

Dear BGU International students,

To help you take advantage of the upcoming holiday season in Israel, we have collected information about some of the most special and interesting places to visit and explore during Christmas and Hanukah.

We know you may be missing celebrating these holidays with your loved ones, but we hope that you will appreciate and enjoy the unique experience you'll have this winter season.

Below you will find some suggested tours. These tours are led by a tour company and are not related in any way to BGU International. You can find more tours and sites to visit online or consult Rotem for more information.

Christmas in Israel:

Celebrating Christmas in Israel is a unique experience. Though it's not a public holiday in Israel, the Holy Land is an extremely meaningful environment to celebrate Christmas.

Here are some of the main sites for celebrating Christmas:

Christmas in Nazareth:

Historically, Nazareth is believed to be the hometown of Jesus Christ. Today, Nazareth is Israel's largest Arab city. Combine these two factors and you begin to see why Christmas in Nazareth is such a special experience.

[Nazareth](#) comes to life during the holiday; its residents decorate their Christmas trees, roam around in their Santa hats, and throw street festivals, church services, and parties. On the eve of Christmas, there is a massive colorful procession throughout the town to celebrate.

Christmas events in Nazareth:

- ❖ December 24: Christmas Parade, starting 15:00 from Mary's Well down Paul VI Street
- ❖ December 24: Fireworks display, 17:30
- ❖ December 24: Midnight Mass in the Basilica of the Annunciation, 19:00
- ❖ Christmas Day: All Catholic churches have Mass. First Mass at the Church of the Annunciation takes place at 07:00. At 10:00, a festive Mass will take place.

Christmas in Jerusalem:

Christmas in Jerusalem is a truly unique time of year. Thousands of pilgrims come to the city to celebrate Christmas in the place where it all began (nearby in Bethlehem). The city, in particular, the Old City's Christian and Armenian quarters, become adorned with decorations, while other Jerusalem landmarks such as the YMCA, along with the city's churches, celebrate by holding services and carol concerts. Below are some of the best things to do in Jerusalem during Christmas.

Here's a suggested Christmas tour in Jerusalem (not related to BGU international): [once-a-year unique tour in and around Jerusalem](#). See Christian spots you won't find in a guide book, such as the birthplace of John the Baptist in what's now one of Jerusalem's most idyllic neighborhoods, Ein Karem; then visit Qasr al-Yahud, deep in the Judean Desert, where Jesus was baptized. You'll truly delve into the spirit of Christmas as you finish your tour relaxing at the Dead Sea for a spectacular winter sunset.

Christmas services In the city:

- ❖ Christmas Concert at the YMCA on December 24, 2022, 19:30 – 21:30 (TBC) – Enjoy performances by over 80 singers and musicians, including the Jerusalem Street Orchestra, Oratorio Jerusalem Choir, the Jerusalem Youth Choir, and the YMCA Academy Orchestra. Sing along with the best Christmas songs to ring in the holiday.
- ❖ Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem (Franciscan Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament)
- ❖ Pontifical Institute, Notre Dame Center (New Gate, Tel. 02-6279111, Fax: 02-6271995), holds multi-lingual messe

Christmas in Jerusalem's old city:

- ❖ In the Old City, head to the [Via Dolorosa](#) and watch pilgrims from around the world walk this famous route with the cross of Christ over their shoulders. While the visit can be made at any time of year, it's definitely more special on Christmas!
- ❖ In the days leading up to Christmas and directly after Christmas, explore the rest of the city on a [day tour](#) that takes you around the Old City as well as the modern areas.

Christmas in Tel Aviv- Jaffa:

Christmas in Tel Aviv-Jaffa is a unique experience. Tel Aviv, Israel's cultural capital, is a place that simmers with winter spirit. While the magical alleys of the diverse old town of Jaffa are adorned with Christmas trees. There are plenty of activities to celebrate this special time of year.

Christmas events in the city:

- ❖ The lighting of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Christmas tree will happen on December 19, 2022 at 18:30, next to the clock tower in Jaffa
- ❖ Weekend Christmas Market with artisan booths, holiday performances in Arabic, and many family-friendly activities. The market will be open from December 10-11, 2022 and from December 17-18, 2022.
- ❖ Come celebrate and shop at Teder's annual Christmas Market on December 21, 2022. There will be clothes, accessories, records, home decor and many other items to purchase. Plus, Christmas screenings and wine!
- ❖ "Kuli Alma" Club is a great place to celebrate the holidays, with themed events for Christmas and New Years.
- ❖ Attend the Christmas Parade in Jaffa on December 27 (TBC) from 17:30 pm-19:30 pm on Yefet Street. The parade will be a celebration of music, costumes, balloons, fireworks and much more, with Santa Claus leading the way.
- ❖ Take a digital self-guided tour: Codes on lamp posts throughout Jaffa will allow tourists to navigate through historical sites on their own with GPS systems, visual aids and audio explanations.

"Holiday of holidays" in Haifa, December 8-26:

The Holiday of Holidays, or Chag HaChagim in Hebrew, is an annual celebration of the religious and cultural diversity of the city of Haifa in the north of Israel. It takes place every December and marks the Hanukkah, Christmas, and Ramadan holidays for the Jewish, Christian and Muslim residents of Haifa who live peacefully side by side. This year it will be celebrated from December 8-26.

Activities during the Holiday of Holidays include food stands, antique fairs, arts and crafts fair, music, circus, and street celebrations. The event is intended to encourage the values of coexistence and mutual respect of all religions in the city. The festival takes place in the Arab Wadi Nisnas neighborhood and extends to the German Colony at the foot of the Bahai Gardens.

Hanukkah in Israel:

Hanukkah in Israel is a magical time! There are events happening all over the country, schools are on holiday, and families are busy exploring the country and celebrating the 'festival of light'. This year, Hanukkah will begin on December 18th and continue for 8 nights until the 26th of December.

The history of Hanukkah:

The festival of Hanukkah celebrates the re-dedication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem during the Maccabean Revolt in the 2nd century BCE. The Temple had been partially destroyed by the ancient Greeks, and when the Maccabees re-entered the Temple, they only found a tiny amount of oil. The oil was supposed to be used to light a candle every single night, but there was only enough for one day. The miracle of Hanukkah was that the oil burned for eight days instead of only one. The Jewish sages declared an eight-day festival to commemorate this miracle. Therefore Hanukkah is observed for eight days and nights. One symbol of Hanukkah you will see across Israel in both homes and public places are Menorahs or Hanukkiah's. These are small versions of the original Menorah from the Temple. These candelabras are lit every night of the festival, with another candle added each night. It's the perfect time of year to visit the Old City of Jerusalem, where there's a public Hanukkah lighting ceremony at the Western Wall. The true magic of the holiday can be accessed by walking around residential neighborhoods of Israel. Families gather outside their homes to light the special candles together at sunset. By the time it gets dark, full streets are illuminated by candlelight.

Traditional Hanukkah food:

Since the miracle of Hanukkah involved oil, the modern tradition of Hanukkah is to eat oily foods. Yum! In the month or so leading up to Hanukkah, cafes around the country will start to sell "Sufganiyot", which are filled donuts. While the basic Sufganiyah is a simple powdered donut filled with jelly or caramel, you can now get very elaborate versions of the delicious treat! Other popular foods are Latkes, which are fried Potato pancakes, and "Sfinge", which is a Moroccan take on the Sufganiyah.

Hanukkah in Jerusalem:

Hanukkah in Jerusalem is a magical time. Whether you're attending a menorah lighting event or simply taking a stroll in the streets, it will be impossible to miss the holiday spirit felt around the city. Many menorahs decorate city windows and the smells of freshly baked sufganiyot from the city's many bakeries waft through the air. For Jerusalem locals or visitors, Hanukkah is a great time to be in Jerusalem.

Special Hanukkah tours of Jerusalem:

❖ [Hanukkah evening tour of Jerusalem](#). One of the best parts of Hanukkah is the tradition to eat Sufganiyot, which are traditional filled donuts that you'll see in every bakery in Israel throughout the festive period. On this special tour, you'll get to try some of the best Sufganiyot in town!

❖ **Walk in the old city:**

Walk through the [Jewish Quarter of the Old City](#) and admire the beautiful menorahs which can be seen in the windows of homes.

❖ **Kotel menorah lighting in Jerusalem:**

The menorah at the Kotel (Western Wall) will be lit every night at 16:30 in an iconic public ceremony in the presence of leading rabbis and dignitaries. It is a very interesting time to visit the Kotel.

❖ **Israel museum:**

The Israel Museum invites your whole family to celebrate Hanukkah. They offer tons of activities which are all included in the admission price. There are art workshops, juggling shows, light and magic shows, story time, and much more! The Israel Museum, Derech Ruppin

❖ **Guided tour at "Yad Vashem":**

Yad Vashem, Israel's [Holocaust Museum](#), leads special tours on Hanukkah, which include stories about brave Jewish people who defied oppression by celebrating Hanukkah in secret during the Holocaust.

Spend a day of the Hanukkah festival on a [tour of the Old City and Yad Vashem](#) to acknowledge the holiday in a meaningful way.

❖ **The tower of David:**

The [museum](#) offers many activities and exhibitions during Hanukkah. Their magical night tour is perfect for the whole family. Get to know the fascinating story of Jerusalem, tour the walls of the fort, sing Hanukkah songs, and finish the tour lighting festive candles and eating donuts.

❖ **Herzl Museum:**

The Herzl Museum invites you to light the menorah every night during Hanukkah. The lighting also includes a visit of the museum. Herzl Museum, Herzl Blvd

❖ **Beit "Avi Chai":**

This cultural center has a tradition of celebrating Hanukkah. They put on a Hanukkah theater show for children. There is also a creative light-kite workshop in the holiday spirit. Beit Avi Chai, King George St 44.

❖ **Bloomfield Science Museum:**

Celebrate the festive holiday at the science museum. They have special activities happening for the whole family like tours, science and art workshops, a 3D movie screening, and a children's show. Bloomfield Science Museum, Sderot HaMuze'onim 3.

Hanukkah in Tel Aviv:

The Festival of Lights is being celebrated this year in 2022 from December 18th – 26th. There are tons of events to be found all around the city. Here are some of the top events happening for Hanukkah in Tel Aviv, and most importantly, where to find the best sufganiyot (doughnuts) that will have you wishing that the oil lasted for more than 8 days!

What to do during Hanukkah in Tel Aviv?:

❖ **Attend a menorah lighting:**

What better way to commemorate the miracle of Hanukkah and get to know the community than by attending a [public menorah lighting](#)? Go to Gan Ha'atzmaut (Independence Park), the park overlooking Hilton Beach, to celebrate the first night of Hanukkah. There will be a menorah lighting, live music, donuts, activities for the kids, and of course, a selfie with Judah Maccabi himself!

The Bavli Community Center hosts annual menorah lightings. The event will also have a parade of lights, donuts, candles, and performances. During the entire holiday, there will be public menorah lightings at HaBima Square and at Rabin Square.

❖ **Eat your weight in sufganiyot:**

Eating sufganiyot (doughnuts) on Hanukkah is a tradition, "Roladin" bakery is most famous for serving up a huge variety of donuts, with innovative new

flavors every year. Of course, since Tel Aviv is the vegan capital of the world, you can even find vegan donuts at Piece of Cake, a bakery with a few locations throughout the city. There are really donuts for every taste. See more on our list of the [best sufganiyot in Tel Aviv](#).

❖ **Attend a Hanukkah performance:**

Tel Aviv has a plethora of [places to see live music](#). Catch special Hanukkah performances all around the city.

❖ **Visit a museum:**

Head to the Tel Aviv Museum of Art for some Hanukkah adventures. There will be shows for the children and other fun happenings.

For more museums in Tel Aviv see [Tel Aviv's Best Museums](#).

❖ **Shop for presents:**

Tel Aviv has some great [shopping](#) opportunities. From the swanky boutiques of Neve Tzedek and Shenkin to the unique handicrafts fair on Nahalt Binyamin and the offbeat vendors in the Jaffa Flea Market, Hanukkah is a great time to pick up presents in Tel Aviv for friends and loved ones – or yourself.

