



Travel insights from Sandy Bornstein, award-winning travel and lifestyle writer

Experience Israel While Staying at Four Luxury Hotels

Shortly after my husband, Ira, was diagnosed with glioblastoma (incurable brain cancer) in July 2020, I asked him to prepare a bucket travel list. Even though we had visited the Middle East three times, he selected Israel as his top choice. With travel uncertainties mounting due to COVID-19, I reached out to several tour operators and ultimately chose [Israel My Way](#), a Conde Nast Top Travel Specialist

Sep. 28, 2022

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and a member of the Virtuoso network. After discussing our options, this tour operator booked our hotels and planned an itinerary geared to our personal interests. Israel My Way provided a media rate for our private tour. All opinions are my own.

Carefree Arrival

On the airplane's jetway, we were warmly welcomed by a VIP representative who streamlined our arrival procedures and assisted us with transportation to the Mamilla Hotel, one of Jerusalem's luxury hotels.

Mamilla Hotel and Touring Near Jerusalem

Jetlag had not diminished our appetites for Mediterranean food. Happy Fish, a restaurant in the [Mamilla Hotel](#), was the most convenient option for our first night in Jerusalem. Seated in an elevated patio overlooking Alrov Mamilla Avenue, a stone paved outdoor pedestrian mall filled with local and international stores, cafes and restaurants, we listened to the restaurant's vocalist and guitarist.



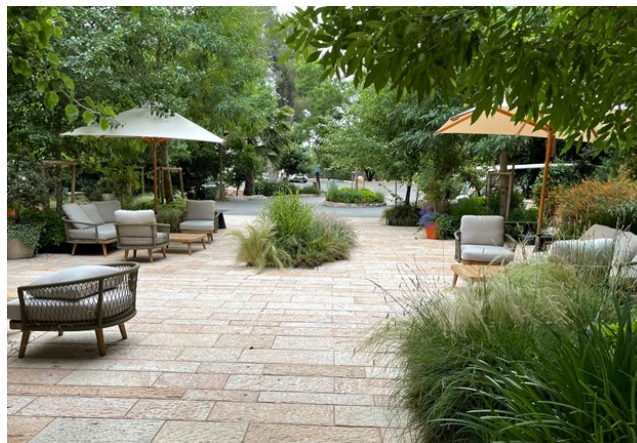
Our narrow, modern guest room was appointed with the latest technology. With the click of a switch, we could activate the privacy screening for the glass enclosed bathroom. This conveniently located hotel was just a short walk away from the Old City's Jaffa Gate.

Before setting out for our first full day of touring, we took advantage of the hotel's delectable breakfast buffet. Anyone who has traveled to Israel knows that most hotels offer an impressive assortment of nourishing hot and cold food items. On Friday nights (the start of the Sabbath) guests can choose a traditional Friday night dinner in the Dining Room or more casual cuisine at the Rooftop restaurant.

Mitzpe Hayamim and the Galilee

Driving north into the Galilee, we visited the famous Roman city Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast and the manicured Bahai Gardens in Haifa. While touring the Galilee, we stayed at the [Mitzpe Hayamim](#), a resort overlooking the Sea of Galilee. This destination showcases guestrooms with one-of-a-kind furnishings.

The dinner buffet was a perfect way to end a busy day of touring. Without access to a vehicle or the desire to go elsewhere, we were content with the abundance of farm to table Mediterranean inspired dishes.



Before breakfast every morning, we strolled on the resort's paths to enjoy the aromatic gardens, forested areas, organic orchards, herb garden and dairy farm. The breakfast buffet offered a nutritious start to our busy days.

Had time not been an issue, I may have scheduled

a visit to the onsite spa. While our main emphasis was on exploring places in the Galilee, many of the guests had come for the spa services and time away from urban life.

The Norman and Tel Aviv

When it was time to leave the Galilee, I wasn't sure if I was ready to return to the hustle and bustle of city life. Even though we were only in Tel Aviv for a couple of days, we spent a considerable amount of time exploring the city by foot. From Rothchild Boulevard to Neveh Tzedek to Libbi Cohen's graffiti tour, we learned about Israel's second largest city.

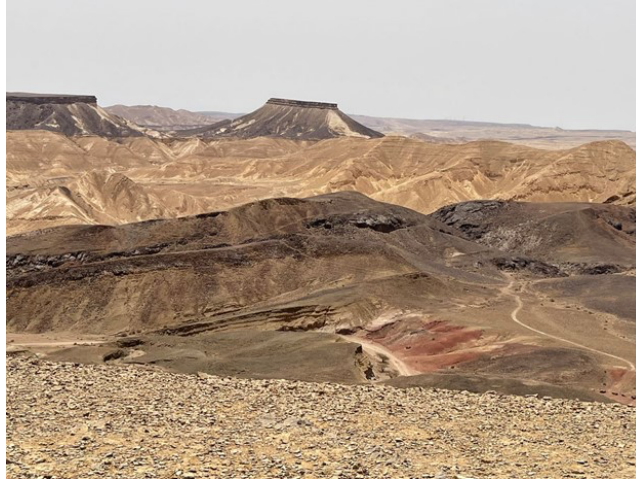


Our elegant accommodations reflected the tone of the hotel, a mixture of old and new. Highlights of our stay at [The Norman](#) included exemplary service and delicious dining experiences. This hotel had a sit-down menu for breakfast with a set number of appealing options. Unlike our previous Tel Aviv stays in large beachfront hotels adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea, The Norman offered a luxury boutique hotel experience with a rooftop pool in the heart of the city. From this location, we were able to walk each evening to Tel Aviv's finest restaurants.

The Beresheet Resort and Negev Desert

At the tail end of our journey, we drove south to the [Beresheet Resort](#) in the town of Mitzpeh Ramon. To

break up the long drive, we visited Sderot where we met with Israelis who are often the unprovoked recipients of rocket attacks. At [Rockets into Roses](#), Yaron Bob demonstrated how he creatively transforms the remnants of rockets into pieces of art.



When we reached our destination, the Beresheet Resort, we said goodbye to our private guide. For the next couple of days, we relaxed at the award-winning infinity pool, took advantage of the onsite Carmel Forest Spa, encountered roaming ibex, participated in an educational jeep tour and hiked along the edge of the [Makhtesh Ramon](#), the world's largest erosion crater. Our hearty appetites were addressed throughout the day and evening by delicious Mediterranean cuisine served in the onsite restaurants.

Relaxed Departure

Israel My Way arranged for our transfer to Ben Gurion airport as well as the VIP service that minimized our wait time going through customs and security checkpoints. The check-in lines during peak travel times are notoriously long.

By contracting with a tour operator, Ira and I were able to enjoy a stress-free visit to Israel. We stayed in luxury accommodations in prime locations, had dinner reservations secured before arrival and experienced a wide range of custom tour options.

About the Author



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. Sandy's second book, [100 Things to Do in Boulder Before You Die](#), published by Reedy Press offers recommendations on the top places to visit in Boulder, Colorado. Connect with Sandy at [The Traveling Bornsteins](#).

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