



UNWIND AT THE BERESHEET IN THE NEGEV DESERT IN ISRAEL

Written by Sandy Bornstein

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While most visitors to Israel experience the main population centers, you might want to consider exploring the Negev Desert in Israel. This is an ideal way to experience more of the country.

First-time visitors to Israel are easily overwhelmed by tour options. Even though Israel is a small country, approximately the size of [New Jersey](#), it is filled with an abundance of popular attractions and culinary experiences. General tours appeal to those looking for an introduction to the country in a large group setting, while specialized and private tours tailor their itineraries to the specific needs of travelers. More than 60% of Israel's geography is considered a desert ecosystem. However, most people visit the main population centers in the northern and central regions, where Mediterranean coastal plains and highlands are the predominant features. You will find many places showcasing Israel's history and culture in these locations. I recommend winding down from a fast-paced tour with a stay at the luxurious [Beresheet Resort](#) in the Negev Desert in Israel.

The Beresheet Resort is part of the Isrotel exclusive collection of hotels and is rated 5+ stars by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. Before booking a preferred fall or spring reservation to the Negev Desert in Israel, check a Jewish calendar to ensure the dates don't coincide with non-working Jewish holidays.



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Driving to the Beresheet Resort in the Negev Desert in Israel

After being on the go for more than a week, my husband Ira and I were looking forward to leaving urban life behind and finding respite at a [deluxe resort](#). To break up our more than two-hour journey from Tel Aviv to Mitzpe Ramon, we stopped in Sderot to learn about the challenges faced by Israelis living adjacent to the Gaza Strip.

As an American, I struggle to comprehend the daily concerns of individuals and families who have approximately 15 seconds to reach bomb shelters when their hostile neighbors randomly fire rockets into their peaceful residential communities. By touring the town and later standing at the [Black Arrow Memorial](#) overlooking the Jabalia and Gaza city area with a former Israel Defense Force field commander, we gained a better appreciation of how the residents do not allow fear to control their lives.

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View from the Black Arrow Memorial near Sderot. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

We were able to understand further the dynamics of living near the border when we visited Yaron Bob's [Rocket to Roses](#) workshop. Yaron is an Israeli artist who handcrafts roses, candlesticks, menorahs, and other sculptures from rocket remnants. Yaron's powerful artwork symbolizes hope for a more promising tomorrow.



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Initial Impression of the Makhtesh Ramon

We passed through Mitzpe Ramon more than a decade ago during a long drive to Eilat. I was immediately intrigued by the [Makhtesh Ramon](#), the world's largest erosion crater. I knew we needed to include this unique place if we planned another trip to the Negev Desert in Israel.

During this trip, we had more time to explore the serene setting of the Negev Desert in Israel by staying at the Beresheet Resort, strategically situated on the edge of the crater. The Hebrew word, Beresheet, is equivalent to the English word Genesis, or new creation. From almost every vantage point at the resort, we could experience the wow factor of the crater. Within hours of our stay, we understood Prime Minister Ben Gurion's (Israel's first prime minister) dream to make the Negev bloom. The Beresheet was an oasis in the Negev Desert.



View from the Israel Trail on the rim of Makhtesh Ramon. Photo by Sandy Bornstein



Beresheet Guest Room with a View in the Negev Desert in Israel

The resort's stone building and one- and two-story private villas blend into the muted colors of the desert terrain. Our second-floor spacious guest room had a balcony offering an amazing view of the crater. The lower-level unit had less of a view but had the luxury of a private pool. With more than 430 square feet, we did not feel cramped. Our large bathroom had both a tub and a shower.



A cluster of two-story villas at the Beresheet. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

Award-Winning Infinity Pool

The infinity pool is a focal point of the resort. When we did not have a planned activity, we parked ourselves at this amenity to take advantage of the cooling breezes and views of the crater.



Evening view of Beresheet's infinity pool overlooking the Makhtesh Ramon. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

The local population of ibex, wild goats, also benefits from visiting the large pool deck. Intent on causing havoc, they bravely invaded guests' possessions in search of anything edible. While food service was available outdoors, we chose to dine inside.

Winter months bring considerably cooler temperatures to this desert location. The resort's indoor pool meets

the needs of swimmers during that time of year.



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Exploring the Makhtesh Ramon

Before breakfast, we took early morning walks along the path running adjacent to the crater. Our daily route took us past the Makhtesh Ramon Visitor Center, which opened later in the day. Had we had more time, we would have entered the center and visited the Ilan Ramon Memorial, created in memory of Israel's famous astronaut. Colonel Ramon and six American astronauts were killed in 2003 during the Columbia explosion. We might have considered trekking into the crater if the temperature was a bit cooler.

One morning we passed by a repelling class that was learning the basics of entering the crater. Another time we encountered a large group of young soldiers attending a graduation ceremony. Ubiquitous ibex that roamed freely throughout the area almost always greeted us. We remained awed by the serene desert landscape as we walked along the Israel Trail. Since we were out early, we rarely encountered other people.



One of an abundance of ibex grazing at the Beresheet and the crater. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

Our private morning jeep tour, arranged by the resort's concierge, was the highlight of our trip. Our guide,

Naor, drove us into the Mt. Negev Nature Reserve, where the mountain ridges range from 700 to 1000 meters above sea level. His informative talk included details about the formation of the crater. A considerable amount of time was spent explaining the ramifications of an ecosystem with only two inches of rain and the significance of the layers of colors embedded in the rock formations.

As our jeep sped through the rocky terrain, we saw a collection of hardy plants that could survive with almost no water. We gained a new appreciation of the Negev Desert by riding through the inside of this massive crater instead of peering down into it.

Indulging in a Carmel Forest Spa Treatment

Whenever possible, I select unique spa treatments. At the Beresheet, I opted for an AHAVA treatment. Since the late 1980s, [AHAVA](#) has created skin products derived from the rich minerals harvested from the Dead Sea. Conveniently located on the shores of the Dead Sea, this company has taken advantage of its prime location to patent dozens of Dead Sea products. These products are available online and in retail stores in the United States.

My holistic massage included a salt body butter to exfoliate the outer layers of my skin and concluded with a mineral body lotion to replenish my skin. On the day of my appointment, none of the massage therapists could communicate in English. I could get by with hand gestures and a few simple Hebrew words I learned decades ago.

Feasting on Mediterranean Cuisine

We were delighted that we could stay on the property with a limited number of local dining options. The Beresheet Resort offers delicious food at its restaurants. Since the hotel adheres to kashrut (kosher) laws, it has both dairy and meat restaurants. On the Jewish Sabbath, all dining options have limited service. Food selections will be modified to conform to the restrictions associated with the seventh day of rest.

When we arrived at the resort, we did not have time to stop for lunch. We shared a healthy salad and a homemade pizza to satisfy our hunger.

From Sunday to Friday, the resort showcases an elaborate breakfast buffet. The selections on Saturday morning do not include made-to-order items and are less extensive. The Mediterranean-inspired cuisine will appeal to anyone who loves fresh vegetables, hummus, pita, fish, cheeses, and homemade bread.



An assortment of vegetable dishes at the Beresheet's breakfast buffet. Photo by Sandy Bornstein

For dinner, we could select an entrée and serve ourselves at a comprehensive buffet. Months later, I can still recall the mushroom and lentil burger that had the texture and taste of a beef burger. This nutrient-dense

option was delicious, topped with chipotle aioli sauce and garnished with shredded potatoes and pickled vegetables.

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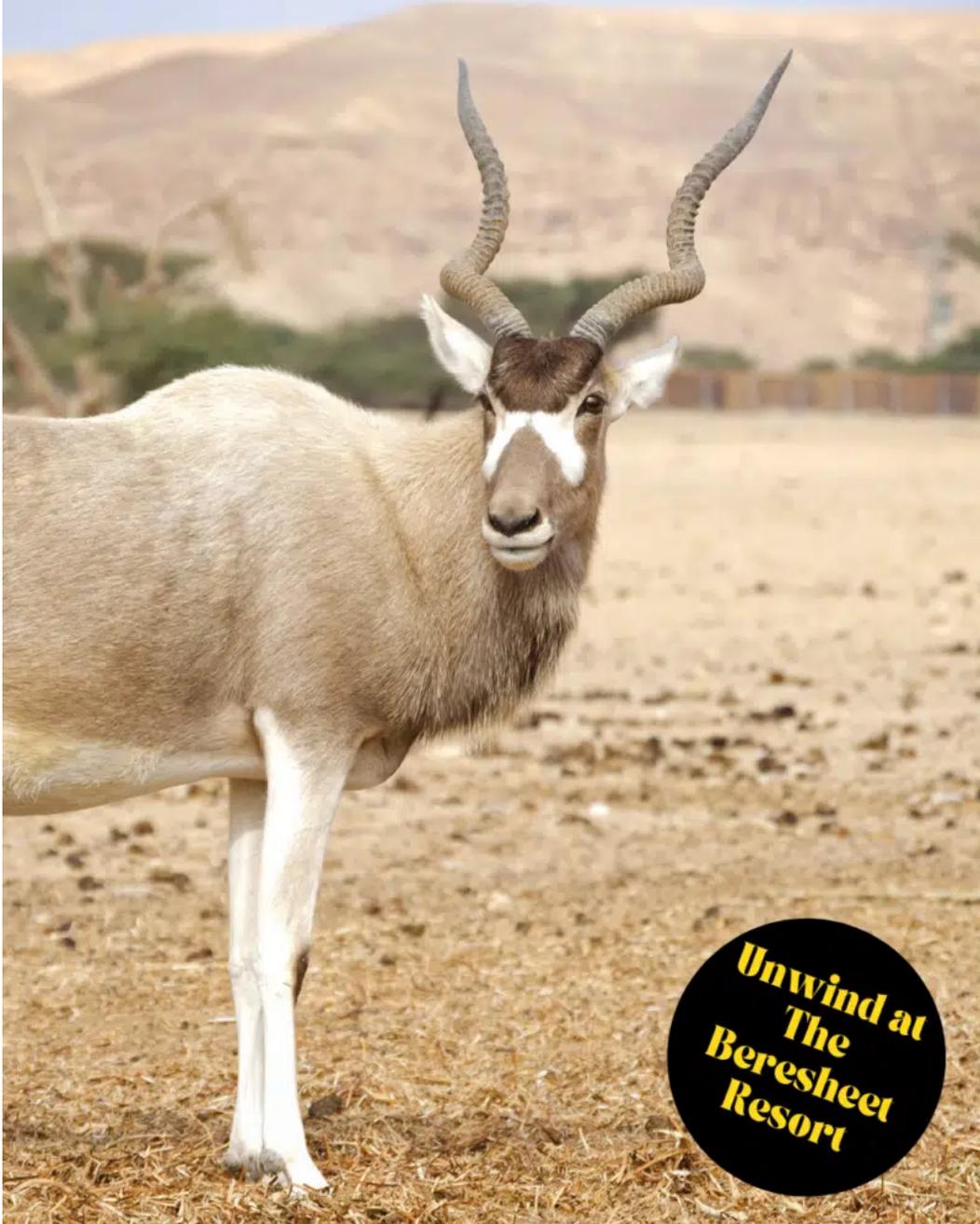
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Visiting Israel's Beresheet Resort

A leisurely stay at the Beresheet provides an oasis from our daily concerns and sufficient time to reflect on what we experienced during a multi-city comprehensive tour. Time spent in the Negev Desert allowed us to appreciate the complexity of Israel's diverse topography, including a disproportionate amount of desert terrain. After being rejuvenated in an arid and desolate environment, we were more relaxed and eager to return home. When planning your next trip to Israel, the [Middle East](#), or another [desert region](#), let Wander with Wonder be your guide.



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Sandy Bornstein is a Colorado-based, award-winning travel and lifestyle writer who focuses on active adventure, food and beverages, history and culture, cruises, luxury boomer travel, family travel, health and wellness, worldwide Jewish culture, and the importance of embracing life when faced with an incurable cancer diagnosis. After living as an expat international teacher in Bangalore, India, Sandy wrote *May This Be the Best Year of Your Life: A memoir as a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle*. In the fall of 2022, Sandy's second book, *100 Things to Do in Boulder Before You Die*, will be published by Reedy Press. Connect with Sandy at TheTravelingBornsteins.com and SandraBornstein.com.

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