

# Haifa



Israel's third largest city and one of its prettiest, Haifa has a lot to offer visitors. It has the country's largest port, a particularly active beach and is the home of the World Center of the Bahai Faith. Surrounded by abundant nature sites, the city contains an interesting mix of modern neighborhoods and older districts; churches and mosques; mountain and sea.

Haifa is a multi-faceted city with several unique characteristics making it an attractive place to visit. Its proximity to the sea and its active port contribute to its prominence. The bustling port area draws merchants, shoppers and tourists. The beautiful beaches are popular for sports and recreation, and are filled with people during summer weekends. In addition, because of their excellent surfing conditions, the beaches serve many of Israel's top sailing enthusiasts and host sailing competitions and other sporting events.

Haifa's reputation for tolerance extends to the Bahai Faith whose World Center is located in the city. The Bahais originated in the Bab sect which separated from Iran's Shi'ite Islam in 1844. The Bahai World Center, an expansive and well-designed complex on the slope of the Carmel, is famous for its magnificent gardens. It includes the exquisitely landscaped "Hanging Gardens" which run about a kilometer along the Louis Promenade until Ha-Gefen Street. At the center is the impressive, gold-domed Shrine of the Bab, the burial place of the Bab, the founder of the faith. One can enjoy some enchanting spots while strolling through the beautiful gardens by day, but with the special lighting, an evening visit provides equal pleasure and a peaceful, romantic atmosphere

At the foot of the Bahai Gardens lies the picturesque German Colony, founded in the nineteenth century by German Templars who came to establish a Christian community in the Holy Land. The pretty stone houses lend charm and romance to the neighborhood and reflect its special qualities. Some of the houses have been preserved, and some still have the names of the original residents etched onto them. The German Colony attracts many visitors, and it is worth wandering through it to enjoy its beauty and get a sense of its colorful past. Those interested in experiencing the city by foot will enjoy one of the "Step Tours", four marked walking routes which begin on Yefe Nof (Panorama) Street and proceed down to the beach area.

Other options are nature routes which descend the mountain along one of the rivers – Ezov, Akhuza, Lotem and Si'akh. From the coast, one can go up the mountain via the cable car or the Carmelit, Israel's only subway (underground) which ends at the Carmel district. Here, one should visit Gan ha'Em ("Mother's Park") and walk along the Louis Promenade with its spectacular view of the city which hugs the sea. Haifa also boasts many institutions devoted to culture, art and science which offer an array of festivals and activities. Several types of museums are located in Haifa, including: the Dagon Grain Silo; the National Maritime Museum; the National Museum of Science and Technology; the Haifa Museum of Art; the Clandestine Immigration and Naval Museum; the Railway Museum; the Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art; the Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum; and the Israel Oil Industry Museum.