



# TEL EVERYONE

**C**OASTAL cities tend to have a cool attitude and Tel Aviv, right on the glittery Mediterranean Sea, is no exception. This laid-back, walkable metropolis has a breezy, beachy vibe that runs through just about everything, from the fashion, to the food, to the festivities.

Let's start with the food because the cuisine really is as sensational as everyone says. While fine dining is popular and there are over 400 vegan restaurants, the markets are the beating heart of the food scene. Book a tour with hyper-local guides Eager Tourist to taste the best of Carmel, the city's largest open-air market, and the largely pedestrian Shuk Levinsky.

Plying you with retro fizzy sodas known as gazoz made fresh daily at Cafe Levinsky 41, pickled hibiscus flowers stuffed with cheese from Yom Tov deli, and rich kubaneh from the Yemen Bakery, which dates back to the 1930s, you will not leave hungry.

The local café culture is strong here — as is the black coffee — so refuel at Caffe Tamati or Coffee Roasters in Noga Square.

For dinner head to the hip Herzl 16, with a leafy courtyard housing the first lift in Tel Aviv and killer shawarma with an Asian twist, or keep it casual with a bowl of impossibly creamy hummus — try Ali Karawan in Jaffa or Hummus Hakerem — or sabich, an Israeli-Iraqi street food sandwich with fried aubergine at local hotspot Sabich Tchernikhovski.

With so many impossible-to-resist things to eat, it's a good thing Tel Aviv is a walking city. There's a new light rail opening soon, but don't let that stop you from setting out on foot.

Gan Mesilla, the site of the former Jaffa-Jerusalem railway line, is now a pedestrian park similar to Manhattan's High Line. The area is also one of Tel Aviv's most fun after-dark spots, with Tender FM attracting locals and visitors with live music and epic pizza. Treasure-filled antiques, retro markets and funky design shops are the highlight of Jaffa, while the cobblestoned Neve Tzedek, the city's oldest nook, offers quiet reprieve.

The Unesco-listed White



A sun-splashed micro Mediterranean metropolis with a laid-back attitude, the so-called 'non-stop city' of Tel Aviv beats with beachy energy and cool charisma

BY NICOLE TRILIVAS

Historic: (Main) Tel Aviv and (right) the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

City is the place for architectural buffs with 1920s and 1930s modernist buildings. If you're a fan of Bauhaus, the chic new R48 on Rothschild Boulevard is the hotel for you. A temple for aesthetes with an if-you-know-you-know air, there are just 11 (massive) suites, immaculately dressed in modern art and stems of tuberose in hand-hewn clay vases.

Book dinner at the hotel's tasting-menu-only restaurant as soon as you can, as it's always packed, but save room for the tipples of rum and chocolate left at turn down in your room. While small, R48 has plenty of amenities including bikes, a surprisingly large gym, a dreamy rooftop pool, bedecked with pillar candles in hurricane glasses, retro tunes and urban landscaping of herbaceous perennials by Piet Oudolf, a rock star of the gardening world.

Of course, we can't forget about the sandy beaches, and Tel Aviv has 16 to the delight of surfers, swimmers and sun worshippers. The beachside promenade is also the site of the annual Pride Opening Parade, coming up in June.

If you're a beach lover, stay at the new David Kempinski, housed in a shining sky-

scraper over the Med and boasting plenty of polish, just-right service, and a fantastic restaurant Sereia by former Ritz-Carlton chef Mor Cohen, which serves sea-fresh fare and a traditional Shabbat buffet dinner on Fridays.

Spacious, blue-accented rooms come with sea views that will have you gasping aloud, and there are two pools — three if you count the private pool in the three-floor penthouse — and beach access.

Other reasons to stay here? Spa treatments start at 70 minutes and pristine grey-veined marble bathrooms are stocked with Molton Brown products. It's all deliciously soothing, flooded with bright light, and it might just be the best place in the city to watch the sun sink into the sea, with a glass of crisp chardonnay from the Yarden winery in the Golan Heights in hand.

If you're visiting Tel Aviv, a trip to the Holy City of Jerusalem is a must. Less than an hour away, depending on traffic, it makes for an easy addition. If you're only staying for a day or two, focus on the Old City, the atmospheric historical core where some of the world's holiest sites are almost literally piled atop



each other, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the site of the crucifixion and resurrection for Christians, still scarred with crusaders' graffiti); one of Judaism's most sacred sites, the Western Wall; and a masterpiece of Islamic architecture, the Dome of the Rock, where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven.

Outside of the Old City, the Tower of David Museum is reopening after an extensive renovation this June; and with the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Aleppo Codex — the earliest surviving Hebrew Bible, dating back to the 10th century — the Israel Museum is well worth a visit.

There's a state-of-the-art new VR exhibition that tells the story of the Codex, and don't miss the Dead Sea salt-encrusted sculptures by visionary Israeli artist Sigalit Landau, running 'til June 17.

Bed down at the chic-and-central Mamilla Hotel, a hide-design hideaway with exposed limestone walls and industrial architectural flourishes. Watch the sun set over the Ottoman-era city walls from the chic rooftop restaurant; fill up on crunchy salads and crumbly sweet halvah in the shaded breakfast courtyard; and recharge with a soak in the tub, scented with Bvlgari bath products, or a hammam in the spoiling Akasha Spa.

## TRAVEL FACTS

Fly Dublin to Tel Aviv with Virgin Atlantic (via London Heathrow) with return fares from €450 per person, virginatlantic.com. Book R48 via www.r48.co.il; The David Kempinski Tel Aviv via kempinski.com; and Mamilla Hotel via mamillahotel.com.