

## FINANCIAL TIMES

How To Spend It In... Tel Aviv

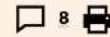
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**'In Tel Aviv people live life at 100 per cent'**

French architect and designer Charles Zana shares his favourite haunts in the city of Bauhaus



Interview by **Christina Ohly Evans**. Photography by Michal Chelbin 6 HOURS AGO



Tel Aviv is a magical city. Your first time there is usually a shock. It is a modern city in an old world, chaotic but fun. The art and architecture, the food and the hospitality are all world-class, but everything is on a smaller scale, which I have come to appreciate more and more.

As a child, I used to go to Jerusalem more than Tel Aviv. Then, towards the end of my studies at the Beaux-Arts in Paris, I got the opportunity to work with an Israeli architect in Tel Aviv named Mordechai Ben Chorin with whom I got to discover the city, its endless streets and secret corners. I now travel there about six times a year to work, create and relax. I have drawn several pieces for my furniture collections here and I've had many projects in Tel Aviv over these past years, mostly private [homes](#).



Architect and designer Charles Zana at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art © Michal Chelbin



The Bauhaus Center, Tel Aviv © Michal Chelbin

Tel Aviv is known as the White City because of its Bauhaus-inspired white concrete and steel buildings. Many of the great Bauhaus architects, including Arie Sharon and Shlomo Bernstein, fled the Nazis in the '30s and landed here; the Bauhaus quarter – where many of these buildings are concentrated – was named a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2003 and it's one of the largest collections of this architectural style anywhere in the world. The best place to find books and gifts on the subject is at the shop in [The Bauhaus Center](#).



Zana in the alleys of Old Jaffa © Michal Chelbin

My favourite part of Tel Aviv is Old Jaffa, which faces the water and is a very happening part of the city. There are plenty of craft markets, antique shops and [galleries](#), but the area is really known for its massive flea market where you'll find everything from vintage clothing to furniture, and which is open every day but Saturday.





Old Jaffa Port © Alamy



A bedroom at Soho House Tel Aviv, set in a former convent © Sivan Askayo

Food is so central to everything. [HaBasta](#), with its Lebanese influence and casual feel, is my favourite restaurant for uncomplicated food and presentation. The menus are written on the wall because chef Elon Amir changes them daily, and the place inspires me to simplify. The same people have just opened an excellent shawarma place called [Mifgash Rambam](#). You'll find a similar sense of effortlessness at [Soho House](#), where you can have a delicious dinner and nothing is ever too chi-chi – they just get it right. If you want to eat on the beach then [Cassis Yaffo](#) is the place for crispy artichokes and grilled fish in an airy, modern setting.



The pool at The Norman hotel



A bedroom at Hotel Montefiore © Sivan Askayo

Another special aspect of Tel Aviv is the kiosks. These little street cafés sell everything from coffee to croissants to ice cream and are open all year round. Rothschild Boulevard is known for them, and also for its eclectic style architecture, which is an early-20th-century mix of Turkish and European elements. It's a great place also to people-watch or to walk along a shady *allée* of ficus and poinciana trees. Stay at the 12-room [Hotel Montefiore](#) in the area, or [The Norman](#), which is slightly larger but still has a personal feel and is housed in a former mansion with '20s-style architecture.





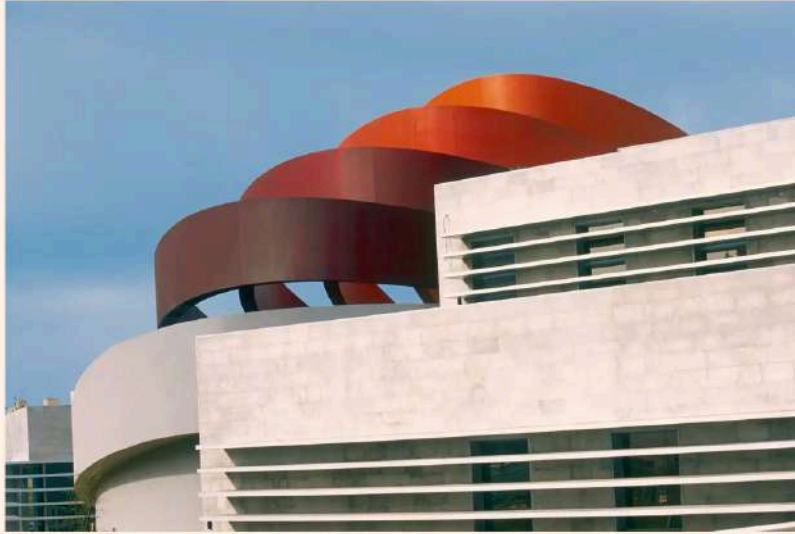
Zana at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art's sculpture garden © Michal Chelbin

The arts are thriving in Tel Aviv at the moment, with the [Suzanne Dellal Centre for Dance and Theatre](#) a hub for all kinds of creativity – the world-class Batsheva Dance Company performs there and the [Tel Aviv Museum of Art](#) is also wonderful, with both old and new collections. After a viewing, I usually get something to eat in the museum's restaurant, [Pastel](#), which overlooks the sculpture garden.

It's worth a trip to the northern part of the city to visit the [Dvir Gallery](#), dedicated to cutting-edge contemporary Israeli artists, and also to the [Design Museum Holon](#), just 10km outside town. It's a sculptural design museum by architect Ron Arad and a fantastic addition to the area – both inside and out.

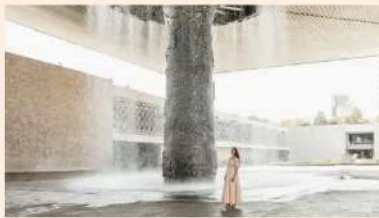


The Orchard at Suzanne Dellal Centre © Harel Gilboa



The Design Museum Holon, designed by Ron Arad © Yael Pincus

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Tel Aviv is a city that never sleeps; there is an energy from its history, a survival energy. People really live life here at 100 per cent and the mix of western and Middle Eastern culture is quite unlike anywhere else in the world. Sometimes you don't know where you are – it's a world in between.

*Charles Zana Mobilier is on view at PAD London, 10 to 16 October;*