

Terrific Tours in Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv-Jaffa is a city that beckons both visitors and residents alike to uncover its secrets and treasures.

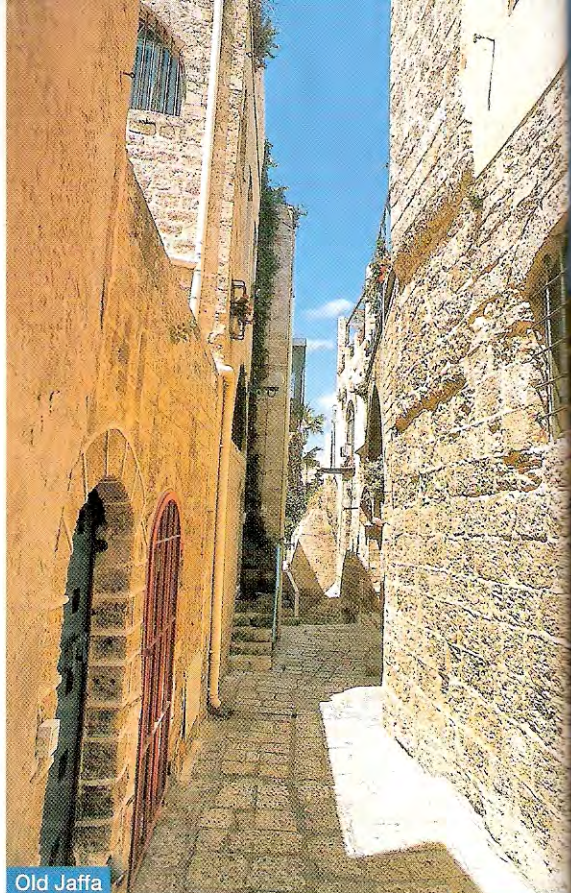
To that end, the Association for Tourism Tel Aviv-Jaffa offers more than 30 different guided tours showcasing all the culture, history and sheer fun that the city has to offer / Liza Rosenberg

Whether it's the thousands of Bauhaus buildings that dot the city, the burgeoning number of art galleries and museums, or the hidden alleys and myriad archeological sites of Jaffa, there can be no doubt that Tel Aviv is a city with a great deal to discover.

The Association for Tourism Tel Aviv-Jaffa, a municipality-run company which maintains an information center adjacent to the beach promenade at 46 Herbert Samuel Street, serves both Israeli and foreign tourists eager to explore the different facets of this special city. Tours are available in Hebrew and English, as well as one tour offered in Russian. According to Merav Uziel Refetov, the association's Deputy General Director, the English-speaking tours have been in existence for more than ten years, while the Hebrew-speaking ones began approximately six years ago.

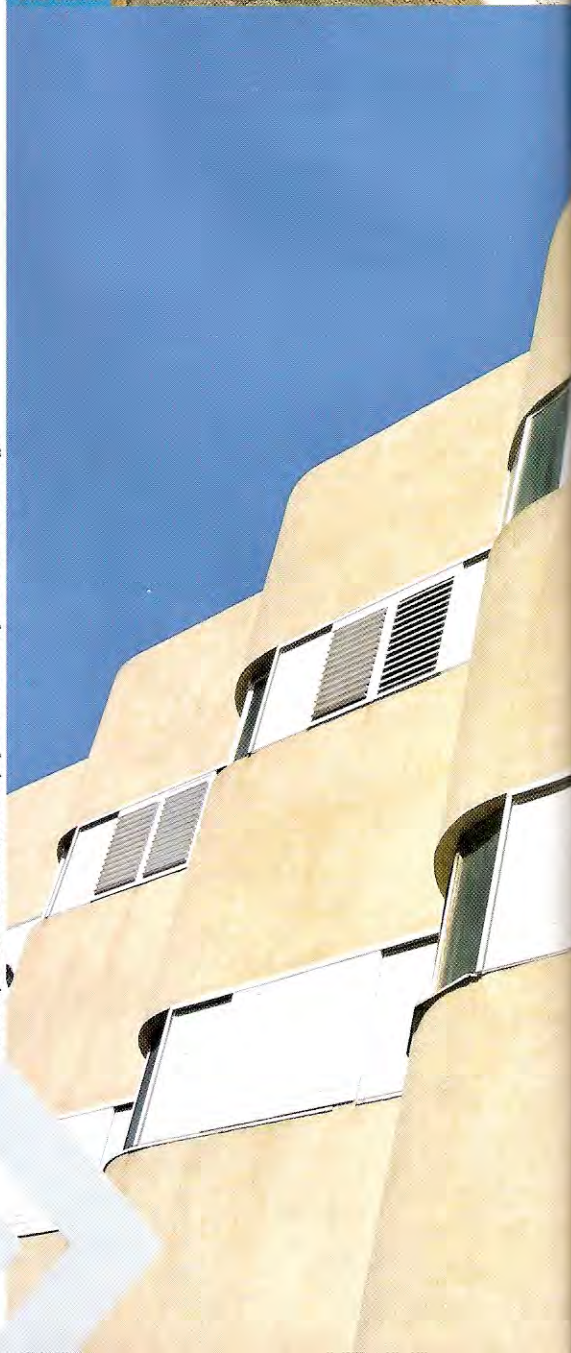
Today, there are more than 30 tours covering a multitude of themes. Says Refetov, "when we began to run the Hebrew-speaking walking tours, we offered only four. These guided tours have been very successful, and the number of tours that we offer has more than quadrupled since we started." Hebrew-language tours usually cost NIS 50 per person, while the English ones are free.

Tours are offered throughout the year, mainly on weekends, and no matter where your interests lie, finding a tour that piques your curiosity should be easy. With themes covering such wide-ranging topics as "How Do You Like Your Espresso?" (a caffeinated step back in time to the cafés of old Tel Aviv), "The Beautiful Life in Little Tel Aviv" (a stroll back in history through the magical corners of Tel Aviv during the 1920s and 1930s), "Cops and Robbers" (scintillating tales of crime from the early days of the state through today) and more, the Association for Tourism has something for everyone. Most are guided walking tours, but there are also bus and bicycle tours.



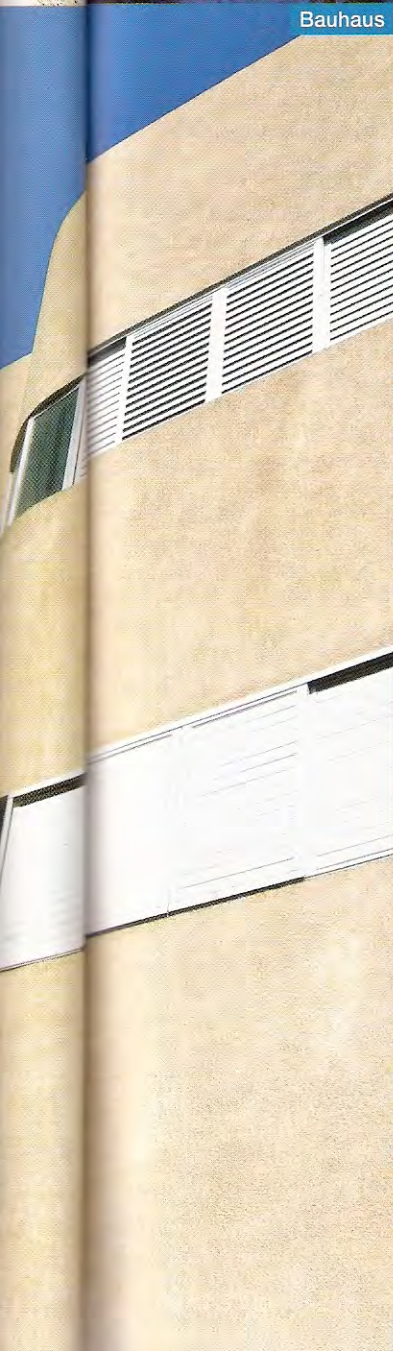
Old Jaffa

Photos by Gilad Kavalerechik, courtesy of the Association for Tourism Tel Aviv-Jaffa





View of Jaffa
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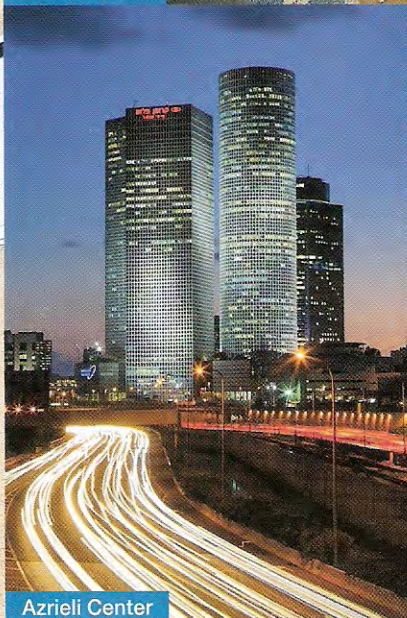


Bauhaus



The Flea Market

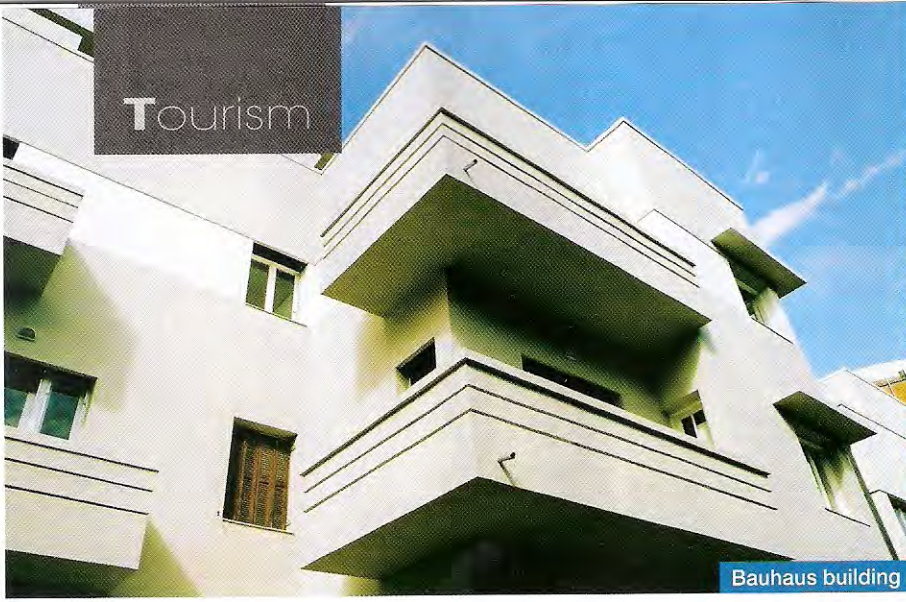
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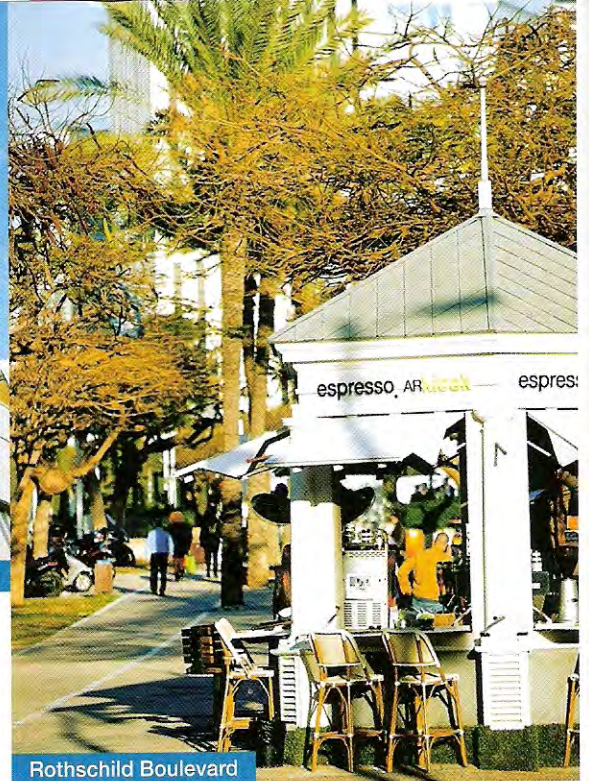
Azrieli Center



Neve Tzedek



Bauhaus building



Rothschild Boulevard

ENGLISH-SPEAKING VISITORS CAN BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH THE CITY BY JOINING ANY OF THE FOUR GUIDED ENGLISH-LANGUAGE WALKING TOURS CURRENTLY BEING OFFERED



Nahalat Binyamin

number of guided tours that cater to families. “Birds and Cherry” will appeal to both young and old as you are guided through Tel Aviv using children’s poetry written by national poet Chaim Nachman Bialik. “How a City is Born” takes you on a humorous journey that shows how the first Hebrew city was created, while “Andromeda and Abu Navot” shares stories of famous historical visitors.

The newest tour offerings

Of the more than 30 Hebrew-language tours being given, more than ten of them are brand new. These include “Saturday Morning, Beautiful Day,” which takes participants on a tour of Tel Aviv using the timeless songs of Israeli singer Arik Einstein as a guide; “Diary of a Single Woman in Tel Aviv,” showing the city through the eyes of its many singletons; and “Unbelievable and Untold,” sharing stories that came to life on the boulevards of the city. “Touring and Drawing in Jaffa” takes you through the streets and alleys of Old Jaffa, with stops in art galleries and the renovated port area before ending with an art workshop by the sea.

If you prefer a bit of drama in your tour, the Association for Tourism offers several new tours that should fit the bill. “Friends from Bialik Street” is a dramatized tour where colorful, quirky characters from 1930s-era Bialik Street tell their tales. You’ll meet Sonia, the bourgeois wife of the neighborhood doctor who loves culture and loves creature comforts. One day, Sonia meets a new friend in the café, and this is where the story of Bialik Street begins. Another such tour is “Gertrude in the Colony,” with stories about famous actors, houses that arrived on boats, neighborhood conflicts and more serving as the backdrop of this tour, as Gertrude leads you through the American-German Colony.

If sports and health are the topics that get your pulse racing, the Association for Tourism has something for you as well. From basketball to soccer, from stadiums to sports teams - “On Your Mark, Get Set, Go” guides you through the history of sports in Tel Aviv, and includes a visit to the Olympic Experience attraction.

For a taste of old Tel Aviv’s medical scene, “Be Healthy” entails a stroll along the paths once trodden by the many famous doctors who lived in Tel Aviv at the turn of the previous century. The tour is led by medical professionals, who regale you with stories of their legendary, long-gone colleagues.

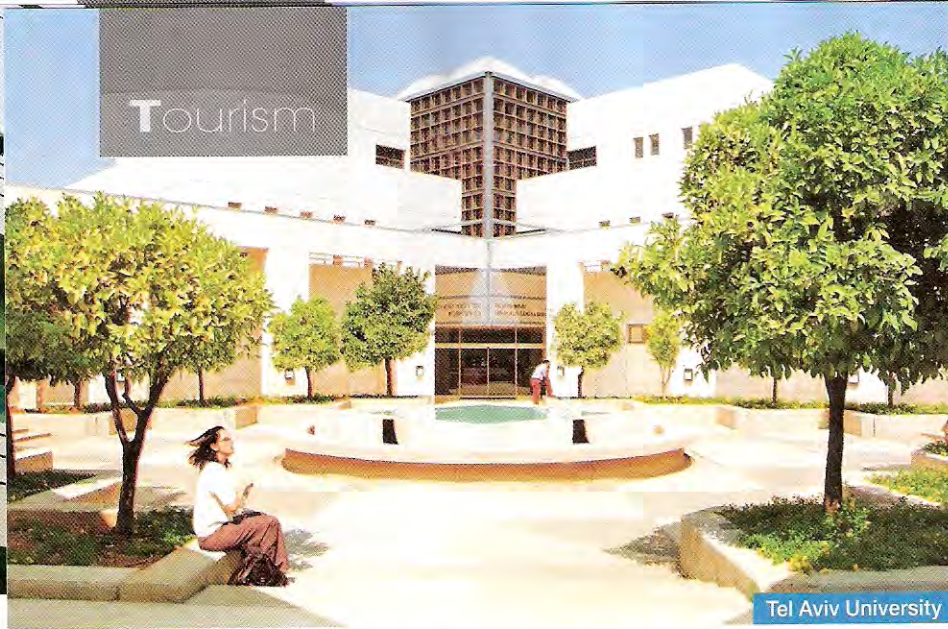
For foodies and kids too

No matter what the time of day, something is always happening in the city of Tel Aviv, and this includes guided tours. While most tours are given during the daytime, the Association for Tourism also offers a number of nighttime tours such as “Stories for the Late Night Hour” and “Night on Rothschild.” Says Refetov, “nightlife plays a significant role in Tel Aviv, and it was important for us to offer guided tours that reflect this.”

Whether you’re interested in architecture, sports, cinema, literature or food, the tourism association most likely runs a tour to tickle your fancy. There are tours of the Florentine, Neve Tzedek and Ajami neighborhoods (“Florentine Wakes Up,” “Magical Alleys in Neve Tzedek” and “Ajami - Three Religions One God,” respectively); cultural tours such as “Behind the Scenes at the Theater,” “Women Creating in Tel Aviv” (about the lives and loves of women such as Leah Goldberg) and “Tel Aviv in Film.”

There are also tours with a culinary theme, such as “Pass the Hummus - People and Food in Jaffa” (one of this year’s new offerings), the aforementioned “How Do You Like Your Espresso?” and “Taste and Color in South Tel Aviv,” which takes you through the alleys and food stalls of the Levinsky Market - and yes, tastings are definitely part of the experience.

For those of you with children in tow, there are a



Tel Aviv University

WITH THEMES COVERING SUCH WIDE-RANGING TOPICS AS "HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR ESPRESSO?", "THE BEAUTIFUL LIFE IN LITTLE TEL AVIV IN THE 1920'S" AND "COPS AND ROBBERS," THE ASSOCIATION FOR TOURISM HAS TOURS FOR EVERYONE



If you're hoping to get some exercise while visiting the city, the "Tel Aviv by Bicycle" tour is definitely for you. As you learn about the city's past and present, cycle from Tel Aviv's legendary Hayarkon Park down to Jaffa (via the Promenade), before making your way to Tel Aviv's fashionable Rothschild and Chen Boulevards. Bicycles and safety helmets can be rented at an additional cost. While all of the tours mentioned above are given in Hebrew, it is possible for groups to arrange tours in English and other languages by contacting the Association for Tourism in advance.

Guided tours in English

English-speaking visitors can become acquainted with the city by joining any of the four guided English-language walking tours regularly offered by the Association for Tourism. These tours - "Tel Aviv University - Art and Architecture," "Old Jaffa," "Bauhaus - The 'White City'" and "Tel Aviv by Night" - are all free of charge, and run for approximately two hours, rain or shine. There's no need to book in advance, though it is recommended for large groups to call ahead and coordinate with the tourism association.

If art and architecture are your thing, be sure to catch the "Tel Aviv University - Art and Architecture" tour. Learn about the campus's architecture - styles and international influences are introduced, as are stories about the environmental sculptures and landscape design. This tour leaves every Monday at 11:00, except for Jewish holidays and the last week of August.

A tour of "Old Jaffa" meets at the city's famous clock tower and winds through the flea market and a number of archeological and other historical sites. This tour is offered every Wednesday morning at 9:30.

If you're someone who loves the nightlife, "Tel Aviv by Night" is a tour in English that should not be missed. Tour guide and Tel Aviv native Doron Ozer provides explanations about the city's history, folklore and nocturnal habits, and shares insider secrets, including everything from typical Israeli nightspots to where to drink the best beer. As he leads participants around Rothschild Boulevard, Nahalat Binyamin and the heart of Tel Aviv, Ozer describes the city's beginnings and talks about how people felt at the time. Participants range in age from the young to the young at heart, and include tourists from abroad and new



Tel Aviv by night



immigrants who want to know the city better, as well as native Israelis. The nature of the tour tends to lend itself to a very social atmosphere, with participants often celebrating milestone events during the course of the tour. It's clear that Ozer loves his city. "I love the stories and the social scene. I love to show people my Tel Aviv," he beams.

The White City

In 2003, UNESCO designated the White City of Tel Aviv as one of its world heritage sites, and this was primarily due to the more than 4,000 Bauhaus - or International Style - buildings spread out across the city. In addition to the Hebrew-language "White Cube Houses" Bauhaus tour, the association also offers the "Bauhaus - The 'White City'" tour in English. Highlights of the tour include at least 20 different buildings, most of which were renovated in the 1980s.

According to Bauhaus tour guide Daniel Rosenblum, there are very specific laws regarding the renovation of Bauhaus structures. The facades of these buildings must maintain the Bauhaus style, and any changes made to the inside must not be seen from the outside. Prior to beginning the tour, Rosenblum provides a 20-minute explanation about the city, accompanied by pictures. He describes how Tel Aviv became a city and talks about its culture and economy. In his introduction to Bauhaus, he reviews the changes to local architecture during the 1920s and 1930s, and how these changes reflected the movement of architects between Israel and Europe.

The tour is very popular, and often has more than 50 participants. "People come to Tel Aviv especially for this tour," claims Rosenblum. "I know of one instance where tourists came from Jordan to participate in the tour. They'd heard about it from tourists who had been in Tel Aviv and decided to come check it out." Participants are all ages and come from all over the world. One thing that Rosenblum has noticed is that there are always participants from Germany. "I always find it interesting to see German tourists who choose to participate in the Bauhaus tour while visiting Israel," he muses. The Bauhaus tour begins on Shadal Street (behind the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange and across from Max Brenner), and is held every Saturday morning at 11:00, with the exception of Yom Kippur.

So how well do you really know Tel Aviv? Join a tour, and you'll be surprised by what you see and learn. ❖

Contact the Association for Tourism Tel Aviv-Jaffa at 03-5166188 or visit www.visit-tlv.com (English) and www.visit-tlv.co.il (Hebrew) for additional information about guided walking tours.