

Get Off the Tour Bus!

Get creative with your next visit to Israel.

BY JUDY LASH BALINT

WHILE SOME WILL CHOOSE TO STAY AWAY from Israel as acts of sporadic violence continue to take place, savvy travelers looking to deepen their Israel experience will luck out. A wealth of participatory activities in secured surroundings awaits those looking to supplement visits to the popular tourist sites. Israelis and the Israeli economy will appreciate your presence, and you'll gain a better understanding of what makes the country tick.

Volunteer

Despite its "start-up nation" image, poverty exists in Israel. Figures for 2014 indicate that 22 percent of Israel's population and one in three Israeli kids lives below the poverty line. Get an orientation about the problem at the **Pantry Packers' Jerusalem distribution plant**, and then make a difference by packing boxes of food staples designated for needy families.

pantrypackers.org

Bond with the Duchifat (Hoopoe Bird)

Mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, and amphibians are all mentioned in the Torah and discussed in the Talmud. Head to the **Biblical Museum of Natural History** in Beit Shemesh to explore the significance of animals and zoology in Jewish tradition and the land of Israel in an interactive workshop with director Rabbi Natan Slifkin, author of *The Torah Encyclopedia of the Animal Kingdom*. biblicalnaturalhistory.org

Indulge

Located in a beautiful stone building that was once the original cowshed of iconic Kibbutz Deganya Bet near the Kinneret, Galita offers a variety of **chocolate-oriented activities**: a three-hour how-to workshop that includes creating your own gourmet truffles with recipes to take home, a visit to the factory outlet, a film on the history of chocolate, and a café to sample some homemade ice cream and other treats. ekinneret.co.il

Make Some Art

Get your creative juices flowing at the home of one of Israel's most recognizable design brands. **Kakadu's** distinctive hand-painted wooden place mats, carpets, wall hangings, and shelves are designed at a studio in Moshav Tzafirir in the pastoral Elah Valley. Sign up for a workshop with Kakadu staff to produce your own Israel-inspired item or learn about environmental sculpting. kakadu.co.il

Challenge Yourself

Jerusalem's Ammunition Hill was the site of one of the decisive battles that resulted in the reunification of Jerusalem in the 1967 Six Day War. Today, there's a way to combine learning history with some up-to-the-minute adventure. Visit the on-site museum, climb through the trenches, and book a spot on the **Ropes Course Challenge** that features a 200-foot omega zip line, rope ladders, a bungee swing, a rope bridge, and outdoor training activities. g-h.org.il/en

See Social Entrepreneurship in Action

At the Yvel factory and showroom, learn how the owners of one of the world's leading **jewelry** manufacturers are teaching skills of the trade to Ethiopian Israelis in an intensive training program. Watch the designers in action, see a 3-D movie about the pearls used at Yvel, and sample a glass of wine from the nearby Judean hills at the wine cellar in the historic Yvel building.

funinjerusalem.com/yvel

