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 **GRIFFIX TRADIN**
Tel # (02) 83341794 / 092253386
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BACK TO NATURE IN PALAWAN

ULTIMATE LUXURY IN THE MALDIVES

THE BEST NIGHTMARKETS IN TAIPEI

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Michelle Barrera

Photographer
Tracey Heppner

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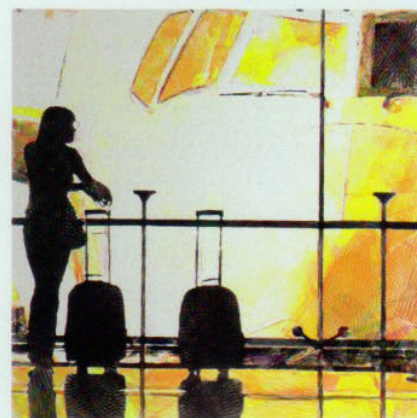
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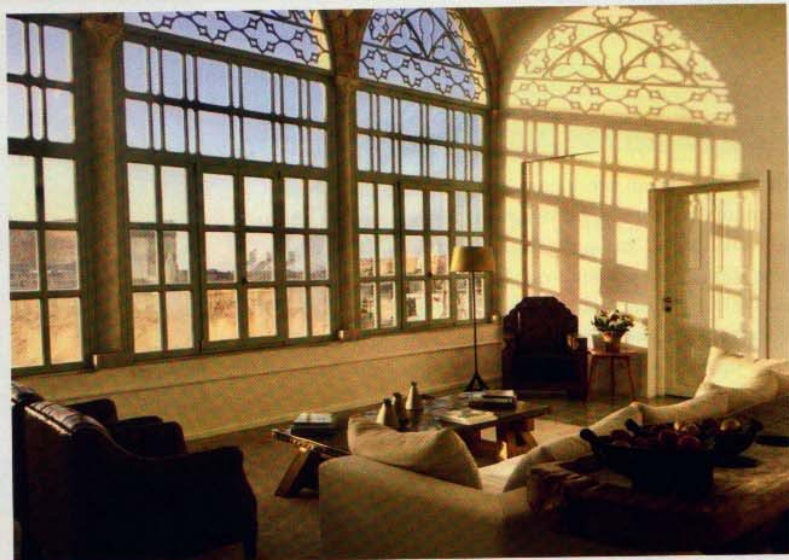


ISRAEL'S PERFECT DOZEN

MICHELLE BARRERA shortlists
Israel's off the (b)eaten track
restaurants and eateries

For a country rich in religious and historical roots, it's not surprising that Israel has also established itself as a top culinary destination. Cross-cultural influences weigh in on locally grown spices to create bursts of incredible flavors and diverse and colorful dishes worthy of a gastronomic adventure.

These are a few of our favorite culinary gems in the country – no flavors compromised.



BREAKFAST

Mamilla Hotel **Jerusalem**

This hotel lives up to its reputation of offering an elaborate and abundant breakfast spread amidst gallery-like surroundings. The bright dining room and courtyard is the perfect place to start the day. The hotel's unique cheese selection is memorable, but the shining star is the *rugelach*, a local chocolate and hazelnut pastry that's worth every calorie. mamillahotel.co.il

Villa Ba'Moshava **Jerusalem**

Tucked away in Jerusalem's German quarter, this small boutique hotel serves a grand breakfast spread of farm-fresh salads, freshly baked breads, a wide range of cold cuts, and eggs cooked to order. We loved the *shakshuka*, a spicy Middle Eastern version of scrambled eggs. brownhotels.com/moshava

The Efendi Hotel **Akko**

Owner-chef Uri Jeremias took a 500-year-old Ottoman mansion and renovated it into a luxury hotel considered among Israel's best, based on his work ethics and beliefs. The result is an immaculate hotel with a bright and elegant ambiance, and the most flavorful breakfast spread yet. Our server ushered us to a long breakfast table shared with other hotel guests – this is part of the Efendi experience – as Chef Jonathan prepared dishes in an open kitchen. The star of the show was the most perfectly cooked shakshuka I've ever had. efendi-hotel.com

BRUNCH & LUNCH

Satya

Tel Aviv

This Asian-fusion restaurant serves healthy dishes that highlight the quality of Israel's fresh local produce. The lovely setting opens itself to late lunches and early evening cocktails as well. Their hefty main courses left me satisfied, and their unique vanilla ice cream served with tahini and honey is definitely worth saving a bit of space for. satya.co.il

Manta Ray

Tel Aviv

Located along Tel Aviv's seaside promenade, this stylish restaurant that resembles a giant beach hut is always full. It's a local favorite both for its unparalleled location and its delicious comfort food, Israel-style. It offers seafood dishes seasoned with local herbs and spices. Their mussel pot is especially delightful as an early lunch, as it can carry an active traveler through dinner. mantaray.co.il

Tel Aviv Port

This artsy foodie and shopping spot was only used as a port in the 1930s during the local rebellion against the British. Fresh produce is delivered to a clean and attractive market venue right next to the port, so it's fun to walk around and just sample everything. There are also stands that sell high-quality cold cuts, pastries, oils, and tahini products such as *halva*. For a sit-down meal, **Kitchen Market** (kitchen-market.co.il) on the second floor is an upscale eatery that serves contemporary dishes made with fresh ingredients from downstairs.





AFTERNOON SNACKS

Golden Falafel Balls

Akko

Walking around the food section of the Ottoman-era souk of Akko, we stumbled upon the Golden Balls Falafel Stall parked right outside a souvenir shop. This was the best food stop ever. The falafel balls were made fresh out of a portable wooden kitchen by the stall owner. We began with one falafel each and we were immediately blown away by its flavors and sauces. This is completely off the beaten track, but it's definitely not a stop to be missed. When in Akko, just head for the center of the souk and ask for directions. Everyone knows where to get the best falafel balls in town.

Machane Yehuda Market

Jerusalem

This famous market lives up to its reputation for being full of character and flavor. Its alleyways give way to local street art when stalls are closed; and its lively atmosphere encourages locals and tourists to explore, mingle, and bargain over spices – and then to end the visit at a local tea shop.

We've been here several times, and one of our favorite stops is a fruit juice stall run by a father and his sons. They make healing lotions, balms, and soaps that are effective on sore muscles and arthritic limbs. Every spice stall here also offers an array of spices and herbs that will leave you wide-eyed with wonder. Best of all, everything is available for tasting, and the mixes are so delicious and unique, you'll need another suitcase to bring them all home. en.machne.co.il



DINNER

Uri Buri Akko

Chef Uri Jeremias – fondly called Uri Buri by everyone in town – creates truly spectacular dishes made with fresh seafood. We were privileged to have a meal with Uri himself, and this counts as one of the most mind-blowing meals I've ever had. Every dish was prepared to perfection – each a magical combination on unlikely ingredients. My favorites include the salmon sashimi with wasabi sorbet; the aniseed and marzipan sorbet palate cleanser; the pulpo done brilliantly; and the *Kalafeh*. uriburi.co.il

Messa Tel Aviv

This modern restaurant offers a fusion of traditional Israeli and western dishes. Some of their standout dishes include a pea and soup with *shifka* (pepper) vinegar; bread chiffon with nuts and three dips – beetroot cream, olive oil balsamic, and lemon cream with *harissa*. The signature dishes of veal baklava and foie gras on waffle with valrhona white chocolate soup, offer a mix of sweet and savory. messa.rest.co.il



Oasis Tel Aviv

Californian immigrant Rima Olvera gained her culinary experiences by traveling around the world before she settled down in Israel 20 years ago. Her fusion dishes are inspired by the places she's seen; and the names of her dishes reflect those places of influence. Much like Uri Buri, her passion for food and excellence is evident in her open-plan kitchen, where one is able to witness the chefs work together in their own stations to deliver perfection in flavor, texture, and presentation.

Our favorites include the lobster tail with artichoke and marinated artichoke carpaccio; Paris CDG; gnocchetti with morels; matcha and jasmine foam cappuccino; strawberry carpaccio with cognac brûlée; and geranium ice cream (and gold flake). oasistlv.co.il



CHEF URI'S MANTRAS

1

The staff must be professional, not necessarily professionals.

2

Uri also doesn't believe in uniforms. He believes in freedom of expression and unity through differences.

3

Use the KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) mentality.

4

Don't complicate life.

5

Each dish is made from quality ingredients that need to be prepared to perfection, so that on their own, they are whole. Once they come together, they can form a marriage of flavors that make magic.

Blackout Nalaga'at Tel Aviv

Last but certainly not least, Blackout Nalaga'at takes guest on an incredibly moving journey through the senses. With our eyesight completely blocked, our other senses were heightened as we experienced completely unexpected flavors and texture. Using touch to feel around the plates and forcing ourselves to use our imagination to visualize turned out to be a unique privilege – and one that many take for granted. This restaurant taught us the importance of enjoying a most tasteful meal. In being blind, our eyes were opened. nalagaat.org.il

WHERE TO EAT IN JERUSALEM

THE EUCALYPTUS

Found in the Artist Quarter of the city, this kosher restaurant gives diners sunset views of the walls of Old Jerusalem from the balcony. Chef Moshe Basson's passion for biblical culture inspired him to serve a modern interpretation of ancient cuisine based on old recipes and using local herbs and spices. the-eucalyptus.com

MACHNEYUDA RESTAURANT

Machneyuda Restaurant is named after the famous Mahane Yehuda Market where the restaurant is found. The restaurant offers modern and flavorful Israeli dishes, served by a lively team of waitstaff who often break out with impromptu songs and dances. It's perpetually full, so book in advance if you wish to experience this special restaurant. machneyuda.co.il

TMOL SHILSHOM

Known only to student crowds, literary aficionados, and tourists with insider knowledge of the local hotspots, this bookshop and cafe is named after a novel by Nobel laureate S. Y. Agnon, a writer who propelled the Yiddish literary tradition onto the global cultural scene. The cozy restaurant is lined with stacked bookshelves, and visitors can enjoy eclectic dishes like Arabic stuffed pastries, and beet gnocchi filled with pistachios and cream in a Swiss chard sauce. tmol-shilshom.co.il

PASHA'S

Pasha's restaurant serves authentic Palestinian dishes such as the oven-baked *mansaf*, a Jordanian lamb dish cooked in fermented yogurt sauce served with rice and nuts; and *mussakhan*, a traditional chicken dish cooked with mixed spices, onions and pine nuts, served on a pile of taboon flat breads. shahwan.org



IN A NUTSHELL

Whether it's a night out with friends, an afternoon coffee date, or a fancy dining escapade, Israel has something special to offer. Michelin-star quality dishes served in comfortable settings allow ease, comfort, and friendly interactions I've come to know Israel for, without fine dining stiffness. There is a push towards healthy eating due to the availability of fresh local produce; and light dishes over excessively rich ones make meals comfortably satisfy without overdoing it.

So, next time you find yourself in Israel, close your eyes, open your senses, and take a walk off the beaten track to see what tasty surprises are just around the bend or in front of you. ■



Special thanks to Israel Ministry of Tourism.



Israel is a major destination for its historical, religious, and archeological sites. It also offers diverse destinations because of its unique geography. Tiberius is an ancient city with a sprawling beachfront, as well as hot springs with healing properties. Akko is a fortress town that traces its origins back to the time of the crusaders. Jaffa is a seaside city that is quickly becoming a mecca for indie fashion, quirky cafes, and gourmet food with a twist.

WHEN TO GO

Spring and autumn are the best seasons to visit, when the weather is pleasantly cool and mild.

WHERE TO STAY

JERUSALEM

Luxury

MAMILLA HOTEL

This five-star deluxe hotel is located in the heart of Jerusalem, amidst the city's most historic neighborhoods and bustling city life. Designed by world-renowned architects, Moshe Safdie and Piero Lissoni, it offers contemporary comfort along with distinctive furnishings. mamillahotel.com

WALDORF ASTORIA JERUSALEM

Within walking distance of the Old City and the Jaffa Gate, this hotel is a wonderful mixture of architecture styles. The result is a fascinating space beyond the hotel's beautifully preserved 80-year old facade. waldorfastoria3.hilton.com

Value

VILLA BA'MOSHAVA

This boutique hotel is housed in a charming historic mansion in the center of the German colony, slightly away from the main tourist and pilgrimage routes. With its old-fashioned interiors and warm service, it gives travelers an authentic feel of Jerusalem. brownhotels.com/moshava



AKKO

THE EFENDI HOTEL

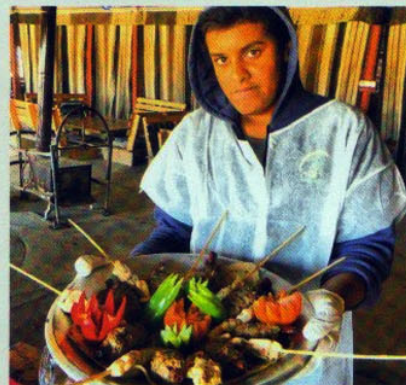
Two houses with over 500 years of history were reconstructed to form an intimate luxury hotel with rooms facing the sea, the ancient city of Akko, or Western Galilee's scenic mountains. efendi-hotel.co.il

TIBERIUS

SCOTS HOTEL

The Scots Hotel was a hospital in the 19th century built by Scottish surgeon David Watt Torrance. It has 50 modern rooms, but travelers can also opt to stay in one of the 16 antique rooms carved out of basalt rock, found in the hotel's two original buildings. scotshotels.co.il

WHAT TO DO OFF THE TOURIST TRACK



1 Scuba dive in the Red Sea

Go to Eilat and dive into an underwater world of colorful coral reefs and bustling marine life.

2 Soak in the Tiberius Hot Springs

These mineral-rich waters have been soothing the body and reducing ailments and pains, for almost 3,000 years.

3 Live like a Bedouin

Learn about tribal traditions and culture by living like a desert nomad.

4 Walking tour of the Old City and Souk of Akko

The walled port-city of Akko has citadels, mosques, and baths. Drop by the souk in the old city for fresh produce, flavorful spices, and unique souvenirs. Make sure to visit the Ottoman-era bathhouse in Old Akko, built in 1795 on the ruins of an older bath and transformed into a museum in 1945.

WIDEN YOUR
WORLD

TURKISH
AIRLINES 

Turkish Airlines flies daily to Tel Aviv from Southeast Asia.