south of downtown Eilat.

## Beyond Eilat

The **Underwater Observatory Marine Park** gives visitors the opportunity to explore the underwater world of the Red Sea...without getting wet. The observatory enables guests to watch the sea life from below the surface of the open water while dozens of large aquariums are home to hundreds of brightly colored fish. The kids especially love to watch experts divers feed the sharks.

The **Timna Park** and the canyons of the Southern Negev and Arava Valley all combine to provide visitors with some of the most stunning and stark scenery in Israel. The region's copper mines date back thousands of years and are believed to be among the oldest in the world.

The **Dead Sea** is the lowest point on earth; famous for the high mineral content of the mud and the high salinity of the water. The area has been a popular resort destination for thousands of years. In 1946, in cliff-side caves along the desolate shore of the sea, Bedouin shepherds made one of the most incredible discoveries in history; the famous "Dead Sea Scrolls". It is interesting to note that when the Bedouins first offered to sell a couple of the ancient scrolls to a dealer of antiquities the "expert" pronounced them "worthless" and politely declined.

**Masada** is an ancient fortress set high upon a desolate rock outcropping which overlooks the Dead Sea. Built by Herod the Great in 37 BC, a century later it was the final refuge from the mighty legions of Rome for close to 1,000 Jewish men, women and children. Masada is an eternal example of determination and sacrifice exhibited by a few Jewish families from a generation long past. Their courage is acknowledged with awe and respect unto this day and their story shall be passed down for generations of Israelis to come. "Sheynit Masada lo tipul" ... "Masada shall not fall again."

## SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Eilat and the surrounding area we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Order Form or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

**Bargaining:** Prices are usually fixed.

**Tipping:** A 12% tip is appropriate if a service charge is not added to your dining tab. Taxi drivers are not customarily tipped.

## LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

As Jews returned to Israel from around the world they brought their favorite adopted and adapted recipes with them. Consequently, today there is no so-called "typical" cuisine of Israel.

So what about the food in Eilat? As with any international tourist destination there is a wide variety of cuisine, price and quality to be found among the many cafés and restaurants of Eilat. Has it been a while since you've had an ostrich fillet? You can find it in Eilat. Visitors and locals can also enjoy everything from shawarma to sushi, bagels to borekas, chorizo to crispy duck, Irish, Indian or Italian, Mediterranean, Mexican or Moroccan, French bistros and French fries to falafels, Yemenite jachnun and kebabs to kosher. And this is only a partial list. Many of Eilat's restaurants and cafés, especially around the waterfront, cater to tourists and many have a fine reputation. But if you want to get a bit off the beaten/eaten track ask the taxi driver or anyone who calls Eilat home to recommend a good neighborhood restaurant. As is the case in almost every city and town anywhere in the world; if you want good food at a good price then find out where the locals eat. Just remember the old Jewish proverb; No meal is complete without leftovers.

Tea and coffee are very popular drinks in Israel. Maccabi and Goldstar (Tempo Beer Industries) are among the most popular beers brewed in Israel. Alcohol is not widely consumed though wine is often served on holy days. Most of the nation's wineries are in the north of the country. If you enjoy wine and would like to add an interesting bottle or two to your collection then try some of the wines produced in Israel.

## SHOPPING

Eilat is a Duty-Free Zone with no VAT (Value Added Tax). This is yet another reason for Eilat's popularity. There are a number of sites which offer a wide variety of merchandise, everything from jewelry (turquoise malachite) to the latest fashion, electronics and of course, souvenirs. Mall Hayam (Ocean Mall), the Red Canyon Shopping Center and Big Eilat have many of the well-known stores and all one would expect in a modern shopping mall. Along the North Street Promenade there are many boutiques, small shops and assorted vendors.

## LOCAL CURRENCY

The national currency is the New Israeli Shekel (NIS). Foreign currency can be exchanged at post offices, banks and licensed exchange agencies. Travelers' checks and major credit cards are widely accepted.

## POST OFFICE

There is a Post Office conveniently located in the Red Canyon Shopping Center, near the center of town at Shifon and Ein He-Hatul Streets.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

A Tourist Information Office is located across from the Mall Hayam, at Yotam Blvd and Arava Road.

## TRANSPORTATION

Taxis are plentiful. Many drivers will accept Israeli and foreign currency. Public transportation only accepts Israeli currency. Rental cars are widely available in Eilat.

## USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

*English - Hebrew*

Hello/goodbye - sha-LOM

Good morning - BO-ker tov

Good evening - erev tov

Yes - ken

No - loh

Thank you - to-DAH

You're welcome - al low da-VAAR

