AVSIM Commercial FSX Scenery Review

**Ben Gurion X**

**Product Information**

**Publishers:** FSAddon

**Description:** Airport scenery add-on.

**Download Size:** 153 MB

**Format:** Download

**Simulation Type:** FSX

**Reviewed by:** Benjamin van Soldt AVSIM Staff Reviewer - May 17, 2011
**Introduction**

I can’t recall the number of times I have been to Ben Gurion, but my first time was in 1990, 3 months after being born. My mother brought me to Israel so I could “meet” the rest of the family (I was probably oblivious to who all these people were). In the following years, we tended to go twice and sometimes even three times a year to Israel. These were the flights that got me hooked on FS, and these are the flights that were the cause of the review you are now reading. A review about Ben Gurion intl. airport, the second airport that I visited in my life and has always remained in my heart for nostalgic reasons.

Below are two photographs I made when I was a kid. This was long before 2004, when the new terminal was built, and in that time, the old terminal required you to go to and from the aircraft by bus. This terminal, however, has been closed and reopened several times over the last six years. First to prepare it for domestic flights, and later to also handle international domestic aircraft, such as holiday charters and low-cost airlines.

The new terminal (called “terminal 3”) is the newest (opened in 2004) and serves international flights. It has three concourses (A, B and C), each with several gates with jetways (contrary to the old terminal). The new terminal is a big, modern building, designed by local architects.

**Test System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Windows 7 64 bit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FSX + Acceleration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intel i5 Quad @2,79 GHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATI HD5750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4GB RAM DDR3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add-ons: REX, MyTrafficX</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Flying Time:**

10 hours

FS Addon has published this new rendition of Ben Gurion for FSX by David Rosenfeld, the same guy that made a very good LLBG add-on for FS2004 in 2006. However, this FSX version is no mere port, as you might think. It is new scenery, suited for FSX, and using FSX technology. In this review I shall see how the product is, and if it’s a big improvement over the older, 2006 version.

**Installation and Documentation**

The installation is straightforward. You get an executable, which you simply run and it will install all the necessary files. I found that it does this without fuss. The default is an installation into Microsoft Flight Simulator X/FSAddon/Ben Gurion X. In there you'll find the scenery files and the manual.

The manual is nicely laid out. You are greeted by a clean front page, featuring a screenshot of Ben Gurion's Terminal 3; shot from Gate D8's parking position. The detail is apparent and so is the clarity of the textures used. The author's name and publishing house are also mentioned.

On the next page we get a good, nicely laid out table of contents that incidentally looks a lot like the standard table of contents that MS Word makes for you. Anyway, whether or not it was made by Word, the print is that you can easily see where you can expect what info, making it easy to navigate. I’ve already seen manuals that consist of 400+ pages and do not have a really useful table of contents.
Besides copyright stuff, we get an introduction to the scenery, installation and uninstallation instructions, and information about where to get support. The info is extremely clear and you get a good sense of what you’re getting into.

The rest of the manual is devoted to a short history of the airport and a description, featuring information on each and every terminal and runway. It even gives information on future runway configurations. It concludes with some general airport data. Finally, there are links to charts and a list of the guys in the beta test team.

All in all I should congratulate David for this clean and accessible manual. In my opinion, this is what a manual should look like.

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**Scenery overview**

Contained in this scenery package is Ben Gurion International airport and photo scenery of the immediate surrounding area. The photo scenery does not extend all the way to the beaches of Tel Aviv, but stops right where Tel Aviv more or less starts.

I personally think this is a great pity, because the ILS12 approach is one of the most exciting approaches due to the fact that you fly straight into the airport without one turn. You fly over the beach, getting lower and lower, and when you think you are about to crash, suddenly the airport pops up under you and you land on runway 12.

There is not one turn involved during the entire approach, which is why I think it’s such a nice approach. It is made that much more exciting because of the city of Tel Aviv beneath you. Not really having a photoreal rendition of it is a pity, much like the city of Hong Kong and the approach into VHHX making it so memorable.

The scenery pretty much includes all you would expect, including autogen annotation for the areas covered by photo scenery and night rendition of the photo scenery and the scenery itself. All in all, the scenery comes across as modern, FSX-oriented scenery. Now let’s look to see if that’s the truth.
The Scenery: Terminals

As said, Ben Gurion has two main terminals: the old one and the new one. We will begin our tour at the new terminal. It’s a modern structure consisting of an entrance hall and a long “arm” extending onto the tarmac, which culminates into a rotunda with three concourses attached to it (B, C and D). Each concourse has several gates, outfitted with jetways. This can be seen below:

Overall, the terminal looks just as I remember it from my last visit. The hall is an impressive building, with huge columns holding up the brightly lit roof. Also the FSX version presented here looks very good. The modeling is impressive and the texturing is great. I love that the colors are so vivid.

We continue our walk through the terminal and finally end up in the rotunda, featured on the screenshot above. Here we’ll find duty-free shops organized in a circle, with corridors leading to each of the concourses in between the shops. Let’s take a closer look at concourse B:

From each concourse extends four tiny arms, with two jetways each for a grand total of eight gates per concourse. The concourse is also pretty much as I remember it. Fine modeling and good texturing again gives us a good representation of the real thing.

I really like the carts and such scattered around the gates. The important thing is that they are there, but not in too great an amount: one has to know when to add more and when to stop adding. I think the developer has hit it just right, mostly. The only thing I want to highlight is that I see El Al aircraft parked at concourse B.
From what I know, this is incorrect. EL Al aircraft mostly dock at concourse D leaving the others for other airlines. When I talked to the developer he said this would be corrected in the future.

For the list paragraph, I decided to fly low to the ground so I could show you gate detail at concourse C (why not B? No particular reason. The gates are the same at all concourses, so there is no difference). I think everything just looks really good. From the well-modeled jetways to the textures of the ground markings, all looks well.

I really like the vivid colors, on the terminal’s entrance hall for example, making it a very pleasant building to look at. It might have been nice if the “Ben Gurion Airport” letters on the concourse’s windows would have been more in focus, but since these are on the inside of the building, I’ll be forgiving on this account.

Now that we have seen the main terminal, let’s take a look at the old terminal. As opposed to the new terminal, the old terminal is rather dull-looking. It’s basically a straight building without anything fancy. There are no real concourses and there are no jetways. A bus brings you from the gate to the aircraft, which will be parked on the apron somewhere between the new and old terminal:

It’s not an ugly building, it’s just dull. There isn’t much to see. That’s not because the developer did a bad job, but that’s simply how the terminal looks. The small control tower is on top, and various radio masts have also been placed there.

Buses drive up front and take the passengers (very speedily I must say) to their aircraft which is parked only a short drive away. Texturing and modeling is again fine, but it might have been nice if more cars would have been parked in front of the old terminal. I remember it as a mass of buses, carts and cars.

For example, the Hercules photographs I showed at the very beginning of the review were taken from the old terminal. You can see how the area in front of the terminal is filled with “clutter”.
Here's the entrance to the old terminal. Colors are far more vibrant than I remember, but let's pretend the grass had been given water just before making this screenshot. For all I know, the entrance looks pretty much like the real thing, although it's probably simplified. That said, do we care that much? Most of the time you won't be seeing this anyway.

This is all that's to be seen about the terminals. They are modeled well and the texturing really appeals to me due to its vividness. So far so good!

**The Scenery: Cargo and military**

Ben Gurion handles cargo besides passengers, as all international airports probably do. However besides cargo and passengers, Ben Gurion is also partly a military airbase.

It's not for nothing that one sees Hercules aircraft taxi around the airport, and if you were to take off on runway 24, you would taxi along the military area to get there. I still remember how we'd taxi onto runway 3/21, only to find that we were not going to take off just yet. Instead, we'd use it as a taxiway to get to runway 24. Before we get to the military area, a brief view of the cargo facilities:

The cargo area isn't that big, but has enough room to park lots of cargo aircraft at once. The handling facilities can be seen in both screenshots and consist of the surrounding buildings. Again the modeling and texturing is just fine, although it might have been nice if more carts and containers would have been scattered around the apron. It feels a bit empty right now.

The military area isn't much bigger than the cargo area. There is a rather long apron where you'd usually see Boeing 707s and Hercs on the stand, and when taxiing along it you'd notice the soldier's barracks. Here are some shots:
As you can see, the military area isn’t an awe-inspiring place. Actually, it seems it roughly consists of two types of buildings, and it also seems to be missing lots of buildings here. It could have been filled up more, but I can also imagine that the Israeli army maybe didn’t like the idea of an exact replica of their Ben Gurion base featuring prominently in FSX scenery.

**The Scenery: Miscellaneous airport areas**

Lacking a better place to discuss this, in this section I’ll give those places a look that didn’t really fit anywhere else. There aren’t many, but they need to be looked at: ground texture detail and one spot on the airport we didn’t visit as yet: the apron adjacent to terminal 2. Below follow some screenshots.

First of all the parking. We mostly see a big roof, but under this roof we see some ground vehicles, all well-detailed. The Ben Gurion tower, which has been here for as long as I can remember, stands in the middle and is very well detailed too. If you look closely, you’ll notice that you can look through the tower’s glass, and see the instrument panels inside. Also notice the staircase leading to the tower’s roof.

For the rest, the ground markings look very life-like. The lamp posts are also well-detailed and well-textured and all uphold the quality we have seen throughout this scenery.

The final shot for this section shows the ground detail of the taxiway, runway and ground marking. What can I say? All look very good. Notice the tiny cracks in the taxiways and look at the ground details in the shots covering the terminals and apron, and you’ll see the same quality ground markings. They are easy to see and follow without looking cartoonish, which is an issue with some freeware sceneries.

This covers the airport itself. Time to go on to the surrounding area.

**The Scenery: Surrounding area**

Not only has the airport seen a makeover, but also large chunks of the surrounding area too. Not only has photo scenery been laid out around the airport, also autogen was placed. The result is a very nice approach into Ben Gurion.

The photo scenery also has night lighting and the default FSX cars move on the photo scenery’s highways. Not all is great; however, the photo scenery is a bit blurry. When flying high this shouldn’t be a noticeable problem, but the fact is that on approach to Ben Gurion, you won’t be flying high.

Furthermore, the photo scenery has a slightly “garbled” look, not being able to find a word that better fits what I mean. You can easily distinguish what is what, but at the same time I get the feeling I’m looking at a photograph made in the fifties. Still, even with all that criticism, I’m very happy to see that a relatively large area around Ben Gurion is covered, and I can only be a bit saddened by the fact that the photo scenery doesn’t extend all the way to the beach.

My main memory from approaching Ben Gurion is the low approach over Tel Aviv’s beach. It would have been great if...
the photo scenery would have extended to Tel Aviv’s beach, but it’s clear why this is not the case: the imagery’s price.

It’s expensive to buy the imagery needed to make these photo sceneries, and thus Ben Gurion’s photo scenery doesn’t extend to Tel Aviv’s beach.

Now look at some shots of the photo scenery. Do not be mistaken: even with the criticism I give about it, I’m very happy to have it and overall I’m pleased with the look. I simply like to nitpick.

One other thing, which is something that is not unimportant and often isn’t done very well: the photo scenery in this add-on package blends nicely with the surrounding default ground textures. The colors are somewhat the same, making it hard to spot the edges of the photo scenery (hard, but not impossible). Here’s an example:

**The Scenery: At night**

After seeing what Ben Gurion looks like during the day, let’s see how it is at night time. The entire scenery has got night lighting, including the photo scenery surrounding the airport and all the houses on the photo scenery. Below are screenshots with captions which should be self explanatory.
First an overview shot. The photo scenery sports a nice orange lighting for all the roads and urban areas. Wherever you see other colors of light, you know that it is not covered by the photo scenery. The airports also looks very good, with a really visible terminal 3, flooded with light from all sides.

Night approach to Ben Gurion’s runway 12. The runway lights look good, but the rest seems kind of dim. The lighting around the terminal looks great, however.

The new terminal, and it looks pretty much like what I remember. The yellowish light from inside that contrasts with the silver light that floods the apron. All in all, it looks very good!

The old terminal is a place I have seen more often at night than at day time, and this rendition looks good.

The cargo area at night time is a dark place. While it looks okay, I do wonder if in reality there isn’t more light coming of those lamp posts.

The maintenance area of Ben Gurion seems to be rather well lit, but it’s a pity that the white/silver light we see projected by the lights on the buildings doesn’t quite fit the golden light we see on the photo scenery.

The surroundings of the airport have their own night lighting. The houses themselves look good, and the same can be said about the photo scenery. Combined, however, it seems a bit like some houses float over a pool of light.

Overall, I’m pleased with the night lighting. The areas that matter have been given a very nice treatment and as such are a pleasure to arrive or depart from, at night.

**The Scenery: Performance**

And now a paragraph on performance. Below is a table of performance for various planes, during day and night. All testing was done during fair weather, and the values written below are from the VC, fully zoomed out.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aircraft</th>
<th>Time (with fair weather)</th>
<th>FPS</th>
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<td>PMDG 747</td>
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<td>18-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMDG 747</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>16-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS 767</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS 767</td>
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<td>16-23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Default Cessna</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Default Cessna</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>26-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see, performance isn’t stellar, but it’s not bad either. My philosophy is simple: if I can taxi with somewhat fluent motion, take off and land without noticing some sort of stutter, then I am happy. With the above values, I can enjoy a good flight and so I am pleased. Could be better, but it’s okay with me.

Other sceneries?

Israel is one of the least forgotten places in the Middle East, and as such there is some nice scenery to be found. Much of it is, sadly, for FS2004 but there is good FSX scenery too. The best project and a good place to visit if you intend to frequently fly in and out of Ben Gurion, is the Israeli Scenery project.

This group of developers produces freeware scenery for FSX. Released projects include the airports of Haifa and Eilat, but also land class and textures to go with it so as to make a more realistic experience in FSX Israel. Good quality mesh for Israel can also be found at VATIL, the Israeli division of VATSIM, which includes many more sceneries for both FS2004 and FSX.

Summary / Closing Remarks

Ben Gurion is an airport I have visited so many times that I have lost count. From what I can remember, I think FSAddon’s rendition of Ben Gurion is a faithful one. Everything that needs to be there is present, and it has been done with an eye for detail, resulting in very good quality scenery.

The 3D modeling is great and the texturing is very good too. From the little cracks in the taxiway to Terminal 3’s jetways, it is all done in a good way giving you a very accurate depiction of Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion International airport.

For anybody interested in flying into this airport at least a few times, FSAddon’s Ben Gurion is pretty much a must-have.

What I Like About Ben Gurion X

- Very nice manual
- Good texturing, with vibrant colors, makes the terminals come to life.
- Good modeling, incorporating a good amount of detail.
- Ground texturing is very nice.
- Nice night lighting at terminal 1 and 2.

What I Don’t Like About Ben Gurion X

- Photo scenery looks a bit "garbled", like an old photograph.
- Photo scenery sadly doesn't extend to Tel Aviv's beach, which I would have liked to see.
- Aircraft don’t seem to always park at correct spots; updated AFCAD is on the way!

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**Printing**

If you wish to print this review or read it offline at your leisure, right click on the link below, and select "save as"

**Ben Gurion X**

(Adobe Acrobat required)

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**Comments?**

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