



Dear AACI Member & Friends,

You'll definitely notice that this newsletter is different from our usual. That's because this time, we've decided to focus on just one important and growing area – 'green' tourism. Those who come to Israel independently or as part of a group, will be happy to find that along with the many important historical and religious centers, there are also plenty of fascinatingly unique and 'eco friendly' activities just waiting to be explored.

November 2011

In this Issue:

[Hot Eco Events](#)

[Hiking](#)

[Biking in Israel](#)

[Eco Hotels](#)

[Secret Eco-Hideaways](#)

[Social responsibility](#)



Green Israel

Ophir Tours is thrilled to provide programs for the environmentally responsible traveler, based on the following values:

- Traveling with minimal harm to the environment
- Using energy efficient methods of transport and staying in energy efficient hotels
- Co-operating with local communities - as well as finding ways of contributing

There is a variety of possibilities and itineraries for "responsible" independent travelers to Israel. Eco travel packages can be tailored to any budget requirement, and can incorporate unique trekking paths, cycling or even overnight stays at local eco lodges. There is also the option to stay in luxury accommodation without the guilt - in Israel's increasing number of energy efficient prestigious hotels.

As a socially committed company, Ophir Tours can arrange for travelers to meet up and engage with local community members, and, for those wishing to contribute to the community, we will be happy to find the best places in which to donate or volunteer.

Nature and wildlife conservation is, quite rightly, an important priority for the next generation. That's why Ophir Tours financially supports and helps raise awareness of the **Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel** -in particular their birding center. We provide an array of exclusive packages for bird watchers, along with programs which combine visits to various nature reserves across the country.

Hot Eco Events



The Hula Valley Bird Festival

The **Hula Valley Bird Festival** takes place in Northern Israel this week. This time of year brings the arrival of huge numbers of Common Cranes and White Pelicans to the Valley, and visitors can also watch the already present wintering Eagles, ducks, waders and waterfowl. Get ready for the next event in 2012.

Eilat Birds Festival

The **6th Eilat Birds Festival**, which will take place in March 2012, is organized by the Israel Ornithological Center of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. This world renowned festival is a weeklong celebration of all things ornithological, including day and night birding tours to the most important sites in Southern Israel. Festival packages include accommodation and a variety of activities.

Hiking



The Israel Trail

This trail is around 1000 km long, from the Lebanese border in the north to the Red Sea in the south, taking hikers from 30 to 45 days to complete. The trail can be done north to south or south to north, in moderate to advanced trail segments. Taking in beautiful desert landscapes, forests and villages, there are many good campgrounds along the trail - and it's a great opportunity to meet the famous "trail angels", who open their homes and hearts - free of charge - to hikers who could use a breather. Trails are well marked and again the 'leave no trace' approach holds.

Jeruseland

Jeruseland is a unique 3-day tour for independent travelers, which starts at Tel Azeka on the Judean Hills and finishing at Jerusalem - around 60 km of moderate hiking that makes 3000 years of rich history so much clearer. In groups of 12 to 18, participants follow a fascinating itinerary through biblical landscapes, making their way to Jerusalem - as did

pilgrims of all religions in ancient times. Knowledgeable guides take visitors through places mentioned in the Old and New Testament, ensuring a once in a lifetime experience. Evenings round the campfire, nutritious meals, and luggage transfer are all included.

Biking in Israel



Biking has become one of the most popular ways to get around Israel over recent years – the constant rise in bike trails leave no doubt about its growing popularity. More and more people have become aware of the biking alternative, and have decided to put their foot to the pedal to enjoy the views, get some fresh air, and a bit of exercise along the way.

Bicycles can also be hired at any street corner in Tel Aviv as well as in more scenic areas in Northern and Southern Israel, where a selection of guided bike trips are available, together with the option of staying overnight in unique hotels dedicated to the specific needs of cyclists.

For your convenience, we've highlighted a few interesting bike initiatives:



Namal Tours

Namal Tours run a guided bike tour of Tel Aviv, one of the most modern, vibrant cities in the world. These exciting tours take in Old Jaffa, including a ride along the promenade, the Etzel Museum, the Old Railway Station, the Neve Tzedek Neighborhood, the Rockach House Museum and the White City - finishing at Metzizim Beach for a much needed rest. This recent [New York Times article](#) offers some great insights on biking in Tel Aviv.



Jerusalem on Wheels

Jerusalem on wheels offers riders a green opportunity to visit both historical and modern sites, with tours focusing either on the Old or New city – or a customized combination of the two. New City tours combine nature and architecture, taking cyclists to the Supreme Court Building, the Israeli Parliament (Knesset), the Israel Museum, the magnificent chords bridge and Gan Saker – Jerusalem's largest park. Old City tours go through the magical stone alleys of the Christian and Jewish Quarters, the Jaffa and Zion Gates, the Kardo, Hur`va Synagogue, the Arabic Shuck, King David's tomb, Mt. Zion and along the Old City walls.



iBike

Located in the Negev desert next to geographical phenomenon Mitzpe Ramon, **iBike hotel and cycling center** offers cyclists and hikers visiting Israel's southern region a hotel dedicated to their specific needs. The comfortable accommodation is ideal for bikers, and the center's bicycle and hiking equipment shop as well as a café, ensure bikers get a great start on their journey. iBike also offers visitors a selection of guided bike trips and activities in the surrounding area - with drop-off and pick-up at the trail.



HooHa

HooHa is a unique hotel and center where cyclists from all over the world can meet up and exchange travel experiences and tips. Situated in Kfar Tavor in the Northern Galilee region, HooHa's Cyclist's House offers comfortable guest rooms, a swimming pool and Jacuzzi as well as comfy leather sofas – perfect for resting weary legs after a day's cycling. Run by cyclists for cyclists, visitors are sure to get all the right tips and assistance to make their excursion one to remember.

Eco Hotels



This time around, we've decided to focus our attention on accommodation options that take environmental protection seriously. No matter where travelers decide to go, they're sure to find a place that will spark their interest and fit their budget.



Eco Neighborhood in kibbutz Lotan

The Eco Neighborhood in kibbutz Lotan, a prototype model for sustainable living, offers visitors the chance to learn about an unconventional type of living first hand. Guests are welcome to lodge with full board included, in one of the 10 dome shaped apartments made out of straw bale and earth plaster, while taking advantage of solar energy, utilizing gray water , composting and more.



Desert Nomads Eco Retreat

The **Desert Nomads Eco Retreat** is located at the edge of the Ramon Crater and offers three types of accommodation: Eco tents built from sheeting and covered with earth, a Central tent for communal sleeping, and a Camping area. Facilities, plus information for hikers and bikers are available, as well as a restaurant.

Secret Eco-Hideaways





Abraham Tours

The Indie Travelers' Center and Abraham Hostel have joined forces to create **Abraham Tours** - unique tours for independent travelers to Israel. Abraham Tours are truly like no other – they are unique in approach and include highlights such as a Masada Sunrise Tour, a Desert Adventure day, Self-guided excursions, Bicycle Tours and so much more.



Cry of the Jackal Mountains Ranch

The **Cry of the Jackal Mountains Ranch** is located on the western slope of the Carmel Forest, amidst rich green foliage. This quiet and inspirational setting is the perfect base for celebrating an event, learning about plants in the workshops, as well as simply chilling out and enjoying the sunset - whilst listening to the cry of the jackals outside. The ranch is also the perfect starting point for groups interested in spicing up their stay with a tour of the Carmel and a satisfying meal or participating in unique activities in the area.



Hof Hasharon Nature Reserve

The beautiful **Hof Hasharon Nature Reserve** is hidden amongst the bustling mall of Shfayim. With a central location just 15 minutes from Tel Aviv, this oasis of pure natural surroundings can take visitors on any number of trails to catch site of the gazelles as well as the famous dark purple Iris which flowers in February.

Social responsibility



A Forester for a day program

The **Forester for a day Program**, a new and special program initiated by Keren Kayemet LeIsrael (The Jewish National Fund), allows visitors a unique opportunity to help maintain forests, prevent fires and promote a greener Israel. Groups can take part in a 2-3 hour program which will involve pruning trees, preparing fire breaks and clearing forest paths. A certificate is awarded upon completion of this program which is run at Kibbutz Nir Etzion.



Nalaga'at Center

The "**Nalaga'at**" **Center** is located at the Jaffa Port in Tel Aviv and is home to the Nalaga'at Theater, Café Kapish and BlackOut restaurant, all of which are run for and by Deaf-Blind people. Following an eye-level encounter with disabled individuals, visitors will leave with a real insight into the challenges faced by those who are deaf, blind or deaf-blind. The center offers unique experiences such as the Blackout restaurant where dinner is served in total darkness.



Better Place

Better Place is a company which works with governments, businesses and energy companies in a bid to accelerate their move to sustainable forms of transportation – Electric Vehicles. By making EVs which are easy to use, and attractive to own, drivers have the chance to help minimize environmental impact and reduce costs. Read more about it [here](#), - and make sure you visit this fascinating place.

For more information or reservations please contact one of our agents at Ophir Tours Raanana: Telephone: 09-777-7100 or email: livia@ophirtours.co.il



"Please consider your environmental responsibility before printing this e-mail"