

# 65 Things to Love About Israel

How many reasons can you come up with to love Israel? Here are 65 from lone soldier Keren Hajioff, but there are certainly a great deal more.

1. I love that there are Israeli flags absolutely everywhere—just because we can.
2. I love that time I was in a pretentious club in Tel-Aviv during Hanukkah and they stopped the crazy partying in order to light the Hanukkah candles.
3. I love that it is considered impolite to *not* tell someone whom you voted for.
4. I love that Dudi is a common name here.
5. I love that when I was crying once on the bus, the girl next to me put her arm around me.
6. I love that feeling when the siren goes off and everything stops. And you know that everyone is feeling the same thing.
7. I love that under a week of knowing someone, he invited me to his wedding.
8. I love that the taxi driver carried on telling me his story from the Yom Kippur War, despite having already arrived at my destination.
9. I love that time I was on a packed bus with 10 passengers standing. When a seated passenger got off the bus, all the standing passengers were arguing who should sit down. Arguing that the other should sit. After nobody budged, the seat remained empty for the rest of the hour-long journey.

10. I love that the above has happened to me more than once.
11. I love that woman from Beer Sheva who stood in the streets giving out tea and biscuits during Operation Pillar of Defense.
12. I love being told "Chag Sameach" by the electronic sign on the front of the bus. Seventy years ago, nobody would have been able to believe that we would have the technology or a homeland in order to do so.
13. I love how people are dressed up every day for a week to in order to celebrate the one day of Purim.
14. I love watching the video of Sam Sank's parents surprising him at his beret ceremony (search "sam sank surprise" on YouTube, and you will understand).
15. I love that at the end of my ride in the taxi, the driver gave me a *bracha* to get married.
16. I love that I occasionally get phone calls in the army from my friends' parents, just to "see how things are going."
17. I love that last year during the memorial ceremony for the fallen soldiers of Israel, I met a Holocaust survivor who spent the evening telling me his story and held my hand during the Hatikva.
18. I love that when a glass breaks in a restaurant, everyone, without fail, screams "*Mazel tov!*" and starts cheering.
19. I love that walking through the streets of Israel and reading the street names is more of a history lesson than most history lessons I have had.
20. I love Mivtza Yonatan (the operation in Entebbe). It's simply the most incredible story ever.
21. I love that while in a clothes shop with my friend, a

fellow customer handed us her baby (which was 2 months old) while she tried on clothes.

22. I love getting the seat on the bus next to the middle door. Because as opposed to other seats on the bus, it has its own shade for the window and there isn't a chance for another passenger to pull the shade down and stop me from looking out of the window at our beautiful country.

23. I love my adopted family. I got an adopted family when I moved to Israel, and they have just accepted me like a real daughter. It's amazing! When I lost my credit card, my adopted mum offered to give me hers. When I was crying during the hard times, my adopted dad knew exactly how to calm me down (he would sing me songs!). And it's all because a family took me in out of the goodness of their hearts. Unbelievable.

24. I strangely love that people here complain so much about Israel. For people to complain so much about this country means that they have forgotten how great of a miracle it is that we have it. Why do I love the fact that people have forgotten how great it is that Israel is ours? Because it means we are used to it. Why are people used to it? It's because it has been ours for 65 years. That is something that I am very happy about. So the more people complain, the more I am reminded that Israel is ours.

25. I love that the most common form of graffiti in Israel is "*Am Yisrael Chai*."

26. I love that I know an Israeli family that went to a very fancy wedding that I too attended, and after an hour of being at the wedding, I saw them leaving. When asking them why they were leaving so early, they responded, "There are no salatim, no humus, no tehina; we are hungry." I laughed, but they were being genuinely serious; they left before the main course.

27. I love that I got more than 15 (yes, 15) invitations from people for Seder, including two taxi drivers, a stranger I met

in a bar, old friends from the army I hadn't seen in years, etc.

28. I love watching the Chabad guys chasing men to put on teffilin, then succeeding, and then hugging them. The hugging bit is the bit that I love.

29. I love Israel Defense Forces soldiers. (There was no way that this wasn't going to one of my 65.)

30. I love that Nimrod is a common name here.

31. I love that the guy in the shwarma shop saw me bopping my head to the music, came out from behind the counter and started doing a yeminite dance. And then gave me a free bag of chips.

32. I love that when you land in Israel, everyone on the plane cheers. And they really mean it.

33. I love that feeling when you get off the plane and you see everything is written in Hebrew and you are reminded of the fact that we have a Jewish state.

34. I love that on Friday evenings, no matter where you are in Israel—in the field, in a secular community, anywhere at all—you feel that it's Shabbat.

35. I love that on Friday afternoons, you can already smell that it's Shabbat.

36. I love the girls that give out Shabbat candles on the streets; it's so nice of them!

37. I love that the other day, my bus driver pulled over in the middle of the journey and bought himself pretzels.

38. I love that a few days earlier, another bus driver announced at the beginning of his journey that he didn't actually know where he was going and he would appreciate it if

someone would come and sit next to him and direct him.

39. I love that the security guard in Azrielli Mall, after looking at my picture on my army ID, felt comfortable enough to tell me that I used to be fat.

40. I love Elal. During Pillar of Defense, they allowed people to cancel their flights for free in order to stay and help the situation in Israel, which lost them millions of dollars. How nice is that?

41. I love that while eating dinner in a restaurant with a friend, the table next to us brought us a slice of birthday cake.

42. I love that the guy from my phone company, after flirting with me over the phone, added me on Facebook after we finished talking!

43. I love that when flying back from New York to Israel, after introducing myself to the man sitting next to me and telling him I was a lone soldier, he instantly invited me for Shabbat. The plane hadn't even taken off.

44. I love that Israeli's say the word "*achi*" (brother) after approximately every seven words in a sentence—even if they are screaming at each other.

45. I love the taxi driver that felt comfortable enough to have an argument with his wife on loudspeaker.

46. I love that Israelis call daddy long legs "helicopters" (in a strong Israeli accent).

47. I love how people in Israel regard their ages in halves up until their mid-20s. "I'm 22 and a half," "I'm 24 and three-eighths" (the example was made up).

48. I love how Israelis refer to Arabs as our "*bnei dodim*" (our cousins).

49. I love that when trying on a dress in a shop, one of the workers told me not to get it because it didn't look good.
50. I love those occasions where I am sitting on a bus or a train and someone is walking around giving out wafers or biscuits. It's a regular occurrence here.
51. I love that one morning, at 5:30 AM, while walking to my base, a guy on a bike cycling past me screamed, "Don't yawn with your mouth open!"
52. I love the time I was driving with a friend and all the cars in the lane going in the opposite direction were flashing their lights as they drove by. I asked why they were all flashing their lights and my friend said, "It's because they saw police ahead and they are warning me." Apparently this is a common code in Israel.
53. I love that on a plane from London to Israel, an Israeli sitting next to me was holding a baby. The baby was crying for the majority of the journey, but then it became cute for a bit. During its couple of minutes of being cute, I said to the woman next to me, "Your baby is so cute," and she said, "Well actually, it's not mine. I saw a woman I know who has twins, and I thought I'd help her out by holding one of them for the plane journey."
54. I love that there are so many people riding their bikes and singing out loud. They don't even get any weird looks; it's completely acceptable here.
55. I love that people start saying "*Shabbat Shalom*" as of Wednesday. I even once heard someone say "*Shabbat Shalom*" on a Sunday.
56. I love that before Pesach, there are adverts on the television and radio reminding people to make sure that everyone they know has somewhere to be for all their meals.

57. I love that on numerous occasions, people have stopped me in the street and asked me to use my phone. And sometimes if I am about to meet someone yet am running out of battery, I make sure to write down their number because I myself know I can find someone's phone to use.

58. I love that as soon as a mother with a stroller is about to go up/downstairs, there is always more than one person who helps her. They don't even ask; they simply help.

59. I love that night that my friends and I walked into a random apartment in Tel-Aviv because it looked as if they were throwing a party, pretended we knew people there even though we didn't, and end up becoming friends with the majority of them.

60. I love that everyone can keep calm and keep going when missiles are being fired at Israel, but when there is snow, that is when panic begins.

61. I love seeing old Israeli men sitting at a table, laughing, playing shesh-besh, eating nuts and smoking, knowing that they have probably been friends for years and been through a lot together.

62. I love seeing a group of guys my age that are so close and are like brothers, knowing that in 40 years time, they will be what I described above.

63. I love that you can go outside in your pajamas and give reason to doing so, because "even if I'm not inside my apartment, I'm still walking around my home."

64. (Only those who have experienced this feeling will be able to understand it.) I love that feeling you get when you simply realize how lucky it is to be here. Be it on a memorial day or at the top of a mountain during a hike with friends or on a packed bus, there are those moments where you all of a sudden appreciate where you are. In the state of Israel, the Jewish

homeland, those moments are truly great.

65. I love the fact that this list could carry on and on ...

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