

CLIMATOTHERAPY (Dead Sea)

Climatotherapy

- Sunlight can have a beneficial effect on psoriasis. Climatotherapy has been used for many years in the Dead Sea, Israel, and the Canary Islands, Spain, with good results.

DEAD SEA ALTERNATIVE History Two thousand years ago, the historian Josephus Flavius wrote that "one should praise the Dead Sea; this salt brings healing to the human body." This is still true today as thousands of visitors flock to the area to sample the incredible natural healing powers of the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea at 400 meters below sea level is the lowest point on earth and part of the Great Rift Valley. The water has a 33% concentration of salt (3% in the ocean) and minerals such as calcium, potassium, sodium, magnesium and bromide. The high salt and mineral concentration allows everyone to float in its waters. Most visitors take home the "floating on the water reading the Jerusalem Post" photo. The sunshine in this area is unique. Due to the water evaporating quickly in the intense heat, the Dead Sea has its own ozone layer hanging over it. The haze helps to filter out more of the damaging ultraviolet rays that can cause skin cancer, burning and ageing. This allows the duration of exposure to be dramatically increased. Very few people will suffer sunburn if careful progressive exposure is practiced and the hours of 11am to 2pm are avoided. The air is extremely dry, unpolluted and pollen free. With the high levels of bromide in the air, and 10% more oxygen, this induces total relaxation and makes breathing much easier. Combined, these natural elements offer an excellent alternative treatment for psoriasis and other skin problems, breathing and joint problems. You have a choice of travelling to either Israel or Jordan.

The Treatment The treatment is basically very straight forward. The minimum stay should be for three weeks however, some people achieve excellent results in two. The ideal dates to travel are April / May and September / October and any use of steroids must be ceased at least three weeks prior to travel. You need to build up exposure to the sunshine to 5 hours a day and take two twenty minute dips in the Dead Sea each day. There is no embarrassment or shame as you will be sunbathing with fellow sufferers. Most people with psoriasis sunbathe nude in the specially built solariums situated on the roof of the hotels. An alternative facility is on offer at a large public solarium (small local charge) on the Israeli side and also allows nude sunbathing. The beach and around the hotel pools are the other more obvious options. You only sunbathe with oil on your body such as carrot, olive or baby. Most people who stay for the three weeks will clear; the success rate is staggeringly high. Remission times average between 6-8 months. Longer times are not uncommon, but for some, remission can be only 3 months and in rare cases down to a matter of weeks. However, when the psoriasis does return, it generally comes back far less severe. **Hotels & Clinics (Israel)** The clinics are situated locally to all the hotels. These give you access to a local Dermatologist and nurse. Costs are around £100 per week and this service is advisable to first time travellers. The nurses also offer good help with scalp psoriasis for people with thick heads of hair. The hotels are all pretty much alike, some on the beach and some not and some with slightly better facilities. A lot of people find the overall standard (food especially) is not quite what they were expecting for 5* accommodation, but the standard is the same in all the hotels and this opinion is not just aimed at one in particular. Most Brits head to the Le Meridien, Dead Sea Hotel. The area is in Ein Bokek and is basically made up of a few hotels, a few skin clinics, some shops selling Dead Sea products, clothes and a limited selection of food/snacks. There is a bar situated in a Bedouin tent and the one and only Sammy's bar. There is a bistro and a couple of café style places to grab a bite. Entertainment is thin on the ground, although there are a couple of clubs in the hotels and the hotels do have a bar with some entertainment. The most notable arrival in recent years is McDonalds. Looking from your hotel balcony with the back drop of the Dead Sea, with Jordan just beyond and all the mystical, biblical history the area offers, that great big yellow and red "M" really does look out of place. Arad is the closest town, about a forty minute drive away and will provide you with just about anything you might need. It has an excellent shopping centre and also offers some good places to eat if you fancy just getting away from the hotel for a night. A regular bus service also operates. Masada is only half hour away and well worth a visit. There are tour operators who will also advise on trips further a field to places like Jerusalem. The dress code here is relaxed, but during the day it is advisable to bring all your old summer clothes and swimming costumes with you. **Hotels & Clinics (Jordan)** An alternative is now on offer on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea, and only a half hour away from Amman. The area is undeveloped, having a few hotels only and nothing else, not even a shop. However, the hotels offer a far higher standard of service. The food, staff and accommodation is far superior to the Israeli side; the food is so nice there is no need to find alternative eating places away from the hotel. Down side is the price of alcohol should you fancy a drink or two and as with Israel the entertainment is limited. The hotels do have clinics attached to them as in Israel and offer the use of private solariums for nude sunbathing. Amman being only half hour away is handy if you need to get to a supermarket or just fancy an evening out for a change of scenery. The tour people in the hotel can organise trips to places such as Petra. As with Israel, the dress code is relaxed. **Cost** The cost of this trip is quite prohibitive to a lot of people, but for most, on seeing the results, think it is money well spent and will return as and when they feel necessary. In 2007, the cost for a hotel such as the Le Meridien in Israel or the Movenpick in Jordan for a single room was approximately £1850 for three weeks half board including flights and transfers. Clinics are extra to this. Specialist travel agents will arrange for independent travel or as part of an organised group. **Security** Security in this part of Israel or Jordan is not a problem, being well away from high risk areas, and all roads leading into the resorts are guarded by armed patrols as are the access roads to the hotels. **Travel Tips** A travel tip is to pack the suitcase full of books, books and more books and don't forget the personal stereo to beat the boredom during the day. The hotels have only limited English TV stations but do have tea making. You will need to take enough good quality moisturiser along with some baby oil or the oil of your choice to sunbathe in, but do not use anything with sun protection. Aloe Vera gel is another advisable item to take with you; it is great for sunburn, bites or itching. Fly swats and repellent are a good idea especially if going to the Jordanian side. A visit to the Dead Sea is no holiday. There really is not a lot to occupy your

mind for one day let alone three weeks. But I suppose this really is what you could call stress free, which is exactly what you need to help combat the psoriasis. It really is hard work conditioning yourself for three weeks solid sunbathing in temperatures well in to the 40's, but after the first few days when you can literally watch the psoriasis disappear it makes all the effort and cost seem very worthwhile. The therapy is so highly regarded by some EU countries that stays in the area are funded by their respective health authorities.