

Haifa & the North Coast



Gifted with tranquil bays, a mild climate and natural resources, Israel's north coast has always been a key centre of industry and a gateway to the Holy Land. This economic prosperity has attracted a variety of ethnic groups, making it one of the most heterogeneous areas of the country.

The history of the north is largely based on its coastal cities, which for centuries have connected the Middle East and Europe. The harbour at Caesarea saw legions of Roman soldiers pass through its gates. Later, Akko welcomed Marco Polo and other travellers heading east. Haifa has recently taken over as the major port city, ushering in thousands of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. The north coast also offers some magnificent landscapes, including a string of white-sand beaches from the resort town of Nahariya straight up to the Lebanese border, culminating with the surf-pounded cliffs at Rosh HaNikra. There is some excellent hiking in the area, especially around Montfort and Carmel National Park.

From the coast the land rises into tree-clad hillsides, dotted with idyllic villages inhabited by an eclectic mix of Druze, Arabs and Jews. Russians have accounted for the majority of the new immigrants, and have done much to transform the cultural fabric of Haifa. Quaint communities have sprung up elsewhere, including an artist's village in Ein Hod and the wine-producing town of Zichron Ya'acov.

Tragically the north coast is also in the line of fire between Israel and Lebanon and fighting periodically spills across the border. Enjoy its natural beauty and history, but keep an ear to the ground for the latest developments.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Strolling through the gardens of the spectacular **Baha'i Shrine of the Bab** (p195)
- Tempting Armageddon at **Megiddo** (p214), a biblical site expected to host the end of the world
- Imagining the glory of Herod's great palaces at the archaeological site of **Caesarea** (p210)
- Exploring the ancient alleys and underground tunnels of **Akko** (p215), an extraordinary fortified town on the sea
- Feeling the spray of the sea as it surges through the grottoes of **Rosh HaNikra** (p222), close to the Lebanese border



Climate

The north coast sees warm summer temperatures that reach into the low 30s Celsius, and winter temperatures dipping to the low teens. It's one of the wettest parts of the country, with more than 150mm of rain in December and January, a fact that allows most of the region to stay green through the year.

Getting There & Around

There are plenty of bus and train links from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem to Haifa and the north coast. If you are driving, it's a straight shot up Hwy 2. There are also bus links to the Galilee region; drivers take Hwy 77 from Tiberias.

The best way around the area is with your own car. If you choose not to hire one, Egged buses can get you to (or close to) most places, though you may have to put up with some long waits.

HAIFA

חיפה חיפה

☎ 04 / pop 270,500

Spilling over the sides of woodsy Mt Carmel, with sweeping views of the sea, twist-

ing roads and one of the most beautiful gardens in the world, Haifa is one of the most picturesque cities in the Middle East. Its cultural fabric as a mixed city of tolerance between Arabs and Jews also makes it something of an anomaly in Israel.

Traditionally a blue-collar city centred on its large port, Haifa's working class has changed in recent years with the development of a hi-tech industry. The diverse economy has spurred development, bringing office parks and shopping malls to the outskirts, a trend that has sadly had a debilitating effect on the downtown commerce. There are signs of revival, however, thanks in part to the restoration of the old German Colony, now the city's premier address for fine dining.

Haifa has also spent the past few years developing an arts and culture community, improving museums and the like, but at heart it remains an industrial town, with attractions such as a technology museum and an enormous port-side grain silo.

Haifa's most striking feature is the Baha'i Gardens, an inspiring slash of green that cuts down the entire length of Mt Carmel. The religiously minded would also want to visit the holy sights of Elijah's cave and the neo-Gothic Stella Maris Carmelite Church.

Haifa's central location and good transport links make it a useful base from which to explore the area. There is no great need to lug your bags up and down the coast when Akko, Caesarea and other highlights in the area can be visited on day trips.

History

The city's name first appeared in 3rd-century Talmudic literature and, although its origin remains obscure, it's been suggested that 'Haifa' is related to the Hebrew words *hof yafe*, which mean 'beautiful coast'.

A thousand years ago, Haifa was considered an important Arab town, but early in the 12th century it was destroyed in battles with the Crusaders. Nearby Akko superseded the town in importance, and at the time of the Ottoman conquest of Palestine, Haifa was an insignificant village.

By the early 19th century, Haifa's Jewish community had begun to increase. With the growth of political Zionism the town expanded quite dramatically, although early in the 20th century the population was still only 10,000. What today is the port area

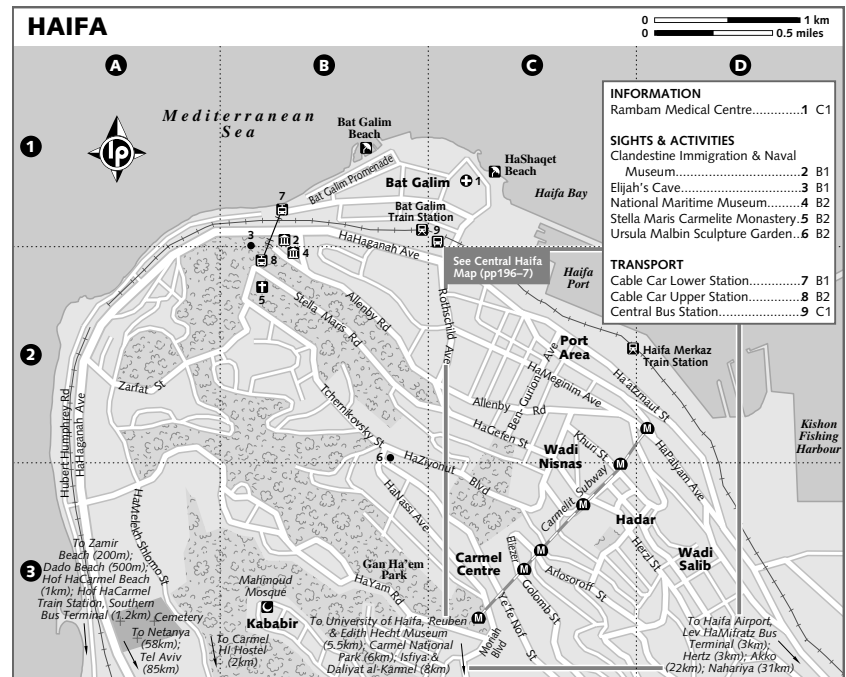
was then marshland, and the slopes of Mt Carmel were home only to grazing sheep.

In 1898 Theodore Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, visited Haifa and visualised what lay ahead for the fledgling city: 'Huge liners rode at anchor... a serpentine road led up to Mt Carmel', and 'at the top of the mountain there were thousands of white homes and the mountain itself was crowned with imposing villas'. His predictions have proved amazingly accurate.

Haifa's modern revival truly got under way with the construction of the Hejaz railway between Damascus and Medina in 1905, and the later development of lines to Akko and the south of the country. Land was reclaimed from the sea to create an area of offices and warehouses, and Haifa rapidly became the country's shipping base, naval centre and oil terminal. Much of this development took place under the rule of the British Mandate – the British were the first to exploit Haifa's naturally sheltered position as a harbour, bucking the ancient trend of favouring Caesarea and Akko.

As the country's major new port, Haifa was the first sight of the 'Promised Land' for shiploads of arriving Jewish immigrants. Prior to the British withdrawal from Palestine, Haifa became a Jewish stronghold and it was the first major area to be secured by the newly declared State of Israel in 1948. The city earned a reputation for liberalism, which, to a certain extent, it still maintains. The mostly secular Jewish community enjoys a better than average relationship with the local Arab population, who are mainly Christian.

In recent years Haifa has shifted its economy from heavy industry to tech. This culminated in 2004 when two professors at Haifa's Technion were awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry after describing the manner in which cells destroy unwanted proteins. IBM also maintains a strong presence here, with a research laboratory staffed by 600 people. When Katusha rockets started pummeling the city in the summer of 2006, the work carried on, with technicians uploading data from their laptops while hunkered down inside bomb shelters.



Orientation

Haifa is divided into three main tiers, with levels of affluence growing the further you head up the slopes of Mt Carmel. Travellers arriving from Tel Aviv or Jerusalem by bus or train are set down at Hof HaCarmel, which is about 5km south of the city – you'll need to change to a local train or bus to reach Haifa Merkaz, the Port Area, which is within walking distance of the downtown area.

The two major downtown roads are Ha'atzmaut St and, one block inland, Jaffa Rd. A familiar landmark is Kikar Paris (Paris Sq), the lower terminal of the city's subway line (the Carmelit). One kilometre west of Kikar Paris is Ben-Gurion Ave, the main road of the trendy German Colony.

About a half-kilometre hike uphill from Kikar Paris is the Hadar HaCarmel (Glory of the Carmel) area, or Hadar for short. Centred on Herzl St, Hadar is the city's commercial centre, with a heavy concentration of shops, office blocks, restaurants and cafés. It's a good place to brush up on your Russian as this is the language of choice here.

The Carmel district occupies the higher slopes of the city, where exclusive residences benefit from cool breezes and magnificent views. The high street, HaNassi Ave, has several excellent restaurants and a youthful vibe.

Many roads in Haifa run parallel to the coastline and are linked by steeply angled stairways. It is feasible to walk between some sections of the port area and Hadar, but the tiring slopes encourage you to use public transport to Carmel Centre.

MAPS

Free street maps are available at most hotels and the Haifa tourist office. The tourist office also sells a glossy map with a backside containing information on sights and activities.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Book Exchange (Map p196; ☎ 862 8540; 31 HeHalutz St) Big selection of used books.

Steimatzky Bookshop (Map p196; ☎ 866 4058; 16 Herzl St); Carmel Centre (130 HaNassi Ave) Steimatzky also has branches at the Hof HaCarmel train station, among other places.

EMERGENCY

Ambulance (☎ 101)

Fire (☎ 102)

Police (☎ 100; 28 Jaffa Rd)

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Café (Map p196; ☎ 838 4692; 122 HaNassi Ave; per hr 25NIS; ☎ 9am-midnight Sat-Thu, 9am-5pm Fri) At the top of the stairs at Gan Ha'em subway.

Manilla (Map p196; ☎ 052 424 4445; 31 Nordau St; per hr 10NIS; ☎ 9am-6pm Sun-Thu, 9am-midnight Fri-Sat) Internet café in Hadar.

WI-FI ACCESS

Free wireless hotspots can be found at Greg Coffee (p204), Mandarin (p204) and Dinner Rush (p203).

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.haifa.muni.il Official website for the municipality.

www.tour-haifa.co.il Official website for the tourist board. Contains updates on what is happening around the city.

LIBRARIES

University of Haifa Library (☎ 824 0289; University of Haifa; ☎ 8.30am-7.45pm Sun-Thu, 8.30am-12.45pm Fri) Beautiful library with a large collection of English-language books and temporary art or historical exhibits.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Rambam Medical Centre (Map p193; ☎ 1 700 505 150; Bat Galim) This is one of the largest hospitals in the country.

MONEY

The Bank Leumi and Bank HaPoalim main branches are both on Jaffa Rd, and you'll find branches with ATMs along most city streets. Exchange bureaux are likewise common; in the Carmel Centre there is one at the corner of Wedgewood and HaNassi. Post offices marked on our map will change travellers cheques.

POST

Main Post Office (Map p196; 19 HaPalyam Ave; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm Sun-Tue & Thu, 8am-1pm Wed, 8am-noon Fri) Located in the port area, 300m southeast of Kikar Paris.

Post office German Colony (27 Ben-Gurion Ave); Hadar (cnr HaNevi'im & Shabtai Levi Sts) Another handy branch is behind the Haifa Tower.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Haifa Tourism Development Association (Map p196; ☎ 853 5605, 1 800 305 090; www.tour-haifa.co.il; 48 Ben-Gurion Ave) Immediately at the foot of the Baha'i Gardens, this tourist office distributes several useful publications, including *A Guide to Haifa Tourism* and a city map (ANIS), which outlines four themed walking tours.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

ISSTA (Map p196; ☎ 868 2227; www.issta.co.il; Bei Hakranot Bldg, 20 Herzl St) Books air tickets and sells student ID cards.

Sights

Haifa's premier attraction is the Baha'i Gardens and this is where most travellers should head first if time is limited (you should make sure you have prebooked your visit). Museums are scattered around Wadi Nisnas, Hadar and Carmel Centre – all can be reached by foot and by subway. The maritime museums, Elijah's Cave and the Stella Maris Carmelite Monastery are a few kilometres northwest and are best reached by bus.

THE BAHAI'

The Baha'i faith is one of the world's youngest religions, established only in the middle of the 19th century. Its central belief is in equality and unity, and it clings to the notion that many prophets have appeared throughout history, including the likes of Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Jesus and Shakyamuni Buddha.

The origins of the faith can be traced back to one Ali-Muhammad (1819–50), a native of Shiraz, Iran. In 1844 Ali declared that he was the 'Promised One', manifestation of the God and 'the Bab' (Gate) through which prophecies would be told. The charismatic Ali gathered up followers (called Babis) but was later arrested for heretical teachings and executed by firing squad in Tabriz.

One prophecy of the Bab included the coming of 'one whom God would make manifest'. In 1866, a Babi named Mizra Hussein Ali proclaimed that he was this Messianic figure and assumed the title of Baha'ullah, having received divine inspiration while imprisoned in Tehran's infamous Black Pit.

As with the Bab, Baha'ullah's declarations were unwelcome in Persia and he was expelled first to Baghdad, and then Constantinople, Adrianople and finally the penal colony of Akko. Sitting in his cell in Akko he dedicated himself to laying down the tenets of a new faith, the Baha'i, which comes from the Arabic word *baha* (glory).

Among his writings, Baha'ullah stated that one could not be born a Baha'i; at the age of 15, a person chooses whether or not they want to be Baha'i. He also spoke of gender equality, the oneness of mankind, world peace, the need for universal compulsory education and harmony between religion and the sciences.

Baha'i now claim an estimated six million followers in more than 75 countries. Only a handful permanently resides in Israel as the Baha'ullah declared such an act to be sacrilegious. There are around 700 volunteers who come from abroad to serve in the World Centre (the Baha'i governing seat). Tradition dictates that once in their life a Baha'i must make a pilgrimage to Haifa to walk up the 1400 steps of the Baha'i Gardens.

BAHA'I GARDENS

With every tree trimmed to perfection and every blade of grass seemingly cut to the exact same height, the 18 terraces of the **Baha'i Gardens** (Map p196; ☎ 831 3131; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Thu-Tue) are truly a sight to behold.

The gardens are one of the two great holy places for members of the Baha'i faith (see The Baha'i, below), an independent movement that originated in Persia in the middle of the 19th century. The Baha'i are based in the area because the faith's founder, Baha'ullah, spent 25 years imprisoned in nearby Akko. Baha'ullah visited Mt Carmel four times and announced to his son that this would be the final resting place for the remains of the Bab (Gate), his spiritual predecessor who died in Persia in 1850.

The remains were brought to Haifa in 1909 and interred into the golden-domed **Shrine of the Bab** (☎ 9am-noon), which combines the style and proportions of European architecture with designs inspired by the Orient. Truly an international building, it was designed by a Canadian architect and built with Italian stone and Dutch tiles.

The tomb, which was completed in 1953, is considered one of the two most sacred sites for the world's six million Baha'is (the other site is the tomb of Mizra Hussein Ali outside nearby Akko; see p195 for details). Visitors to the shrine must remove their shoes and be modestly dressed (no shorts or bare shoulders).

Higher up the hill, behind the shrine, stands the **Universal House of Justice**, an impressive, classically styled pseudo-temple that also belongs to the Baha'i but is closed to the public.

While the lower gardens were built in the 1960s, the construction of the upper gardens was made between 1987 and 2001, at a price

tag of US\$250 million. Pilgrims solemnly tread uphill, soothed by the sounds of the lapping water as it flows past the steps. The 18 terraces have a distinctly European feel, with wrought-iron gates opening up to stone balustrades, sculptures, fountains and impossibly steep walls of grass. One hundred full-time gardeners are on hand to maintain the site.

The Baha'i Gardens are accessible to the general public only on guided tours, which must be prebooked well in advance. Meet at the appointed time at Ye'fe Nof St at the top of the garden (and a little down to the left, look for the sign). Baha'i pilgrims, however, can organise individual entry.

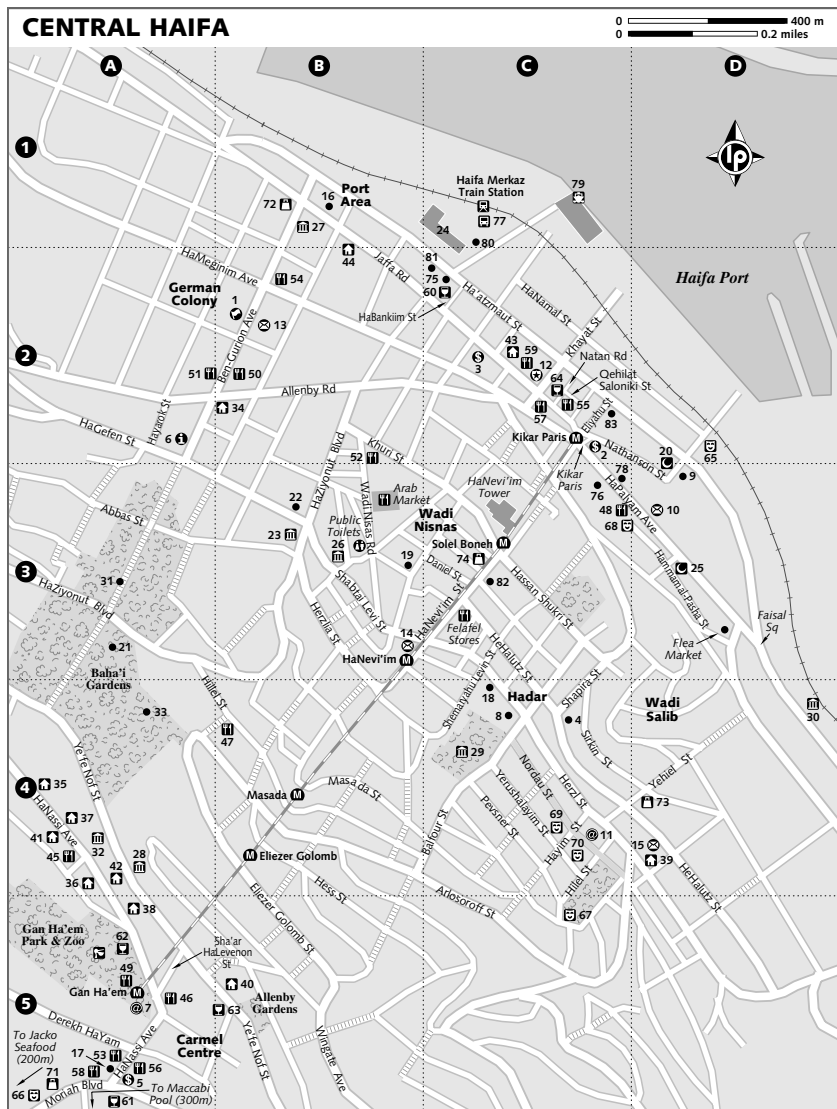
Further downhill on Ye'fe Nof St, west of the Baha'i Gardens, is the **Ursula Malbin Sculpture Garden** (Map p193; www.malbin-sculpture.com; Gan HaPesalim, HaZiyonut Blvd), a small park filled with contemporary bronze sculptures focusing mainly on children at play. Ursula Malbin is a Berlin-born sculptor who fled Nazi Germany in 1939. Since 1967 she has split her time working in Ein Hod and Switzerland.

CARMEL CENTRE

As Haifa quickly rose up Mt Carmel during its great expansion in the early 20th century, real estate speculators banked on the top of the hill. Not only were the views great, but the hill top enjoyed a pleasant breeze and was always a few degrees cooler than the port area. The **Carmel Centre**, as it became known, was soon home to a clutch of five-star hotels plus a quaint street lined with cafés and boutiques. Cultural life has improved with the installation of a cinematheque that screens art house films.

As you stroll behind the hotels you'll spot the entrance for the **Mane Katz Museum** (Map p196; ☎ 838 3482; 89 Ye'fe Nof St; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Sun-Mon & Wed-Thu, 2-6pm Tue, 10am-1pm Fri, 10am-2pm Sat). Mane Katz (1894-1962), an influential member of the group of Jewish Expressionists based in Paris earlier in the 20th century, was given this home by the Haifa city authorities in return for the bequest of his works to the city.

Back on HaNassi, next to the Dan Carmel hotel, is the somewhat incongruous **Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art** (Map p196; ☎ 838



INFORMATION	Railway Museum.....	30 D4	DRINKING ☑		
American Consulate.....	Shrine of the Bab.....	31 A3	Basement.....	60 C2	
Bank HaPoalim.....	Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art.....	32 A4	Bear.....	61 A5	
Bank Leumi.....	Universal House of Justice.....	33 A4	Beer House.....	62 A5	
Book Exchange.....	Exchange Bureau.....	5 A4	Irish House.....	63 B5	
Haifa Tourism Development Association.....	6 A2	SLEEPING ☑	Syncopa.....	64 C2	
Internet Café.....	7 A5	Baloutin Rosa.....	34 B2	ENTERTAINMENT ☑	
ISSTA.....	8 C4	Beth Rutenberg Hostel.....	35 A4	Achurva.....	65 D2
Kiryat Rabin (Sail Building).....	9 D3	Beth Shalom Hotel.....	36 A4	Cinematheque.....	66 A5
Main Post Office.....	10 D3	Dan Carmel.....	37 A4	Haifa Municipal (Meirhoff) Theatre.....	67 C5
Manilla.....	11 C4	Dan Panorama Hotel.....	38 A5	Luna.....	68 C3
Police Station.....	12 C2	Haifa Tower.....	39 D4	Martef 10.....	69 C4
Post Office.....	13 B2	Holiday Inn Bayview.....	40 B5	Matnas Hadar.....	70 C4
Post Office.....	14 B3	Molada Guest House.....	41 A4	Morrison.....	(see 40)
Post Office.....	15 D4	Nof Hotel.....	42 A4	SHOPPING ☑	
SPNI Haifa.....	16 B1	Port Inn.....	43 C2	Auditorium Mall.....	71 A5
Steimatzyk Bookshop.....	17 A5	St Charles Hospice.....	44 B2	City Centre.....	72 B1
Steimatzyk Bookshop.....	18 C4	EATING ☑		Fruit & Vegetable Market.....	73 D4
Ulpan Emunah.....	19 B3	Arabica.....	45 A4	MDK.....	74 C3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		B Bagels.....	46 A5	TRANSPORT	
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Baha'i Gardens.....	21 A3	Canibar Village.....	48 C3	Avis.....	76 C3
Beit HaGefen Arab-Jewish Centre.....	22 B3	Dinner Rush.....	49 A5	Bus to Amman.....	77 C1
Chagall Artists' House.....	23 B3	Douzan.....	50 B2	El Al.....	78 C3
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Esteklayl Mosque.....	25 D3	Felafel Michelle.....	52 B2	Haifa Merkaz Train Station	
Haifa Art Museum.....	26 B3	Greg Coffee.....	53 A5	Entrance.....	80 C1
Haifa City Museum.....	27 B1	Hashmura 1872.....	54 B2	Rosenfeld Shipping.....	81 C2
Mane Katz Museum.....	28 A4	Jacko Seafood.....	55 C2	Sheruts to Akko, Nahariya & Tsfat.....	82 C3
National Museum of Science, Planning & Technology.....	29 C4	Haifa City Museum.....	56 A5	Sheruts to Daliyat al-Karmel.....	83 C2
		Mandarin.....	57 C2		
		Mayan Habira.....	58 A5		
		Shamli.....	59 C2		
		Yan Yan.....			

HAIFA & THE NORTH COAST

HAIFA & THE NORTH COAST

3554; www.hms.org.il; adult/student 29/22NIS; 89 HaNassi Ave; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Wed, 4-9pm Thu, 10am-1pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) and its unique collection of Far Eastern works. The museum, founded by Felix Tikotin in 1957, features everything from 14th-century Buddhist scroll art to pottery, metal work and newer exhibits on Japanese animation and even Pokémon.

On the crest of Carmel, across from the upper Carmelit subway station, is **Gan Ha'em** (Mother's Park), a cool swath of greenery with an arcade of shops and cafés, and an amphitheatre that hosts summer evening concerts. The northern area of the park is given over to an extremely attractive small **zoo** (Map p196; ☎ 837 1833; adult/child 30/15NIS; ☎ 9am-6pm Sat-Thu, 9am-2pm Fri), which sports an aviary, a reptile house and microhabitats that are home to bears, lions, monkeys and other creatures. There is also a rogue peacock that bolts past unsuspecting visitors (watch out!). Within the grounds of the zoo you can also enter the **M Stekelis Museum of Prehistory**, the **Biological Museum** and the **Natural History Museum**. Hours for the museums are the same as the zoo and one ticket is good for all the sites.

Bus No 21, 28 or 37 (departing from bus stops downtown or the bus stations) will take you to the zoo.

GERMAN COLONY

At least once during your stay in Haifa, walk up Ben-Gurion Ave from Jaffa Rd and enjoy the splendour that is the **German Colony** backed by the cascading lights of the Baha'i Gardens. The colony (really just this street), was renovated in the 1990s into the city's premier address for shopping and dining, with many of its buildings restored and given plaques that describe the history of the area. Haifa's tourist information centre is also located here. Part of the renovation required that the entire street be moved 168cm, so that its centre divide would line up with the staircase of Baha'i Gardens.

The colony was established in 1869 by the Templers (not to be confused with the Knights of the Templars), a Christian society that aimed to help Palestine ready itself for the second coming of Christ. The Templers built seven colonies in Palestine and are credited with developing the country in the late 1900s, providing improved methods of transportation, technology and agriculture.

The colony built contained attractive stone houses with steep red-shingled roofs. It impressed the Baha'ullah, the founder of the Baha'i faith, and was visited by Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1898. Germans continued to live in the colony until WWII when the British threw them out as suspected Nazi collaborators.

Dramatised tours of the German Colony, led by actor-guides, describe the history of the colony and are done Saturdays at 11am. Call for a reservation on ☎ 1 800 305 090.

Near the bottom of Ben-Gurion Ave is the **Haifa City Museum** (Map p196; ☎ 851 2030; 11 Ben-Gurion Ave; adult/child 20/10NIS; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon & Wed-Thu, 4-8pm Tue, 10am-1pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sat), which displays revolving exhibitions by local artists. The building in which it is housed was once a conference hall and later served as a school.

HADAR

The busiest area of commerce in Haifa, **Hadar** is a rash of shops and restaurants covering a low foothill between the Carmel Centre and the port. Herzl, the main thoroughfare of Hadar, was the city's original residential district but is now a little worse for wear. Pedestrianised **Nordau St** has become a favoured haunt of the city's Russian immigrant community, so much so that it now bears an uncanny resemblance to Moscow's Arbat.

An exception to Hadar's shabbiness is the elegant 1920s concoction of European Orientalism that is the **National Museum of Science, Planning & Technology** (Map p196; ☎ 862 8111; www.netvision.net.il/inmos; Technion Bldg, Shemaryahu Levin St, Hadar; adult/senior/child/student 35/17.5/20/25NIS; ☎ 9am-4pm Sun-Mon & Wed-Thu, 9am-7.30pm Tue, 10am-2pm Fri, 10am-6pm Sat). Sometimes referred to as the Technodea, the museum specialises in interactive exhibits, of which it has more than 250, and it's a great place to visit with children. Audio guides are available for a reasonable 3NIS.

WADI NISNAS

Haifa's grizzled old Christian-Arab quarter, Wadi Nisnas, is a maze of twisting streets that tumble from Hadar down towards the port area. The sandy block architecture, heavily laden donkey carts and smells of cumin and cardamom firmly place Haifa back in the Middle East. To get a feel for the place, walk downhill from the Haifa Art Museum and through the Arab market. You'll spot displays

of public art, hardware shops, narrow alleys and plenty of felafel stands to suppress your hunger. In December and January there is a unique ongoing festival here that celebrates Hanukkah, Christmas and Ramadan.

The **Haifa Art Museum** (Map p196; ☎ 852 3255; www.hms.org.il; 26 Shabtai Levi St; adult/senior/child/student 22/11/16/16NIS; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon & Wed-Thu, 4-8pm Tue, 10am-1pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) is a museum of modern art, containing temporary multimedia displays created by local artists. The same ticket (good for three days) will also get you into the Haifa City Museum and the Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art.

A block west of the Haifa Art Museum, and on the corner of Herzlia St, is the **Chagall Artists' House** (Map p196; ☎ 852 2355; 24 HaZiyonut Blvd; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Sun-Thu, 10am-1pm Sat) which displays the work of contemporary Israeli artists. Further along HaZiyonut Blvd, on the corner of HaGefen St, is the **Beit HaGefen Arab-Jewish Centre** (Map p196; ☎ 852 5252), which sponsors joint Arab-Jewish social activities, and could be worth a visit – check to see if there are any social events or lectures during your stay.

DOWNTOWN & PORT AREA

Shopping malls in outlying suburbs did much to kill off downtown business, and shop owners wistfully remember days of a better economy. But signs of life have returned in the past few years, helped by some new bars along Jaffa Rd near Kikar Paris. The best time to visit is on Friday afternoons when a craft market spills onto Jaffa Rd, drawing artists from around the region who come to sell their work.

The oldest buildings in the city are located in this area. About 100m east of Kikar Paris you'll spot the dilapidated **Al-Kebir Mosque** (Great Mosque), which has a curiously un-Islamic minaret resembling nothing so much as a provincial English town clock tower. A short distance away is the better maintained, typically Ottoman **Esteklayl Mosque** (Independence Mosque), still in use for worship.

Housed in the old Haifa East train station, the **Railway Museum** (Map p196; adult/student 8/6NIS; ☎ 856 4293; Faisal Sq; ☎ 9am-noon Sun, Tue & Thu) features a collection of stamps, photographs, tickets, timetables and rolling stock. Old timetables remind you that you could at one time travel from here by train south

to Cairo or north to Beirut or Damascus. To get there follow HaPalyam Ave past the mosque – the museum is a few minutes' walk further, on the left.

There is no reason to visit the port area, unless you are catching a ferry to Cyprus or have a keen interest in seeing Israel's entrepôt for grain. The enormous **Dagon grain silo** (Map p196; ☎ 866 4221; Plummer Sq) is the distinctive fortresslike construction on Ha'atzmaut St that dominates the skyline of lower Haifa. There's a **museum** within the plant where you can take a free guided tour to learn something about the other oldest profession: the cultivation, handling, storing and distribution of grain. Tours are at 10.30am Sunday to Friday, and the museum closes for the day once the tour is over.

MARITIME MUSEUMS

Across the road from Bat Galim, and around 2km west of the German Colony, are a couple of museums as well as one of Israel's holiest sites.

The **Clandestine Immigration & Navy Museum** (Map p193; ☎ 853 6249; www.amutayam.org.il; 204 Allenby Rd; adult/child 10/5NIS; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Sun-Thu) may sound a bit bland but it's actually quite fascinating and worth a visit. The museum deals with the successes and failures of the Zionists' illegal attempts to infiltrate into British-blockaded Palestine in the 1930s and '40s. The centrepiece of the museum (quite literally – the building has been constructed around it) is a boat, the *Af-Al-Pi-Chen* (Hebrew: Nevertheless), whose hold carried 434 refugees to Palestine in 1947. The boat was intercepted by the British and its passengers were forced into internment camps in Cyprus. Other stories are told about the famed *Exodus*, a ship that carried over 4500 passengers that was forced back to Germany, and the *Struma*, which sank off the coast of Istanbul, killing all but one of its 767 passengers.

The neighbouring **National Maritime Museum** (Map p193; ☎ 853 6622; 198 Allenby Rd; adult/child 29/22NIS) deals with the history of shipping in the Mediterranean area. The collection contains old maps, models of ancient ships, navigation equipment and bits and pieces of sunken ships. For 45NIS you can buy a combo ticket for this museum, the Haifa Art Museum and the Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art.

ELIJAH'S CAVE

A holy place for three faiths, **Elijah's Cave** (Map p193; admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm Sun-Thu, 8.30am-12.45pm Fri) is where the prophet Elijah is believed to have hidden from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel after he slew the 450 priests of Ba'al (Kings 1:17-19). There is also a Christian tradition that the Holy Family sheltered here on their return from Egypt, hence the alternative Christian name, Cave of the Madonna. Enter the cave in modest dress.

Although prior to 1948 the cave was a mosque dedicated to Khadar (the Green Prophet), Elijah in Muslim guise, these days the rock chamber is usually crammed full of praying Haredim. Outside, the garden is a favourite picnic spot for local Christian Arabs.

The cave is located over the road from the National Maritime Museum and up a narrow string of steps. To reach the cave and the museums take bus No 5, 26, 43, 44, 45 or 47. The path running by Elijah's Cave leads, after a short, steep ascent, to the Carmelite Monastery.

STELLA MARIS CARMELITE MONASTERY & CABLE CARS

The Carmelites are a Catholic order that originated in the late 12th century when a band of Crusaders, inspired by the prophet Elijah, opted for a hermetic life on the western slopes of Mt Carmel (hence the name). The desired solitude was rarely granted as, over the centuries, the Carmelites suffered Muslim persecution, frequently having to abandon their monasteries. Occasionally, the Carmelites did have a hand in their own misfortune, as in 1799 when they extended their hospitality to Napoleon during his campaign against the Turks. The French lost their battle for the region and the Carmelites lost their monastery.

The present monastery and church, built over what the Carmelites believe to be a cave where Elijah lived, dates from 1836 after the previous buildings were destroyed in 1821 by Abdullah, pasha of Akko.

It's worth visiting the **church** (Map p193; ☎ 833 7758; ☎ 6am-noon & 3-6pm) to view the beautiful painted ceiling, which portrays Elijah and the famous chariot of fire (in which he ascended to heaven), King David with his harp, the saints of the order, the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel and David, and the Holy Family with the

four evangelists below. A small adjoining **museum** contains ruins of former cloisters dating from Byzantine and Crusader times.

The pyramid in the garden close by the church's entrance is the **tomb of French soldiers** commemorating those who died during Napoleon's campaign.

To get to the monastery take bus No 26 from Hadar, or 31 from Carmel Centre. There is also a **cable car** (Map p193; ☎ 833 5970; one-way/return 16/22NIS; ☎ 10am-6pm) that runs up to the monastery from Bat Galim Promenade below, not far from the cave and museums. While the views from the cabins aren't as good as those from the observation point on Stella Maris Rd up at the top, on a hot day you'd certainly want to skip climbing to the monastery.

UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA

One of Israel's premier places of higher learning, **University of Haifa** (☎ 824 0111; www.haifa.ac.il; Mount Carmel), 5.5km south of Carmel Centre, covers all areas of academia, but specialises in the liberal arts. There is another spin on 'higher learning' here as the university is perched spectacularly on the summit of Mt Carmel with views of Haifa and far beyond. The best place to take in the panorama is from the observation deck of the 27-storey **Eshkol Tower**, which was designed by the renowned Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer.

The basement of the Eshkol Tower houses the impressive **Reuben & Edith Hecht Museum** (☎ 825 7773; www.mushecht.haifa.ac.il; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Sun-Mon & Wed-Thu, 10am-7pm Tue, 10am-1pm Fri, 10am-2pm Sat), which houses a fine collection of archaeological artefacts relating to Jewish history before the Diaspora. There is plenty of ancient pottery, weapons and even a pair of 2100-year-old petite-sized sandals. The museum highlight is a 5th-century-BC Greek ship found near Caesarea in 1984. It has been carefully rebuilt and placed in a specially designed annex of the museum. An art wing upstairs contains sections on French Impressionist and Jewish art from the 19th and 20th centuries. Among the works are paintings by Monet, Pissarro and Van Gogh.

Near Eshkol Tower, check out the **open air museum**, a collection of ancient buildings brought here from other parts of Israel and reconstructed. There are several buildings

from the Negev and an oil press from Kasra, on the Carmel Coast.

Tours of the university can be made, but by advance booking only; call ☎ 824 0097 to make a reservation.

To get to the university take bus No 37 from outside the Carmel Centre, bus 24 from downtown or bus No 46 from the Hof HaCarmel train station.

CARMEL HAI BAR

The **Carmel Hai Bar** (☎ 984 1750; adult/child 18/8; ☎ 8am-4pm) is a functioning wildlife preserve where wild goats, wild sheep and deer are bred and monitored until they can be released into the wild. The entrance to the reserve is on Rte 672, about 300m past the Haifa University. It's a good idea to call first as hours are sporadic.

The preserve is on the edge of **Carmel National Park**, known locally as the Shveysaria HaK'tana (Little Switzerland). It is renowned for its fertility; vineyards covered the area in ancient times and the name Carmel is derived from the Hebrew Kerem-El (Vineyard of God). For some pleasant walking or for a picnic, take bus No 92 from Herzl St in Hadar or Carmel Centre and just get off when it gets green enough for you.

Activities**BEACHES & POOLS**

Ports tend to make a mess of the coast so it's not too surprising that Haifa's beaches are infamously toxic and strewn with garbage. Case in point is **Bat Galim beach** (Map p193), considered one of the best surf breaks in the country and host to international competitions – surfers constantly lament its piles of rusting metal, bricks, concrete, disused furniture and other refuse. You might want to try the religious **HaShaqet Beach** (Map p193), located on the east side of Rambam Medical Centre, which is open to men Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and open to women Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. Saturday is mixed.

If you really fancy some sun-worshipping in Haifa, you should head for the much more attractive **Hof HaCarmel Beach**, located near the Hof HaCarmel train station in the south of the city. The beach has an inviting promenade with a number of restaurants and cafés, some of them upscale places serving steak and seafood. Folk dancing is held here on Saturdays (11am February to

June and 7pm July to January). Trains from Haifa Merkaz come here every 20 minutes for 5NIS. **Zamir** and **Dado** beaches north of Hof HaCarmel are also quite clean.

The **Maccabi pool** (☎ 838 8341; 19 Bikkurim St; admission 40NIS) has two heated swimming pools and a fitness room. From Gan Ha'em subway station, walk south down HaNassi Ave, which becomes Bikurim St. Some of the large hotels, such as the Dan Carmel, also open their pools to nonresidents, with admission fees around 50NIS to 80NIS.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

If you enjoy horse riding, visit **Bet Oren riding stables** (☎ 830 7262, 830 7242), which offers rides for 100NIS per hour. Prices come down if you come with a group. Bet Oren is a 20-minute drive south of Haifa, just off the road to Dalijat al-Karmel.

For adrenaline junkies there is **skydiving** (☎ 639 1068) at Hof HaBonim, south of Haifa. A tandem jump costs around US\$245. Scuba divers can explore the dive sites off the coast with **Ze'ev Hayam Diving Club** (☎ 832 3911, 866 2005; Kishon Fishing Harbour); they have an eight-day PADI diving course (1100NIS) and dives for certified divers. Another way to explore the Med is to take a **boat tour** (☎ 841 8765; adult/child 40/25NIS) around Haifa Bay. Departures are from the Kishon Fishing Harbour. Tours are held Sunday to Thursday 8am to 4pm and Friday 10am to 1pm with advance booking.

Courses

Ulpan Emunah (Map p196; ☎ 862 8142; 20 YL Peretz St) Language courses are held five days a week from 5pm to 8pm. Enrolment is US\$540 per month and courses generally last six months.

University of Haifa Ulpan (☎ 054 279 5649; www.uhaifa.org; University of Haifa) Charges US\$850 for a four-week intensive language course at the university 5.5km south of Carmel Centre.

Tours

The Haifa Tourism Development Association organises a free guided walking tour every Saturday at 10.30am; meet behind the **Nof Hotel** (101 HaNassi Ave) in Carmel Centre. The guide leads you down to the Haifa City Museum (cover your own admission), taking in most of the sights en route – including the Baha'i Shrine of the Bab, so dress modestly. It's not exactly mind-blowing,

but it's a convenient way to get your initial bearings in Haifa.

Sleeping

Haifa has plenty of high-end accommodation in the Carmel Centre but budget options are a little spread out and not too plentiful. For anywhere you want to stay, call ahead and reserve a room, especially in July and August, when sudden waves of Baha'i pilgrims can make accommodation very scarce.

BUDGET

Beth Rutenberg Hostel (Map p196; ☎ 838 7958; 77 HaNassi Ave; dm US\$22; ♿) Close to Molada Guesthouse is this cheaper hostel, which is run by the same institute. Phone ahead during normal working hours to secure a bed. The building itself was built in 1939 by Pinchas Rutenberg, founder of the Haifa Electric Corporation. Templers planted the garden that surrounds the building. After Rutenberg's death the building was used as a youth centre, and it continues in this capacity today.

Baloutin Rosa (Map p196; ☎ 852 4972; 49 Ben-Gurion Ave; s/d US\$25/30; ♿) The proprietors of this German Colony homestay let out an extra room in their home. It's not too glamorous, but it has a great location on this trendy street near the Baha'i Gardens.

Carmel HI Hostel (☎ 853 1944; www.yiha.org.il; dm/s/d US\$20/37.50/56; ♿) Comfortable and friendly, this place is close to the Hof HaCarmel train and bus station, but less convenient for Haifa's main tourist attractions. Take bus No 3 or 114 from the Hof HaCarmel station or 43 or 45 from downtown.

St Charles Hospice (Map p196; ☎ 855 3705; stcharls@netvision.net.il; 105 Jaffa Rd; s/d/tr, with breakfast US\$35/60/75) Sometimes called the 'German Guesthouse', St Charles is owned by the Latin Patriarchate and run by the Catholic Rosary Sisters. It's housed in a beautiful building and there is a lovely garden out back. Rooms are simple but comfortably furnished, well maintained and come equipped with fans and private showers. The gate is often locked so you'll need to ring the bell to enter.

Molada Guest House (Map p196; ☎ 838 7958; www.rutenberg.org.il; 82 HaNassi Ave; s/d, with breakfast US\$40/60; ♿) Run by the Rutenberg Institute for Youth Education, this DIY guesthouse has large rooms with single beds, a desk and hot-water showers. As it's designed to house students there's a distinct college dormitory feel, with

an unkempt kitchen and living room. But it's also empty most of the time so you feel like you have the place to yourself. There is no reception but someone is usually around during daytime hours to let you in. After hours, ring the doorbell and somebody will let you in. It is opposite the Dan Carmel hotel.

Our pick Port Inn (Map p196; ☎ 852 4401; www.portinn.co.il; 34 Jaffa Rd; dm/s/d/tr US\$14/47/66/84; ♿ ♿) The comfortable sitting lounge and friendly reception at the Port Inn will have you dropping your bags at first sight. Recently renovated rooms are simply furnished, with neat bedding and spotless bathrooms. Dorm rooms are comfortable but you'll need to book ahead to reserve a lower bunk – this place does get busy. There's a communal kitchen with an attached lounge where guests can watch TV or browse the bookshelf. Breakfast (extra 20NIS) is prepared by the family that runs the place and includes a freshly cooked omelette, juice, toast and spreads. Laundry service is available for 40NIS. The owners are also a great source of local information and can give tips on transportation and will even help book you a place on the Baha'i Gardens tour.

MIDRANGE

Haifa Tower (Map p196; ☎ 867 7111; 63 Herzl St; s/d, with breakfast US\$55/65; ♿) This distinctive multi-tiered building rises incongruously out of the Hadar district. Its best days seem behind it and rooms appear to have been decorated when Golda Mier was in office, but it's still a functional midrange option that won't break your bank. Best of all, it's usually empty so it can be a fall-back if Baha'i pilgrims have filled up other hotels.

Stella Maris Hospice (Map p193; ☎ 833 2084; Carmelite Monastery; s/d, with breakfast US\$40/70; ♿) It's not the most convenient place to stay in Haifa, but the Stella Maris Hospice does offer plenty of old-world charm and some great views over the bay. The hospice is run by the Carmelite order and geared towards Christian pilgrims, but there is plenty of room for independent travellers, so long as they don't mind the simple rooms, sombre atmosphere and 11pm curfew. Bus Nos 26, 30, 31, 99 and 115 stop near the hospice. You'll need to ring the bell at the gate to get inside.

Beth Shalom Hotel (Map p196; ☎ 837 7481; www.beth-shalom.co.il; 110 HaNassi Ave; s/d/tr, with breakfast

US\$60/84/108; ♿) In the Carmel Centre district, this is a basic but comfortable Lutheran 'evangelical guesthouse'. Each of the 30 rooms is brightly lit, spotless and nicely renovated with hardwood floors. It's a homey place with a garden and a small library. There is a comfortable lounge, and complimentary hot and cold drinks are served throughout the day. Dinner is available for an additional US\$10. From downtown take the metro.

TOP END

Dan Panorama Hotel (Map p196; ☎ 835 2222; www.danhotels.co.il; 107 HaNassi Ave; s/d, with breakfast US\$153/166; ♿ ♿ ♿) The Panorama, conveniently located in the heart of the Carmel Centre, offers just about every imaginable facility, including a pool, gym, sauna and internet room. There is even an attached mall if you need to go on spur-of-the-moment shopping sprees. Rooms are tastefully decorated, although none have balconies.

Nof Hotel (Map p196; ☎ 835 4311; www.inisrael.com/nof; 101 HaNassi Ave; s/d with breakfast US\$84/104; ♿ ♿ ♿) This 86-room four-star hotel breaks up the Dan monopoly in the Carmel Centre. It's a bit smaller than the other hotels in this category, but the service is excellent and they are slowly improving the place (a spa centre was being built when we visited). The hotel has free wi-fi, a business centre and a kosher Chinese restaurant. Similar to other hotels on this strip, the upper rooms in the hotel offer great views of Haifa Bay.

Holiday Inn Bayview (Map p196; ☎ 835 0835; www.holiday-inn.com/haifaisrael; 111 Ye'fe Nof St; s/d, with breakfast US\$159/179; ♿ ♿ ♿) Perched on the edge of Carmel Heights, the Holiday Inn plunges down from street level nine floors. It's the newest and most modern hotel in the area, with a welcoming lobby that features a comfy green sofa under a glass dome. A variety of facilities includes a sauna, gym, Jacuzzi, pool, business centre and free wi-fi. Attractive rooms are brightly lit with sufficient work space and a minibar.

Eating

RESTAURANTS

Dinner Rush (Map p196; ☎ 836 1908; 122 HaNassi Ave; dishes 25NIS; ☎ noon-1am) A concept bar, this one has the bartenders doubling as chefs who serve up American diner-style food – pasta, burgers and chicken wings. Portions are large, reasonably priced and usually satisfac-

ting, but avoid the disappointing goulash. The food comes up hot and fast; it's right next to the Gan Ha'em metro station.

Hashmura 1872 (Map p196; ☎ 855 1872; 15 Ben-Gurion Ave; dishes 39-105NIS; ☎ noon-midnight Sun-Thu, noon-8pm Fri & Sat) The premier dining address in the German Colony, Hashmura 1872 does a range of pasta, chicken, steak and lamb dishes, but the speciality is seafood. Shrimp, *carpaccio* (thinly sliced raw fish) or squid starters cost 39NIS to 55NIS, and salmon, bream or mussel mains are 72NIS to 80NIS. A glass floor reveals the extensive wine cellar in the historic 1872 basement, where there's also an atmospheric pub.

Yan Yan (Map p196; ☎ 866 0022; 28 Jaffa Rd; main dishes 35-50NIS; ☎ noon-11pm) Friendly downtown place serving excellent Chinese and Vietnamese fare. The Chinese business lunch costs 39.50NIS and in the evening there's a 49NIS all-you-can-eat special. Prices are cheaper for takeaway, making it a popular option for travellers staying in the nearby Port Inn.

Jacko Seafood Central Haifa (Map p196; ☎ 866 8813; 12 Qehilat Saloniki St; dishes 55-65NIS; ☎ noon-midnight; Carmel Centre (11 Moriah Blvd) Something of a Haifa institution, Jacko has been a consistent purveyor of seafood dishes for the past 30 years. Top marks to the excellent fish dishes, including salmon, bream, bass, shark, triggerfish and St Peter's fish. These can be prepared a half-dozen ways; try the house speciality, the Jacko, cooked in butter, garlic and white wine. Other underwater critters (calamari, crab or shrimp) are also available, plus there are grilled Turkish kebabs.

Fatoush (Map p196; ☎ 852 4930; 38 Ben-Gurion Ave; dishes 40-60NIS; ☎ 8am-1am) Set up like a medieval Arabic house, complete with burgundy cushions, nargileh (water pipes) and candle lamps, Fatoush is an atmospheric and popular restaurant serving a fusion of Western and Middle Eastern cuisine. It's named after a kind of salad eaten by poor people of the Levant – a Middle Eastern version of peasant pie – but there is much more to the menu than *fatoush*. Try the *arros al-wadi* (pride of the valley), baked bread topped with minced calf meat, or tasty seafood dishes. You can dine inside a cavernous underground chamber or, in pleasant weather, it's just as nice to eat under the olive trees on the street-side patio.

Mayan Habira (Fountains of Beer; Map p196; ☎ 862 3193; 4 Nathanson St; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon,

10am-midnight Tue) Serving up the 'soul food' of Haifa, this restaurant can place before you parts of animals that you may have never tasted before. The classically Eastern European menu, created by the Romanian family that runs the place, includes jellied calf's foot, gefilte fish, chopped liver and *petschai* (boiled calf's leg). You can also try *kreplach*, a meat-stuffed dumpling known affectionately as a 'Jewish wonton'.

Douzan (Map p196; ☎ 852 5444; 35 Ben-Gurion Ave; dishes 25NIS; ☎ 10am-1am) Douzan means 'to tune an instrument'. Likewise the atmosphere and food in this restaurant is meant to tune your senses. Decorated with old clocks, musical instruments, antique furnishings and velvet cushions, owner Fadi Najjar has created a harmonious atmosphere and is proud that both Arabs and Jews dine together under his roof. The food is all home cooked, prepared by Fadi's mother Leila. It's a fusion of French and Arab recipes, with specials like chicken cordon bleu, and some unexpected treats such as *sfeeha* (small meat pie topped with feta cheese and pine nuts).

Canibar Village (Map p196; ☎ 864 4622; 5 Al-Pasha St; dishes 25-40NIS; ☎ 11.30am-2am) A play on words gives this meat restaurant and bar combo its name. The interior design is one of stone walls and vines, but it's made hip by the blood-red lighting and flat-panel TVs that show music videos. It's a popular place for lunch among the downtown business set, but gets going as a singles bar after dark. Come on a Friday night before stepping into Luna dance club, next door.

CAFÉS

Mandarin (Map p196; ☎ 838 0691; 129 HaNassi Ave; dishes 30-50NIS; ☎ 8.30am-1am) Step off busy HaNassi Ave, down past a gardenlike entrance with the sign 'Mandarin' and you'll assume you're headed for a Chinese restaurant. Where you actually end up is a quaint café with a wood deck and cosy interior set to a soundtrack of funk and blues. The menu features soups, salads, big sandwiches and pastas. There is live jazz on Thursdays and free wi-fi for laptop users.

Arabica (Map p196; ☎ 810 7761; 96 HaNassi Ave; dishes 40NIS; ☎ 10am-midnight Sun-Thu, 9am-3am Fri, 5pm-1am Sat) This pastel-painted European-style café is big on homemade items – everything is made from scratch. The menu is geared towards the sandwich and salad crowd, and

caffeine lovers will appreciate the 100% pure Arabica coffee.

Beneno (Map p196; ☎ 852 4155; 49 Hillel St; ☎ 9.30am-1am Sun-Fri, noon-1am Sat) An artsy café shuttered in a quiet neighbourhood halfway up the mountain, Beneno serves a simple menu of sandwiches, soups and salads. Its closest landmark is the Shrine of the Bab so it does tend to get a few Baha'i pilgrims. It's also a meeting place for Haifa's gay and lesbian community. It's a short walk from the Masada subway station.

Greg Coffee (Map p196; 3 Derekh Ha'Yam St; ☎ 7am-1am) Decorated with kettles and jars of spices and coffee beans, Greg might remind you of your mum's kitchen back home. Aside from the homy feel, you get excellent coffee and brownies, while laptop users can access the free wi-fi.

QUICK EATS

Felafel Michelle (Map p196; 21 Wadi Nisas Rd; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat) Serves up what many locals claim to be the best felafel in Haifa. As you are walking east on Wadi Nisas Rd, look for the hole-in-the-wall on the left side of the road.

Shamli (Map p196; 130 HaNassi St; ☎ 11am-midnight Sat-Thu, 11am-9pm Fri) Putting a twist on shwarma, this small eatery serves grilled meats and sausages (as opposed to meat cut from a spit) inside pita with various toppings.

B Bagels (Map p196; ☎ 837 7676; 121 HaNassi Ave; ☎ 7am-4am Sun-Thu, 24hr Fri & Sat) This small eatery sells bagels with cream cheese, lox and other toppings. It's next to the Carmel Centre subway station.

Around the HaNevi'im St end of HeHalutz St, you'll find a wide range of excellent felafel and shwarma, as well as bakeries selling sweet pastries, sticky buns and other delights. The other prime shwarma area is Allenby Rd, around HaZiyonut Blvd. For fruit and vegetables, shop at the little Arab bazaars in Wadi Nisnas or Hadar.

Drinking

For an evening out, locals head for the trendy bars and cafés along Moriah St and the environs of Carmel Centre. A handful of bars and nightclubs are clustered around downtown.

Bear House (Map p196; ☎ 822 9750; Gan Ha'em Park; ☎ 7pm-late) The Bear House is a little downtrodden but if you are after some very nice beer it's hard to beat. The bartender can guide you through the complexities of

WHAT TO DO ON SHABBAT IN HAIFA

With a little planning, the Shabbat shutdown shouldn't have too much of a negative impact on your visit to Haifa. To begin, things do not shut down entirely as one quarter of the city is Arab and their lives carry on as usual. The liberal municipality makes things easier by keeping some sights open as well as transportation links, though they have a late starting time of around 9.30am.

Start off a Saturday morning with a visit to the Baha'i Shrine of the Bab and Gardens. Other museums that remain open at least part of the day include the Mane Katz and the Science and National Maritime museums. The free Saturday morning guided walking tour takes in a number of these places. Or take bus No 23 from HaNevi'im St in Hadar up to Carmel Central where Gan Ha'em, the zoo, the museums and the cafés and restaurants are all open. The Arab Market and grocers in Wadi Nisnas stay open, as do some of the *felafel* merchants, the bakeries and the cafés along HaNevi'im and HeHalutz Sts in Hadar.

For a truly eventful day do as most Haifans do and take a day trip out of the city. Zichron Ya'acov and Ein Hod are absolutely bursting with activity on Saturdays. Transport would be tricky without your own car so make sure to hire a vehicle on Friday before the Shabbat. It's a bit easier to get to Akko and the Druze village of Daliyat al-Karmel, as both are connected to Haifa by *sherut* (shared taxi). On Shabbat, Israelis love to visit Daliyat al-Karmel to shop in the vast outdoor furniture market that lines the streets. While in the area you could also visit Mukhraqa's Carmelite Monastery of St Elijah, plus nearby Beit She'arim and Megiddo.

If all else fails, grab a bottle of strong sun block and hit the beach at Dor or Akhziv. The Hof HaCarmel beach is also popular on Saturday and folk dancing is held here to close the Shabbat.

the 120 types of beers on offer and provides good commentary with friendly service to boot. They usually recommend a fruity Belgian beer (try the peach). They also serve food and do a nice smoked meat platter. It's below street level in Gan Ha'em Park.

Bear (Map p196; ☎ 838 1703; 135 HaNassi Ave; pub meals 35-75NIS; ☎ 6pm-3am Sun-Wed, 11am-4am Thu-Fri, 5pm-3am Sat) The Bear is a popular Irish pub and is regarded as the city's main expat hang-out. Munch on pretzels and try to identify your favourite teams' scarf – it's bound to be on one of the walls. For meals, you can choose between salads, sandwiches, chicken, steak and seafood, washed down with your choice of 12 different draught beers.

Basement (Map p196; ☎ 853 2367; 2 HaBankiim St; ☎ 9pm-3am) Dim, hedonistic and rowdy, this alternative rock bar is popular with young Haifans. Live music is featured on Saturdays while Sunday is open mike night; aspiring rock stars will have a captive audience.

Irish House (Map p196; ☎ 810 3776; 120 Ye'fe Nof St; ☎ 9pm-late) A classic Irish pub right down to the meat pies and pints of Guinness. Decorated with jerseys from around the globe and set up with multiple TVs showing sports, it's a good place to come and watch a football or rugby match.

Syncopa (Map p196; ☎ 866 0174; 5 Khayat St; ☎ 8pm-late) Injecting some life back into the

downtown area, this new bar on the corner of Nathanson St attracts a slightly more mature crowd. A cream-coloured interior glows with the soft lighting and the whole place grooves to a funk beat. Paired with Mayan Habira around the corner you've got a hardy evening of meat and alcohol.

Entertainment NIGHTCLUBS

Nightclubs charge between 50 and 70NIS cover charge; don't bother turning up until at least 1am.

Luna (Map p196; HaPalyam Ave; ☎ midnight-late Thu-Fri) Part Crusader castle, part modern nightclub, Luna is an exciting, large nightclub where young sybarites can drink at five bars or dance in three separate halls, each with its own genre of music. The main hall is a huge vaulted room with stone walls, strobe lights and hip-hop music to blow your ears out. There is also a chill-out patio and a Bedouin tent in summer. Thursday is student night.

Achurva (Map p196; ☎ 867 1265; Captain Steve St, Port Area; ☎ midnight-sunrise Thu night) You'll need to dance around the puddles of beer in this grungy rooftop dance place in the port. It's not the most glamorous outfit but it remains extremely popular with the soldier crowd.

CINEMAS

Cinematheque (Map p196; ☎ 810 4299; www.ethos.co.il; 142 HaNassi Ave; admission 33NIS) Shows avant-garde, off-beat and foreign films. The phone number is just a recording in Hebrew asking you to leave a call-back number (an English-speaking staff member should get back to you soon).

THEATRE

Haifa Municipal (Meirhoff) Theatre (Map p196; ☎ 860 0500; www.ht1.co.il; 50 Pevsner St) Stages concerts and Hebrew-language theatre. Tickets cost around 160NIS. Bus Nos 21, 23, 24 28 and 37 go to the theatre.

Matnas Hadar (Map p196; ☎ 862 4231; hadarh@matnasim.org.il; 29 Yerushalayim St) Community centre with a regular schedule of amateur concerts and Hebrew-language performances.

LIVE MUSIC

Morrison (Map p196; ☎ 054-812 3801; 111 Ye'fe Nof St; ☎ 7.30pm-late) This booming bar and live-music venue has bands on weekends and karaoke on Mondays. It caters to a young crowd of students and soldiers. The entrance is down a flight of steps next to the Holiday Inn Bayview.

Martef 10 (Map p196; Basement 10; ☎ 824 0762; www.martef10.com; 23 Yerushalayim St; ☎ 10pm-late) 'Basement 10' is a nonprofit student club that hosts live-music shows most nights of the week from 10pm. During the school year it's closed Tuesday and Saturday. During the summer it's closed Saturday and Monday. Shows are usually jazz, Irish or Israeli music. It's very informal – cushions on the floor make up the seating and dress is casual. The room is windowless and a little claustrophobic, but smoking is thankfully prohibited.

Shopping

Auditorium Mall (Map p196; 153 HaNassi Ave; ☎ 10am-10pm) Located in the Carmel Centre next to the Cinematheque. It's small, but handy if you are staying in the area, and contains a Steimatzky bookshop, supermarket and pharmacy.

City Centre (Map p196; ☎ 853 0111; 6 Ben-Gurion Ave; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Thu, 9.30am-2pm Fri, 8-10.30pm Sat) Handy little mall if you are in the German Colony. It has a modern feel inside while retaining the Templar architecture on the outside. Brand-name shops, cafés and restaurants are inside.

MDK (Map p196; ☎ 867 6731; 8 HaNevi'im St) Camera repair shop and dealer.

Getting There & Away**AIR**

Arkia (Map p196; ☎ 861 1600; 80 Ha'atzmaut St) connects Haifa with Eilat on Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday (447NIS). **Haifa airport** (HFA; ☎ 04-847 6100) is in the industrial zone east of Haifa; a taxi will cost around 25NIS.

BUS

Arriving from the south, passengers are dropped off at the new Hof HaCarmel bus station (adjacent to the train station of the same name), from where you can take bus No 103 downtown. The old **central bus station** (Map p193; HaHaganah Ave) handles city buses. Buses to Akko, Nahariya and the Galilee use the eastern bus terminal at Lev HaMifratz.

During the day, buses depart every 20 minutes for Tel Aviv (No 900 or 910, 23NIS, 90 minutes), while there's an hourly service to Jerusalem (No 940 or 947, 39NIS, two hours). Heading north, bus No 271 and 272 (express) go to Nahariya (13.50NIS, 45 to 70 minutes) via Akko, and bus No 251 and 252 (express) stop at Akko (11.50NIS, 30 to 50 minutes). Eastbound, bus No 430 goes to Tiberias (28NIS, 90 minutes) and bus No 332 goes to Nazareth (17.50NIS, 45 minutes).

For buses to Jordan see p405.

CAR

You can cover a lot of territory in northern Israel by hiring a car for a couple of days. It allows you to easily visit off-the-beaten-track places like Montfort, Ein Hod and Peqi'in. In Haifa, the only car-rental agency in town is Avis; others are east of the city near the Lev HaMifratz bus station.

Avis (Map p196; ☎ 867 0170; 2 HaPalyam Ave)

Hertz (☎ 861 1613; 102 Ha'atzmaut St)

FERRY

For information on travelling to and from Cyprus by ferry, see p406.

SHERUT (SERVICE TAXI)

Sheruts (service or shared taxis) to Akko (15NIS), Nahariya (20NIS) and Tsfat (25NIS) gather one block north of Solel Bone Sq, on the northern edge of Hadar. For the Druze village of Daliyat al-Karmel (13NIS), sheruts depart daily from 9am to

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

In the summer of 2006, when the Katyushas started flying into northern Israel, Hezbollah's Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah pleaded with the Arabs of Haifa to flee the violence. Some heeded his call, others defied him, and still others sat in the middle, confused by the restive pull of their Arab blood and Israeli citizenship.

Opinions may have been mixed as to where loyalties stood, but what became obvious was that a disproportionate number of civilians killed in Israel were in fact Arab. While Arabs make up just 20% of Israel's population, they accounted for around 40% of civilian casualties in the fighting.

Critics blame the deaths on inadequate protection. Arab towns were sorely lacking in early-warning measures such as air raid sirens. Only after two Arab children were killed in Nazareth did the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) offer to equip the city with sirens. Likewise, bomb shelters were in short supply, accommodating only a third of the population for most Arab towns. Some towns were utterly devoid of shelters, causing Israeli Arabs to accuse the government of wanton neglect.

Hassan Nasrallah may have been unsuccessful in boring a divide between Jews and Arabs in Israel but the cracks he made in the walls highlighted tensions between the two. For an in-depth look on the complexities of Arab life in Israel, read Susan Nathan's controversial book *The Other Side of Israel*.

4pm, with the last sherut at 2pm on Friday.

TRAIN

Haifa effectively has several train stations. The southernmost is Hof HaCarmel, which is useful for getting southbound trains to Tel Aviv and elsewhere. The second most useful is Haifa Merkaz, near the port and downtown. Lev HaMifratz, in the eastern part of the city, is close to the Lev HaMifratz bus station, where you'll end up if you've taken a bus from Akko.

From Haifa Merkaz, trains depart roughly hourly for Tel Aviv (27.5NIS, 90 minutes) via Netanya (23NIS, one hour), and north to Nahariya (16NIS, 45 minutes) via Akko (12.50NIS, 30 minutes). For questions about train schedules, dial ☎ *5770.

Getting Around**BUS**

For city bus information call ☎ 854 9131.

The main city bus destinations:

Carmel Centre Bus No 22 from HaGefen St near Hayarok St, bus No 24 from the central bus station and Herzl St, Hadar, and bus No 37, also from Herzl St.

German Colony Bus No 37 from the Carmel Centre.

Hadar Bus Nos 6, 19, 21, 24, 28 and 51 from the central bus station to Herzl St. Bus No 3 from the Carmel Centre.

CARMELITE SUBWAY

Israel's only underground, the **Carmelit** (☎ 837 6861; per person 5.50NIS; ☎ 6am-10pm Sun-Thu, 6am-3pm Fri, 7pm-midnight Sat), connects Kikar Paris with

the Carmel Centre, via the Hadar district. Visitors can ride to the top and see the city sights on a leisurely downhill stroll. A packet of 10 tickets can be purchased for 49.50NIS, or you can buy a transfer ticket to connect with a city bus for 8.80NIS.

DALIYAT AL-KARMEL

דלית אל-כרמל دالية الكرمل

☎ 04 / pop 13,000

The largest Druze settlement in Israel, **Daliyat al-Karmel** is one street down on the southern spur of Mt Carmel, 15km south of Haifa. Although still referred to as a village, don't arrive thinking you'll be among stone houses and wheat fields – years of growth have sent Daliyat sprawling over the neighbouring hills and have nearly fused it with the smaller Druze village of Isfiya, just to the north.

Despite its growth, Daliyat's commerce is still concentrated on its lone high street, a 100m stretch of food stands, jewellery shops and stalls cluttered with brightly coloured shawls and trousers, metalwork and factory-manufactured tabla drums, pottery and paintings. Bargains for one and all.

Following the road due west from the sherut stop, about 800m along is a square little building, whitewashed with a crude red pimple of a dome. This is the **Mausoleum of Abu Ibrahim**, which serves as a local mosque. An inscription beside the door in Arabic warns would-be vandals: 'Do not stain the walls with blood' – not a reference to Arab-Israeli tensions but to the Islamic

practice of daubing bloody handprints everywhere after slaughtering sheep on feast days. Heads must be covered to enter, but you can glance in from the doorway.

A few minutes further on is **Beit Oliphant** (signposted as Beit Druze), which was the home of the Christian Zionists Sir Lawrence Oliphant and his wife between 1882 and 1887. The Oliphants were among the few non-Druze to have a close relationship with the sect, and did much to help the community. In the garden is a cave where they hid insurgents from the authorities. The house was recently renovated and is now a memorial to the many Druze members of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). The house faces a modern sports hall, outside which stands a **tank and artillery piece** with an 18m-long wall mural depicting the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the signing of the Camp David peace treaty.

For eating, **Andarin** (☎ 839 7393; mains 25-30NIS; ☎ 9am-7pm) is right on the main street and is a classy little restaurant that has a takeaway shwarma bar and a sit-down menu. Appetisers include stuffed vine leaves, tabbouleh and other salads. For a main course you could choose the excellent lamb with bean tagine, a mutton stew or kebabs. Directly opposite, **Halabi Bros** (☎ 839 3537) is a more informal hummus and shwarma place. If you are on a budget they have felafel for 5NIS.

Getting There & Away

The Druze villages are a half-day trip from Haifa. Sheruts depart from Eiyahu St near Kikar Paris in the morning when full and charge 13NIS. Returning to Haifa, the sheruts become less frequent after about 5pm, and you run the risk of either a long wait for a stretch-Mercedes to fill up, or of being forced to pay more for a special taxi. Sheruts pass through Isfiya en route between Haifa and Daliyat al-Karmel.

CARMELITE MONASTERY OF ST ELIJAH

مؤرקה مخرقة

About 4km south of Daliyat al-Karmel is one of the most renowned viewpoints in Israel, the **Carmelite Monastery of St Elijah** (admission 3NIS; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm), built to commemorate Elijah's showdown with the 450 prophets of Ba'al (Kings 1:17-19). Climb to the roof of the monastery to enjoy the great views across the patchwork of fields of the Jezreel Valley.

There is no public transport to the monastery, so you have to walk from Daliyat al-Karmel, or take a taxi. Bear left at the signposted junction or you'll end up miles away and be part of the view you are meant to be admiring.

ATLIT

عتليت عتليت

☎ 04

The old Haifa-Hadera coastal road passes Atlit, a coastal settlement 16km south of Haifa. The main reason to stop here is to visit the **Atlit Illegal Immigrants Camp** (☎ 984 1980; adult/student 17/14NIS; ☎ 9am-5pm Sun-Thu, 9am-1pm Fri), a major detention centre for thousands of illegal immigrants captured by the British as they tried to enter Palestine during the British Mandate era. After a few months in detention, prisoners were released and free to enter Palestine. On 10 October 1945, the Palmach (Special Forces unit of the Hagannah) broke into the camp and released 200 prisoners. The daring infiltration, led by a young Yitzhak Rabin, caused the British to close the camp. A one-hour tour of the camp includes a short film and a guided tour of the barracks. It was rebuilt thanks to the accounts of prisoners who stayed there, and you'll see their living quarters and a dreadful wash house where new arrivals were stripped of their clothing and disinfected with DDT.

Atlit has some impressive **Crusader castle ruins** known in Latin as Castrum Pergrinorum and in French as Château Pèlerin (Pilgrims' Castle). The castle was built by the Crusaders around 1200 and fell to Arab armies in 1291. Sadly, the castle is off-limits to visitors, as it is part of a naval installation.

EIN HOD

عين هود لاین הוד

☎ 04

Dadaist painter Marcel Janco happened upon Ein Hod in 1950 and fell in love. The Arab village had been abandoned two years earlier during the 1948 war and Janco saw the empty homes as the perfect place to set up his workshops. Others followed and today the village is home to around 140 artists and their families.

Sights

There are various working studios and Israelis come here to learn such skills as ceramics, weaving and drawing. The studios are mainly closed to casual visitors.

Works by the colony residents are exhibited at the **Ein Hod Gallery** (admission 4NIS; ☎ 9.30am-5pm), and at the **Janco-Dada Museum** (☎ 954 1961; www.jancodada-museum.israel.net; adult/student 20/10NIS; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Sun-Thu, 9.30am-2pm Fri, 11am-3pm Sat), which also exhibits collages, drawings and paintings by Marcel Janco himself. From the museum's top-floor porch you can appreciate the kind of view that inspired Janco to settle here.

Opposite the Janco-Dada Museum is the **Beit Gertrude Gallery** (admission free; ☎ 11am-2pm Sat Sep-Jun), dedicated to Gertrude Krause, a co-founding member of the colony. The museum contains more locally produced artwork and hosts occasional concerts, lectures and other cultural events. At other times than those indicated, you can inquire at the Ein Hod Gallery and if staff are not busy, they will let you in.

Among other offbeat exhibits in Ein Hod is the **Nisco Museum** (☎ 052 475 5313; wound up@bezeqint.net; adult/child 20/10NIS; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Thu & Sat), a collection of mechanical music instruments, some of the items dating back to the 19th century.

Occasional Friday evening concerts are held at the restored **Roman Amphitheatre**, up the road from Beit Gertrude. For more information on Ein Hod, check the website www.ein-hod.israel.net.

Eating & Drinking

Doña Rosa (☎ 954 3777; www.dona-rosa.israel.net; steaks 65NIS; ☎ noon-9.30pm) Israelis from all over the country save their appetite on the drive to Ein Hod, anticipating a feast of meat at this Argentinean steakhouse. No expense is spared as all the ingredients are imported from Argentina, including the meat, charcoal and wine. You can enjoy your meal on the balcony or in the rustic interior of this old wood and stone building.

Art Bar (☎ 054-460 0613; ☎ 11am-3pm & 9pm-midnight) Danny Schlyfestone is the village beermeister and one of the local characters. He brews up fresh stouts and ales in his home; don't leave town without downing a bottle or two.

Getting There & Away

Bus Nos 202, 222 and 922 go past the Ein Hod junction on the Haifa-Hadera coastal road. Buses are fairly frequent and the trip takes about 20 minutes from Haifa. From

the junction, walk up the hill for about 10 minutes, and the village is on the right.

It's possible to take a Hadera-bound bus and tell the driver you want to go to Ein Hod, and then to take a 30-minute walk to the village.

ZICHRON YA'ACOV

זכרון יעקב זכרון יעקב

☎ 04 / pop 9000

With fine food, great wine, country air and throngs of holiday makers, Zichron Ya'acov looks like a slice of Napa Valley shorn off and transported to the Middle East.

Sights

The town was established in 1882 by Romanian Jews who formed one of Palestine's first Zionist settlements. Nowadays Zichron Ya'acov (Jacob's Memorial) is more renowned for its role in Israel's wine industry. Visitors are welcome at the **Carmel Winery** (☎ 629 0977; www.carmelwines.co.il; ☎ 8.30am-3.30pm Sun-Thu, 8.30am-1pm Fri), which produces wines both for export and domestic consumption. Guided tours in English (15NIS) need to be arranged in advance.

Hameyasdim, two blocks west of the winery, is a cobblestone street lined with 19th-century homes that have been restored to perfection, many of them converted into boutique shops, cafés and ice-cream parlours. It makes for pleasant walking and is at its most bustling on the Shabbat.

The end of the *midrahov* (pedestrian mall) is marked by the **Aaronsohn House Museum** (☎ 637 7666; www.nill-museum.org.il in Hebrew; 40 Hameyasdim St; adult/student 15/12NIS; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Sun-Thu, 8.30am-1pm Fri), named after a noted agronomist and botanist who lived in Zichron Ya'acov. He and his family were also leaders of the NILL, a network of agents who spied on the Turks during WWI, and so the museum not only houses his collection of Palestinian plants but also tells the story of NILL. Tours of the museum in English are conducted every 90 minutes.

In the early days, the town owed its survival to donations from the Baron de Rothschild, who funded the establishment of the vineyards, the town synagogue and other buildings. One of his buildings, the former Administration House, has been converted into the **First Aliya Museum** (☎ 629 4777; 2 Hanavid St; admission 15NIS; ☎ 9am-2pm Sun-Thu),

which commemorates the immigrants who came to Israel during the early settlement years between 1882 and 1904. A multimedia presentation describes the trials and tribulations of those heady days.

Sleeping & Eating

Bet Maimon (☎ 6390212, 6290999; www.maimon.com; 4 Zahal St; s/d, with breakfast US\$96/104; ♿ ♿) This pleasant, family-run hotel has 25 spacious rooms with TV and modern décor. The patio and garden have some spectacular views towards the coast (especially at sunset) and there are welcome amenities such as a sauna and Jacuzzi. The restaurant serves Mediterranean and Sephardic dishes in a rustic setting. The hotel is located on the western slopes of Zichron Ya'acov – it's well signposted from Hwy 4.

Haneshika (☎ 639 0133; 37 Hameyasdim St; ☎ 12.30-3.30pm Tue-Sat, 7-11.30pm Mon-Sat) Charming Haneshika is an old farmhouse and garden, taking you back to Zichron Ya'acov's days of yore. Inside the cosy dining hall, you can sample some fine Provençale cuisine, including excellent appetisers like potato gnocchi with mozzarella and country-style sausages. For a main course you might want to order the lamb casserole with eggplant or the pork stew.

Getting There & Away

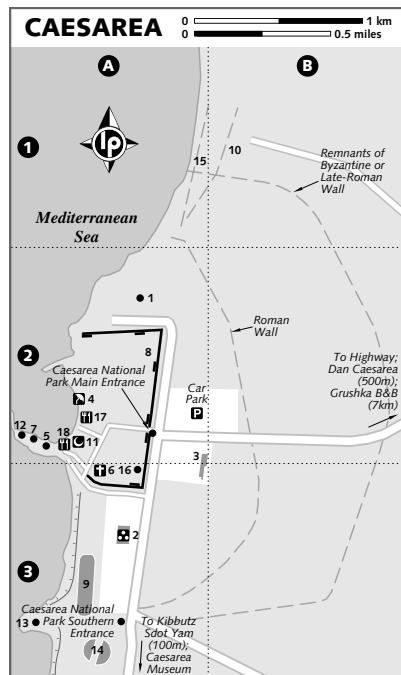
Zichron Ya'acov is about 5km southeast of Dor, accessed by Hwy 652. Buses travel here from Tel Aviv (bus No 872, 23NIS, one hour, hourly) and from Hof HaKarmel (bus No 202 or 222, 13.50NIS, 30 minutes, hourly)

CAESAREA قيسارية كيسارية
☎ 04 / pop 3400

While it may not look like much nowadays, Caesarea was one of the great cities of antiquity, rivalling other ancient harbours such as Alexandria and Antioch. Despite efforts by various conquerors to keep the city alive, time and warfare eventually had their way and by the 14th century AD most of Caesarea had disappeared under the shifting dunes. Major excavations have been made over the past 15 years and Caesarea is now one of the country's top archaeological developments. The impressive renovations include a new visitor centre with a dynamic multimedia display. Cafés and restaurants add to the scene and even after the park

closes you can still visit and dine alfresco by the sea.

A more modern Caesarea of shopping malls and gated communities has developed outside the archaeological area. The Israeli developers will have to go some way, however, to exceed the almost megalomaniacal



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achievements of the founder of Caesarea, Herod the Great.

History

This place was initially a small Phoenician settlement in the 3rd or 4th century BC. Herod inherited the site and set about building his city in 22 BC. Dedicating it to his patron, the Roman emperor Augustus Caesar, Herod apparently aimed to build the most grandiose city imaginable. For several years, hundreds of builders and divers worked around the clock to complete the project. To create the two lofty breakwaters which stretched for 540m on the southern side and 270m on the north, stones of 230 cu metres were lowered into the open sea.

In the pursuit of his desire, Herod became increasingly tyrannical and those who questioned, let alone disobeyed, his orders were often executed. Following Herod's death (sighs of relief all round, no doubt), Caesarea became the local Roman capital. Pontius Pilate resided here as prefect from AD 26 to 36, and his name appears on an inscription found in the ruins of the theatre. The Bible also records (Acts 10) that a Roman centurion serving at the garrison here was the first Gentile to be converted to Christianity, baptised by Peter.

Following the First Revolt (AD 66-70), in which the Jews rose up against – and were crushed by – the Romans (and expelled from Jerusalem), thousands of captives were executed in Caesarea's amphitheatre. Some 65 years later, after the Romans put down the Bar Kochba Revolt, the amphitheatre again became an arena of cruelty as 10 Jewish sages were tortured to entertain the masses.

The city was seized by the Arabs in AD 640 only to fall into disrepair. In 1101 the Crusaders took Caesarea from the Muslims and discovered in the city a hexagonal, green-glass bowl that they believed to be the Holy Grail, the vessel from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper. It is now kept at the Cathedral of St Lorenzo in Genoa. The Crusaders favoured Akko and Jaffa as their principal ports and therefore only a part of Herod's Caesarea was rehabilitated.

The city was to change hands between Arabs and Crusaders four times until King Louis IX of France captured it in 1251.

That same year he added most of the fortifications visible today. They proved totally inadequate under the onslaught of the Mamluk sultan Beybars, who in 1261 broke through the Crusader defences and devastated the city.

The ruins remained deserted and over time were swallowed by shifting wind-blown sands. More than 600 years later, in 1878, groups of refugees from Bosnia (soon to become part of ill-fated Yugoslavia) were installed here by the Turks but driven out again during the 1948 war, making their tenancy relatively short-lived.

It was only with the establishment of Kibbutz Sdot Yam that ancient Caesarea began to re-emerge. While tilling the land, farmers found bits and pieces of the old city and archaeologists soon followed. Children on the kibbutz were rewarded with pieces of candy if they could retrieve something valuable. More investment was made in the 1990s and today the foundations of Caesarea are largely open to the public.

Orientation & Information

Caesarea's remains are spread along a 3km stretch of the Mediterranean coast, just west of the old Haifa-Hadera coastal road. Most visitors approach from the highway, first seeing the walled Crusader city with its citadel and harbour. Beyond the walls is Caesarea's oldest structure, **Strato's Tower**, and 1km beyond that, littered across the beach, are the skeletons of the Roman aqueducts.

Park in the lot to the right as you arrive from the highway. From here you'll see the main entrance to the **Caesarea National Park** (☎ 636 1358; www.parks.org.il; basic ticket adult/child 23/12NIS, with interactive tour 40/33NIS; ☎ 8am-5pm Apr-Sep, 8am-4pm Oct-Mar). If your time is limited, enter here and explore the main sights around the harbour. If you have more time, you could enter at the southern entrance (800m south of the main entrance) and work your way north through the ruins. Either way, be sure to take the option of the multimedia tour, which helps bring to life the sprawling ruins.

Once you are inside the park everything is well signposted. When you buy your ticket make sure to pick up a map of the area; it describes five colour-coded walking tours of the site. Also grab a Caesarea National Park brochure, which contains brief

descriptions of the sights inside the park. Both the brochure and map are free.

Sights

ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE

The original Herodian structure of the **amphitheatre** has been modified and added to over the centuries. The semicircular platform behind the stage is an addition dating back to the 3rd century, and the great wall with the two towers is part of a 6th-century Byzantine fortress built over the ruins. A great deal more reconstruction has gone on in more recent times to transform the amphitheatre into a spectacular venue for concert performances.

PROMONTORY PALACE

Beyond the amphitheatre is a rocky point with the ruins of the **Promontory Palace**, a colossal structure built in Roman times. Its western portion contains a pool believed to have been used as a fish market.

HERODIAN AMPHITHEATRE & THE BATHHOUSE

The U-shaped dirt plaza near Promontory Palace is the **Herodian Amphitheatre**, also known as the hippodrome, where chariot races and other sporting events took place. The theatre is 250m long and 50m wide, with enough seating for 10,000 spectators. Next to the amphitheatre are the remains of a **bathhouse**. Well-preserved mosaics are protected from the elements by a temporary roof.

CRUSADER CITY

King Louis IX of France built the fortifications and moat that surround the **Crusader City**. The wall was 900m long, 13m high and enclosed the harbour and the city, which during Crusader times was much smaller than Herod's Caesarea. There were 16 towers and a moat that is still largely intact. The French monarch actually spent a year here overseeing the construction. Once inside you should follow the marked route to the left, which takes you along the **vaulted street** to the remains of a Crusader-era **church**, built over the site of Caesar's temple and destroyed by the Arabs in 1291. Down by the harbour and easily identifiable is the **mosque** constructed by the Turks for the Bosnian refugees in the late 19th century.

CAESAREA EXPERIENCE & CRUSADER CITADEL

As you walk out on the jetty, the long building on your left is the **Caesarea Experience**, which starts off with a 10-minute movie (in English at appointed times) dramatising the history of the city from birth to destruction. A second room contains computer-animated holographs of King Herod & Co, designed to answer your every question.

The two-storey building behind the Caesarea Experience is the Time Tower, also known as the **Crusader Citadel**. The top floor contains the third segment of the multimedia experience, a computer-generated show that allows you to see the city at different periods of its existence. It goes quite far in helping you understand the layers of history in the archaeological park. From the Time Tower you get a view of the harbour. The dark blotches are actually the foundations of the enormous breakwater constructed by Herod. The Caesarea Experience costs 25NIS, but it's cheaper if you buy a combined ticket when you first enter the national park.

BYZANTINE STREET (CARDO)

Outside the city walls and across the street is a fenced-in excavated **Byzantine street** (Cardo) with two large 2nd- or 3rd-century statues. Some steps lead down to the street, which is attributed in an inscription in the mosaic floor to Flavius Strategius, a 6th-century mayor. The statues originally belonged to temples and were unearthed by the ploughs of local kibbutzniks. The white marble figure is unidentified but the red porphyry one is most probably the Emperor Hadrian holding an orb and sceptre.

ROMAN & BYZANTINE AQUEDUCTS

Driving out of the site and back towards the highway, take a left at the roundabout to the **Roman aqueduct**. Although most of it has been buried by sand, the aqueduct nearest to the sea is about 17km long. Built by the Romans in the 2nd century, it carried water from mountain springs to Caesarea. The other, lower **Byzantine aqueduct** dates from the 4th or 5th century and runs for about 5km before connecting to an artificial lake to the north.

KIBBUTZ SDOT YAM & THE CAESAREA MUSEUM

Kibbutzniks from nearby Kibbutz Sdot Yam to the south have spent the past five decades digging up the history of Caesarea. Many of the relics from the ancient city have ended up at the kibbutz in the on-site **Caesarea Museum** (☎ 636 4637, 636 4366; admission 10NIS; ☎ 10am-4pm Sat-Thu, 10am-1pm Fri). Among the relics here is a replica of the Pontius Pilate inscription. The plaque is of enormous historical significance as it's the only physical evidence that the man who the Bible says ordered the crucifixion of Jesus Christ actually existed. The original is on display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

Activities

The **Caesarea Beach Club** (adult/child 25/20NIS) is the small slice of shoreline fringing Herod's harbour. The price includes the use of lounge chairs, umbrellas and showers. There are also kayaks available to hire. The beach at the Roman aqueduct is another fine place to swim. There is no charge there but you get what you pay for as there are only basic facilities.

Scuba divers will get a kick out of diving in the harbour, where your dive master will give you a guided tour of Herod's breakwater. It is organised by the **Old Caesarea Diving Centre** (☎ 626 5898; www.caesarea-diving.com), which has a dive shop on the jetty, just behind the Time Tower. A group dive with equipment costs 165NIS per person.

Sleeping

Grushka B&B (☎ 638 9810; www.grushka.co.il; 28 Ham-eyasdim St, Binyamina; d 525NIS, plus per child 125NIS; ☎ ☎) This friendly Dutch- and Israeli-run B&B offers several comfortable rooms as well as a quiet cottage and a fully equipped villa for families. It's just a seven-minute walk from the Binyamina train station; or call for a pick-up. It makes a pretty good base if you want to explore Caesarea and nearby Zichron Ya'acov.

Dan Caesarea (☎ 626 9111; www.danhotels.com; s/d US\$120/140; ☎ ☎ ☎) The best hotel in Caesarea offers comfortable digs and lots of activities. Colourfully decorated rooms have balconies, some of which have sea views. Around the hotel you can walk in landscaped gardens, or even play a round of golf at the attached 18-hole course. Other

amenities include a gym, spa and tennis courts.

Eating

Helena (☎ 610 1018; dishes 60-80NIS; ☎ noon-10pm) Watch the fishing boats bob in the harbour as you settle into this elegant multilevel restaurant, with the best seats on the wood deck. Chef Amos Sion, one of Israel's well-known culinary masters, aims to impress with some tasty appetisers including a nice fried calamari and focaccia bread, and filling main dishes – try the whole grilled fish. It is at the beginning of the jetty.

Crusaders (Zalbanim; ☎ 636 1931; dishes 65-80NIS; ☎ 11am-12.30am) Located at the northern end of the port, Crusaders is recognisable by its pleasant patio and large, airy interior. It's a family-friendly place with a large menu serving everything from steaks to grilled fish and shrimp platters. This is not a good place for dieters as the apple pie and ice cream dessert are almost irresistible. It's a great place to watch the sun set and, once darkness has taken over, you can mosey over to the wine bar for a drink.

Getting There & Away

From Tel Aviv or Netanya, take any bus along the coastal road towards Khadera, where you can disembark and connect with bus No 76 to Caesarea, the best of which depart at 8.20am, 11.25am, 1.10pm and 2.45pm. Coming from Haifa, get off at the Caesarea intersection and hike or hitch the last 3.5km to the site. Alternatively, take the train (☎ 638 8007) to Binyamina from Tel Aviv (21NIS, 45 minutes) or Haifa (17.50NIS, 30 minutes) and look for a taxi to take you the last 7km.

BEIT SHE'ARIM

בית שְׁעָרִים בית שְׁעָרִים

Once an ancient city of antiquity and later a necropolis for Jews, **Beit She'arim** (☎ 04-983 1643; adult/child 18/8NIS; ☎ 8am-5pm, entrance until 3pm) is now a shady park and key destination for archaeology hounds. Don't confuse this place with the similar-sounding Beit She'an, near the Sea of Galilee. Beit She'arim is nowhere near as impressive and does not justify a major detour, but if you're in the area with time on your hands, it may be worth a visit.

During the 2nd century, Beit She'arim was the meeting place of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court, headed at the time by

Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi. The rabbi took on responsibilities both secular and religious, and conducted political affairs between Jews and the Roman overlords. At Tzipori he called together Jewish scholars and compiled the Mishnah (Jewish holy law).

When Yehuda HaNassi died he was buried in Beit She'arim. The Jews traditionally buried their dead on the Mount of Olives, where the Messiah was expected to appear, but after they were expelled from Jerusalem many followed the lead of Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi and chose Beit She'arim as a place of burial.

During the 4th century the town was destroyed by the Romans, presumably in the process of suppressing a Jewish uprising. During the following 600 years the many tombs suffered further destruction and looting, and the catacombs gradually became covered by earth and rock falls until they were eventually forgotten. It was not until 1936 that archaeologists first discovered Beit She'arim's remains, although extensive exploration only truly began after Israel's independence in 1948.

The site today is basically in two parts – the town's remains on the crest of the hill, and the tombs below. As you drive towards the entrance of the park, the ruins of a **2nd-century synagogue** are off to the left.

The actual entrance to the park, where you pay for a ticket to visit the **catacombs**, is around the hairpin bend. There are 31 catacombs here and a small museum in an ancient rock-cut reservoir. The catacombs are slightly spooky caves – cool chambers filled with now-empty stone coffins. The largest catacomb contains 24 separate chambers with more than 200 sarcophagi. Note the variety of symbols and inscriptions carved onto the coffins, including epithets written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Palmyran and Greek. Some of the dead, it is believed, had come from as far away as Persia and Yemen.

Getting There & Away

Beit She'arim is located 19km southeast of Haifa. With your own car, take Hwy 75 to Hwy 70, then take Hwy 722 north and turn left at the sign that says 'Qiryat Amal'. The entrance to Beit She'arim is a further 400m. If you don't have your own wheels, take bus No 338 from Haifa to Kiryat Tivon, and walk 2km to the park.

MEGIDDO

مجدو 17גג

☎ 04

Better known as Armageddon (in Hebrew Har Megiddo, meaning 'Mt Megiddo'), the site that St John predicted would host the last great battle on earth (Revelation 16:16) is now preserved in **Megiddo National Park** (☎ 659 0316; adult/child 23/12NIS; ☎ 8am–5pm Sat–Thu, 8am–4pm Fri). Megiddo is today a very popular attraction for doomsday watchers or just the plain curious.

Although nothing too apocalyptic has happened yet, Megiddo has been the scene of important and bloody battles throughout the ages. Details of the first blood to be spilt at the site come from hieroglyphics on the wall of Karnak Temple in Luxor, which describe the battle that Thutmose III fought here in 1468 BC. Megiddo remained a prosperous Egyptian stronghold for at least 100 years, holding out against the Israelites (Judges 1:27) and probably only falling to David. Under his son, Solomon, Megiddo became one of the jewels of the kingdom, known as the Chariot City – excavations have revealed traces of stables extensive enough to have held thousands of horses.

For a while Megiddo was a strategic stronghold on the Roman Empire's Via Maris trade route, but by the 4th century BC the town had inexplicably become uninhabited. However, its strategic importance remained, and among those armies that fought here were the British in WWI. On being awarded his peerage, General Allenby took the title Lord Allenby of Megiddo. Jewish and Arab forces also fought here during the 1948 War.

Excavations have unearthed the remains of 20 distinct historical periods, from 4000 to 400 BC, but it takes some stretch of the imagination to see in the modern-day site any traces of former grandeur. Help is given through some excellent models in the visitors centre **museum**, and by informative signs planted around the site sketching out the relevance of the earthen hummocks and depressions. The most tangible aspect of the excavations is the preserved 9th-century-BC water system. This consists of a shaft sunk 30m through solid rock down to a 70m tunnel. This hid the city's water source from invading forces, rather like Hezekiah's version in Jerusalem. There is no water to slosh through here, though. Save the tunnel until last as it leads you out of the site,

depositing you on a side road some distance away from the visitors centre.

Getting There & Away

The archaeological site is 2km north of Megiddo Junction, which is the well-signposted intersection of the Haifa–Jenin road and the Afula–Hadera highway. There are several Haifa–Afula buses passing by daily, as well as half-hourly Tiberias to Tel Aviv services – ask the driver to let you off at Megiddo Junction and then walk or hitch a lift the last 2km. Megiddo can also be reached from Nazareth via Afula.

AKKO (ACRE)

עכו עכא

☎ 04 / pop 46,000

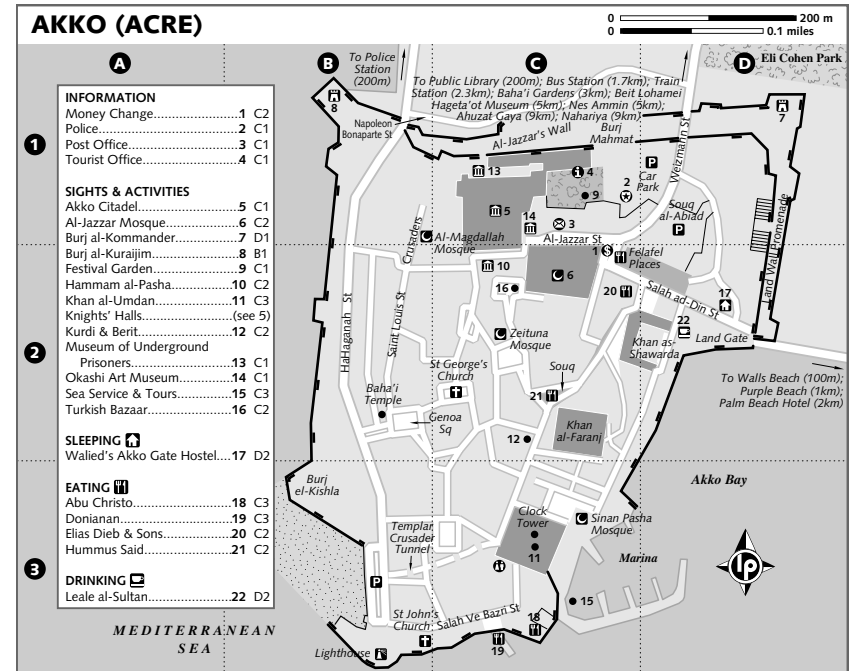
Don't make Akko the first place you visit in Israel. After visiting this wonderfully preserved city of stone all the historic settlements scattered across Israel will appear rather ho-hum. Akko, sited on a narrow spit of land that pokes into the sea, seduces visitors with its narrow alleys, slender minarets, secret passageways, subterranean vaults and impressive ramparts. But

while other historic towns in Israel are busy packaging their heritage for the benefit of tourists, Akko has taken a more modest approach, leaving its homes for families, not artists, and its souq (market) for fishers, not souvenir hawkers.

Akko is the Acre of the Crusaders, and as the capital and port of the Latinate Kingdom of Palestine, it received ships from Amalfi, Genoa, Pisa and Venice. St Francis of Assisi and Marco Polo were among the guests in the knights' dining halls. Things haven't changed much since then and the modern visitor can get a real sense of Akko's history by wandering its streets. Accommodation is sadly lacking and most visitors just come for the day, which is a shame as Akko is at its most romantic by moonlight.

History

Long before it was graced with the royalty of Europe, Akko could already boast a distinguished and colourful history. It received mention in Egyptian sacred texts of the 19th century BC and it's reputedly the place where Hercules, the Rambo of



Greek mythology, took refuge to heal his wounds. Another theory on the origins of the town's name suggests that it is derived from the Ancient Greek word *ake*, meaning 'point' (headland).

Always an important port, Alexander the Great established a mint here in 333 BC, which operated for 600 years. After the Greek conqueror's death, Akko was taken by the Egyptian Ptolemies, who called it Ptolemais. In 200 BC they lost it to the Syrian Seleucids, who struggled to keep it until the Romans, led by Pompey, began two centuries of rule.

In 636, Akko fell to the Arabs, who enjoyed a fairly untroubled reign until the coming of the Crusaders. The arrival of the Christian armies heralded the most turbulent period in Akko's history. The Crusaders seized the town and established it as their principal port and lifeline. They lost it to Saladin (Salah ad-Din) for a time, but it was retaken during the Third Crusade by armies under the command of Richard the Lionheart and King Philip of Spain.

Every now and again the differences had to be settled long enough to repel an attack from the Muslims, but in 1291 the Mamluks appeared with an army that outnumbered the defenders 10-to-one. After a two-month siege, during which most of Akko's inhabitants escaped to Cyprus, the town fell. It was pounded to rubble by the Mamluks and remained in ruins for the next 450 years.

The rebirth of Akko was undertaken by an unlikely midwife, an Albanian mercenary, Ahmed Pasha al-Jazzar, known as 'the Butcher' (jazzar means 'butcher' in Arabic) – a nickname that had nothing to do with his skill with meat cutlets. Taking advantage of the weak and corrupt Ottoman administration, Al-Jazzar established a virtually independent fiefdom and bullied the port back into working order. Old Akko, as it exists today, was shaped by the decrees of Al-Jazzar. By 1799 the city had become important enough for Napoleon to attempt its capture, but he was repelled by Al-Jazzar with some help from the English fleet.

Akko remained in Turkish hands until the British captured Palestine in 1917. They set up their headquarters in Haifa, and Akko's importance dwindled, although its citadel was maintained as the main prison in

Palestine. During the 1930s, Akko became a hotbed of Arab hostility towards increased Jewish immigration and the notion of a Zionist state, but Jewish forces captured the town fairly easily in 1948.

Since then the Jews have more or less left Old Akko to the Arabs, preferring to develop their own new town east of Al-Jazzar's walls. In May 2002 the city was awarded Unesco World Heritage status.

Orientation

All the places of interest are firmly enclosed within the walls of Old Akko, so you really only need to get to know a small, albeit confusing, area. To get within the walls, coming out of the train station, turn right on Herzl and then take the first left on Derekh Ha'arb'a. Walk past the bus station (which is on your left) and walk one block to the traffic lights and turn right onto Ben Ami St. After walking through the pedestrianised shopping precinct (*midrahov*), turn left onto Weizmann St and you'll see the city walls ahead. All up, it's a 20-minute walk; you can make things easier on yourself by taking a taxi.

Information

Library (☎ 9am-7pm Sun-Thu, 9am-3pm Fri) Located 200m north of the Old City walls, the library offers internet access for 7NIS per 30 minutes.

Money Change (☎ 991 5097; cnr Weizmann & Al-Jazzar Sts; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm) Changes US dollars and euros.

Banks with ATMs can be found in the new city.

Police (☎ 987 6736; Weizmann St) Located in the parking lot near the tourist office.

Post Office (Al-Jazzar St; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 4-6pm Sun-Mon & Wed-Thu, 8am-1.30pm Tue, 8am-1pm Fri) Branch post office that might be able to change travellers cheques. The main post office is in the new city at 49 Ben Ami.

Tourist Office (☎ 995 6707; www.akkо.org.il; 1 Weizmann St; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Apr-Oct; 8.30-4.30 Nov-Mar) Located north of the Festival Garden, inside the Crusader citadel. Internet is available here for 8NIS per hour.

Dangers & Annoyances

Akko shuts down after dark and while most people feel comfortable walking around, some women walking alone have been subject to unwanted attention and occasional sexual harassment. As Akko is an Arab-Muslim town, you could reduce such attention by dressing modestly.

Sights

WALLS & GATES

As you approach Old Akko on Weizmann St, you first come to the wall and moat built by Al-Jazzar in 1799 after Napoleon's retreat. Today they serve as a very physical division between the predominantly Arab Old Akko and the sprawl of the modern Jewish town to the north.

Heading west along Al-Jazzar's wall brings you to **Burj al-Kurajjim** (Vineyard Tower), also known as the British Fortress. From here, the 12th-century sea wall (refaced in the 18th century by Al-Jazzar with stones scavenged from the Crusader castle at Atlit) runs due south before looping around to the harbour. In the shadow of the sea wall is HaHaganah St, which terminates in a car park beside the lighthouse at the southernmost tip of Old Akko.

Back at the point where Weizmann St breaches Al-Jazzar's wall, some stairs to the east ascend to the **Land Wall Promenade** and the **Burj al-Kommander**, the squat bastion that anchors the northeastern corner of Old Akko. From the platform atop the tower there are great views across the bay to Haifa and over the exotic skyline of Akko before you. The promenade terminates 200m south at the 12th-century **Land Gate**, once the city's only land entrance – the only other way in was via the **Sea Gate** in the harbour, now occupied by the Abu Christo restaurant.

AL-JAZZAR MOSQUE

Perhaps a little bit patchy up close, from a distance the large green dome and slender pencil minaret of **Al-Jazzar Mosque** (admission 6NIS; ☎ 8am-5pm Sat-Thu, 8-11am & 1-5pm Fri) form a beautiful ensemble. The mosque was built in 1781 in typical Ottoman Turkish style with a little local improvisation in parts; the columns in the courtyard, for example, were looted from Roman Caesarea. Around by the base of the minaret, the small twin-domed building contains the sarcophagi of Al-Jazzar and his adopted son and successor, Süleyman.

The mosque stands on the site of a former Crusader cathedral, the cellars of which were put into use by the Turks as cisterns. Renovated some years ago, the vaulted water-filled chambers are open to the public – bear over to the left as you enter the courtyard.

FESTIVAL GARDEN

From the mosque, backtrack a few steps towards the city wall and turn left into the parking lot next to the police station. Walk through the lush **Festival Garden** and turn right into the **tourist office**. Here you can watch a short introductory film about Akko and look over a model of the city. The helpful staff will be able to provide advice on how to tackle the city.

Outside the tourist office is a kiosk where you purchase mix and match combination tickets to the attractions in the city. The best ticket gets you into the Subterranean Crusader City, the Hammam al-Pasha (Turkish Bath) Exhibit, the Okashi Art Museum, the Templars Tunnel and Rosh HaNikra (p222) for 65/58NIS per adult/child. A separate kiosk passes out audio headsets (free with admission) that lead you through the subterranean city. The exhibits are open 9am to 5.15pm Saturday to Thursday and 9am to 2.15pm Friday. From November to March the sites close one hour early.

MUSEUM OF UNDERGROUND PRISONERS

Before exploring the Knights' Halls climb up the stairs behind the ticket kiosk to the top of the **Akko Citadel**, a rambling structure built by the Turks in the late 18th century on 13th-century Crusader foundations. At the top of the stairs, turn left to reach the **Museum of Underground Prisoners** (☎ 991 1375; admission 10NIS; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Sun-Thu, 8.30am-1.30pm Fri), which is dedicated to the Jewish resistance during the British Mandate. The citadel served for a while as a prison whose inmates included Ze'ev Jabotinsky, a leader of the Jewish underground, in the 1920s. Exhibits include memorials to nine Jewish resistance fighters who were executed here (the gallows room is open to the public) and a model illustrating the successful mass breakout of 1947 – that scene in the movie *Exodus* was filmed here.

For the Baha'i the room upstairs is a holy place. Baha'ullah, founder of the Baha'i faith, was imprisoned here in the late 19th century. Later, his third son Mirzá Mihda fell through a skylight in the roof whilst meditating. He died 22 hours later.

SUBTERRANEAN CRUSADER CITY

Buy tickets for the **Subterranean Crusader City** from the kiosk outside the tourist office. Head across the lawn to the entry to the

Knights' Halls (adult/child 25/22NIS), a haunting series of vaulted halls that lie 8m below the street level.

At one time, the halls served as the headquarters of the crusading Knights Hospitallers but, like the rest of Acre, it was laid to waste and buried under rubble when the Mamluks breached the walls in 1291. When the city came to be reconstructed some 450 years later it was simpler to start all over again and build on top of the ruins.

Within the Knights' Halls, you can see where part of the ceiling is covered by a cement patch – this plugs a tunnel dug in 1947 by Jewish prisoners held in the British prison above. Not knowing what lay beneath in the dark halls, they returned to their cells to plot a more successful mass escape. Today the halls are occasionally used for concerts, and the annual Akko Fringe Theatre Festival is, aptly enough, staged here. Ongoing reconstruction work may impede your path in places, but most of the area remains open.

The Knights' Halls lead out to an open courtyard. Enter one of the doors to the left to enter the Refectory (Dining Hall). As a visitor to Acre, it's likely that Marco Polo would have dined in this room. Opposite the entrance you can see a fleur-de-lys, an emblem of the kings of France.

Next to the entrance to the dining hall is a stairwell that leads to a long and claustrophobic underground sewer. (The medieval waste seems to have been thoroughly disinfected, thank you very much). It's likely that the sewer doubled as an escape route, through which knights could abandon the halls and escape to the harbour.

The tunnel continues to a crypt that contains, among other things, the tombstone of the last bishop of Nazareth. Past the crypt is the Crusaders' Domus Infirmorum, or hospital. The Turks used the area as a post office, so it's also known as Al-Bosta. The way out of the subterranean depths is through a conspicuously placed souvenir shop that leads into a **Turkish Bazaar**.

HAMMAM AL-PASHA

From the end of the Turkish Bazaar, turn right and look out for the **Hammam al-Pasha** (Turkish Bath), housed in the 1780 bathhouse built by Al-Jazzar, which remained in use until the 1940s. The Hammam now contains a worthwhile 30-minute **multimedia**

show (adult/child 25/21NIS) called 'The Story of the Last Bath Attendant'. The creatively designed exhibit leads you from the dressing room through the steamy rooms, all brilliantly lit with coloured glass.

OKASHI ART MUSEUM

Around the corner from the Hamman al-Pasha (back towards the Crusader City) is the **Okashi Art Museum** (adult/child 10/7NIS), a gallery devoted to the works of Avshalom Okashi (1916–80), an influential Israeli painter and a resident of Akko for the last half of his life.

SOUQ

From the Turkish Bathhouse, head away from the Crusader City and follow your nose to Akko's small but bustling souq. Here fresh hummus is boiled in giant vats while fresh fish nearby flop off the tables. As carts trundle past, children shuck corn and vendors hawk fresh fruit, all to the soundtrack of tinny Arabic music playing from battered radios. As you browse the stalls, visit **Kurdi & Berit** (☎ 991 6188), a tourist-friendly shop that ships herbs and spices worldwide.

SOUTHERN ROAD

The 600m-long **Southern Road** was an important thoroughfare in Akko during Crusader times. It was here that pilgrims entering the Holy Land would be divided into groups before setting off towards Jerusalem. The road was recently found buried under the city and a 50m subterranean stretch has been excavated and prepared for tourism. The road is paved with stone tablets and its walls contain Crusader-era carvings of boats, crosses and shields. A row of shops and a gate was also identified. At the time of writing the site had not yet opened for tourism – ask the **tourist office** (☎ 995 6707; www.akk.org.il; 1 Weizmann St; ☎ 8.30am–5.30pm Apr–Oct; 8.30–4.30 Nov–Mar) for details on how to visit the site.

KHAN AL-UMDAN & THE HARBOUR

Old Akko has several large khans (an inn enclosing a courtyard, used by caravans for accommodation), which once served the camel caravans bringing in grain from the hinterland. The grandest is the **Khan al-Umdan**, down by the harbour. Its name means 'Inn of the Pillars', and it was built by Al-Jazzar in 1785. The pillars that give the khan its name were looted from

Caesarea. It's a two-storey structure and the ground floor would have housed the animals, while their merchant owners would have slept upstairs. The courtyard now serves as Akko's unofficial soccer stadium. The harbour's marina is still very much in service and if you are around early enough, you can watch the fishing boats come in and unload the day's catch.

TEMPLARS TUNNEL

Near the lighthouse parking lot at the southern tip of Akko, look out for the amazing **Templar Crusader Tunnel** (adult/child 10/7NIS), an underground passageway that connected the Port to a Templar palace. The tunnel was found by accident in 1994 after a complaint made by a local woman about a blocked sewer led a plumber to the underground shaft. The tunnel was investigated and opened to tourists.

Activities

From 10am to 6pm, **Sea Service & Tours** (☎ 052 465 3189; ybramly@012.net.il) runs a boat trip from the end of the breakwater and makes a 20-minute cruise around the walls. The boat leaves whenever a sufficient number of passengers is aboard, and the trip costs 20NIS per person.

The best bathing spot is **Purple Beach** (Hof Argaman; admission 15NIS), so named because of the royally favoured dye obtained from the snails that frequented the area in ancient times. With wonderful views of Old Akko on the horizon, the beach is popular with Israelis.

To reach Purple Beach, either get off the bus from Haifa when you see the Palm Beach Club Hotel, or walk east from Land Gate along Yonatan HaHoshmonai St – it's about a 10-minute walk.

Closer to the Land Gate is **Walls Beach** (Hof HaHomot), popular with windsurfers. There is a changing room near the entrance to the beach.

Sleeping

Walied's Akko Gate Hostel (☎ 991 0410; fax 981 5530; Salah ad-Din St; dm 30NIS, s with/without bathroom 200/120NIS, d with/without bathroom 220/140NIS; ☎) In this split-personality guesthouse, you've got a choice of fine-looking street-side rooms with attached bathrooms, or stuffy non-attached rooms that overlook a grubby yard filled with discarded metal bunk beds.

Owner Walied can arrange trips to the Golan Heights (200NIS) and Rosh HaNikra (35NIS) when there is enough demand. Call for a free pick-up from the station. If you just turn up on the doorstep there might not be anyone around, but if you're patient someone will turn up soon enough.

Palm Beach Hotel (☎ 987 7777; www.palmbeach.co.il; s/d US\$120/160; ☎ ☎) Located 2km east of the old city, the Palm Beach offers four-star quality rooms with facilities befitting its family-style atmosphere, including a pool, sauna, health spa and water sports. Book through the internet for a 10% discount. It's great if you like kids, but 'peace and quiet' is unknown terminology here.

Ahuzat Gaya (☎ 952 5656; www.ahuzatgaya.co.il; 1 Hof St; r, with breakfast US\$275; ☎ ☎) Pampering you in every way possible, Ahuzat Gaya provides gourmet food, a massage service and elegant sleeping quarters in the most peaceful of coasts settings. The low-key Mediterranean ambience is popular with Israelis looking for a weekend escape (no children under 18 are allowed), but is also happy to host travellers looking for a little luxury. It's 8km north of Akko on Moshav Shavei Zion.

Eating & Drinking

For cheap eating there are several *felafel* places around the junction of Salah ad-Din and Al-Jazzar Sts. Self-catering supplies are available at **Elias Dieb & Sons** (Salah ad-Din St), a little cave-like supermarket opposite Souq al-Abiad; there's no English sign.

Hummus Said (☎ 6am–2pm) Deeply entrenched in the souq, this place has become something of an institution, doling up that much-loved Middle Eastern dip to throngs of visitors from around the country. For 15NIS, you'll get salads, pickles, pita and a big glob of hummus with fuul (fava bean paste) or garlic.

Abu Christo (☎ 991 5653; Sea Promenade; dishes 60–80NIS; ☎ 10am–midnight) One of the oldest restaurants in town, this institution has been serving kebabs and fish for six decades. The family that runs it still turns up each day to greet patrons and serve up any number of seafood dishes. The restaurant is located at one of the former city gates, built in the 18th century.

Donianan (☎ 991 0001; Pisan Harbour; meals 100NIS; ☎ noon–1am) Raising the bar for dining experiences in Akko, this upscale restaurant

impresses with its beautifully presented appetisers and selection of fresh seafood meals. The grilled fish is the obvious choice but you could also try calamari, mussels or crab. Meat lovers may prefer the tender, marinated steak, complemented by a Golan wine. The restaurant enjoys spectacular views from its location atop the ramparts, next to Galileo restaurant.

Leale al-Sultan (Khan as-Shawarda; ☎ 9am-midnight) Traditional Middle Eastern coffeehouse sporting sequined cushions, colourful wall hangings and backgammon tables. A Turkish coffee costs 5NIS while a nargileh is 10NIS. Popular with locals.

Getting There & Away

Akko's bus terminal and train station lie about a 20-minute walk from the main entrance to the Old City. From Haifa (11.70NIS, 30 to 50 minutes), bus Nos 252 and 272 depart frequently, as do the slower bus Nos 251 and 271. From Akko, bus Nos 270, 271 and 272 (express) run north to Nahariya (7.60NIS, 15 to 25 minutes). Sheruts wait outside the Akko bus station and depart when full, to Haifa (10NIS) and Nahariya (8NIS).

The most pleasant way to travel between Akko and Haifa (12.50NIS, 30 minutes) or on to Nahariya (7.50NIS, 15 minutes), however, is by train along the beachfront railway. Trains pass in both directions three times an hour. An automatic ticket machine is inside the station.

Getting Around

There's no need for transport within Old Akko, but rather than walk there you could catch a bus from platform 16, which will drop you off on Weizmann St beside Al-Jazzar's wall. From the train station, a taxi costs around 12NIS.

AROUND AKKO

Bahje House & the Baha'i Gardens

The Bahje House and the Baha'i Gardens (admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm) is the holiest site for the Baha'is. This is where Baha'ullah, a follower of the Bab and the founder of the faith (see The Baha'i, p195), lived after his release from prison in Akko and where he died in 1892. His tomb is in lovely gardens, similar in style to those in Haifa. The shrine, known as **Bahje House** (admission free; ☎ 9am-noon Fri-Mon), contains a small museum.

The gardens are about a kilometre north of the town centre on the main Akko-Nahariya road. Take bus No 271 and get off at the stop after the main gate to the gardens, which you should see off to the right, 10 minutes out of the station. Unless you're a Baha'i, you'll have to use the entrance about 500m up the side road to the north of the main gate.

Turkish Aqueduct

On your right as you go north on the Nahariya road is a long **Roman-style aqueduct**. Built by Al-Jazzar in about 1780, it supplied Akko with water from the Galilee uplands.

Kibbutz Lohamei HaGheta'ot

Just north of the aqueduct is **Kibbutz Lohamei HaGheta'ot**, established in 1949 by former resistance fighters from the ghettos of Germany, Poland and Lithuania. On the property of the kibbutz is the **Beit Lohamei HaGeta'ot Museum** (☎ 04-995 8052; www.gfh.org.il; adult/child 20/18NIS; ☎ 9am-4pm Sun-Thu), which commemorates the ghetto uprisings, Jewish resistance and Allied assistance during the Nazi Holocaust. Despite the depressing theme, it presents a hopeful picture of this tragic period.

Your ticket is also good for **Yad Layaed** (☎ 04-995 8044; ☎ 9am-4pm Sun-Thu, 10am-5pm Sat), a moving museum dedicated to children of the Holocaust, located in an adjacent circular structure. This museum utilises powerful imagery to describe the fates of the 1.5 million children who died in the Holocaust. As you descend into the structure, the setting shifts through the ghetto while haunting voices tell the tales of the victims, and TV monitors play testimonies of the survivors. It culminates at a moving memorial in the bottom of the building.

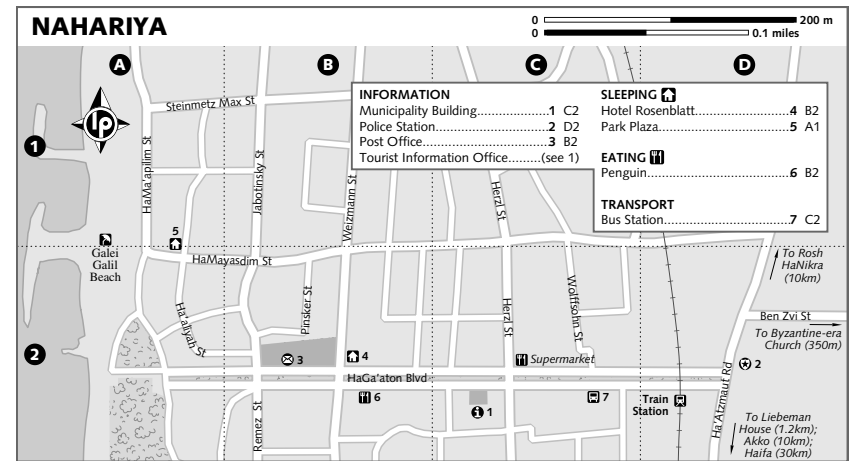
The kibbutz is on the road between Akko and Nahariya; just ask the bus driver to let you off.

NAHARIYA נהריה נהריה

☎ 04 / pop 47,400

As the main resort town in Israel's north, Nahariya seems to lie in a perpetual state of Shabbat. Numerous hotels line its quiet streets, ice-cream vendors do brisk business on the promenade and families soak up the sun on its gorgeous beaches.

In good times the town prospers from the tourist trade, but Nahariya is only about 10km – as the rocket flies – from the Lebanese



border. Hezbollah set its sights on Nahariya in the summer of 2006, landing more than 800 Katyushas in and around the city. Things have since gotten back to normal as best as they can.

In summer (June to August) **folk dancing** is held on the promenade at 9pm every Wednesday and Saturday. In autumn and spring (September to November and March to May) this is held on Saturday at 9pm. In winter (December to February) it is on Saturday morning.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Rosenblatt (☎ 992 3469; jael@walla.co.il; 59 Weizmann St; s/d US\$135/150; ☎ ☎) Budget travellers will have to make do with this rather scruffy place, near the corner with HaGa'aton Blvd. Rooms are a little drab and the furniture old, but the staff are helpful enough.

Park Plaza (☎ 900 0248; www.parkplazannahariya.co.il; 17 Ha'aliya St; s/d US\$135/150; ☎ ☎ ☎) Combining a personal touch with high-quality facilities and sea views, this chain hotel is one of the most attractive options in Nahariya. Colours tend to clash a little in the rooms but they are thoroughly modern and come with a kitchenette, minibar and safe box. Bikes are available for hire and guests are allowed free access to the adjacent sports centre.

Penguin (☎ 992 0027; 31 HaGa'aton Blvd; dishes 25-40NIS; ☎ 8am-1am) A mainstay of Nahariya, Penguin is older than Israel itself, dating back to 1940. Light meals such as pasta and salads are available here, plus burgers and

some tasty schnitzel. There is an easy-going atmosphere and an attached bookshop.

Getting There & Away

Bus Nos 270, 271 and 272 (express) run roughly every 25 minutes (until 10.30pm) to Akko (7.50NIS, 15 to 25 minutes), with bus Nos 271 and 272 services continuing to Haifa (10.50NIS, 45 to 70 minutes).

AROUND NAHARIYA

Montfort מונפורט מונפורט

Montfort is not the most impressive of Israel's Crusader castles, but it is interesting and a visit here involves a pleasant hike. Originally built in 1226 by the French Courtenays, the castle's name was changed from Montfort (Strong Mountain) to Starckenburg (Strong Castle) when they sold it to the Teutonic knights, the Templars and the Hospitaliers. They modified the castle, which became their central treasury, archives and Holy Land headquarters, although it had no real strategic value. In 1271 the Muslims, led by the Mamluk sultan Beybars, took the castle after a previous attempt (five years earlier) had failed. The Crusaders retreated to Akko and the castle was razed.

Little remains to be seen today. To the right of the entrance is the governor's residence, with the tower straight ahead. The two vaulted chambers to the right are the basement of the knights' hall; next to them is the chapel.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The best way to reach Montfort is by car. From Rosh HaNikra take Hwy 899 to Goren Park (It is 7.8km from the Hanita Junction). Drive 2km to a parking lot where you can see Montfort in the distance. The area is poorly signposted so you may need to ask around. From the parking lot it will take around an hour to hike to Montfort.

If you are coming from the south, there is road access from Mi'iliya on Hwy 89.

Akhziv שאט'י הזיב אכזיב

The short stretch of coastline between Nahariya and Rosh HaNikra on the Lebanese border is known as Akhziv. Once one of the towns of the Asher tribe in ancient Israel, it was also a Phoenician port, and Bronze Age remains have been found here.

AKHZIV NATIONAL PARK

About 4km north of Nahariya, **Akhziv National Park** (adult/child 25/15NIS; ☎ 8am-7pm Apr-Sep, 8am-4pm Oct-Mar) has a pleasant beach – with changing rooms, sunshades, showers and snack bar – and costs 11NIS to use.

Just a little further north is an area of well-manicured parkland on the site of an 'abandoned' Arab village. You can see traces of a Phoenician port and use the beach. There are changing rooms and a snack bar.

AKHZIVLAND

In 1952, Eli Avivi settled in an old Arab house by the beach just north of the national park and declared his land to be an independent state, which he called Akhzivland. Since then he has established a **museum** (☎ 04-982 3250; adult/child 10/5NIS; ☎ 8am-5pm Apr-Sep, 8am-4pm Oct-Mar) housing his varied collection of artefacts found nearby. Some of them date from the Phoenician, Roman and Byzantine periods.

Avivi also runs a basic **hostel** (☎ 04-982 3250; 11havivi@walla.com; dm 100NIS; r per person 150NIS) and has **campsites**, (80NIS) which give you access to the facilities. Guests here undoubtedly gain an unassailable advantage in the one-upmanship stakes by getting an Akhzivland stamp in their passports.

Rosh HaNikra

ראש הנקרה
راس الناقورة

The tumultuous border between Israel and Lebanon comes to an appropriately rugged and foreboding head at Rosh HaNikra,

where jagged cliffs plunge into the sea and waves crash into a series of grottoes. The 10km road from Nahariya ends at the **Rosh HaNikra Tourist Centre** (☎ 04-985 7109; www.rosh-hanikra.com) from where a **cable car** (adult/child 40/32NIS; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Sep-Mar, 8.30am-6pm Apr-Jun, 8.30am-11pm Jul-Aug) descends steeply to the caves. Alternatively, find the dim walking track that leaves the main highway about 300m south of the tourist centre; it leads through a former rail tunnel to the caves.

The caves were enlarged by the British for a railway and by the Israelis to improve access for visitors. They are explored via a meandering path that leads you to various points where the sea caves can be seen in all their glory – or tempestuousness – if the sea is seething. At the northern end, the tunnel leads you into a small theatre, slap-bang on the Lebanese border where you can watch a 12-minute film on the history of this historic railway.

Other than the caves, there is a reasonably priced self-service restaurant and the closed gate marking the border between Israel and Lebanon.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Nahariya, bus No 20 and 32 run four times daily to Rosh HaNikra (noon, 2.30pm, 5.30pm and 6pm, 6.5NIS, 15 minutes). Only one bus comes back to Nahariya, at 3pm. But if you're stuck it shouldn't be too hard to hitch or hop in a shared taxi.

Peqi'in פקי'ין
البيعة

Halfway between the Jordan River and the coast, and about a century behind the times, sits the stone-clad village of Peqi'in. It's inhabited predominantly by Druze but Peqi'in has also been home to a centuries-old Jewish community, which, according to tradition, has never been exiled from the Holy Land. In 1936 though, the political situation forced the residents to leave the area and only a small number returned after Israel became independent.

The village is believed to be where Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son, Eliezer, hid from the Romans in the 2nd century to escape a decree that made it illegal to study the Torah. The legend has it that they stayed in a cave here for 13 years, during which time the rabbi compiled the Zohar,

the most important book in Jewish mysticism. Outside the cave, a freshwater spring and a carob tree miraculously appeared. The two are said to have fed on the fruit from the tree, drunk from the spring and embedded themselves in the sand up to their necks while they spent all their time studying the Torah.

The **cave of Bar Yochai** is now a holy site, and you can see the spring (trickling unattractively through a modern-day pipe into a pool), an ancient **synagogue**, the Jewish community's old **cemetery**, and an old flour mill and oil presses. The village is a maze of twisting streets and it is hard to find these visually disappointing sites. Down by the

town square, locals that run the restaurants can point the way.

Peqi'in's other point of note is its speciality food, *pitta-eeem-leben*. This is wafer-thin pita bread served with a soft, sour white cheese that is mixed with olive oil and marjoram. You can try this at **Hummus Pigi'in** (☎ 9am-midnight Apr-Oct, 9am-7pm Nov-Mar), a friendly little café on the square overlooking the fountain.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus No 44 runs about every hour from Nahariya (13NIS, 45 minutes). Get off at the old village, Peqi'in Atika, not the modern settlement of Peqi'in Hadasha, one stop before.

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