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## Summer in the City

Where to stay in the hot -- as in, popular -- Jerusalem?

May 06, 2010 - Elyse Glickman, Jewish Exponent Feature

Passover denotes a time when Moses pleaded to the Israelites' oppressors to "Let my people go!" As Israel continues to celebrate its independence, as well as Jerusalem Day on May 12, the summer season also begins, when the Israeli hospitality industry implores weary American Jews seeking a spiritually enlightening vacation to "Let our people come!"



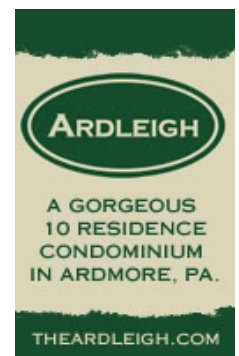
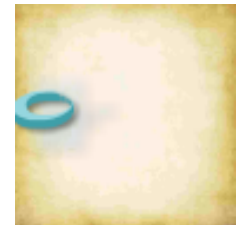
*Rooms with a view -- such a view: Mount Zion Hotel, and Mamilla Hotel (below)*

With this in mind, it's always a good idea to research what hotels are best to do business with, especially with family and temple groups. For that matter, it's also good to research flight offers, especially when making the big exodus with your relatives or synagogue members.

In fact, doing your homework can reap some very nice rewards that make a group or family trip virtually seamless.

EL AL Israel Airlines ([www.elal.com](http://www.elal.com)), for example, is offering passengers departing from Philadelphia several incentives to spend quality time in Israel this summer.

As part of EL AL's partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia ([www.elal.com/phl](http://www.elal.com/phl)), EL AL donates \$10 of every ticket purchased to Federation initiatives, such as day-school education, scholarships, and overnight camping and Israel experiences.





The airline is also offering a limited-time, free travel cell phone to use in Israel with the purchase of roundtrip ticket departures before June 30. Additionally, each member of your group gets 60 complimentary minutes of outgoing call time from within Israel to ensure the group stays together.

Better still, there is no charge for incoming calls from anywhere in the world.

On the subject of choice locations, while Jerusalem has no shortage of hotels, the best strategy to finding a place everybody can agree on is to seek out properties that specialize in being all things to all people. While the famous King David Hotel has been a no-brainer in that area for years, several newer properties are not only offering roomy accommodations, but also amenities and ambiance that allow diverse personalities traveling together to have an authentic

Jerusalem experience.

The King David's sister property, the Dan Panorama Hotel Jerusalem ([www.danhotels.com](http://www.danhotels.com)), takes its older sibling's most desirable elements to the next level, with its striking architecture, 292 well-appointed rooms and its location in the new part of the city.

It is just steps from Jerusalem's lively center, theaters, shops and businesses, as well as the Old City and prime historic sites.

Groups in town for a religious experience will be pleased to know that in addition to an in-house synagogue (standard for the city's better properties), the Dan offers a Friday shuttle service to the Western Wall.

Rafi Baeri, vice president of Dan Hotels marketing and sales, explains that the Dan Panorama is particularly well-equipped to keep families involved together, from the on-site children's activity center Daniland to several accessible walking tours of both Old City (and new), to easy access to the city's myriad summer festivals, including the Festival of Light in June; the Jerusalem Film Festival in July; the city's arts-and-crafts festival -- Huzot Hayozar -- in August; and the Israel Festival of Jerusalem, stretching through May and June.

Meanwhile, the 257-room Inbal Hotel ([www.inbalhotel.com](http://www.inbalhotel.com)) is also a trailblazer in modernizing and personalizing the Jerusalem experience, even when accommodating larger groups. Overlooking Jerusalem's Liberty Bell Park, and located within walking distance of the city's main cultural venues and the Old City, the Inbal doesn't just lay claim to being one of the finest hotels in Jerusalem, but is also a (literal) open doorway to Jerusalem's highlights, which can be had for excellent negotiated group and family rates, as well as discounts for early bookings.

Food is also a major selling point, as Inbal's executive chef, Itzik Barak, has addressed the divergent palates through restaurants and menus that offer a full gamut of cuisines, including Continental, French, Italian, Moroccan, Eastern, traditional and fusion.

For those who prefer the more intimate and contemporary setting of a boutique hotel, the 117-room Mount Zion Hotel ([www.Mountzion.co.il](http://www.Mountzion.co.il)) is a standout -- not only for its hands-on approach to accommodating both individual guests and groups, but also the wow factor of its decor and location on the outskirts of the Old City, overlooking such biblical landscapes as King David's Tower, Mount Zion and the Hinnom Valley.



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Though the exterior of the former 19th-century British ophthalmic hospital is on the plain side, the Mount Zion's interior, jewel-box exquisite guest rooms and striking, stylized Pan-Middle Eastern furnishings and rich colors add an extra snazzy factor to the terrain that surrounds the property.

Even with all that uptown opulence, however, Mount Zion Hotel makes no bones about the fact that it is family and group-friendly.

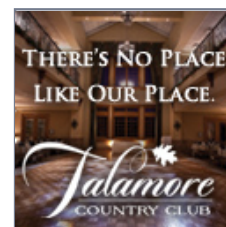
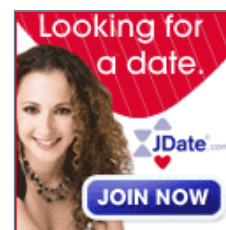
The Mamilla Hotel, in turn, brings the Jerusalem twist on the modern boutique hotel to the next level. Though it has much in common with its neighbors -- location minutes from the Old City and key historic destination landmarks -- it endeavors to be a Jerusalem landmark for the 21st century.

"Our hotel should act as a story-teller, a window through which guests can see and experience the very best of Jerusalem," says Massimo Ianni, COO of parent company Alrov Luxury Hotels.

Inside a dramatic structure designed by noted architectural giants, Moshe Safdie and Piero Lissoni, the luxury property -- touted in this month's issue of *Condé Nast Traveller* as part of its "Hot List 2010" -- boasts the world-class rooftop restaurant and a "lifestyle"-driven orientation that appeals to visitors who like state-of-the-art amenities as much as they appreciate historical legacy.

While many hotels in Jerusalem have a synagogue on site, the Mamilla also boasts a special feature: the Holistic Well-Being retreat.

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