

Title:

Tel Aviv

Word Count:

656

Summary:

Tel Aviv is noisy, filthy, smelly and full of unattractive, blackened buildings. There's practically nowhere quiet to sit and collect your thoughts and it's full of Israelis in a hurry, shouting at each other and having attitude contests. It's costly to go out and so you would stay home but then the neighbours have decided to have a lengthy family debate on the staircase - even though they're two floors apart.

Keywords:

israel hotels

Article Body:

Tel Aviv is, without doubt, one of my favourite cities in the world.

It's that Tel Aviv has character and the will to live. Everywhere you look you find people getting by somehow and the compassion of the place is infectious; Israelis here come in a million shades and the stories are as thick as the hummus stuffed onto your pitta at the falafel joints. People are loud, hasty and beautifully Israeli.

Tel Aviv started out in the 1880's with the neighbourhood of Neve Tsedek, a settlement of Jews breaking away from the city of Jaffa (Yafo) which today joins onto south Tel Aviv. Israelis prefer not to reflect about that kind of thing, however, as most envisage the Arabs lived in nothing but tents before the return of the pioneer Zionists.

Now of course Tel Aviv is a modern city with universities, train stations and all the rest and is something of a half way house between a European and a Middle Eastern city; everyone is educated but there's refuse everywhere, they have the latest technology but the houses are often dilapidated and, whilst it has all the sex, drugs and rock n' roll nightlife of a Western city, it has almost no street crime and is one of the safest places you'll ever walk around.

Best of all, of course, is that Tel Aviv is a beach city and the water is just about clean enough for swimming in the summer. It faces west and so is one of

the few modern places in the world where you can go and watch the sunset every day. Or look at the bodies on the beach, depending which way your head is turned.

There's excellent nightlife with cool bars and clubs everywhere, underground parties and terrace cafes for the day after. At the same time in much of the city there's barely a multinational store (Starbucks failed here - they couldn't contend against the local coffee shops!) and each of the local shops are independent and distinct. There are also markets such as the Carmel Shook which seem almost Arabic and so 'energetic' and 'busy' as to make the wet dream of a Lonely Planet writer.

Tel Aviv is a youthful place with a young population and is pretty much the only real city in Israel, if you're not inclined to count Jerusalem. It's the most costly place in the country as everyone gravitates here to work and study, whether they like it or not. But it's also a terrific place to live as you can walk around by foot everywhere and it's also fairly easy to convene with people, at least in summer.

The north of the city is the wealthier part with plenty of vegetation. The streets are a bit quieter and the coffee shops are more stylish. Everyone seems to drive a car and, though everyone still lives in apartment buildings of concrete with the plastic shutter/blinds over the windows, it has a calm, stress-free feel.

But the best of Tel Aviv is where you can taste and smell the city in the dirty south where rubble lies around in the streets and the people on a budget live. People drive their scooters onto the pavement without a thought and old furniture is just left out on the street. In neighbourhoods like Florentin you find the artistic slums and not far away is the Kerem, where you live and breathe the market.

A thousand satellite cities surround Tel Aviv and they're mostly suburbs lost in space. It's mostly where families move to so they can raise their kids in tranquility. Then they grow up and hate their parents for choosing somewhere so boring to live and then move back to Tel Aviv.

Tel Aviv is one of the newest cities in the world and a platform for modern Israel: abrupt, in your face and altogether quite delightful.