

# LUXURY IN ISRAEL

THE JC'S GUIDE TO ISRAEL 2020



THE GRAND TOUR



## Israel by design

It's the home you've always wanted. And with professional help, it can be yours, hassle-free

BY SHARON GELBACH

**M**aybe you want a place to call home during visits to Israel. Or perhaps you're thinking about taking the aliyah plunge one day. Whatever your reason, acquiring a property in Israel requires a healthy dose of patience. But an interior designer can smooth the way.

Annette Frommer has 28 years of experience in luxury design and won an International Design and Architecture Award in 2016. Originally from Belgium and now living in Tel Aviv,

she speaks six languages and specialises in looking after clients from abroad, from the purchasing stage to equipping the kitchen and removing packaging. "Many of my clients buy apartments for the holidays instead of booking a suite in one of the luxury hotels in Jerusalem, so what they want to achieve is a home on the level of a five-star hotel," she says.

Leah Salter, an interior designer for more than 23 years, was born in Israel yet lived for many years in Manchester. In 2000, she made aliyah with her family, settling in the bucolic community of Alon Shvut in Gush Etzion. Since then, she has been working with clients from Israel and overseas, drawing on her experience as a native Israeli and British ex-pat who understands the needs of Anglos.

Frommer and Salter both offer the entire package, from assisting clients in buying the property and working with the builder on plans, to managing the renovation project

and decorating. But even without far-reaching changes, it's still possible to create a beautiful, inviting space through furnishing, textiles and accessories. And they are both well aware of adhering to a timetable and budget. They eschew the casual *yihye b'seder* (it will be fine) attitude often encountered in Israel.

Salter works with varying budgets, including VIP clients who rely on her to do all the hands-on work, freeing them from the need to visit the site during renovations. \*

From the micromanagers to those who don't want to know and everyone in between, Frommer allows her clients to dictate the extent of their involvement. She recalls one client in particular whom she never met, before or after. "I was contacted by a family member of the client, who gave me only a few skeletal details, but not a word about style, budget, religious orientation. Money was no object, but they insisted that I draw up the budget and then adhere to it, down to the last cent. Oh, and the timeframe was three months, with the High Holydays in between. In Israel, there are Jewish holidays, but also Muslim holidays to take into account. I had only five working days that September. In the

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middle of the project, I was informed they'd forgotten a 'minor' detail: the client had a sizeable, valuable art collection. That was a problem, because I hadn't budgeted for insurance. I didn't know how I'd squeeze everything in, but I didn't need to buy art, so I was

able to stay within budget. We finished right on time and I was told the client loved it."

Even if it's not their primary residence, Frommer says, "People like to come back to the things they know – the accessories, the art, the dishes. And most love to entertain; that's something they can't do from a hotel."

Frommer adds that for her clients, purchasing property in Israel is an emotionally charged experience. "It's not the same as acquiring an apartment anywhere else in the world – and many of my clients do, in fact, own several."

She tells about the time a client chose a stunning painting for her Jerusalem duplex from a local art gallery. The curator discouraged her, saying that such an expensive piece was more



**Opposite page:** Interior design by Annette Frommer. **This page:** Interior design by Leah Salter

suited to her "real" home in London, but the client protested: "This is where I want to have the most beautiful things, in my home in Yerushalayim!" Sometimes, her clients do end up making aliyah. "In fact, I once had a client who made this seminal decision mid-project. It was quite a challenge adjusting the interiors from a holiday apartment to accommodate the family's main residence."

Salter's many public projects include a mikveh in Alon Shvut, whose decor reflects the town's Judean topography and historic roots and for which she earned the Beautiful Israel award.

Drawing on her bubbly personality and supplementary training as a life coach, Salter

not only assists clients in determining their individual style, tastes and needs, but also successfully navigates any domestic conflicts.

For Frommer, too, the job description naturally includes psychologist and marriage counsellor. "I've received calls SOS for a babysitter or to recommend a good restaurant," she says. "I'm also the first to know family news – the fact that the pregnancy is actually twins; an imminent engagement or, sadly, a divorce. Clearly, discretion is the name of the game and my clients know they can trust me implicitly. I can be working with two brothers, and they might know I'm working for both of them, but the one won't have an inkling of what I'm doing for the other." ■

## TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

### FROMMER:

#### KIDS WELCOME

My clients often lend their apartment to their own children and grandchildren or to other families, so I try to ensure all design elements are child-proof and resilient. Outdoor fabrics are a wise choice. They come in a huge selection of styles and colours, but withstand plenty of wear and tear.

### PRACTICALITY VS BEAUTY

There is no need to sacrifice beauty for practicality. My starting point is practicality; there is no lack of ways to beautify an object or a space, so it might as well be practical.

### SALTER:

#### LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

Before buying an apartment, spend time in the city/ neighbourhood you are considering. Check out the neighbours, shopping, health clinic, public transport, schools and other details relating to daily living. You might dream of living in a certain location, but there's nothing like actually spending some time there to ascertain if it's truly a good fit.

### KEEP IT NEUTRAL

Even after you've bought and renovated your holiday apartment, don't forget you might want to move one day. Keep this in mind when decorating and opt for neutral colours and classic designs that won't make it difficult to sell. Add your personal touch and splashes of colour with accessories and art that you will take with you to your new home.

### SMART TECHNOLOGY

Smart home technology systems are increasingly popular and affordable. Imagine the convenience of remotely controlling air conditioning, heating, shutters, lighting, security cameras and more from wherever you are in the world.

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