

# Israel Initiates Largest Eco-Tourism Project In Its History

Israel has embarked on one of the world's most dramatic 'eco-friendly' initiatives, transforming the 2,000-acre Hiriya garbage dump on the outskirts of Tel Aviv into a magnificent park and 24-hour recreational hotspot.



Since Hiriya's establishment decades ago, the ecological blight existed as an eyesore on the edge of Tel Aviv, complete with waste-eating pigeons and horrid stench. Fast forward to 2008, the soon-to-be-completed 'Ayalon Park' will stand as one of the world's largest metropolitan parks containing a vast number of trees, hiking and horseback riding trails, and tropical gardens.

The 230-foot Hiriya Mountain, a waste-mound located within the park's center, has been transformed into an eco-friendly attraction boasting an inner oasis of tilting terraces, ridge groves, shaded foot paths and a two-layered canopy with benches and tables for rest or picnics. Atop Hiriya Mountain, travelers will have panoramic views of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The Recycling Center, which spans 75 acres, is located at the base of the "healed" mountain, and currently operates the most innovative technologies for recycling waste.

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"The Ayalon Park rejuvenation project is a true indicator of Israel's efforts to put itself on par with some of the most environmentally conscious countries in the world," says Arie Sommer, Commissioner of Tourism, North and South America. "The park will be a hotspot for nature-seeking tourists and a "front door" to Tel Aviv's amazing natural landscape."

"Friends of Ayalon Park," an independent non-profit public organization, has launched a brand new, interactive website in an effort to raise awareness of the park and encourage community involvement in its rehabilitation project.

The Israeli Government is committed to Ayalon Park. In 2005, it dedicated one of the last remaining tracts of open urban land for use in Ayalon Park and later allocated a seed grant to create a national treasure for the enjoyment of future generations. This donation then encouraged initial grants from organizations, including the Beracha Foundation, allowing the park to start becoming a reality. In 2005, The Friends of the Ayalon Park was established as an independent, non-profit organization to ensure public involvement in planning, building and financing the park. To date, Ayalon Park is Israel's most ambitious environmental project. Its completion is entirely dependent upon cooperation and a communal effort. Much work remains to guarantee the integrity and success of Ayalon Park.

<http://www.ayalon-park.org.il>

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