

Israel

15 Feb 2020



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Our Air BNB on Ramban St
in West Jerusalem.

Could be in Los Angeles.





Saturday Morning, Shabbat, the Sabbath, taken very seriously in Israel: almost no traffic.



Shabbat, in West Jerusalem



Emerging from the tunnel on Route 1, descending and already entering the Judean Desert.



בית שאן
119 بيت شان
Bet She'an
אילת
304 ايلات
Eilat



You probably have noticed, everywhere the signs are in three languages, Hebrew, Arabic, and English



מעלה אדומים נורכא
معلی ادومیم (نوركا)
Ma'le Adumin
(Nurka)

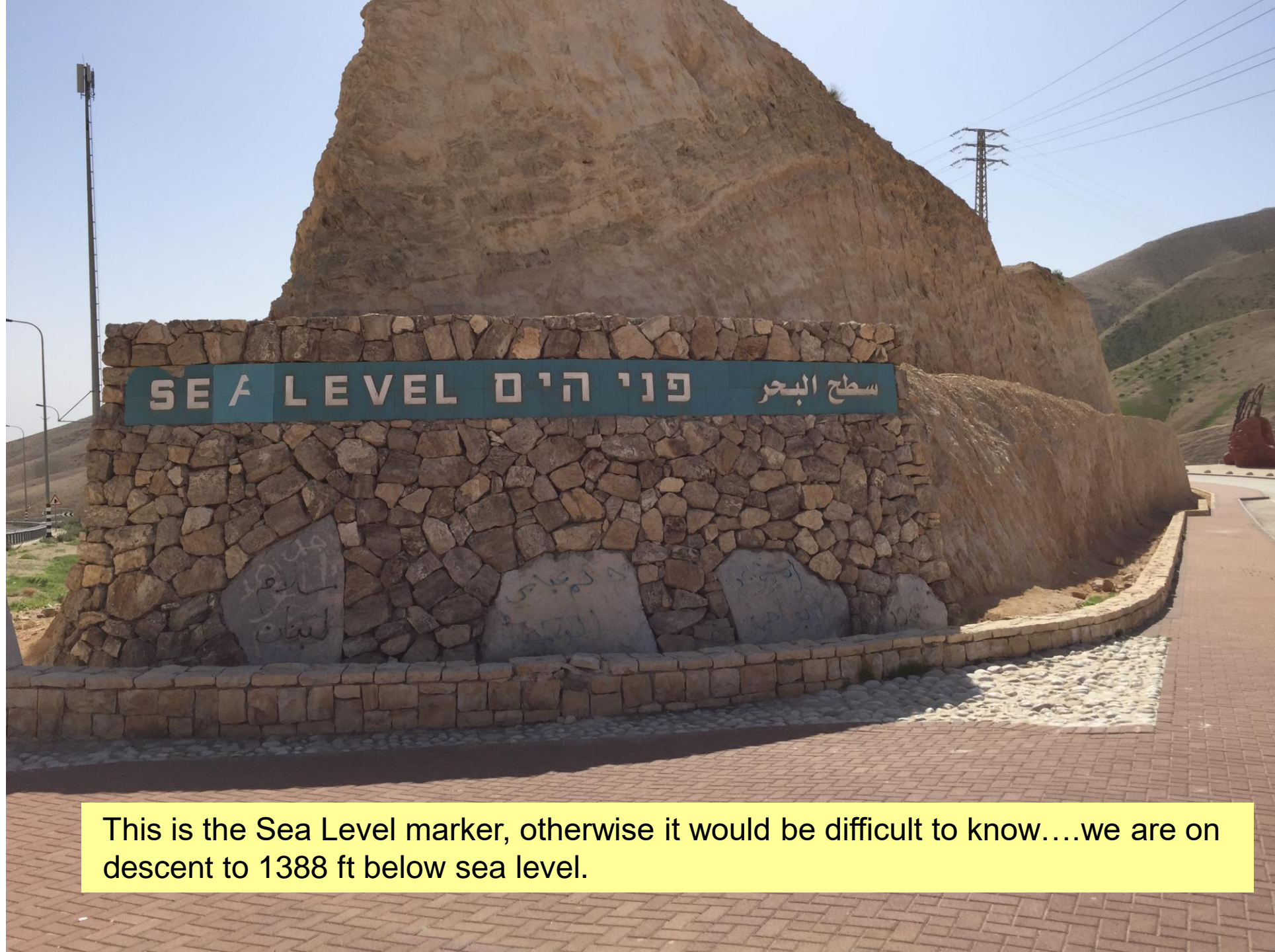
מעלה אדומים
معلی ادومیم
(47)
Ma'le Adumin (47)

האט!
טיבוב מסונן
تمهل!
منعطف خطر
SLOW!
DANGER CURVE



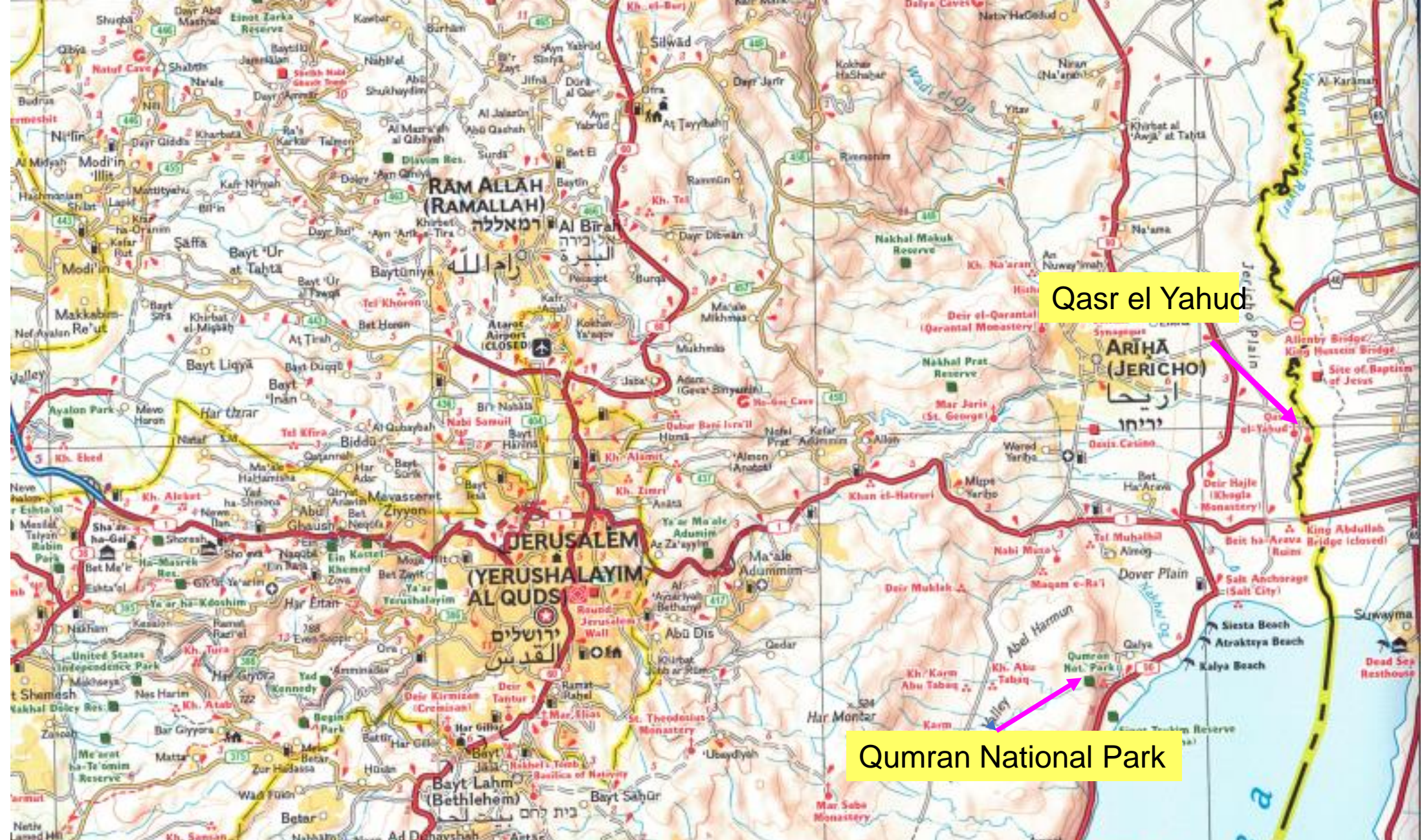
Bedouin encampment. Bedouins are wanderers, indigenous to wide areas of the Middle East and Africa. They are not part of the original twelve Abrahamic Tribes of ancient Israel.





This is the Sea Level marker, otherwise it would be difficult to know....we are on descent to 1388 ft below sea level.





First two destinations for the day are Qasr el Yahud, Jesus baptismal site, and Qumran National Park, where the Dead Sea Scrolls, hidden since the time of Christ, were discovered in 1948.



Jordan River Valley: we are still descending; date farm on the left.





Still descending. The Jordan River is a mile ahead, in the valley bottom. Barbed wire separates the mined area from the safe area along the road.

Israel begins clearing thousands of landmines from Jordan River baptism site

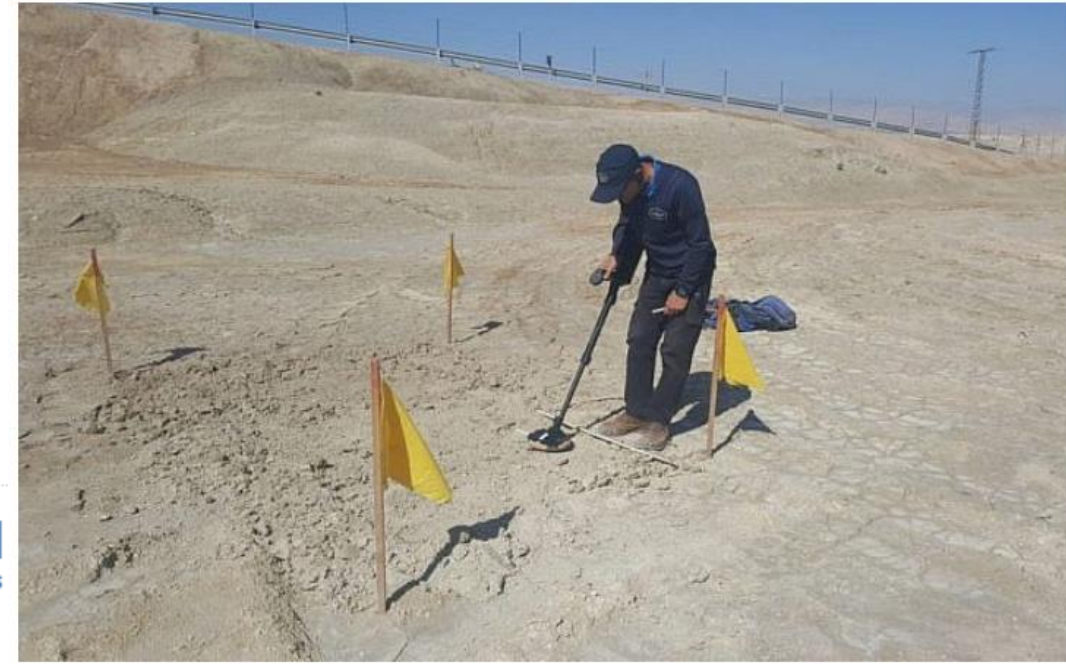
Defense Ministry says there are over 3,000 munitions in Qasr al-Yahud area, including anti-personnel, anti-tank mines and booby-traps

By **MELANIE LIDMAN** and **TOI STAFF**

20 March 2018, 1:39 pm | 5



741
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A sapper working to clear mines from the area around the Qasr al-Yahud Baptism site on the Jordan River, March 2018. (Defense Ministry)

Work began this week to clear thousands of mines and other remnants of war from the Qasr al-Yahud Baptism Site on the Jordan River, the Defense Ministry said in a Tuesday.

The Israel National Mine Action Authority, part of Israel's Defense Ministry, working together with the international mine-clearing charity HALO Trust, expects to uncover over 3,000 items in the area, the ministry said in a statement.

Qasr al-Yahud was a popular pilgrimage spot until 1968, when Israel blocked access and enfolded it in the closed military zone along the border with Jordan, fearing terrorists could use the churches as staging grounds for attacks on Israeli settlements. The Jordan River is only a few meters wide at that point.



Another mined area on the road to the Qasr el Yahud Baptismal site.

Qasr el Yahud; Jesus' Baptismal site, on the now-muddy Jordan River, behind guardrails.
Israeli and Jordanian flags show how narrow the Jordan River is here.











Approaching Qumran National Park, Dead Sea Scrolls discovery site.

Qumran National Park. Dead Sea Scrolls discovery site.





The Dead Sea Scrolls were written on leather, then hidden in ceramic bottles to avoid discovery and destruction as the Romans were invading and pillaging, ca AD 65.



Archaeological ruins of the settlement of Qumran, in the west side of Dead Sea fault valley. The marl walls are nearly vertical, as also seen in the distance.







Erosion of the marl sediments has left numerous natural caves in the area, some visible here. The Dead Sea Scrolls were hidden in at least 12 of these caves. In 1946, a shepherd, looking to scare a goat which had entered a cave, threw a rock to startle the goat, but the rock hit one of the bottles, making an unusual sound. It took a year for the scrolls to reach a student of history who recognized the value of the find.



Wikipedia says that there are about a dozen caves where Dead Sea Scrolls have been discovered to date in this area.







Descending from Qumran into the depths of the Jordan Valley. The Israelis have pioneered intensive agriculture in this desert environment. The Dead Sea is in the distance.



We are driving south, early afternoon into the February sun. Dead Sea on the left, and the marl cliffs of the Dead Sea Fault to the right.



Security checkpoint manned by Israeli Defense Forces. Security measures by the IDF have reduced terrorist attacks to near zero; there were none during our brief visit.



עצור
לביקורת!!
توقف
للفحص!!
Stop for
Inspection!!





We stopped briefly at Ein Gedi for photos. We could see the fortress of the Masada in the distance to the west, but we did not stop there, and continued to Ein Bokek Beach Resort







"המקום הנמוך בעולם"
"أوطأ محلّ في العالم"
"Lowest Place On Earth"



חמי עין גדי
حمام عين جدي
En Gedi Spa





The blocky structure in the distance is The Masada, where ancient Israelis held out against the Roman invaders for a while, then they died by suicide rather than become Roman slaves.



Approaching Ein Bokek Beach and Resort. Potash City, Jordan, across the Dead Sea, in the background.





No sandy beach here! The beach and subsurface are made of cubic halite (salt) crystals which are coming out of solution as the Dead Sea evaporates. The crystals have sharp edges.



Ligia Maria is floating well out of the water in the Dead Sea, so different from what we experience in the ocean or a lake, because the Specific Gravity of the water here is 1.2 to 1.3

Specific Gravity of the ocean might be 1.02, and in a fresh-water lake, it is 0.996 or 0.995



John and Ligia Maria in the Dead Sea at Ein Bokek. The water felt greasy to me, and is very bitter if you get in your nose or throat. I was glad there was a shower when we were through.



Our guide, Adi, made the reservations for our visit to the Ein Bokek Beach, at the Crowne Plaza Resort. Nice place! Excellent buffet luncheon there, too.