Ashdod

Ashdod (Hebrew : ?????????? (audio) ; Arabic : ????? , ????? Isdud) is the sixth @-@ largest city in Israel , located in the Southern District of the country , on the Mediterranean coast where it is situated between Tel Aviv to the north (32 kilometres (20 miles) away) and Ashkelon to the south (20 km (12 mi) away) . Jerusalem is 53 km (33 mi) to the east .

Ashdod is Israel 's largest port , accounting for 60 % of the country 's imported goods . The city is also an important regional industrial center .

Modern Ashdod covers the territory of two ancient twin towns , one inland and one on the coast , which were for most of their history two separate entities , connected though by close ties with each other . This article is dealing with both these historic towns and other ancient sites now located within the territory of modern Ashdod .

The first documented urban settlement at Ashdod dates to the Canaanite culture of the 17th century BCE , making the city one of the oldest in the world . Ashdod is mentioned 13 times in the Bible . During its pre @-@ 1956 history the city was settled by Philistines , Israelites , colonists coming in the wake of Alexander 's conquests , Romans and Byzantines , Arabs , Crusaders , and Ottoman Turks .

Modern Ashdod was established in 1956 on the sand hills near the site of the ancient town , and incorporated as a city in 1968 , with a land @-@ area of approximately 60 square kilometres (23 sq mi) . Being a planned city , expansion followed a main development plan , which facilitated traffic and prevented air pollution in the residential areas , despite population growth . According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics , Ashdod had a population of 217 @,@ 959 in 2014 , with an area of 47 @,@ 242 dunams (47 @.@ 242 km2 ; 18 @.@ 240 sq mi) .

History

Stone Age

Three stone tools dating from the Neolithic era were discovered , but no other evidence of a Stone Age settlement in Ashdod was found , suggesting that the tools were deposited here in a later period .

Bronze and Iron Ages

The site of Ashdod in the Bronze Age and Iron Ages was at a tell just south of the modern city . It was excavated by archaeologists in nine seasons between 1962 and 1972 . The effort was led during the first few years by David Noel Freedman of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and Moshe Dothan . The remaining seasons were headed by Dothan for the Israel Antiquities Authority .

The earliest major habitation in Ashdod dates to the 17th century BCE , when the acropolis of the tell was fortified . Ashdod is first mentioned in written documents from Late Bronze Age Ugarit , which indicate that the city was a center of export for dyed woolen purple fabric and garments . At the end of the 13th century BCE the Sea Peoples conquered and destroyed Ashdod . By the beginning of the 12th century BCE , the Philistines , generally thought to have been one of the Sea Peoples , ruled the city . During their reign , the city prospered and was a member of the Philistine Pentapolis , which included Ashkelon and Gaza on the coast and Ekron and Gath farther inland , in addition to Ashdod .

In 950 BCE Ashdod was destroyed during Pharaoh Siamun 's conquest of the region . The city was not rebuilt until at least 815 BCE .

Asdûdu led the revolt of Philistines , Judeans , Edomites , and Moabites against Assyria after expulsion of king Ahimiti , whom Sargon had installed instead of his brother Azuri . Gath (Gimtu) belonged to the kingdom of Ashdod at that time . Assyrian king Sargon II 's commander @-@ in

@-@ chief (turtanu) , whom the King James Bible calls simply " Tartan " , Isaiah 20 : 1 regained control of Ashdod in 712 / 711 BCE and forced the usurper Yamani to flee . Sargon 's general destroyed the city and exiled its residents , including some Israelites who were subsequently settled in Media and Elam .

Mitinti was king at the time of Sargon 's son Sennacherib (r . 705 ? 681 BCE) , and Akhimilki in the reign of Sennacherib 's son Esarhaddon (r . 681 ? 669 BCE) .

Psamtik I of Egypt (r . 664 ? 610 BCE) is reported to have besieged the great city Azotus for twenty @-@ nine years (Herodotus , ii . 157) ; the biblical references to the remnant of Ashdod (Jeremiah 25 : 20 ; cf Zephaniah 2 : 4) are interpreted as allusions to this event .

The city absorbed another blow in 605 BCE , when Nebuchadnezzar conquered it .

In 539 BCE the city was rebuilt by the Persians . In 332 BCE it was conquered in the wars of Alexander the Great .

In the Book of Nehemiah , the Ashdodites seem to represent the whole nation of the Philistines in the sixth century BCE , the speech of Ashdod (which half of the children from mixed families are described as adopting) would simply be the general Philistine dialect . Hugo Winckler explains the use of that name by the fact that Ashdod was the nearest of the Philistine cities to Jerusalem .

= = = In the Hebrew Bible = = =

There are Biblical episodes referencing Ashdod but they remain uncorroborated by archaeological finds :

Upon Joshua 's conquest of the Promised Land , Ashdod was allotted to the Tribe of Judah (Book of Joshua 15 : 46) .

In I Samuel 6 : 17 Ashdod is mentioned among the principal Philistine cities . After capturing the Ark of the covenant from the Israelites , the Philistines took it to Ashdod and placed it in the temple of Dagon . The next morning Dagon was found prostrate before the Ark ; on being restored to his place , he was on the following morning again found prostrate and broken . The people of Ashdod were smitten with boils ; a plague of mice was sent over the land (1 Samuel 6 : 5) .

According to the Bible , during the 10th century BCE Ashdod became , along with all the kingdom of Philistia , a patronage area of the Kingdom of Israel under the control of King David .

The capture of the city by King Uzziah of Judah shortly after 815 BCE is mentioned within 2 Chronicles (26 : 6) and in the Book of Zechariah (9 : 6) , speaking of the false Jews .

In the Book of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 13 : 23 ? 24) , some 5th century BCE residents of Jerusalem are said to have married women from Ashdod , and half of the children of these unions were reportedly unable to understand Hebrew ; instead , they spoke " the language of Ashdod " .

= = = Hellenistic period = = =

Once Hellenised , the city changed its name to the more Greek @-@ sounding ?zotus (Greek : ??????) and prospered until the Hasmonean Revolt . During the rebellion Judas Maccabeus " took it , and laid it waste " (Antiquities of the Jews Book 12 , 8 : 6) His brother Jonathan conquered it again in 147 BCE and destroyed the temple of Dagon of biblical fame (Antiquities Book 13 , 4 : 4 ; 1 Samuel 5 : 1 @-@ 5) . During the rule of Alexander Jannæus , Ashdod was part of his territory (Antiquities Book 13 , 15 : 4) .

= = = Roman and Byzantine periods = = =

After the destruction wreaked during the succession wars between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II , Pompey restored the independence of Azotus , as he did with all Hellenising coastal cities (Antiquities Book 14 , 4 : 4) . A few years later , in 55 BCE , after more fighting , Roman general Gabinius helped rebuild Ashdod and several other cities left without protective walls (Antiquities Book 14 , 5 : 2) . In 30 BCE Ashdod came under the rule of King Herod , who then bequeathed it to his sister Salome (Antiquities Book 17 , 8 : 1) . By the time of the First Jewish ? Roman War (66

@-@ 70) , there must have been a large enough Jewish presence in Ashdod for Vespasian to feel compelled to place a garrison in the city .

Despite its location four miles (6 km) from the coast , Ptolemy (c . 90 ? c . 168 CE) described it as a maritime city , as did Josephus in Antiquities Book 13 , 15 : 4 . The same Josephus though describes Ashdod as " in the inland parts " (Antiquities Book 14 , 4 : 4) . This curious contradiction may refer to Ashdod 's control of a separate harbor , called Azotus Paralios , or Ashdod @-@ on @-@ the @-@ Sea (???????? - " paralios " , Greek for " on the coast ") . The landlocked city was called by the Romans Hippinos , " of the horsemen " , and by the Greeks until late in the medieval period , Azotus mesogaios or " inland Azotus " .

During the Byzantine period , the port city overshadowed its inland counterpart in size and importance . The 6th @-@ century Madaba Map is showing both under their respective names .

=== In the New Testament ===

The 1st century AD Book of Acts refers to Azotus as the place in which Philip the Evangelist reappeared after he converted the Ethiopian eunuch to Christianity . Philip preached the gospel throughout the area until he reached Caesarea , about 90 km to the north .

=== Early Muslim period ===

The prominence of Hellenised , then Christian Azotus continued until the 7th century , when it came under Muslim rule .

A coastal fort was erected by the Umayyad Caliph Abd al @-@ Malik , the builder of the Dome of the Rock , at or near the former Azotus Paralios , which was later reconstructed by the Fatimids and Crusaders .

The medieval Arabic name of the port town was Mahuz Azdud , " harbour of Azdud " , a very interesting combination between the by then already ancient Aramaic word for harbour , mahuz , and " Azdud " , a return to a form much closer to the old Semitic name " Ashdod " .

The geographer Ibn Khordadbeh (c . 820 ? 912) referred to the inland city as " Azdud " and described it as a postal station between al @-@ Ramla and Gaza .

=== Crusader period ===

Documents from the Crusader period indicate that Ashdod belonged to the lordship of Ramla , and it appears probable that in 1169 the old Arab sea fort was given by Hugh , lord of Ramla , to his knight Nicolas de Beroard . From this period the fort is known as Castellum Beroart .

=== Ayyubid and Mamluk periods ===

The port stops being mentioned during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods , making it likely that it was destroyed by the Muslims along with the other port cities , due to fears that they might again be used by Crusader invasions from the sea . With the destruction of the port city , its inland counterpart regains its importance .

=== Ottoman rule ===

The location of the village on Via Maris enhanced the city 's importance during the Ottoman rule . In 1596 CE , administrated by nahiya (" subdistrict ") of Gaza under the liwa ' (" district ") of Gaza , the population of Ashdod numbered about 413 . The villagers paid taxes on wheat , barley , sesame and fruit crops , as well as goats and beehives .

In the late nineteenth century , Isdud was described as a village spread across the eastern slope of a low hill , covered with gardens . A ruined khan stood southwest of the village . Its houses were one @-@ storey high with walls and enclosures built of adobe brick . There were two main sources of

water : a pond and a masonry well . Both were surrounded by groves of date @-@ palm and fig @-@ trees .

= = = British Mandate = = =

In the 1922 census of Palestine , conducted by the British Mandate authorities , Isdud had a population of 2 @,@ 566 ; 2 @,@ 555 Muslims and 11 Christians , where the Christians were all Catholics . The population increased in the 1931 census to 3 @,@ 240 ; 3 @,@ 238 Muslims and 2 Christians , in a total of 764 houses .
During the Mandatory period , Isdud had two elementary schools ; one for boys which was opened in 1922 , and one for girls which started in 1942 . By the mid @-@ 1940s the boy @-@ school had 371 students , while the girl @-@ school had 74 .
In 1945 Isdud had a population of 4 @,@ 620 Arabs and 290 Jews , with a total of 47 @,@ 871 dunams of land , according to an official land and population survey . Of this , 3 @,@ 277 dunams were used citrus and bananas , 8 @,@ 327 for plantations and irrigable land , 23 @,@ 762 for cereals , while 131 dunams were built @-@ up land .

= = = 1948 war = = =

The village of Isdud was occupied by the Egyptian army on May 29 , 1948 and became the Egyptians ' northernmost position during the 1948 Arab @-@ Israeli War . While the Israelis failed to capture territory , and suffered heavy casualties , Egypt changed its strategy from offensive to defensive , thus halting their advance northwards . Egyptian and Israeli forces clashed in the surrounding area , with the Egyptians being unable to hold the Ad Halom bridge over the Lachish River . Israeli forces surrounded the town during Operation Pleshet , and shelled and bombed it from the air . For three nights from 18 October the Israeli Air Force bombed Isdud and several other locations . Fearing encirclement , Egyptian forces retreated on October 28 , 1948 and the majority of the residents fled . The 300 townspeople who remained were driven southwards by the Israel Defense Forces .

= = = State of Israel = = =

In 1950 , the moshavim of Sde Uziyahu and Shtulim were established to the east of Isdud , and in 1949 and 1953 , Bnei Darom and Gan HaDarom were established north of Isdud . According to Khalidi , they were established on the village lands .
The modern city of Ashdod was founded in 1956 . On May 1 , 1956 , then finance minister Levi Eshkol approved the establishment of the city of Ashdod . " Ashdod Company Ltd . " , a daughter company of City @-@ Builders Company Ltd . , was created for that purpose by Oved Ben @-@ Ami and Philipp Klutznick . The first settlers , 22 families from Morocco , arrived in November 1956 , followed by a small influx of immigrants from Egypt . In July 1957 , the government granted a 24 square kilometres (9 square miles) , approximately 32 kilometres (20 mi) from Tel Aviv , to the Ashdod Company Ltd . , for building the modern city of Ashdod . The building of the Eshkol A power station in Ashdod was completed in 1958 and included 3 units : 2 units of 50 megawatt , and one unit of 45 megawatt (with sea water desalination capabilities) .
The first local council was appointed in October 1959 . Dov Gur was appointed the first local council head on behalf of the Israeli Ministry of Interior . The Magistrates ' Court in the city was inaugurated in 1963 . The building of the port of Ashdod began in April 1961 . The port was inaugurated in November 1963 , and was first utilized in November 1965 , with the coming of the Swedish ship " Wiengelgad " .
Large @-@ scale growth of the city began in 1991 , with the massive arrival of immigrants from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia and infrastructure development . From 1990 to 2001 the city accepted more than 100 @,@ 000 new inhabitants , a 150 % growth .
Ashdod was one of six cities that won the 2012 Education Prize awarded by the Israel Ministry of

Education .

Urban development

 The modern city of Ashdod city was built outside the historic settlement site , on virgin sands . The development followed a main development plan . The planners divided the city into seventeen neighborhoods of ten to fifteen thousand people . Wide avenues between the neighborhoods make traffic flow relatively freely inside the city . Each neighborhood has access to its own commercial center , urban park , and health and education infrastructure . The original plan also called for a business and administrative center , built in the mid @-@ 1990s , when the city population grew rapidly more than doubling in ten years .
 Three industrial zones were placed adjacent to the port in the northern part of the city , taking into account the prevailing southern winds which take air pollution away from the city . The plan had its problems , however , including asymmetric growth of upscale and poorer neighborhoods and the long @-@ time lack of a main business and administrative center .
 The city was planned for a maximum of 250 @,@ 000 inhabitants , and an additional area in the south was reserved for further development .
 In 2012 , a plan to build an industrial zone on part of the Ashdod Sand Dune was approved . The plan calls for a hi @-@ tech industrial park , events halls , and coffee shops to be built adjacent to the train station . It will cover 400 dunams (0 @.@ 4 km2 ; 0 @.@ 2 sq mi) , including 130 dunams of built @-@ up space , with the rest of the area being preserved as a nature reserve . In addition , the Port of Ashdod is undergoing a massive expansion program , and a private hospital will be built in the city .

Geography

 The Ashdod @-@ Nitzanim sand dune nature reserve is a 20 @-@ kilometer (12 @-@ mile) stretch of sand dunes on the southern outskirts of Ashdod .

Climate

 Ashdod has a Mediterranean climate with hot summers , pleasant spring and fall , and cool , rainy winters . As a seaside town , the humidity tends to be high many times year round , and rain occurs mainly from November to March . In winter , temperatures seldom drop below 5 ° C (41 ° F) and are more likely to be in the range of 10 ? 15 ° C (50 ? 59 ° F) , while in summer the average is 27 ° C (81 ° F) . The average annual rainfall is 510 mm (20 in) .

Economy

 Ashdod is one of the most important industrial centers in Israel . All industrial activities in the city are located in northern areas such as the port area , the northern industrial zone , and around the Lachish River . The port of Ashdod is the largest port in Israel , handling about 60 % of Israel 's port cargo . It was mainly upgraded in recent years and will be able to provide berths for Panamax ships . Various shipping companies offices are also located in the port area which also is home to an Eshkol A power station and coal terminal .
 The Northern industrial zone is located on Highway 41 and includes various industry including an oil refinery , which is one of only two in the country . The heavy industry zone located south of the Lachish River was once the main industrial center in Ashdod . Recently , however , leisure facilities have moved into the area . There is still some industry here , however , such as a Teva Pharmaceutical Industries plant , construction components producer Ashtrom , and Solbar a soybean oil producer . Ashdod is also home to Elta , a part of Israel Aircraft Industries where radar equipment , electronic warfare systems , and ELINT are developed .

= = Shopping , going out = =

Historically each neighborhood of Ashdod had its own commercial center . In 1990 , however , when the mall shopping culture developed in Israel , the main commercial activity in Ashdod moved to malls . The first mall to open in Ashdod was the Forum Center in the industrial zone . Restaurants , bars and night clubs were opened in the area . Today , the Forum center is mainly used for offices . Lev Ashdod Mall , which opened in 1993 , has been enlarged and upgraded since then . Ashdod Mall , billed at the time as the city 's largest shopping mall , has also been redesigned since its opening in 1995 . City Mall , Ashdod was opened in a combined building with the central bus station in 1996 , following the examples of the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station and the Jerusalem Central Bus Station . The Sea Mall , a three @-@ story mall near the government offices , has a climbing wall and movie theater . Star Center doubled in size in 2007 .

= = Education = =

In 2013 , Ashdod had 500 schools employing 3 @,@ 500 teachers . The student population was 55 @,@ 000 . The city 's education budget was NIS 418 million shekels .
Lycée français Guivat @-@ Washington , a French international high school , is in Givat Washington , in proximity to Ashdod .

= = Transportation = =

= = = Road = = =

Ashdod is located on the historic Via Maris . Highway 4 was developed following this route along the southern sea shore of Israel ; it serves as the main connection to the north , towards the Tel Aviv metropolitan area , and to the south , towards Ashkelon.Ad Halom junction was planned as the main entrance to the city from the east .
Ashdod Interchange was opened in 2009 . The interchange continues the freeway section of Highway 4 further south , by removing the traffic light at this junction , and also added grade separation with the railway . The other main road in the area is Highway 41 which served the city from the start of its modern history . This road runs from west to east towards Gedera and it is the main transport link to the port of Ashdod and the industrial zones , and connects to Highway 4 with an interchange .
In late 2012 , Ashdod won a NIS 220 million grant from the Israeli Transport Ministry to improve public transportation and decrease private car use . According to the municipality 's plans , a 20 @-@ kilometer ring of road arteries will be given priority in public transportation . These arteries will carry four bus rapid transit lines . In the city 's more crowded areas , such as Herzl Boulevard or the western part of Menachem Begin Boulevard , a public transportation lane will be paved in the center of the road . In other areas , the right @-@ hand lane will be reserved for public transportation . Buses will also be given priority at traffic lights ; electronic devices will allow a bus to signal its approach , causing the light to turn green . In addition , an electric @-@ powered bicycle rental network will be set up , and 22 kilometres (14 miles) of bicycle paths will be paved in the city .

= = = Train = = =

The passenger railway connection to Ashdod opened in 1992 after the renovation of the historical railway to Egypt . Ashdod railway station is on Israel Railways ' Binyamina / Netanya ? Tel Aviv ? Ashkelon line and it is located near Ad Halom Junction . The station was upgraded in 2003 when a new terminal building was built . The station building is modern , but proper road access to it was only organized on September 23 , 2008 , when a new road to the station was opened .
There is also heavy freight traffic in the area . Port of Ashdod has its own railway spur line as well

as a special terminal for potash brought from the Sodom area and exported abroad .

= = = Buses = = =

A new central bus station opened in 1996 . It serves as the terminus both for inter- and intracity lines . The central bus station is attached to the City Mall . Intercity bus lines connect the city with most population centers in central and southern Israel . Following is the list of bus companies serving routes at the central bus station :
The Egged Ta 'avura company has been operating urban buses in Ashdod since 2007 . In addition , a share taxi service exists in Ashdod , operated by Moniyot HaIr . Most share taxi lines coincide with intracity bus lines .

= = = Cruise ships and yachts = = =

There is a passenger pier in the Port of Ashdod . The traffic at this gateway is constantly growing , especially due to cruise ship activities . The other sea gateway is Blue Marina .

= = Demographics = =

According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics , Ashdod had a population of about 204 @,@ 400 at the end of 2006 , making it the fifth largest city in Israel . The annual population growth rate is 2 @.@ 6 % and the ratio of women to men is 1 @,@ 046 to 1 @,@ 000 . The population age distribution was recorded as 19 @.@ 7 % under the age of 10 , 15 @.@ 7 % from age 10 to 19 , 14 @.@ 9 % from 20 to 29 , 19 @.@ 1 % from 30 to 44 , 19 @.@ 1 % from 45 to 64 , and 11 @.@ 3 % were 65 or older . The population of Ashdod is significantly younger than the Israeli average because of the large number of young couples living in the city . The city is ranked medium @-@ low in socio @-@ economic grading , with a rating of 4 out of 10 . 56 @.@ 1 % of 12th grade students in Ashdod were eligible for matriculation certificates in 2000 . The average salary in 2000 was NIS 4 @,@ 821 compared to the national average of NIS 6 @,@ 835 .

= = = Immigrant absorption = = =

Ashdod has seen much of its growth as the result of absorption of immigrants . The first settlers were Jewish immigrants from Morocco and Egypt . In the 1960s Ashdod accepted a large number of immigrants from Romania , followed by a large number from Georgia (then part of the Soviet Union) in the 1970s . More than 60 @,@ 000 Russian Jews from the former Soviet Union who immigrated to Israel in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union settled in Ashdod . Recent demographic figures suggest that about 32 % of the city 's population are new immigrants , 85 % of whom are originally from the former Soviet Union . During the 1990s the city absorbed a large number of Beta Israel immigrants from Ethiopia , and in more recent years Ashdod absorbed a large number of immigrants from the United States , United Kingdom , France , Argentina , and South Africa . Many of the 60 @,@ 000 Marathi @-@ speaking Bene Israel from Maharashtra , India who moved to Israel also settled there . Ashdod also receives a significant amount of internal migration , especially from the Gush Dan region .

= = = Religion = = =

Over 95 % of Ashdod 's population is Jewish , over 30 % of whom are religiously observant . Despite this , the city is generally secular , although most of the non @-@ Jewish population is a result of mixed marriages . About 100 families are affiliated with the Pittsburg Hasidic group , established here in 1969 by Grand Rabbi Avraham Abba Leifer and continued today by his son , Grand Rabbi Mordechai Yissachar Ber Leifer . Ashdod has many synagogues serving different streams of Judaism . The city is also home to the world 's largest Karaite community , about five

thousand strong . There is also a Scandinavian Seamen Protestant church , established by Norwegian Righteous Among the Nations pastor Per Faye @-@ Hansen .

Local government

 Ashdod was declared a city in 1968 . The Ashdod City Council has twenty @-@ five elected members , one of whom is the mayor . The mayor serves a five @-@ year term and appoints six deputies . The current mayor of Ashdod , Yehiel Lasri , was last elected in 2008 after Zvi Zilker has been in office continuously since 1989 . Within the city council there are various factions representing different population groups . The headquarters of the Ashdod Municipality and the mayor 's office are at city hall . This new municipal building is located in the main culture and business area .

Mayors

Culture and art

Music and performing arts

 Ashdod is home to the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra , which performs Andalusian classical music . It is an Arabic music style that originates from Moorish Iberia or Al @-@ Andalus , has been jealously preserved in its original form by Arab and Jewish musicians of the Maghreb over the centuries , and has left its mark on the cante flamenco , the flamenco singing style , perhaps better known in the West . The orchestra was awarded the Israel Prize in 2006 .
 Ashdod also has one of the biggest open theaters in Israel - Amphi Ashdod that can hosts more than 6 @,@ 400 guests . The Amphi hosts Ashdod 's international art festival " Méditerranée " .
 The MonArt Centre for the Arts , which includes a ballet school , a music center and the Ashdod Museum of Art , is a performing arts center which comprises different galleries , art schools , studios and events . The ambitious architectural complex has been inaugurated in 2003 . Theatre and concerts are hosted in several cultural venues ; the most important are performed at the Ashdod Performing Arts Center , a new 938 @-@ seat concert hall of distinct elegance and originality designed by Israeli architect Haim Dotan and inaugurated in 2012 in the city 's cultural center . Ashdod plays host to many national and international music festivals , including the annual Super Jazz Ashdod Festival managed by Leonid Ptashka .
 The ACADMA conservatory is a professional educational institute for music and performance studies based in Ashdod . Operated under the supervision of the Ministry of Education , the institute was established in 1966 , and serves as a home for 600 young musicians in different fields .

Museums

 The Corinne Mamane Museum of Philistine Culture is worldwide the only museum dedicated to this topic . It reopened in 2014 with a new interactive exhibition .
 The Ashdod Museum of Art , located in the MonArt center (see above at " Music and performing arts ") , has 12 galleries and two exhibition halls . In an architectural echo of the Louvre , the entrance to the museum is through a glass pyramid . In 2003 the internal spaces of the museum were redesigned by the architects Eyal Weizman , Rafi Segal and Manuel Herz .

Sports

 Ashdod 's football team , F.C. Ashdod represents the city in Ligat ha 'Al , Israel 's Premier League . The club is known for its successful soccer school . The city 's top basketball team is Maccabi

Ashdod . The men squad plays in First League , Israel 's First tier league , and the women squad Maccabi Bnot Ashdod plays in top division .

Ashdod plays host to many national and international sporting tournaments , including the annual Ashdod International Chess Festival . The city has a cricket team , a rarity in Israel . It is run and organized by citizens of Indian descent . Ashdod 's beaches are a venue for water sports , like as windsurfing and Scuba diving . The Ashdod Marina offers yachting services .

Notable athletes from Ashdod include :

Vered Borochovsky ? 2000 Sydney Olympics and 2004 Summer Olympics swimmer .

Alon Hazan ? international soccer player

Haim Revivo ? international soccer player

Gocha Tzitziashvili ? 2003 Greco @-@ Roman Wrestling World champion & 2004 Summer Olympics wrestler

= = Twin towns ? Sister cities = =

Ashdod is twinned with

= = Notable residents = =

Valery Panov