

Galilee



The Galilee is not a large region. A mere 80 miles separate its northern border—the peak of Mount Hermon from its southernmost boundary along the Jezreel Plain, the site of biblical Armageddon.

Its eastern reaches, on the far edge of the Golan plateau, lie only 50 miles from the Mediterranean sea in the west, but these 5,000 square miles encompass amazingly beautiful and contrasting scenery: mountains and valleys, fertile plateaus and stark cliffs and glimmering seacoast.

The drive just one hour from one end of the Galilee to the other, and it is also a short hop from major attractions all around Israel: a two hour drive to Tel Aviv, under three hours to Jerusalem or the Dead Sea.

Six thousand years ago, the Galilee was already bustling with human activity. The natural forests that covered Galilee mountains were cleared, and replaced with farms and villages. On the plains, large cities sprung up.

About 4,000 years ago, Hazor, of biblical fame, was a world famous trading centre.

Some 3,500 years ago, Joshua and the Israelite tribes conquered the Galilee and settled there, side by side with the pagan indigenous population.

The Galilee mountains were the birthplace of Jewish mysticism. Shimon Bar Yohai, regarded as the first Jewish mystic, lived in the Galilee in the second century CE.

In the sixteenth century, the small town of Safed became the birth-place of Kabbalah.

The Galilee today is still a relatively unknown destination. Its tourism facilities have developed slowly but in the past few years the hospitality of its people, and the growing world wide interest in agro-tourism and eco-tourism, have made the region increasingly popular. The Galilee's ancient sites have been preserved and restored—the old city of Acre, the town of Safed, the antiquities of Hazor and Dan, to name a few.

Natural treasures, such as the sources of the Jordan River, the Hula National Park, and the Biriya forest, await the visitor who loves the great outdoors.

The Galilee as a travel destination is a place to take in slowly, a place to sit in the shade of an ancient olive tree, bask in the sun on a quiet beach, or walk along a cobblestone lane still echoing with footsteps of centuries. Its mystical atmosphere takes the visitor far away from the frenetic world we live in today.