

Rosh Hashanah / Israel's Holiday Mood

WHEN IN ISRAEL

From honey massages to white dresses, everything in the Holy Land is infused with the holiday spirit, reports **Raizel Druxman**



Celebrating Jewish holidays in Israel has its perks; actually, there are a lot of them. In a country where national holidays and Jewish holidays are one and the same, vacation spirit pulses through the entire country.

From Rosh Hashanah through to

Simchat Torah, everyone puts a fresh spin on their products. With apple and honey massages at the Elma Hotel, to special VIP vineyard tours at the Golan Heights Winery, and a fresh stock of white dresses at Trumpeldor, Jerusalem's iconic vintage clothing store, everyone gets involved in the celebrations. Even the public buses in

Israel stream 'Chag Sameach' across the front of the bus.

For Marissa, a second year student at Naale Elite Academy, a high school programme in Israel, seeing the country transform blew her away. "Coming from the States, where Jewish holidays are celebrated in private, it's incredibly meaningful to see the whole country in the Jewish holiday spirit."

Seeach Sod – a non-profit that supports children with special needs and their families – makes sure that no one gets left out of the celebrations. "We tailor the celebrations so the kids and adults can be involved and feel more included in their nation," said Sarah Nathan, Seeach Sod's spokeswoman. Taking special care to provide a joyful celebration catered specifically for the needs of its community, Seeach Sod organises special prayer services, trips and a massive Simchat Torah celebration in



Jerusalem that is open to all.

The streets of Jerusalem are usually where people flock to for the *chagim*, but celebrations happen all over Israel. Tel Aviv, in particular, has a growing religious community with the establishment of Chabad on the Coast, White City TLV and many more synagogues and communities geared towards young Jews and families. With more options, Jews of all stripes are coming out of the woodwork to celebrate the holidays.

Founders of Chabad on the Coast and former programme directors at Ascent in Tzfat, Sarah and Eli Naiditch, saw that people were searching for community. "In Tzfat, we met a lot of people who came up from Tel Aviv for a spiritual getaway," Naiditch said. "It shouldn't be that you have to run to Tzfat to have a meaningful Shabbat experience." Wanting people to feel



at home and pampered, their holiday events are always beautifully decorated, elegant and *heimish*. "If you want to engage people, you need to be up to the standards of the world," added Naiditch. "No one is coming for a plastic bowl of *cholent*."

Also upping the glamour in Israel are Elma Hotel, Golan Heights Winery and Trumpeldor. Elma is featuring a new massage using special apple-scented oils and honey-infused creams. The winery offers special jeep tours of the vineyards and the beautiful Golan Heights surrounding them. A few weeks before the *chagim*, Trumpeldor stocks dresses from around the world, including a huge selection of white dresses.

According to Trumpeldor co-partner, Jordana Rabinowitz, availability of new fashion items is limited in Israel. "People show up to synagogue in the same outfits, especially on the *chagim* when a lot of people are buying something new," she explained. "Shopping at vintage shops gives you more opportunity to look unique and find your own style."

The special holiday flair that Israel offers is unparalleled. From unique places to pray, get pampered, wine and dine and even shop, Israel will show you a side to the *chagim* you've never experienced.

