

Israel





Who are the Switchers?

The Switchers is a community of inspiring green entrepreneurs and changemakers in the Mediterranean region.

It is also a place where entrepreneurs of a similar passion for the environment can meet. The Switchers are green and circular businesses that contribute to sustainable and fair consumption and production models. They are active in a variety of fields, such as organic farming, sustainable textiles, eco-tourism, renewable energy, or waste management.

The platform theswitchers.eu tells their stories of sustainable transformation and change. We aim to contribute towards a more differentiated picture of the Mediterranean region, and shine a light on the people who are working on a greener economy.

The Switchers platform has been developed by the [Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production \(SCP/RAC\)](#) in the framework of the [SwitchMed](#) Programme with the support of the European Union. For more information, please see page 28.

— SPOTLIGHT

The Switchers in Israel



Israel has always been a fascinating cultural, historical and religious hub. The tiny country boasts a striking range of beautiful landscapes and natural attractions, capable of beguiling locals and visitors alike. However, Israelis are increasingly conscious of doing more to protect this precious, delicate environment.

At present, Israel faces a range of ecological challenges that would — if left unchecked — pose an existential threat to the country and its people. For instance, the Israeli government has acknowledged the country’s “chronic” water shortage. As early as 2013, the cumulative deficit of the national water supply had reached 2 billion cubic meters — roughly the same amount as the country’s annual consumption needs. Meanwhile, excessive consumption has contributed to unregulated dumping, with one state official saying “we need to stop burying waste in the Negev (desert).”

This is where our more than 30 Israeli Switchers — with their mission of promoting sustainable consumption and production — come into the picture. Several green entrepreneurs have tackled Israel’s environmental threats at a grassroots level. Their business models may upcycle scrap materials into useful furniture, or design clothes made from water-efficient sources like hemp, or attract tourists while observing the “Leave No Trace” principles. Crucially, each Switcher demonstrates that economic development and environmental responsibility can go hand-in-hand.

We hope that you enjoy reading the stories of these inspiring Switchers, who are changing mindsets by their entrepreneurial example.

Happy reading!
The Switchers



Switching to sustainable consumption can be challenging, so we kept this catalogue simple. It is separated into five sections:

— IN THE FIVE SECTIONS YOU WILL FIND:



**SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM | 6**



**SUSTAINABLE
TEXTILES AND
CLOTHING | 11**



**ORGANIC
FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE | 17**



**RESOURCE EFFICIENCY
AND SUSTAINABLE
WASTE MANAGEMENT | 21**



**RENEWABLE ENERGY
AND ENERGY
EFFICIENCY | 25**



– ZIMMERBUS DESERT STYLE TEA

We have also created a [Google Map](#) featuring each location mentioned, and underlined text can be clicked to access relevant websites.



[Access Israel Google Map](#) >



Sustainable Tourism

Tourism plays a vital role in Israel's economy, with the nation welcoming a record 4 million tourists in 2018 — up 13 percent from the year before. Our featured Switchers welcome visitors to enjoy two exciting, wholly sustainable experiences of the legendary Israeli desert.

— DESERT SHADE ECO-CAMP



Desert Shade Eco-Camp

Mitzpe Ramon

“The desert is the place to be,” said Ziv Spector, the founder of Desert Shade Eco-Camp, a popular accommodation spot in the Negev Desert. Perched on the edge of the Ramon Crater, the camp provides a range of desert activities such as hiking, cycling and engaging with local Bedouin culture. Desert Shade is located a short walk from Mitzpe Ramon, meaning that guests can mix the calming desert and town nightlife in one place.

— ACCOMMODATION

Guests can choose from a range of housing options, which start at around €22 per person, per night. Eco-Tents provide temperature-controlled shelter in structures made entirely from recycled materials. Alternatively, you might like to stay in Bedouin tents crafted from goat's wool, or simply pitch your own tent at the campground.



— GETTING THERE

Take Metropolitan bus line 60, 64 or 65 from Be'er Sheva or Egged line 132 from Eilat. By car, you can drive to the main roundabout in Mitzpe Ramon, drive north for 400 meters along Route 40 and follow the signs on your right to Desert Shade.

— HOW TO BOOK

You can book through Hostelworld or contact Desert Shade directly



+972-546-277-413



info@desert-shade.com



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— ZIMMERBUS IN THE NEGEV





Zimmerbus in the Negev

Ezuz

Guests can take in the atmospheric Negev desert from inside former public buses, now converted into (stationary) guest rooms at Zimmerbus. Owners Eyal and Avigail Hirshfeld have upcycled the buses into stylish, cozy accommodation, replete with traditional decorations, comfortable beds and fully-equipped kitchen facilities. Visitors enjoy spending time in Ezuz, an isolated village with cafes and art galleries, or they tackle the legendary Negev by foot, camel or Jeep.

— ACCOMMODATION

Zimmerbus has three different guest houses: The Airport Bus, The Long Bus and The Couple Bus. Each options varies in terms

of size and facilities, but all enjoy access to communal areas. Prices start from around €27 nightly for each person.

— GETTING THERE

Ezuz is a one-hour drive from Be'er Sheva and 1.5 hours from Mitzpe Ramon.

— HOW TO BOOK

Check availability and book through the Zimmerbus [website](#). For further assistance, call or email.



+972-556-677-962



zimmerbus@gmail.com



zimmerbus.com



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Sustainable Textiles and Clothing

The textile and clothing industry ranks as the world's second-most polluting industry, only beaten out to this dubious honor by the oil and gas sector. Our Switchers are championing more sustainable methods for the future of Israeli fashion — from using less wasteful materials, to creating clothes built-to-last, to safeguarding the cultural heritage of vulnerable communities.



Haptic Path

— WHAT IS IT

If your wardrobe does not feature any hemp, then Nina Skibnevsky — the designer in charge of Haptic Path — thinks that you might need to reconsider. “It’s a magical fabric!” she enthuses, pointing out hemp’s durability, suitability for different climates and surprisingly soft touch. Hemp is also a more sustainable textile than its famous rival, cotton, which needs significantly more water and more time to grow. Haptic Path offers a full range of hemp-based, minimalist clothing pieces, inspired by traditional Japanese attire.



— HOW MUCH

Prices vary depending on the piece, but you would currently pay around €26 for a beanie, €50 for a t-shirt, and €118 for a funky asymmetrical vest.

— WHERE TO BUY

Check out the full clothing catalogue on Haptic Path’s [website](#) or Etsy page. For now, make all purchases through Etsy.



www.hapticpath.com

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Kuchinate

— WHAT IS IT

Tel Aviv has a large community of asylum seekers, many of whom have travelled to Israel from the Horn of Africa in search of a better life. Kuchinate (“crochet” in Tigrinya, an official language of Eritrea) is a collective of female African refugees who put their artistic talents to all things crochet, producing eye-catching baskets, poufs and rugs. Kuchinate operates under umbrella organization African Refugee Therapeutic Services (ARTS), which views the project

as a way to empower women and help asylum seekers engage with their local community.

— HOW MUCH

Check prices in-store or [online](#) but baskets tend to range from €10 to €120 (depending on size and quantity).

— WHERE TO BUY

You can buy Kuchinate products online, but why not visit the ladies in person? The studio is open every Monday to Friday from 10am, while closing time varies. As if you need any more reason to go, Kuchinate hosts in-store crochet lessons, meals and traditional Eritrean and Ethiopian coffee ceremonies.



www.kuchinate.com



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Tamar Shalem

— WHAT IS IT

Global brands like Zara and Topshop have popularized “fast fashion,” a business model that relies on customers buying clothes that are cheaper but less durable, leading to high turnover. Tamar Shalem, owner of the shoe design company by the same name, says that this is the biggest threat to sustainability in her industry. By contrast, Shalem makes men’s and women’s shoes that are built to last, while also looking great. Her workshop uses limited materials, reducing the amount of waste, and has recently introduced a vegan line based on high-quality leather substitutes.

— HOW MUCH

Shoes start out from around €83 and can rise to €215, depending on the model. You can also browse a range of leather bags produced by Shalem’s friend, Shlomi Levi (similar price range).

— WHERE TO BUY

Buy through the Tamar Shalem [website](http://www.tamarshalem.com).



www.tamarshalem.com



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Organic Food and Agriculture

Israel has long worried about the dwindling supply of land and water, a twin threat to the long-term sustainability of the agriculture industry. Our Switchers are exploring new ways to feed Israelis that reduce the harmful impacts of traditional farming on national resources and global carbon levels.





Lilac Frenkel Ben Yakar, the founder of Lilac's Aromas Boutique Soya Products, has managed to produce tasty, wholly vegan cheese derived from soya milk. This offering, which differs from the often flavorless vegan cheeses available, is especially significant in Israel — a country where 5 percent of the population adheres to veganism. Today, Lilac's Aromas makes cheese that fits with these sustainable dietary habits by avoiding the adverse environmental impacts of raising cows. You can learn more about Ben Yakar's techniques by checking out the Lilac's Aromas

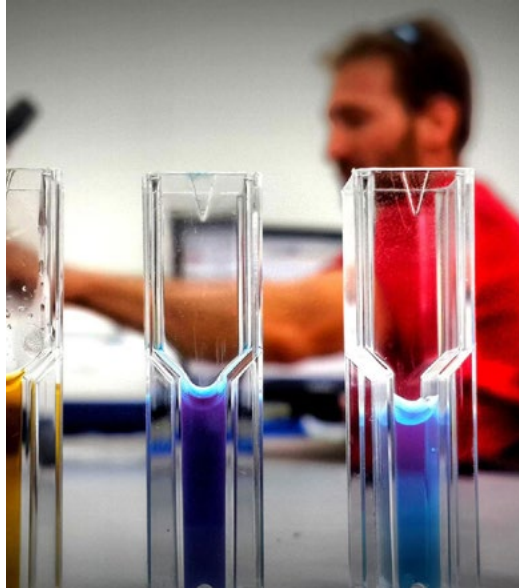


Products range in price from 10 to 25 INS (€3 to €7).

You can visit Lilac's Aromas by warning Ben Yakar's team about your visit via [Facebook](#), then following [Waze](#) to get there.



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SIMPLIIGOOD

— WHAT IS IT

As the world searches for more sustainable protein sources than farming livestock, an attractive substitute is spirulina — a microalgae food supplement that relies on minimal land and water supplies. Bright startup AlgaeCore identified the need for future-facing agriculture in a country like Israel, which faces alarming shortages of both essential resources. The company operates on a compact plot of land, and grows spirulina in artificial ponds with reusable water. Its spirulina products — which can be added to all sorts of healthy meals — come in fresh, dried, and frozen forms

under the brand SIMPLIIGOOD. AlgaeCore has also educated Israeli schoolchildren alongside [JustSpirulina](#), an NGO raising awareness about the supplement's capacity to fight malnutrition.

— HOW MUCH

Prices start at 229 INS (60€) for a monthly package (30 units of 20g each).

— WHERE TO BUY

You can buy SIMPLIIGOOD spirulina through their website and [Facebook](#) page.



[Facebook](#)



www.algae.co.il



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Hava ve Adam Eco-Educational Farm

— WHAT IS IT

Tucked away between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Hava ve Adam Eco-Educational Farm provides an example of permaculture and sustainable living for Israelis, young and old alike. The farm community invites members of the public to visit — and, preferably, live onsite for a while — to work the land, grow organic food, and get closer to nature. Devotees can sign up for the five-month “Eco Israel” program, during which 18 to 30 year olds enjoy an immersive experience of self-sufficiency in a beautiful natural setting. Hava ve Adam Eco-Educational Farm proudly

adheres to best practice principles of sustainability, relying on solar energy, independent waste treatment, recycled wastewater, and more.

— HOW MUCH

The “Eco Israel” program costs around €6,180 per participant, but you may be eligible for Israeli government grants that cover some of the cost. Alternatively, you might prefer the two-month “Work the Land” course.

— GETTING THERE

The farm is a short drive after turning off from the main highway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Check the map here for specifics.



www.eco-israel.org

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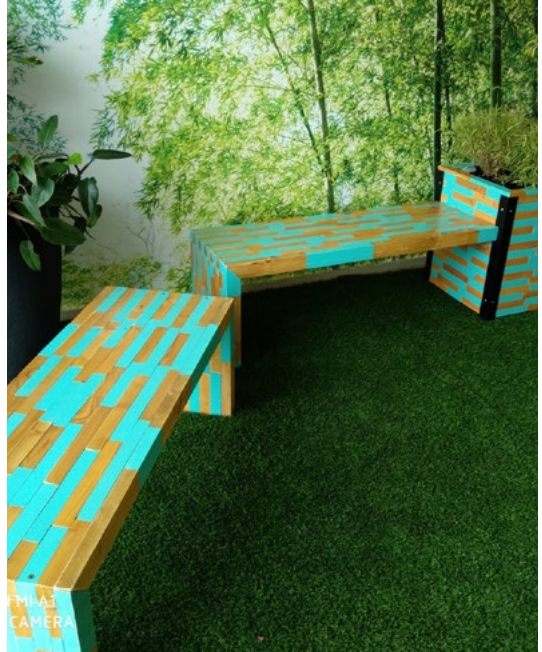


Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Waste Management

Israel has much scope for improvement in terms of recycling, with only around 20 percent of household trash being properly recycled. These Switchers demonstrate that used products can have a second, useful life — and might even sustain a profitable business model along the way.



— EDEN SOCIAL WOOD RECYCLING



Eden Social Wood Recycling

— WHAT IS IT

If you find yourself walking past a building site in Israel, do not be too surprised to see Ben Yavnieli snooping around. Yavnieli has spent years collaborating with construction companies to salvage wooden debris for use by his upcycled furniture business, Eden Social Wood Recycling. Yavnieli and his team convert the discarded wood into colorful outdoor furniture, breathing new life into the still-valuable materials. Since 2014, Yavnieli has created thousands of pieces, many of which have been sold to Israeli schools. You can visit Eden Social Wood Recycling's workshop in

Ra'anana to learn more about the business' plans to work with local municipalities and reduce wood wastage on an even larger scale.

— HOW MUCH

While Yavnieli's products will likely prove a touch bulky to take back overseas, he sells his pieces for between 310 and 2000 INS (€80 and €515).

— WHERE TO BUY

Eden Social Wood Recycling does not have a shop front, but you can contact Yavnieli via [Facebook](#) to arrange a factory visit.



[Facebook](#)

S [Read the Story on Switchers](#) >



ToySwap

— WHAT IS IT

Young children often amaze their parents as they grow older, maturing at a dazzling rate. Nadav Leshem noticed one negative consequence of this wondrous period — when a child grows too old for a particular toy, it ends up unused and, eventually, in landfill. In response, Leshem established ToySwap, a subscription-based library for parents to exchange old toys for new ones instead of consigning them to the trash. The business model promotes the simple, powerful idea of a circular economy — a concept that has evidently filtered down to the children themselves. “When one mother arrived home with a toy, the child asked when Nadav will stop by to replace it,” recalled Leshem proudly.



— HOW MUCH

A subscription with ToySwap costs €30 to 50 annually. The local municipality subsidizes subscriptions to encourage the initiative.

— WHERE TO BUY

Feel free to contact Leshem via e-mail to find out more about his toy library.



Nadav@toyswap.co.il



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Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

At present, Israel's energy production is disconcertingly lopsided — around 30 percent comes from coal-based sources, while renewables account for just 3 percent. Clean energy practices, like biogas, stand out as the country's most viable option moving forward, from both environmental and economic standpoints.



Home Biogas

— WHAT IS IT

Israeli startup Home Biogas has developed technology that treats organic waste and maximizes that waste's potential as an energy source. The company's biodigesters generate clean energy and liquid fertilizer from animal manure, human waste, and food scraps. Each day, this process can produce around 600 liters of clean gas (the equivalent of two hours of cooking) and six liters of high-quality liquid fertilizer. Home Biogas' innovation has certainly caught on over the years. With more than 9,000 units installed

in 106 countries, Home Biogas has partnered with governments and some of the world's largest organizations, including the UN, the EU, USAID, the International Red Cross, and more.

— FIND OUT MORE

You can learn about Home Biogas by viewing the [website](#), where you may contact the team with specific questions.



www.homebiogas.com



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Credits and Disclaimer

To see the location of all businesses and sites mentioned, visit our custom map.



[Access the Israel Google Map](#)

All photo and statistics credits can be found in this [Document](#).

The Switchers catalogue for Israel was created by Ananda Alonso. Layout and design of this catalogue was done by [Loop: Design for Social Good](#).

Have comments or questions? We would love to hear from you at



theswitchers@scprac.org

A special thanks to the Switchers in Israel, whose knowledge, talents, and innovations made this catalogue a reality!

Follow the stories of Mediterranean changemakers online:



[Switchers Website](#)



[Switchers Facebook](#)



[Switchers Instagram](#)

— DISCLAIMER

The Switchers is a community of inspiring green entrepreneurs and changemakers in the Mediterranean region.

The Switchers Community has been developed by the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) in the framework of the SwitchMed Programme.

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SwitchMed works to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Mediterranean via:

- *Capacity building for resource efficiency in manufacturing*
- *Training for start-ups in eco-design, business plan, marketing and financing of sustainable products and services,*
- *Engagement with policymakers to establish a boosting legal framework*
- *An action network of interested parties to connect and scale-up activities.*

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Well.

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