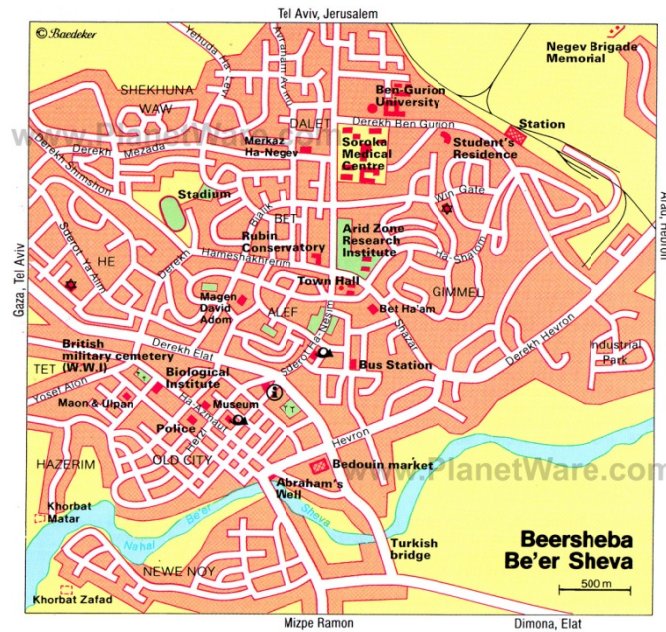


## Fact Sheet

### Beersheva - Capital of the Negev



Beersheva is a desert city of some 200,000 inhabitants. It is the sixth largest city in the country and considered the gateway to the Negev region.

Be'er Sheba, spelled Beersheba in most English translations of the Bible, is a major crossroads whose potential was felt by Abraham, father of the Jewish people, who arrived here 3,700 years ago. He dug a well to water his flock, made a covenant of peace with Abimelech, the king of Gerar in those days, and the two swore allegiance to one another. "Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because there the two of them took an oath" (Genesis 21, Verse 21). To symbolize his ownership of the well, he planted a tamarisk tree. Thus the city of Be'er Sheba struck roots at that place and at that time. Abraham's descendants continued to live here, in a place that was the cradle of monotheism.

Be'er Sheba is located at the intersection of two ancient important international road junctions: The "Way of the Sea" (Via Maris) which extended along the shoreline in the west, and the King's Highway (the Valley Route) in the east. Consequently, the city is mentioned throughout biblical times as a wayside station, as a resting spot, as a border point and as a ritual center.

Tel Be'er Sheba, five kilometers east of the city, is usually identified with biblical Be'er Sheba. The site is fascinating, and contains the ruins of a walled city from the Israelite monarchic period. Due to the wonderful finds there, UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Site in 2005. In the Roman Period, the settlement spread to the area of present-day Be'er Sheba, and was located in the center of the Limes Palestinae, the Roman defense layout from Rafah (Rafi'akh) to the Dead Sea, which mainly consisted of fortresses built the borderline. When the Romans converted to Christianity, it served as the Episcopal residence (the residence of the Bishop) and several churches were built there. The Crusaders also built a fortress in the city, but when it was destroyed it remained desolate for a long time.

The Ottomans founded Be'er Sheba at the start of the twentieth century and was the only city that the Turks built in the Land of Israel. Remains of buildings from this period and from the time of the British Mandate can be seen in the Old City, located in the south of the city. These include the Governor's House – the residence and office of the city's governor, which was built in 1906 and today houses the Negev Museum of Art; the city's first mosque also built in 1906; the Turkish railway station built during the First World War; the station manager's house; the water tower that supplied the trains' steam engines with water; the Saraya – the Government House (today the city's police station); a public garden; and additional buildings that tell the fascinating story of Be'er Sheba under Turkish rule.

### **Modern Beersheva**

The modern Israeli city of Beersheva was established in 1949. It developed and turned into the center of the south and became the capital of the Negev. It also became a main center of the absorption of thousands of Russian-speaking immigrants who came to the country in the eighties and ninties. Today, Beersheva offers museums, a zoo, historical sites, one of the largest universities in Israel, and on Thursdays – the famous Bedouin market which was officially opened in 1905 and still operates today.

In recent years, some \$10.5 million has been invested in renovating Beersheva's Old City, preserving historical buildings and upgrading infrastructure. The Turkish Quarter is also being redeveloped with newly cobbled streets, widened sidewalks, and the restoration of Turkish homes into areas for dining and shopping. In 2011, city hall announced plans to turn Beersheva into the "water city" of Israel. One of the projects, "Beersheva beach," envisions a facility opposite city hall.

The city is undergoing a major construction boom, which includes both development of urban design elements, such as water fountains and bridges, and environmental development such as playgrounds and parks. In December 2012, a plan to build 16,000 new housing units in the Ramot Gimel neighborhood was scrapped in favor of creating a new urban forest, which will span 1,360 acres and serve as the area's "green lung", as part of the plans to develop a "green band" around the city. The forest will include designated picnic areas, biking trails, and walking trails.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vie/Beersheba>

<http://goisrael.com/Tourism>

<http://www.beer-sheva.muni.il>

[http://wikitravel.org/en/Beer\\_Sheva](http://wikitravel.org/en/Beer_Sheva)

This information is current as of 2015.