

Enjoying Israel in your 2nd home

A growing number of Jews from around the world have fulfilled the dream – or followed their investment advisors – and bought a 2nd home in Israel. While they are not in a position to live in Israel permanently, they have regardless taken the plunge and bought their very own slice of the Holy Land.

There are numerous benefits that come from owning your own home in Israel – from the ability to visit regularly and stay in your own “home away from home”, to having a place where you can build memories and share family simchahs. For some it’s the idea of being in Israel for Yom Tov, without having to deal with hotels and eating in public dining rooms. For many, it’s the simple joy of knowing that they own a piece of the Promised Land.

But while they have taken their first steps in this grand adventure, many are not aware of some new developments that can make owning and visiting their property in Israel a far more pleasant and rewarding experience.

Property managers have existed in Israel for a number of years now, but with the advancing economy and higher market expectations, a new breed has come into being. Sometimes called “Concierge Property Managers”, they offer a range of services that go over and above the traditional Property Manager role.

Property Management services have traditionally included: caring for your place while you are away; coordinating cleaning, repairs or renovations; ensuring your property is kept in good condition; and managing renters to enhance your return on your investment. Concierge Property Managers however provide extra services, including: preparing for your arrival (for example, filling the refrigerator with groceries, organizing transportation from the airport and purchasing pre-paid local Phone SIM cards), helping plan your stay (including organizing tours and rental cars, finding baby-sitters and restaurants to try, catering for events, and so on) and helping make your visit a truly unforgettable experience (4x4 safari in the desert, rappelling in the Judean mountains, digging for archaeological treasures, winery tours, family simchahs at the Kotel or overlooking the Temple Mount).

The aim of the Concierge Property Manager is to provide the services of a 5 star hotel, while allowing you to remain in the comfort of your own “home away from home”.

Avinoam Czitron, founder & CEO of Heartland, a boutique Concierge Property Management company in Jerusalem, has worked for a number of years in this burgeoning market. Several years ago, Avinoam saw the opportunity to change the traditional paradigm of the Property Management Business by merging the luxury hotel experience with the benefits of owning one’s own home. He recognized that while visiting Israel provided the chance to experience the beauty and wonder of this ancient land, in the past that sometimes meant giving up on the hassle-free experience Westerners had come to expect. For those who

went that one step further and purchased a home here, the difficulties due to bureaucracy, language difficulties and lack of local knowledge only served to increase the negative experience. However, as the tourist market adapted to the more refined needs of its international visitors, the Property Management business still had room for improvement. And so Avinoam adapted his business to provide this hybrid model of standard Property services, with that little bit extra at every turn.

While Avinoam is very private about his clients, it is clear that they are extremely satisfied. Judging by their testimonials – and their loyalty - Avinoam's Concierge service has managed to bridge that gap between private home and luxury hotel. Apparently his original clients are still his best customers, and they have been his best promoters. In a business where word-of-mouth is the prime means of finding new clients, maintaining happy and loyal customers is the most important aspect of his business.

Avinoam does confirm that with different clients come very different needs. Prospective clients are looking for a range of services, from basic property management (at a more basic cost), to administrative and language help with the banks and the various government agencies, to the full service, all-inclusive personal concierge service. Some like the flexibility – full service when required, otherwise just the basics when not.

But what really sets this new business model apart is not the level of service. Rather, it's the loyalty that Avinoam himself has to his clients. Recognizing the immense level of trust they are placing in him in caring for their special and significant investment in Israel, Avinoam takes this responsibility very seriously.

But in return, he sees his responsibility to not only protect their financial investment, but to also preserve and support the aspirations that brought them here in the first place. Whether it was a lifelong dream of living in Israel, to a desire to be close to family living in the country, Avinoam recognizes that the ultimate service he can provide his clients is to see their wishes come true. And his mission is to try – wherever possible – to deliver that every time they visit.

When asked what sets his business apart from his competitors, his response is simple: “no matter what my clients want, my job is to help them as best as I can”. But behind that is an unspoken promise – just as they have invested of themselves in Israel, he hopes their visits to Israel will reward that investment many times over.