

SEA OF GALILEE IS NEW TOURIST CENTER

BY BUNNY ALEXANDRONI

Israelis are now wondering where they'll spend vacations after April 25th. With the return of the Sinai peninsula to Egypt on that date, Israelis long accustomed to taking their vacation in the sun on the shores of the Red Sea will have to find new spots for much-needed relaxation.

Not for the first time, the Jewish National Fund has a solution to their problem.

Long before the Red Sea became a popular tourist spot, the JNF was developing the shores of another body of water - The Sea of Galilee -- into a major recreational area. Today forests, parks, camping sites, hiking trails, nature rambles and even facilities for swimming and horseback riding are available around the ancient lake.

These attractions have become so popular that for several years the JNF has been working overtime reclaiming the land to create new facilities. And now the JNF is involved in a massive expansion to provide space for all the new tourists expected starting this year.

At the northern tip of the lake lies Jordan Park, 200 dunams of JNF-developed park area abounding with rivers, lagoons and old mills where water turns the wheels to provide usable power exactly as it did centuries ago. And in the south picnic sites surround one of the most beautiful Roman bath complexes ever uncovered in addition to the functioning hot springs and the newest attraction - an alligator farm.

Not too long ago The Sea of Galilee was ecologically unsafe but the establishment of a governing board and strict restrictions on pollution and waste dumping have resulted in clear water and clean shores.

These shores now abound with full-grown palm and eucalyptus trees, the results of ecological planning by the JNF back in the 1950's which also contributed heavily to the security of the region. Before the Six Day War Syrian guns

perched on the Golan Heights easily bombarded the exposed Israeli homes and fields below. Today those forests are full of campers and caravans as thousands take advantage of the land the JNF reclaimed. Visitors from as far away as Europe and Scandinavia even come to escape their freezing climate and enjoy the sun in bathing suits and shorts mid-winter.

High on the slope of the Golan Heights lies the first cooperative village settled - Ramot. It looks more like a Swiss village with its A-frame bungalows than an Israeli moshav. Omer Aran, director of the resort village, is justifiably proud of its extended holiday programs for both adults and children. "But we couldn't have done it without the infrastructure prepared for us by the JNF," he tells visitors repeatedly. "Look at the terraces on the mountain...and don't forget our roads. And in a few years we'll even be in the middle of a forest. They may look only like saplings now," he said, pointing to the extensive planting, "but in a few years..."

From Ramot the whole eastern shoreline of the lake is visible and you can see JNF tractors at work expanding several different campsites all along the edge of the blue waters.

Will the sand and sea worshippers who loved Sinai settle for such a radical change of scenery? So far the reservation books at all the tourist centers along the Galilee show that they will. It'll be a change but still a dream vacation. "After all," Omer Aran said glancing at the sea just beyond the lush greenery of Ramot, "one look at this place and they're hooked!"

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- The Cameri Theater's new play "The Great Harlot of Babylon," had its premier performance in Tel Aviv with all scenes intact -- including those in which the script called for total nudity. The motion picture and theater censorship council, which had ordered the nude scenes deleted, backed down after the Cameri Theater appealed to the Supreme Court against its decision.

NEW YORK (WNS) -- The National Conference on Soviet Jewry announced that the number of of Soviet Jewish Vienna arrivals was only 289 during March signaling a virtual closing of exit doors at this time.

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COALITION TO MARCH ON WASHINGTON

A newly formed broad-based coalition, "The Coalition to Stop the Abandonment of Israel," is sponsoring a rally in Washington on Sunday, April 25, to express its concern with the present course of the Administration's Middle East policies.

The rally, which will take place at 2 p.m. in Lafayette Park, opposite the White House, is expected to attract thousands of persons from the Mid-Atlantic region.

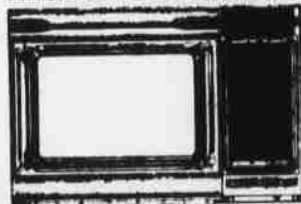
"The rally is both a protest against the Administration's policies and an appeal to the President to reaffirm and implement his pledges and principles in support of the State of Israel," said Peter E. Goldman a spokesman for the Coalition. "While we are rally for Israel, we are also rallying for the conscience of America. While we are marching for a secure Israel, we are also marching for a secure America, since these two concepts are inextricably linked."

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