



See the Sights

Three Perfect  
Days

# Haifa

Gardens, graffiti, & group art  
/ Jennifer Greenberg

Haifa doesn't always get the best rep, which is surprising seeing as the Northern city is home to Israel's most underrated museum, the Downtown area is teeming with cozy cafés, and Masada Street is giving Florentine a run for its money. The City of Coexistence is much more than the "monotonous," "industrial," "purely academic" port town it is unfairly accused of being. Well worth a three day stopover from Tel Aviv, here's how to do it right





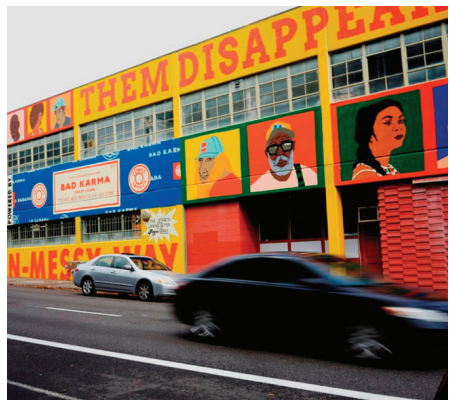
# Day 1

## Rest(aurants) & Relaxation

**Getting there:** The most direct route to central Haifa from Tel Aviv is by train. Head straight to Tel Aviv's Savidor Station and hop on any of the frequent trains heading north for a quick hour-long scenic ride along the coast.

**NOTE:** If you're not a fan of sitting along the aisles, avoid taking the Friday morning trains, packed to the brim with soldiers on their way home for the weekend. I suggest taking an early afternoon ticket, settling down, and getting an early night's sleep before an action-packed day in Haifa.

**Where to stay:** When in Haifa, do as the slightly-less clueless tourists do. Avoid the alluring Germany Colony tourist traps settled at the bottom of the Baha'i Gardens and check into the Bay Club Hotel instead. The charming, neo-baroque style accommodation is part of the well-known Atlas Boutique Hotel chain and is just about a 10-15 minute walk from everything: restaurants, Downtown nightlife, the gardens, museums, Masada Street...even the Germany Colony



**Here's a tip! Clear your 5 à 7 schedule as the hotel offers a lovely, free happy hour from 17:30 to 20:00, rife with drinkable wine (it gets better by the glass, and best after a bottle), and some nibble-worthy snacks to match. Don't fill up on carbs though, as dinner awaits you at the foot of the hill.**

if you're still itching to swing by (just to say that you did). Explore the Downtown area, and if you've got a minute, be sure to check out the impressive mural by Haifa's famed kings of street art, Broken Fingaz Crew, and the ever-so-talented calligrapher, Ahmad Zoabi. **Who needs Tel Aviv's overpriced brasseries?** Scattered by the

Port are a host of quaint cafés, pubs masked as "Irish," and unassuming restaurants. So which do you choose? Easy. Slip past PLMR café (a great afternoon spot to people watch, read a book cover-to-cover, or finish that memoir of yours), and duck inside Venya Bistro. This humble bistro pairs a family-style feel with surprisingly upscale cuisine that never fails to disappoint. The mixed forest mushrooms atop Jerusalem artichoke cream are little buttons of buttery bliss, while the mango shrimp with shallots, basil, chili, and lime remind diners just how necessary seafood is in the Port City. While Tel Aviv stole the "Cocktail Capital of the Middle East" title, Venya makes a surprisingly clean and authentic Moscow Mule, plus their pistachio sorbet wedged between two melt-in-your-mouth chocolate chip cookies is the perfect way to cleanse the palate and finish the evening before heading back to the hotel for some shut-eye.



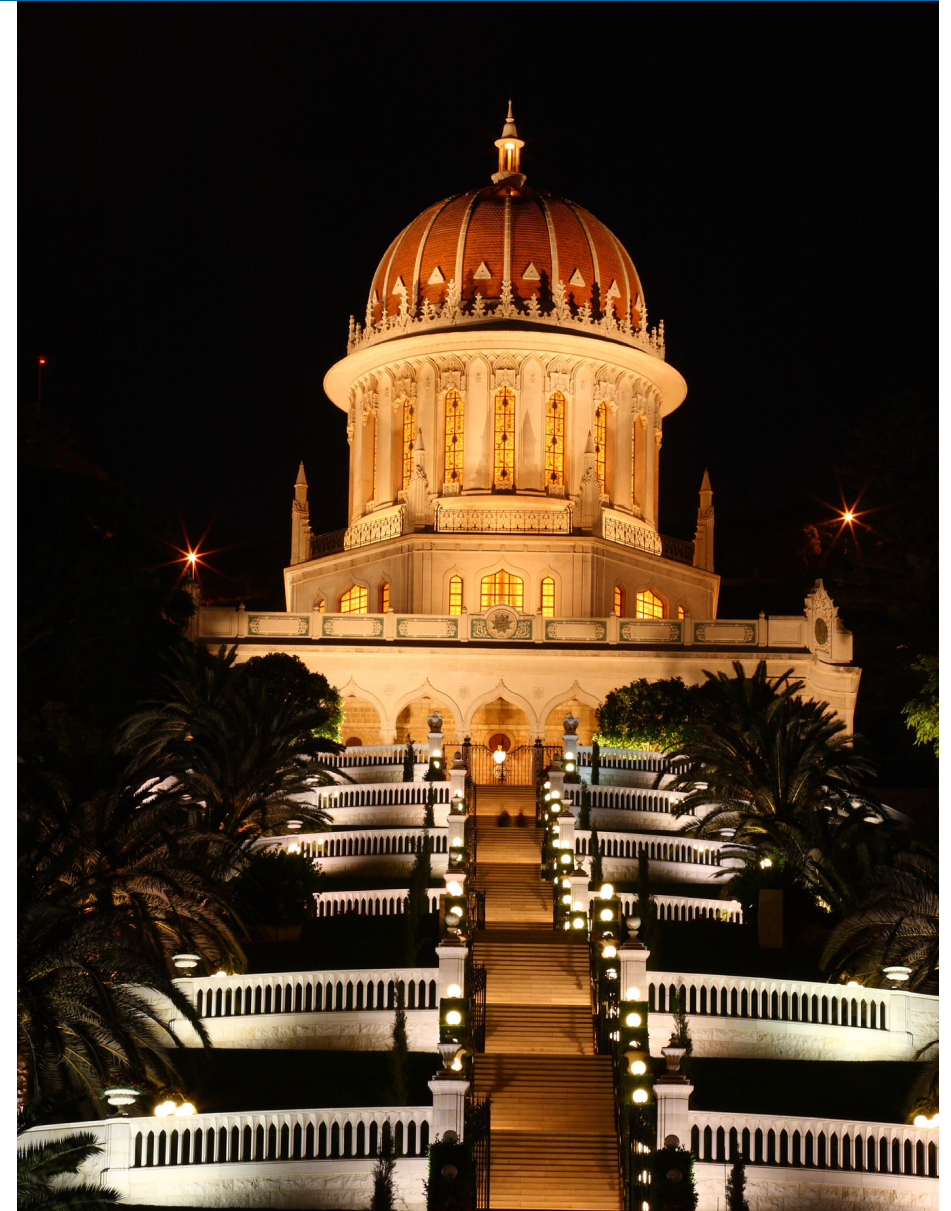
# Day 2

## Mountains, Museums, Masada Street

**Take advantage of the Bay Club's breakfast** as you'll need your energy for a culture-crazed day. An impressive three-tiered platter of flaky pastries, fresh-baked bread, halva, fruit, yogurt, coffee, tea, and an array of fresh salads all await you in the hotel's basement sun-room.

**Stairway to Haifa** - First up: the Baha'i Gardens. While bussing or taking a taxi to the top of the this major tourist attraction is the simplest way to commute, if you're full, fit, and eager for the "scenic route," I'd recommend getting there the old fashioned way – by foot. Weaving up the winding Mount Carmel roads and stairways provides a glimpse into the local life as you maneuver past houses, stray cats, schools, Madatech (The Israel National Museum of Science, Technology, and Space), and of course, more stray cats. Take a moment between flights to turn back and capture mental – or literal – snapshots of the panoramic views of the Port (and to catch your breath, of course).

**"Made in Japan"** - You didn't hike all the way to the summit of the Baha'i Gardens to immediately turn around and hike all the way back down. Hiding behind the Louis Promenade is a tiny museum – more like a gallery – housing Japanese memorabilia, founded by Holocaust survivor Felix Tikotin, whose collection of Japanese artifacts were hidden during the Second World War and recovered afterwards. **Stick it to the Man(é Katz)** - If you've still got some time on your hands before the 12:00 ENGLISH tour of



**Calling all art addicts: Before purchasing your exclusive Tikotin ticket, make sure to inquire about Haifa's combined museum ticket, which grants access to the city's top museums – perfect for both culture buffs and the culture curious.**

the Baha'i Gardens (keep in mind that access to the Temple ends at noon, so if you're itching to sneak a peek inside their main place of worship, factor this in ahead of time), then duck inside the Mané-Katz Museum. Overlooking the Bay of Haifa, this Museum was once home to expressionist painter, Emmanuel Katz, and now houses temporary exhibitions.

**Haifa's gone hipster** - After the fifty-minute tour, resist the urge to continue down the hill to the enticing Templar buildings for an overpriced, under-salted meal; instead, veer off towards Masada Street for ►►



authentic Arabic café fare. The newly-established hipster lane boasts funky poster-plastered bars, cafés, and even a record store. Find a place inside – or outside – the Elika Art Café and order from an impressive list of loaded laffa, filled with everything from labneh, tomatoes, olive oil, and za'atar, to eggplant, tahina, and hard-boiled egg. **Not your average Carmel Market knafeh** - Don't leave before ordering a whopping portion of the Elika Café knafeh. The cheese pastry soaked in a sugary syrup is often found in abundance at any Middle Eastern shuk, easily identifiable by its traffic cone orange topping and overly dense creamy filling that leaves you nauseous and in dire need of a nap. Elika's knafeh, on the other hand, is the real deal: despite its impressive size and pistachio-dusted presentation, it is unusually light and not too sickeningly sweet – a perfect dessert to share over a cup of mint tea and some competitive rounds of shesh besh (backgammon for you Americans and Brits) to pass the afternoon while resting those feet. **Get your beer buzz on** - Wine, check. Cocktails, check. Now it's time for the



**CAUTION: CLOSURE!** Most of Haifa's museums remain open until 19:00 or 20:00 on Thursdays, which also means that they sleep in a little later in preparation. If you don't want to hike back up the mountain, but are eager to catch the latest exhibit at the Mané-Katz Museum, make sure to get your "art on" any other day of the week.

casual man's bubbly: beer. Located in Haifa's hip Lower City, LiBira Brewpub features an array of craft brews, including a German-style lager, a full-bodied smoked stout, and even seasonal 'guests.' Their unpasteurized, unfiltered beers aren't the only reason to frequent Haifa's first microbrewery, though. LiBira's relaxed, industrial atmosphere is paired with equally comforting food. To start, grab a pint and line your

stomachs with little tapas-like dishes, such as the roasted cauliflower on a pillowy cloud of sweet creamy heaven, the mini beer-bread muffin with hand-whipped anchovy butter, and the classic companion to any brew: wings. Continue the meal with one of LiBira's juicy burgers loaded with creative combinations like lamb bacon, Emmenthal, chimichurri, and a beer-battered onion ring. **Roll up the hill.** Take a power shower, climb into bed, and drift off to sleep, drooling – whoops, I mean dreaming – of burgers and beer.



## Day 3

### A Fine (Arts) Farewells

Rise and shine everybody because we've saved the best for last and ample time to enjoy it:

**The most marvelous museum in all the land** - Sure, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art hosts well-known names and international talent. And, yes, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem has the Jewish artifact thing down pat. But, objectively (or slightly subjectively as someone who has seen the likes – and dislikes – of museums all over this country and beyond), the most interesting museum in all of Israel is, by far, The Haifa Museum of Art. *So what's so special about it?* I'm sure you're wondering skeptically. Unlike its cousins, this museum does something truly unique in that its bi-annual exhibitions are set up as a cluster. In other words, the entire museum transforms into one single exhibit that hosts several local and international solo exhibits, group exhibitions, and pieces from the museum's permanent collection under one thematic umbrella. Every half-year the museum magically transforms into an entire story, from the entrance to the very top floor, even the hallways, stairwells, and every space in between – with a narrative arc, chapters, and notes hidden inside the margins – thanks to its dedicated curators.

**On the road again** - You've seen the sights, savored the bites, it's time to catch the train back to Tel Aviv. And as you get swept up in the nonstop city's nightlife, galleries, and fast-paced lifestyle, remind yourself that less than an hour away, your Haifa haven is waiting for you – anytime, any day, any season. ➔

