

Israel Today

Israel, located at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia, is a geographically compact yet remarkably diverse country. Bounded by the Mediterranean to the west, Lebanon and Syria to the north, Jordan to the east, the Red Sea and Egypt to the south, Israel spans about 260 miles (420 km) north to south. From the sea to the Jordan River, there are a mere seventy miles (110 km). Looming above are the central hills of Judea and Samaria, now under Israeli control, overlooking and safeguarding the valleys on all sides, as they do on Golan Heights peaks.



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Although much smaller than California—only 3% of its area—Israel's geographical diversity rivals that of the most populous US state. Yet it's the size of New Jersey.

The country features the lush Galilee hills in the north, the arid Negev Desert in the south, and vibrant coastal plains along the Mediterranean. There are even snow-covered mountains of the Golan in winter.

Dividing Israel from Jordan is the Dead Sea, the lowest point on Earth, and Eilat's coral-rich Red Sea shores in the south. This variety within a tiny area highlights Israel's blend of natural beauty, historical significance, and modern development.

Before 1967, Israel's narrow "waist" near Netanya was just 9 miles (15 km) wide, leaving the country exposed to potential threats in the Arab-held high ground. After 1967, with the inclusion of Judea and Samaria (West Bank), Israel's width increased to a modest 85 miles (135 km) at its widest point and 70 miles (114 km) in the center of the country near Tel Aviv.

Jerusalem is Israel's capital and largest city, about a 50 minute drive to Tel Aviv, its commercial hub. Haifa is the third largest city, followed by Beer Sheba.