

## ANZAC: a brief for tour guides

### A guided tour following the activities of the Anzac forces during the First World War in Be'er-Sheva



Presented to the Be'er-Sheva Economic Company  
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The purpose of this document is to assist tour guides with their tours of Anzac heritage throughout Be'er-Sheva.

The document offers a concise historic background and is written in an instructional language.

The nature of the tour should be adapted to the unique needs of the tourist segments. Recommendations of how to do so appear on the final page of this document.

## Historical background:

- World War I
- Battle of Gallipoli
- The Gaza campaigns
- Battle of Be'er-Sheva
- Allenby and the great deception - Meinertzhagen's haversack ruse
- Australian soldiers and the Jewish settlement
- Zionism during World War I (background required for tourists from abroad)
- The Balfour Declaration

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- The Anzac route in the Negev
- Tel Be'er-Sheva
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- Allenby Park
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- The British Cemetery
- The Anzac Museum
- Turkish Railway Station and Monument - The old locomotive complex
- Australian Soldier Park and Monument
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## **Historical background**

### **World War I**

The Great War (which was the name of the war until it was given the name World War I in 1920) took place between 1914 and 1918. Countries from all over the world were involved and its devastating consequences led to the deaths of 16.5 million people and another 20 million were wounded and handicapped, many of whom were civilians. The main centers of war were in Europe, but a significant arena also took place in the Middle East in the Ottoman Empire. The belligerents were divided into two blocs fighting each other:

The Central Powers included the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria.

The Allied Powers included the British Empire and its colonies (Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa), France and its colonies, the Russian Empire (who withdrew from the war after the Communist Revolution in 1917), Italy (who joined in 1915) and America (joined in 1917). Alongside them were smaller countries such as Belgium, the Balkans, Romania and Greece (from 1917).

### **Gallipoli battles:**

This campaign is significant in understanding the role of the Anzac soldiers in Israel. It took place on the Gallipoli peninsula in the western part of the Ottoman Empire (today's western Turkey, not far from the city of Izmir), and began on April 25, 1915, when British, French, Australian and New Zealand (Anzac) forces, as well as a detachment of the Jewish battalion, the Zion Mule Corps, landed on and around the Gallipoli Peninsula. The bloody battle went on for many months and ended in the defeat of the Anzac troupes.

Out of about 15,000 soldiers, only 4,000 returned from the battle alive. Over the years, the battle has become a somewhat myth in Australian national military heritage, and the landing date on the beach is commemorated as a national Memorial Day for Australian and New Zealand militaries, under the name "Anzac Day", marked annually on April 25th.

The Allies thought they could gain a quick victory by invading Turkey and conquering Istanbul, but their plan failed. After 131,000 soldiers were killed and 252,000 wounded, the Allies decided to withdraw from the peninsula. Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal, who commanded the battle arena with great success, became a hero in Gallipoli, and the battle was to mark his future when the venerable military commander would become the undisputed charismatic leader of the new Turkish Republic. It is interesting to note that the Australians erected a monument in memory of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk on the Anzac Avenue in Canberra, Australia.

The first connection between the Jewish settlement and the Anzacs was established through the Zion Mule Corps who participated in the campaign, during which eight members of the Corps lost their lives.

### **The Gaza Campaigns**

Australia and New Zealand sent the best of their sons to war, being committed to participate as a Crown Colony of the British Empire. After Gallipoli, the main battle fought by the Anzacs took place in Africa, when the Allied Forces intended to conquer Syria and Palestine from the hands of the Ottoman Empire.

Throughout history, Gaza City and its environs have played a major role in curbing war campaigns from troupes moving from Africa northwards to the southern entrance gate to the Land of Israel. The Ottomans withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula and established a strong and stable line of defense from Gaza to Be'er-Sheva to stop the British invasion from the south. The battles for the conquest of Gaza were among the harshest of World War I, and tens of thousands of soldiers fell on both sides. The first battle took place on March 26, 1917, near Gaza City. This was the first important battle which took place in Israel. British troupes failed to break through the front, and the first Gaza battle ended with the victory of the Ottoman Empire, due to its defense, the credit largely going to the German commander, Kress von Kressenstein, who was praised for his expertise.

The Second Battle of Gaza took place on April 19, 1917, and began with an incursion from the East. The Ottomans, who had strengthened their forces after the first battle, succeeded in defeating the British once again. On June 28, 1917, the British command (General Murray) was

replaced and General Edmund Allenby was appointed Commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The British War Office significantly fortified Allenby's army with three new corps: two infantry corps and a cavalry.

### **Allenby and the big deception - Meinertzhagen's haversack ruse**

The Battle of Be'er-Sheva on October 31, 1917 brought about a major breakthrough in the war, when the British army broke through the Turkish defense line and began to move north toward the center of the country. British success should be credited to a fake operation that led the Ottomans to believe that the third attempt to break through the center of the country would be carried out again on Gaza City. As part of the fraud, the British used a series of camouflage and deception. German light aircrafts in the area did not notice the British Army movements, which were done mainly in the dark, without lights, while in the morning the British trucks returned to their place to create the appearance of a thinning of forces on the Gaza front. Wireless transmissions of disinformation were deliberately broadcast in the code that fell into the hands of the Germans, and the British who knew about it made sure that the Germans were passing on "secret" information that had fallen into their hands to the Turks. Alongside these is the well-known "haversack ruse" – the haversack "dropped" by the British intelligence officer Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen in a sophisticated ruse that made the Turks believe that the authentic case contained original and vital documents, which were actually false documents containing misinformation about British intentions which caused the Turks to act accordingly.

The last stage of the battle for the occupation of Gaza appears in Colonel Meinertzhagen's "1917 Middle East Diary". The British used to drop small boxes of cigarettes from light planes over the Turkish soldiers' positions every evening before sunset. On the evening of November 6, 1917, shortly before the start of the Third Battle of Gaza, thousands of boxes of opium-coated cigarettes were dropped down on Turkish positions, drugging the Turkish soldiers and causing them to grow sleepy and unable to function on the day of the battle.

The battle for liberation of Be'er-Sheva, which occurred the week before, and the successful conquest of Gaza, paved the way for the British army to move northward, and later became an important and central mark in the history and battle heritage of Australia and New Zealand.

## **The Battle of Be'er-Sheva**

The liberation of Be'er-Sheva was a fascinating link in a vast chain of events throughout the war. Since this is the main subject for us on this tour, we will focus a little on the events of the battle itself.

Between the Second Battle of Gaza (April 1917) and the liberation of Be'er-Sheva there were six months in which the front turned into trench warfare.

The section of the city of Be'er-Sheva is an arid plain, surrounded by hills, on which the Turks built a system of fortifications and communication trenches. This system surrounded the city in a half-bow from the north, south and east, but the Turkish defense line in the east was nothing more than a system of trenches without a barbed-wire fence that reinforced the natural obstacle of the Be'er-Sheva River. Beyond the first ring, additional fortifications were built in an outer ring with a diameter of up to 6.5 kilometers from the city that protected Be'er-Sheva from the west and southwest. A central point of defense was Tel Be'er-Sheva, a mound overlooking the city from the east, where 900 soldiers and a machine-gun company were stationed. The Turkish victory in the Second Battle of Gaza in April led to new army assessments and a reorganization of the lines of defense and order of forces. On the assumption that the British Army would resume its offensive, which would again concentrate on the Gaza Strip, the Turkish army forces were strengthened in the area. In June 1917, the upper Ottoman command in the arena of Eretz Israel was reorganized, resulting in an impressive force of about 35,000 Turkish soldiers along the Gaza - Be'er-Sheva border on the eve of the battle and about 260 cannons of various types. The Turkish forces were backed up by a special German force known as the Corps of Asia, which included special combat and support units.

Opposite the Ottomans and the Germans, stood the Egyptian Expeditionary Force under the command of General Edmund Allenby. These forces of the British army, used the period between the Second Battle of Gaza and the Battle of Be'er-Sheva to build forces and gather information on the lines of defense and Ottoman army movements. Allenby transferred the command of the Expeditionary Force from Cairo to the fighting zone and set it up in Khan Yunis. The main part of the attack on Be'er-Sheva was supposed to be carried out by the Australian and New Zealand Light Horse Mounted Divisions. According to British combat doctrine, these divisions were

mounted infantry units (not cavalry units). The soldiers were armed with infantry only and lacked the cavalry weapons. The units were supposed to reach enemy lines on horseback, but carry out the attack itself as infantry soldiers, while one in four fighters held the horses. According to the British plan, the XX Corps infantry would attack the Turkish defense lines, while the Light Horse division was tasked with attacking Be'er-Sheva from the east, conquering the city and securing its water sources.

The main thrust of the campaign and the key to its success was a careful logistic deployment by the British to overcome the water shortage and to withstand the long water supply time from Egypt to the Negev. Simultaneously, an intelligence effort was required to conceal the building of forces and planning the attack from the Turks, which Colonel Meinertzhagen expertly conducted with disinformation methods.

The British forces had to be very sophisticated in building supply lines of water, food and equipment through the desert. For this purpose, masses of camels and horses were recruited from the Bedouin, as well as terrain desert vehicles.

A regular supply of water was vital for keeping the British forces on the front line and ensuring their ability to fight. Wells were dug and water plants were constructed, including a British pipeline that drew water from the Suez Canal to transfer to the fighting zones. Transportation of water to the soldiers of the Expeditionary Force was carried out by convoys of thousands of camels, whose task was to ensure the supply of water for the liberation of Be'er-Sheva. To continue northward, the British had to exploit the success quickly, and seize the wells in Be'er-Sheva and its environs. Failing to do so meant stopping the entire operation and withdrawing the forces. The British intended on persuading the Turkish command that most of the effort would be concentrated, again, in a massive assault on Gaza City. Unencrypted wireless transmissions with clues were conjured up and fake news on the absence of senior officers from the front lines on various dates were only the tip of the iceberg. The British also erected empty dummy camps, and assembled boats near the shore of the Gaza Strip. At night, the forces were transferred to the assembly and organization areas, while a minimal force remained to uphold the army camps and routine operations. Finally, artillery shelling on the Turkish lines in Gaza began four days before the attack on Be'er-Sheva, as a *prima facie* preparation for the upcoming attack on Gaza.

The most famous ruse was carried out by a British intelligence officer from the headquarters of the British Expeditionary Command, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, who dropped a bag in Turkish territory with various documents in it, some personal and some containing correspondence with British officers, as well as drafts for topics of discussion at a headquarters meeting. The bag, which was deliberately dropped by Meinertzhagen after allegedly being wounded by Turkish fire, was immediately transferred to Turkish-German headquarters, where the documents were analyzed. This led the Turks to reinforce their initial assessment that most of the British effort would take place in the Gaza Strip, while secondary effort and possibly diversion would be directed towards Be'er-Sheva. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force began to move the forces which intended to attack Be'er-Sheva, first to the assembly areas some distance from the front line in the Gaza area, and then to camps which were intended as a final exit point before the battle. The Desert Cavalry Corps and the Anzac Division advanced by leaps and bounds from the Rafa area towards Khalsah (Halutza), and the Australian Division captured Bir Asluj (Be'er Mashabim) and, with an engineering effort, improved its water production. On October 29, the water sources were enough to supply one portion of water for the horses per day.

At 05:55 the British artillery batteries began shelling the Turkish defense posts southwest of the Natan Camp. This was the signal for the beginning of the battle for Be'er-Sheva.

The Turkish commander's request for reinforcements in Be'er-Sheva was rejected, and the fate of the city, which had fallen into the hands of the Anzac and British Army forces, was sealed.

In the Battle of Be'er-Sheva, 1,148 Turkish prisoners were captured along with 10 cannons and four machine guns. Despite Ismet Bey's instructions to blow up the pumping facilities of water wells, the city's wells were seized intact, with only two out of the 17 wells damaged.

Success in Be'er-Sheva was a symbolic turning point for the British army and the realization of Allenby's hopes, as the battle for the Middle East turned from a series of embarrassing failures to success. It is difficult to exaggerate the weight and importance attributed to the attack carried out by the mounted cavalry on the Turkish positions in Be'er-Sheva. In the Australian legacy of battle and national heritage, the event in particular and the battle of Be'er-Sheva in general are given a place of honor. The victory, especially the boldness of the assault, turned the fronts of Sinai and the Land of Israel from a side arena to the center of attention.



The battles brought 400 years of Ottoman rule in the eastern Mediterranean to an end, and was the beginning of the British Mandate period. During the war, conflicting political promises were made to residents of the region, and the Balfour Declaration was published promising a national home for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. Considering this undertaking, the League of Nations granted the United Kingdom, after the war, the mandate to establish in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people, which eventually led to the establishment of the State of Israel.

Along with the Balfour Declaration, the British promised the Arabs the establishment of a large Arab kingdom that would include the Hijaz and Greater Syria, as formulated in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence. At the end of the war, the Middle East was divided into British and French spheres of influence under the Sykes-Picot agreement and the San Remo Conference.

### **Anecdote for Guides - How to Win a Battle Using Soccer?**

Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Drummond Borton was an outstanding colonel in the Gallipoli battles who was previously a commander of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in the 181<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the London 60<sup>th</sup> Division. His battalion was transferred to Egypt following Allenby's demands to reinforce his forces on the Palestine front, and then was annexed to the XX Corps in the Be'er-Sheva area. On the night of October 30, the battalion under his command excelled in a face-to-face battle on the hills southwest of Be'er-Sheva, breaking through the fences in the first stage of the battle for the city. After a few days of regimentation, on November 6, the regiment captured the Roshdi and Kauka areas, and opened the way for the 170 and 180 Brigades to occupy the Tel Shari'a compound. The explosion of ammunition depots at the foot of the mound, on the night of November 6, delayed the continuation of the attack, which resumed on the night of November 7. In this battle, his battalion stormed the Turkish forces, retreating from Tel Shari'a and preparing to defend the back of a ridge a kilometer north of the Tel. Under heavy fire, and from a low area, the battalion repeatedly attacked the Turks, who stubbornly held their positions, and over and over again, the English had to back down. But Borton didn't give in and led his soldiers back again and again to the Turkish forces. After hours of repeated attempts throughout the night, and on the verge of exhaustion, when dawn was breaking on the horizon, he realized that he had to do something unusual, to fulfill the mission before sunrise. He decided to make a final

attempt, and to encourage his soldiers in an original way, to finally break the resistance of the Turks: he remembered the "secret weapon" of the English, what every Englishman can't remain indifferent to, something that will rid him out of his apathy in any situation, and cause him to rush forward, even in the face of danger: S O C C E R

During the pivotal attack, Borton took a ball out of one of the soldiers' bags, kicked it forward, toward the Turks, like a goalkeeper would, and with bayonets drawn and warrior cries, the English stormed the stunned Turks' positions, winning the battle. This was not the only case in which soccer was used by British commanders to exhilarate soldiers. At least one other such case is known from the Battle of the Somme on the western front. Many Britons serving in the army were soccer players or fans, and several sports clubs and stadiums in England erected monuments in their memory. After the war. Lt. Col. Borton was released from the army, returned to England, and died there in 1933. He was buried in his homeland.



### **Australian soldiers and the Jewish settlement**

The first meeting between the Anzac soldiers and the Jewish Zion Mule Corps in Gallipoli set the foundations for mutual appreciation, where the Jewish brigade, established by Jabotinsky and Trumpeldor, served as an advance transport unit.

Upon their arrival in Eretz Israel, the Anzac forces were sympathetic and affectionate toward the Jewish community and Zionist history remembers them for their good traits.

Their journey in Israel began with the battles of Gaza, continued with the conquest of Be'er-Sheva (and gained a significant commemoration in the collective memory both in Australia and in Israel), continued in Mughar Ridge, and the battles in Jerusalem and Megiddo. Since the

Australian soldiers played an important role in liberating the country from the Turkish yoke, along with their kindness and unpretentiousness, they were much liked and appreciated by the Jewish community in Palestine.

Nahum Gutman's book "Path of the Orange Peels" which uses the WWI period as a backdrop, emphasizes the differences between the harsh and humiliating attitude of the Turks before and during the war, and the sympathetic attitude of the soldiers from the Allied Forces in general, and the Australian soldiers in particular. Gutman describes the courtesy and generosity of the Australians who gave alms to beggars in the street and praise for anyone who gave them services, something which would never occur with Turkish soldiers.

At the beginning of World War II, the Australian army joined Britain again in the campaign against Nazi Germany. The Land of Israel became a base for Allied Forces in the period before and after the outbreak of fighting on the various fronts. Once again, the Jewish community met with the well-remembered Australian soldiers from World War I. Tel Aviv was a favorite with the soldiers - a place of entertainment and rest on their vacations. Jewish girls enjoyed meeting the soldiers at the city's night hotspots, and there were many cases of girls marrying British and Australian soldiers, and immigrating back to their country of origin after the war. The friendliness of the Australian soldiers was related to their easy-going nature and kindness, and to the fact that they were different from the British soldiers who represented the Mandate authorities whom the Jewish community did not favor.

#### **Zionism during the First World War (background for tourists from abroad):**

World War I caused great confusion and discomfiture among European Jewry. Many Jews, citizens of various countries, joined the war effort, like others, under the banner of their homeland. During the war, they often faced difficulties as Jews, either because they were sometimes forced to fight other Jews in enemy armies, or because they were persecuted for being Jewish by those who claimed that Jews did not participate as much as other citizens did in the war effort. Many Jewish communities, mainly in Eastern Europe, were alternately transferred under Russian or German-Austrian patronage. On the eastern front, hundreds of thousands of Jews were expelled from their homes because of the fear that they would serve the enemy.

## **The impact of the war on the organization and political processes of the international Zionist movement**

The state of war and the division of Europe into two rival blocs posed many organizational difficulties on the Zionist movement.

- A. Members of the Zionist movement and its institutions were scattered among different countries that fought each other, and therefore had difficulty establishing contact, functioning on an ongoing basis, and maintaining the unity of the movement.
- B. The leaders of the movement, some of whom were Russian citizens, some Germans and Austrians and others with British citizenship, found themselves on either side of the divide.
- C. The seat of the Zionist Executive was indeed in Berlin, but its main strength was concentrated in Russia and Austro-Hungary. It was therefore decided to establish temporary sub-centers in Copenhagen, The Hague, London and New York.
- D. The movement's financial institutions (the Anglo-Palestine Bank and the Jewish National Fund) were in London and had difficulty providing economic aid to the Jewish community in Palestine under Turkish rule, and in funding Zionist activities in European countries that were at war with Britain.

These difficulties led the Zionist Organization to officially adopted a neutral position in the war. Also, opposition to the Turks would have endangered the Jewish community in Palestine, while on the other hand, support for the Turks would have endangered the Jews of Russia. But beyond the official neutral front, the movement's leaders tended to one of the sides. Among them were many who supported a pro-German line for various reasons. The Jews of Russia hoped that a German victory would overthrow the Russian Tsar and put an end to his anti-Semitic policies. In the Land of Israel, they hoped that Germany would influence Turkey and prevent a policy that would harm the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine.

On the other hand, there were those who argued that a pro-British line should be adopted on the assumption that the Allies would win the war and that Palestine would be under British influence. Enthusiastic supporters of this approach were Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Sokolov who started negotiations with the British about their recognition of the right of the Jewish people to return to settle in the Land of Israel where they would establish the Jewish State.

## The Balfour Declaration

During the war, the Zionist movement made extensive public relations efforts in London, and negotiations were held between representatives of the Zionist movement and the British authorities, to include the British in the national aspirations of the Zionist movement, so that when the war was over, and peace treaties were signed, they would include the aspirations of the Zionist movement and hopefully win international recognition. At the time, Chaim Weizmann was the chief negotiator and representative of the movement. He lived in Britain and was a professor of chemistry at the University of Manchester. He had close relations with British officials, including Lord Balfour, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, and Herbert Samuel, and used his connections to convince them to support Zionist aspirations. The outcome of the negotiations led to the publication of the Balfour Declaration. The declaration was published as an official letter sent by Lord Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, to Lord Rothschild, who was the Honorary President of the Zionist Federation in Britain. The Zionist movement felt that for the first time the movement and the Jewish people had been recognized for their national aspirations.

During negotiations, the Zionist movement proposed the following version which reflected its demands (18.7.1917):

"His Majesty's Government, after considering the aims of the Zionist Organization, accepts the principle of recognizing Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish people... His Majesty's Government regards as essential for the realization of this principle the grant of internal autonomy to the Jewish nationality in Palestine, freedom of immigration for Jews, and the establishment of a Jewish National Colonizing Corporation for the resettlement and economic development of the country.

The conditions and forms of the internal autonomy and a Charter for the Jewish National Colonizing Corporation should, in the view of His Majesty's Government, be elaborated in detail and determined with the representatives of the Zionist Organization."

The meaning of the wording:

1. The British Government recognizes the entire Land of Israel as the national home of the Jewish people.
2. Recognition of the rights of the Jewish nation to live as free people in the Land of Israel.

3. Giving autonomy to the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.
4. Freedom of immigration.
5. Establishment of a company to help settle the land and supervise the economic development of the country.

In other words, implementation of the principles of the Basel Program, in cooperation with Britain. This version however was not accepted. Britain refrained from unequivocal commitments because:

- A. The Arabs were a majority in the Middle East and in Israel. The British feared that "courting" the Zionist movement would adversely affect their good relations with the Arabs. To maintain a stable relationship with the Arabs, the British preferred not to commit themselves explicitly. It is important to note that Britain also provided the McMahon letters to encourage Arab-British relations. These letters, too, were vague and did not relate to clear boundaries. But the Arabs interpreted the contents of the correspondence as a British promise to the Arab peoples in the Middle East to achieve independence in the Land of Israel as well. The British rejected this interpretation.
- B. At that point in time in Palestine, there was a Jewish minority that could not bring about the existence of an independent state, therefore it would be enough to make a vague and non-binding declaration rather than what the Zionist movement wanted to do.

The final statement, written on November 2, 1917, was reached at the end of the negotiations and read:

"Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur James Balfour"

The meaning of the statement and its drawbacks:

1. The concept of "a national home". The final version of the statement was rather vague in relation to this concept. Is this an independent sovereign Jewish state or a British-sponsored autonomy?
2. The definition of the borders of a national home. This issue is also vague. It is clear from the text of the declaration that Britain does not intend to recognize the whole Land of Israel as an area designated for the Jewish National Home, but it is also unclear what areas will be allocated, if any, to the establishment of this home.
3. The means of British assistance. Would Britain provide diplomatic support? What would be the nature of British aid?
4. British-Arab relations. Why are the Arabs living in Palestine at the time not explicitly mentioned? Do civil or religious rights of non-Jewish communities extend to national rights? And what about political sovereignty? The questions remain unclarified.
5. Britain's attitude towards world Jewry. What was Britain's attitude towards world Jewry? And why did Britain place itself as a defender of world Jewry?

It is important to remember that the Balfour Declaration is not a legally binding document in terms of international law.

## **Tour sites in the footsteps of the Anzac forces in Be'er-Sheva:**

### **The Anzac Trail in the Negev**

This is the route the fighters took on their way to Be'er-Sheva. The 100-kilometer-long trail commemorates the large flanking maneuver of the cavalry, and explanatory signs are posted on key sites along the route, with main entrances at three sites: At Badlands Viewpoint at Be'eri, at Golda Park and at Eshkol Park. The signs have explanations and show pictures from the daily lives of the soldiers and the battles. It is recommended to visit the educational park in Nahal Assaf.

Map of the Anzac route: [http://www.eyarok.org.il/uploads/files/netiv\\_anzak\\_map.pdf](http://www.eyarok.org.il/uploads/files/netiv_anzak_map.pdf)

### **The Old City of Be'er-Sheva**

The ancient Turkish city of Be'er-Sheva was established by the Ottoman Empire under the leadership of Sultan Abd al-Hamid II in 1900 as a modern designed city. Within a few years, some 1,000 residents emigrated to the city, mainly Bedouins and Arabs from the south of the Land of Israel (among them were some Jews). The new city was well designed in a cross-sectional style of cross-streets (a classical Hippodamian plan). There were plenty of impressive buildings built in an international and oriental style in the trends of the early 20th century. Some of these handsome buildings were made of neatly dressed yellow limestone, which originated in the Nabataean ruins of Halutza, several dozen kilometers south of Be'er-Sheva. Today, these beautiful public buildings, which are over 100 years old, are home to some of Be'er-Sheva's most impressive tourist and cultural attractions. The restoration and renovation of the Old City includes renovated streets and open, public spaces that attract many visitors, both local and from out of town. The Old City serves as a lively entertainment and cultural center for young Be'er-Sheva residents with many tourist sites attracting thousands of visitors. Following is a list of tourist and cultural sites in the Old City of Be'er-Sheva:

### **Tel Be'er-Sheva National Park (Tel Sheva)**

A tourist attraction near Be'er-Sheva managed by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. The Tel Be'er-Sheva National Park is actually the mound (Tel) on which the ancient biblical city of Sheva, mentioned in the Book of Joshua chapter 19 as a city belonging to the Tribe of Simeon, was located and was a fortified and impressive city from the Early Israelite period (10<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE). The



residents of the city built a sophisticated water plant, which indicates a high engineering capability. The water plant includes a huge square shaft that penetrates 15 meters into the ground. The shaft is surrounded by large walls lined with pebbles, and it descends into a large reservoir that collects the floodwater that flows from the Hebron River. At the entrance to the city, 70-meters-deep well was dug, the deepest well in the Negev, which provided water to visitors in the city, to prevent them from attacking the Old City. At the entrance to the site is a unique significant exhibit: a reconstructed horned animal altar, (the first unearthed in Israel), parts of which were discovered in excavations. From the top of the hill you can get an excellent view of the entire Be'er-Sheva Valley.

### **The Turkish bridge over the Be'er-Sheva River and the Be'er-Sheva River Park**

The Turkish Railway Bridge over the Be'er-Sheva River is a stone arched bridge built in 1916 for the Ottoman army, as part of the railway line from Nahal Sorek to Kuseima (Nitzana) - a crossroads of the eastern military track to the western Sinai Peninsula, to transport soldiers and military equipment as part of the Ottoman-German logistical efforts in the Sinai and Palestine campaigns during the First World War. The bridge was one of a series of bridges and water crossings from Be'er-Sheva to Kuseima in the Sinai. The railway tracks that crossed the bridge reached Auja al-Hafir and from there ran all the way to Kuseima. During the period of operation, the railway line from Afula to Sinai was 300 kilometers long. The use of the bridge ceased in May 1917. The British-built Rafah- Be'er-Sheva railway in May 1918 reached Be'er-Sheva from the northwest and the Turkish bridge to the south of the city was without track use even after the area fell into the hands of the British. The length of the bridge is 190 meters, and for many years it was the longest bridge in Israel. Recently, the bridge was renovated as part of the rehabilitation and development program of the Be'er-Sheva River Park and its environs, transforming the area into an impressive metropolitan recreational park, which includes a huge artificial lake surrounded by various recreational facilities.

### **Abraham's Well International Visitor Center**

Situated on the banks of the biblical Be'er-Sheva River, at the gates of the Old City, this innovative heritage center tells the story of Patriarch Abraham (Avraham Avinu) and the famous water well. The center features experiential content and a 3D presentation that creates a meeting between common values, faith and history of the world. Visitors to the site are exposed to the universal

story of Abraham, who famously hosted the angels in his tent, and was the world's first peacemaker and the spiritual father of the three monotheistic religions. The site opened to the public in 2013 and now attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year.

### **Allenby Park**

This aesthetic park, founded at the beginning of the last century by the Turks, is a green and shaded park - a focal point and oasis amid the dry, hot desert city. It was one of the first public parks in Israel. After WWI, a memorial was erected to commemorate General Allenby with the building of a monument in the middle of the park, with explanatory signs about the general, his army and his war efforts to conquer Be'er-Sheva. After undergoing renovation and development in 2014, the park is a vast open public area situated on the corners of Ha'atzmaut and Hertzl streets.

### **Carasso Science Park**

The large science park in Israel, situated in the Old City. The innovative museum located in a spectacular Ottoman building which used to be a school for Bedouin Sheikhs' children, has been recently renovated. This rich interactive museum features an open courtyard with a massive scientific playground and interactive attractions for all ages. The park hosts 13 exhibition halls with state-of-the-art exhibitions such as: nuclear energy, micro-electronics, genetics and molecular biology, mechanics and more. The project, which opened in 2013, is the fruit of the Be'er-Sheva Municipality and the Rashi Foundation and tens of thousands visit annually.

### **The British Cemetery in Be'er-Sheva**

The British military cemetery, northwest of the Old City, is one of seven British cemeteries established in Palestine during the First World War. 1,239 soldiers and officers who fell in battles in the south of Israel during World War I are buried there, some of whom were transferred from temporary burial sites. 206 of them were Anzacs. There are also 54 unidentified soldiers with engravements on their gravestones: "The great soldiers of the war, God knows who they are." Many of the English soldiers who fell during the battles found their last resting place in Be'er-Sheva, but only one tenth of the total number of soldiers buried there fell in the battle for the conquest of Be'er-Sheva. After November 1918, the British brought their fallen soldiers to the graveyard from nine other temporary cemeteries in the Negev; from Urim in the west to Yavne in

the north. Most of the fallen were not members of the Anzac troops, but were British soldiers from London and the surrounding areas. The rest of the soldiers fell after the liberation of Be'er-Sheva, in battles that took place north of the city. As far as the number of fallen soldiers is concerned, this is the largest British military cemetery in the State of Israel.

### **The Anzac Museum**

An innovative and impressive museum, being built in the south-west corner of the British cemetery for WWI soldiers. The museum was initiated and promoted by Mayor **Ruvik Danilovich**, who enthusiastically recruited the Australian ambassador and other Australian and New Zealand officials, in a joint effort and help erect the museum with the help of donations. On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Be'er-Sheva, to be held on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017, the Prime Ministers of Australia and Israel are expected to inaugurate the museum together in an impressive ceremony.

### **The 70414 Locomotive Complex and the Turkish Monument**

In 2002, a unique monument was erected near the Turkish railway station in memory of the 298 Turkish casualties who fell in the battle for Be'er-Sheva. In 2008, the entire area was dedicated to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in honor of the founder of the new Turkish Republic, who was an officer in the Ottoman army, and lived for a while in Palestine. At the base of the monument is a memorial plaque honoring the Turkish soldiers who fell in battle. The original plaque was previously located on the wall at the entrance to the British military cemetery, giving mercy to the dead, and in gratitude of the Turks who placed a tombstone for a British pilot who fell in battle against them. Next to the monument is a statue of the head of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and an impressive historic tourist attraction - the 70414 Locomotive Complex.

In 1915, the German railway engineer Heinrich August Meisner was appointed to lead the Turkish railway project towards the Suez Canal. In October of that year, the railway (officially named the "Egypt section of the Hijaz track") was inaugurated at a festive ceremony held at the new Be'er-Sheva station. A series of high-ranking dignitaries arrived at the ceremony on a special train that left Damascus and arrived directly at the Be'er-Sheva station. The station included a terminal, a station manager's building, a water tower for locomotives and a workshop.

### **The Australian Soldier Park and the Difference Sculptor**

A beautiful and modern garden in Be'er-Sheva's 11th neighborhood that commemorates the Australian soldiers who participated in the liberation of Be'er-Sheva from the Turks in 1917. The well-kept playground was inaugurated in 2008. The place is fenced and has a permanent guard, maintenance workers and visiting hours. In the eastern corner, there is a statue of an Australian soldier mounted on an assaulting horse, he is either wounded or leaning into the horse, ready to conquer the city. There are also explanatory signs about battle. At the end of October 2007 there was a reenactment of the famous light horse charge organized by the "Association for the Legacy of the First World War in Eretz Israel" and the organization for Australian cavalry who preserve the heritage of the Anzacs.

### **The Anzac Monument**

A monument inaugurated in 1967 in the Be'eri Forest was designed by architect Yedidia Eisenstadt and donated by Australian and New Zealand Jewry in memory and honor of the forces of the two countries that operated in Israel. The area of the monument was part of the first and second battles of Gaza. The monument is shaped like the letter A, the first letter in the word Anzac, and has an observatory tower at the top, overlooking the entire area. The monument commemorates 730 Anzac casualties: 544 from Australia and 186 from New Zealand who are buried in cemeteries for the fallen of the British Empire in the Land of Israel during World War I. The Anzac casualties were 6% out of the total number of fallen war soldiers which was 12,197. Australians and New Zealanders hold special memorial days on April 25 and October 31. Full military ceremonies take place on the British Memorial Day (November 11). The ceremonies take place in Ramle, Jerusalem and Be'er-Sheva. The relatives of the dead tend to visit the cemeteries.

### **Eshkol National Park**

Ein Shellal: Khirbat Shellal is located on one of the hills in the north of the Eshkol National Park. It is home to the remains of a Byzantine church with a beautiful floor mosaic found by Australian soldiers in WWI after they conquered the machine gun position at the top of the hill on April 17, 1917. The mosaic, dated to 561 CE, was transferred to Canberra, Australia, and placed in the Monument to the Unknown Soldier in the Australian War Memorial.

## **Guiding recommendations based on the needs of various tourist segments**

The tour sites of Be'er-Sheva is a standard trail offered to all visitors and tour guides who are interesting in following the story of the Anzac soldiers. The order of the sites and the duration of the visit are subject to the tour guide's discretion and can be tailored to the wishes of whoever requests the tour. Before you is general information about the subject matter and about each site separately. The decision about how much time to spend at each site and what to say at each point, can be adjusted by each tour guide according to his audience.

### **General Tourism:**

This tour will focus on a brief background to World War I and a more comprehensive background as to Australia's involvement in World War I and the character of Anzac soldiers. The emphasis will be on understanding the importance of the Be'er-Sheva battle in Zionism, while linking the symbolic date of the Balfour Declaration to the liberation of Be'er-Sheva from the Turks.

It is important to emphasize the establishment of the Jewish battalions in the First World War and the preliminary processes for the establishment of the State of Israel. It is also essential to give an impressive historical background of the sites to help understand the significance of memorial days for the Australians while touring the sites.

### **Educational tourism:**

In addition to a brief historical background, the tour will focus on educational messages and values: the fighting of the Anzac people away from home for a land and a geographical area that is not their homeland and is unfamiliar to them; emphasize the sacrifice and dedication of the soldiers. The importance of the Anzacs to Be'er-Sheva and Zionism, as well as the good relations that existed between them and the Jewish community. Life today in 21st century compared to life here in Be'er-Sheva at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The technological gaps and ways of life; values of commemoration and honoring the soldiers, reflected in the memorial plaques by the Turks to the Brits and by the Australians to the Turks, even though they were their enemies; the Jewish story, the Jewish soldier, the labor corps, Captain Van den Berg buried in the British cemetery.

**Inbound tourism:**

Focus on the importance of the battles for the global war effort and on the importance of the Anzac fighters for the success of the campaign in Eretz Israel, which ultimately changed the fate of the entire World War I; how the Jewish settlement recognized and respected the Australian and New Zealand soldiers; the connection between the First World War and the beginning of Zionism (the Balfour Declaration) and the connection between Anzac and the Jews' historic right to live in the Land of Israel.