

Directions to Biblical Tamar Park

Address

Biblical Tamar Park
Ir Ovot
D. N. Arava 86805
ISRAEL

Supervisor's phone

052-426-0266

Directions to BTP by Train and Bus from Ben Gurion Airport

After exiting customs at Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv, you will be on the ground level. Take a left after you pass through the people waiting to pick up other passengers. (Take a right to exchange some money if you need to do that first. You can also rent cell phones in this area.) After taking the left, follow the signs to the train station. You will take a right at airport exit #3. Go through the doors and down the hallway. Off to your left, you will see the turnstiles for the train. Walk through that opening in the hallway, before the turnstiles, off to your left is the ticket window. Go to the ticket window and ask for a ticket to Beersheva Central. (Note: If the train is not running for some unknown reason, you will have to take the bus instead. Have someone direct you to the bus stop and take the bus to the Central Bus Station, where you can get a ticket to Tamar like you would at Beersheva.)

The train ticket price should be around 32 shekels. You have to change trains once, and they may mention this to you when you buy the ticket. Just tell them you know you have to change trains. Then, proceed to the turnstiles just before the stairs or escalator. You need to put your train ticket through a machine to activate the turnstile. Do not forget to pick it up when it kicks back out, as you will need it again when you get off. Go down the escalator to the train platforms. Take the northbound train, the one going towards Nahariyya (likely platform 2). I usually do not bother getting a seat because you get off at the very first stop - the Tel Aviv Hahagana station. This is where you change trains. You can see the names of the stations out the window as you pull up to them. Once you get off, you will have to walk across the train platform to the other set of tracks in front of you. You can check a board for the arrival time of the train to Beersheva. There is a board in the middle of the stop that tells when the trains are arriving and where they go. It reads right to left like Hebrew, but English is on it. Look to see when the train to Beersheva arrives at the Tel Aviv Hahagana station and what platform you need. If you are uncertain, ask someone to help you read the board, and most people will help you. More than one train line uses this platform. So, it is wise to ask someone to be sure that you are getting the train to Beersheva. Once you board, you can move from car to car to find a better seat, if you would like. You may need to push a button to open the doors between cars.

There are two stops in Beersheva. You will need the last one - Beersheva Center. You will ride the train to the end of the line. This is about a 1 ½ hour ride. After you get off you will need to put your train ticket back through the machine/turnstile, like you did before you boarded, to exit and then take it when it kicks back. As you exit the train station, you will see the buses off to your left across the street. There will be an exterior bus station for travel around Beersheva. Skip that one. Walk across the street and into the new mall area. There are many shops here to buy food and other items. To get to the bus ticket counter go straight ahead to the wing that is in front of you. The wing of stores to the right is shops, restaurants and a bus line for the north of the country. At the far end of this wing, to your right, is a McDonalds if you would like to eat there. The ticket counter for the bus you need is straight ahead and then along the wall on the immediate right. This is for the Egged Bus Line. Order a ticket to Ein Hatzeva for around 44 shekels. Go to platform for the bus (394) towards Eilat via the

Arava. (You need the one that goes through the Arava.) You might ask those waiting with you, to confirm you are waiting at the right place for the right bus. If that bus is full, you can take the ticket back to the counter and get one for the next bus. At the time of this writing the Egged Bus Line #394 leaves at 8:00 a.m., 9:30, 11:00, 12:30 p.m., 2:00, 3:30, 5:00, 6:30, 9:30 & 1:30 a.m. Sunday – Thursday. On Friday the last bus of the day is at 3:30 p.m. and on Saturday the first bus of the day is at 5: 00 p.m. Buses leave roughly every hour and a half during the day until 6:30 p.m. There is also a bus #393 and #397 that makes this run a few times. The ticket agent can give you more information on this. If you get there when the buses are not running, there are long distance taxis that will take you. They are usually hovering around the train and bus stations. You can also check with them about taking you to the Yellow Gas Station at Ein Hatzeva. (I'm not sure of the going rate for this service.)

There is not much room for luggage where you sit on the bus, so you will need to stow it below. It is best to do this before trying to get on the bus. A small carry-on will be OK to take on the bus, but not much more than that. It is best to put your luggage underneath on the side of the bus that the doors are on, so when you are dropped off and you need to get your luggage, you will be on the shoulder side of the road and not have to go out onto the road where there might be traffic.

Once on the bus, show the driver your ticket and ask him to let you know when you get to the Yellow Gas Station at Ein Hatzeva. The driver should tell you when you get close, but keep watching. To stop the bus, there is a button over your head you will want to push when you're ready to get off. If traveling at night, this stop is right after a long stretch of bright yellow street lights. From there, cross the highway and you will see a small white building in the distance slightly to the right – that is where you are heading! It is about a half mile walk across the desert. The site is just on the far side of the mango fields. If you get off the bus and still can't figure out where to go, find a phone and call the site! The number for the Park Supervisor at Biblical Tamar Park is: 052-462-0266.

If you have questions about the bus schedule you can call the Egged Bus Line in Israel at: 03-694-8888 or check www.egged.co.il/ENG.

Directions to Ben Gurion Airport by Train and Bus from BTP

The Egged Bus Line #394 from Eilat to Beersheva stops at the Yellow gas station in Ein Hatzeva. Someone from Tamar may be able to take you there, or it is a half mile walk down an old British/Roman Road to the Yellow. You can get on the bus at Yellow and take it to Beersheva. It is best to reserve a ticket a couple days before your trip at 03-694-8888. This will give you a reserved seat. If you just show up at the Yellow Gas Station, you may not have a seat available at the time you want. Then you have to wait for the next bus or two. To reserve a ticket on the phone you will need a local Israeli credit card. If you do not have one, or know of someone with one who will let you use it, you will have to take your chances at the Yellow. It helps a lot to have a Hebrew speaker help you make this call, but you can do it. You will often have to wait on the phone a while. Once on the phone, they count off the number of people waiting in front of you, in Hebrew. If you do not know your Hebrew numbers, just keep holding till they get to you. Ask for reservations. They will transfer you, put you on hold, and again give the number of those waiting a head of you, in Hebrew. Usually the person who answers will help you. If you get someone who does not speak English well, you may be put on hold again and the counting begins again or you may get dropped and have to call over again. I have found there are usually 8-10 people waiting, so it can take a little while; be patient. They will ask you what time you would like to be picked up and give you some options. They often talk about the time the buses leave Eilat. It gets to the gas station about 1 ½ hours later. Make sure you know what time the bus is scheduled to arrive at the Yellow at Ein Hatzeva. You will need to give them your passport number and a credit card number, to reserve your ticket. Make sure you take down the confirmation number they give you. It is around 44 shekels per person.

The bus will take about a 20 minute rest stop after it arrives. The driver will often leave the bus and take a 15+ minute break. When he gets back, begin to get on the bus (leaving your luggage outside by the door). He may motion to you to go ahead and store your luggage first, he may come down to meet you or, most common, he may stay seated and ask you your name and confirmation number and then have you get back off to store your luggage. Your ticket will have a seat number on it, but often someone is already sitting in it, or it is way in the back. Go ahead and sit where you can, asking if the seat is taken. If it comes down to it, you can make the person sitting in your seat move by showing that person your ticket and number. This may be needed if the bus is full.

The ride to Beersheva is a little over an hour. As you pull into the bus station, you can see the train station on your right. Once you get off the bus and get your luggage, walk along the shops till you find an opening that goes through. The first opening through faces the train station and after you exit you will see the trains. Cross the street (where local buses may be waiting) and head to the corner on your left. The bus stop is in an L shape. The second opening is in the corner of the L and 90 degrees from the first opening. If you do not see the train station in front of you when you exit, look off to your right and it will be there, just down the street. The third opening is facing the same direction as the second opening. Go through and go right, walking down the side walk. If you have any questions, just ask someone for the train station. It is less than a block away. The train to Tel Aviv leaves on the half hour, so if it is close to the time your bus arrives, you may want to pick up the pace or you will have to wait an hour for the next train.

You may need your passport to go through security to get into the train station, like you do at the airport. The ticket window is to the left, after you get past security. Ask for a ticket to Ben Gurion International Airport. The train ticket price should be around 32 shekels. You have to change trains once and they may mention this to you when you buy the ticket. Just tell them you know you have to change trains. Then proceed to the turnstiles. You need to put your train ticket through a machine to activate the turnstile. Do not forget to pick it up, when it kicks back out, as you will need it again when you get off. There will be a sign for the train to Tel Aviv. If you are early, you may have to wait inside the station. If the train is sitting there, you can go out on the platform and get on. Walk past the first few cars as they are the fullest. I usually go down to the 5th or 6th car. Once you board, you can move from car to car to find a better seat, if you would like. You may need to push a button to open the doors between cars.

You take this train to the Tel Aviv Hahagana station. This is where you change trains. You can see the names of the stations out the window as you pull up to them. LOD is the stop just before Hahagana. Once you get off, you will have to walk across the train platform to the other set of tracks in front of you. You can check a board for the arrival time of the train to Ben Gurion. There is a board in the middle of the stop that shows when the trains are arriving and where they go. It reads right to left like Hebrew, but it is in English. Look to see when the train to Ben Gurion arrives at the Tel Aviv Hahagana station and what platform you need. If you are uncertain, ask someone to help you read the board and most will. More than one line uses this platform. You need the one towards Modi'in. So, it is wise to ask someone if this is the train to the airport, just to be sure. I do not bother sitting down as the airport is the next stop after Hahagana. After you get off, you will need to put your train ticket back through the machine/turnstile, the same as before you boarded, in order to exit, and then take it when it kicks back out.

Directions to BTP by Bus from the Jerusalem Central Bus Station

If in Jerusalem you can take a bus or taxi to the Central Bus Station. Once there, order a ticket to Ein Hatzeva for around 50 shekels. You need (#444) towards Eilat via the Arava. You might ask those waiting with you to confirm you are waiting at the right place for the right bus. If that bus is full, you can take the ticket back to the counter and get one for the next bus. At the time of this writing, the Egged Bus Line #444 leaves from Jerusalem Central at 7 a.m., 10 a.m., & 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Sunday - Thursday. Then 7 a.m., 10 a.m. & 2 p.m.

on Friday (no 5 p.m.) and no bus on Saturday. It is listed as slightly over a 2½ hour trip. The ticket agent can give you more information on this.

There is not much room for luggage where you sit on the bus, so you will need to stow it below. It is best to do this before trying to get on the bus. A small carry on will be OK to take on the bus, but not much more than that. It is best to put your luggage underneath on the side of the bus that the doors are on, so when you are dropped off and getting your luggage, you will be on the shoulder side of the road and not have to go out onto the road where there might be traffic.

Once on the bus, show the driver your ticket and ask him if the bus stops at the Yellow Gas Station at Ein Hatzeva. This bus usually stops here for a break. If it does not, the driver should tell you when you get close, but keep watching. To stop the bus, there is a button over your head that you will want to push when you're ready to get off. If traveling at night, this stop is just after a long stretch of bright yellow street lights. From the Yellow, cross the highway and you will see a small white building in the distance slightly to the right – that is where you are heading! It is about a half mile walk across the desert. The site is just on the far side of the mango fields. If you get off the bus and still can't figure out where to go, find a phone and call the site! The number for the Park Supervisor at Biblical Tamar Park is: 052-426-0266.

If you have questions about the bus schedule you can call the Egged Bus Line in Israel at: 03-694-8888 or check www.egged.co.il/ENG.

Directions to the Jerusalem Central Bus Station by Bus from BTP

The Egged Bus Line #444 from Eilat to Jerusalem stops at the Yellow Gas Station in Ein Hatzeva. Someone from Tamar may be able to take you there or it is a half mile walk down an old British/Roman Road to the Yellow. You can get on the bus here at Yellow and take it to Jerusalem. It is best to reserve a ticket a couple days before your trip at 03-694-8888. This will give you a reserved seat. If you just show up at the Yellow, you may not have a seat available at the time you want. Then you have to wait for the next bus or two. To reserve a ticket on the phone you will need a local Israeli credit card. If you do not have one, or know of someone with one who will let you use it, you will have to take your chances at the Yellow. It helps a lot to have a Hebrew speaker help you make this call, but you can do it. You will often have to wait on the phone a while. Once on the phone, they count off the number of people waiting in front of you, in Hebrew. If you do not know your Hebrew numbers, just keep holding till they get to you. Ask for reservations. They will transfer you, put you on hold, and again give the number of those waiting a head of you, in Hebrew. Usually the person who answers will help you. If you get someone who does not speak English well, you may be put on hold again and the counting begins again or you may get dropped and have to call over again. I have found there are usually 8-10 people waiting, so it can take a little while, be patient. They will ask you what time you would like to be picked up, and give you some options. They often talk about the time the buses leave Eilat. It gets to the gas station about 1 ½ hours later. Make sure you know what time the bus is scheduled to arrive at the Yellow at Ein Hatzeva. You will need to give them your passport number and a credit card number to reserve your ticket. Make sure you take down the confirmation number they give you. It is around 50 shekels.

The bus will take about a 20 minute rest stop after it arrives. The driver will often leave the bus and take a 15+ minute break. When he gets back, start to get on the bus (leaving your luggage outside by the door). He may motion to you to go ahead and store your luggage first, he may come down to meet you, or most common, he may stay seated and ask you your name and confirmation number and then have you get back off to store your luggage. Your ticket will have a seat number on it, but often someone is already sitting in it, or it is way in the back. Go ahead and sit where you can, asking if the seat is taken. If it comes down to it, you can make the person sitting in your seat move by showing that person your ticket and number. This may be needed if the bus is very full. The ride to Jerusalem is a little over 2 ½ hours.

Directions to BTP by Car from Ben Gurion Airport

1. Depart Ben Gurion Airport towards Jerusalem on Highway 1 for approximately 7 miles.
2. Take Highway 6 south toward Be'ersheva, *left lane* (Don't take the exit for Highway 6 North – 443 to the right which is a couple miles prior to Hwy 6 south).
3. Highway 6 will turn into highway 40 as you get closer to Be'ersheva.
4. Stay on Highway 40 by turning left just before Be'ersheva. It is a six mile bypass that skirts Be'ersheva.
5. Get off at the highway 25 intersection and turn left toward Dimona / Eilat.
6. Highway 25 will take you through Dimona and to the Highway 90 intersection.
7. Turn right on Highway 90 toward Eilat. Highway 25 ends at this intersection so if you do not turn right, you will be on Highway 90 North and you will need to turn around.
8. Take Highway 90 about 15 miles to 227 - Ir Ovot. (If you pass the yellow has station on the left, you have gone about 1 mile too far.) Turn right and travel about ½ mile. Turn left at the crocodile sign and you will see the Biblical Tamar Park sign that hangs over the road.

Clarification of Site Name

The majority of the people in Israel do not know the name Biblical Tamar Park. If you ask, even the local people, for directions, they will not likely know where you are talking about. They know this site by the old kibbutz name Ir Ovot, and it is named on most maps. (It has only been in recent years that the ancient city of Tamar has been uncovered, and the site renamed.) When needed, let people know you are looking for Ir Ovot. There are a few people from the old kibbutz who live next door and still call their little compound Ir Ovot, so it can get a bit confusing. Some may try to send you there, but you can easily see the larger park from their compound.

If you are not in the Arava, the people may not know of Ir Ovot either, as it was a very small community. They know the area you are headed for as Hatzeva, which is moshav nearby. So if they do not know Ir Ovot, tell them you are headed for Hatzeva, which is in the Arava (below sea level). If you tell someone, like a taxi driver this, he will likely know of Hatzeva.

Again, it can be a bit confusing, as there are two moshavs that use this name. The larger one is just called "Hatzeva" and a smaller one nearby is called "En Hatzeva." En or Ein is the Hebrew word for spring. It is the smaller, closer moshav, En Hatzeva, that is located just behind the Yellow Gas Station. It is this station that you want to have people get you to, as you can see Biblical Tamar Park from there. The road that leads to the larger moshav, Hatzeva, is another mile or so south of the Yellow on Hwy 90 and then another couple of miles east (toward the Jordan mountains) before you reach it. The En Hatzeva bus stop is at the Yellow. The Hatzeva stop is at the Hwy 90 stop a mile or so south of En Hatzeva, before you turn to go east to Hatzeva.

Another point that may be helpful for clarification is that the ancient biblical city of Tamar was not identified while it was being uncovered. That was discovered later in the ruins. It was called Mesad Hatzeva in Hebrew, meaning the fortress at Hatzeva or Hatzeva Fortress. Tamar was more of a fortress than a city in ancient times. Most archaeologists will know Biblical Tamar Park by this name and still use this term, Mesad Hatzeva.

It was known that ancient Tamar was located in this area, so a few other places use the name Tamar. There is a moshav up by the Dead Sea called "En Tamar" and another archaeological site called "Mesad Tamar" between the Dead Sea and Dimona. If you ask about Tamar, some may think you are talking about these places. In addition, the governmental offices for the Tamar Regional Council are located in Moshav Neve Zohar, just south of the Dead Sea. A regional council is something like a county in the United States. Biblical Tamar Park is not located in this Tamar Regional Council area but in the regional council just south of it, called the Central Arava Regional Council.