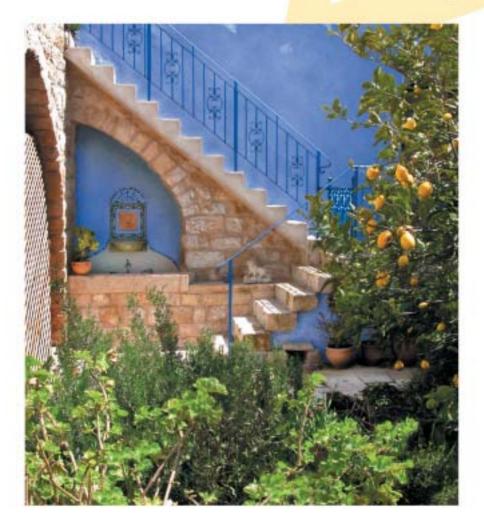
# SAFED The Enchanted City



date



**ERETZ Magazine's Travel Guide** 

#### **ZHR Information Center**

www.zhr.info zhr@zhr.info (04) 680-1465















We wish to thank the following people for their assistance in the preparation of this guide: Maxim ben Abu and the ZHR Tourism Board, Ilan Oren and the Safed Development Administration staff, Bini Shalev, Judy Mor-HaMeiri of the Beit HaMeiri Museum, Zeev Pearl, Michal Auerbach, Miloslavski Architects, Noa and Roni Yeshurun, and Emmanuel Damati.

The descriptions of the synagogues, routes, and locations of sites on the map are based on the work of Emmanuel Damati and Judy Mor-HaMeiri for the Safed Tourism Administration.

The producers and publishers of this guide and the authors of the touring routes are not responsible in any way for the people who follow these routes or for the safety and condition of the routes. Travelers using the information in the guide do so at their own risk.

Editor in Chief: Yadin Roman

Editing: Ya'acov Shkolnik, Nurit Ron, Hadas Beeri Editing of English Edition: David Sandler

> Maps: ERETZ Group Design: Rami Raviv

Photos: Yadin Roman, Noa Yeshurun, Roni Yeshurun.

Natasha Newrock, Nurit Ron, Dita Kohl

Cover Photo: Yeshurun House. (Photo: Roni Yeshurun)

Illustrations: Sergio Lerman

Graphics: Natasha Newrock, Shai Saramani, Amy Caron

Editorial Coordinator: Ruthie Herzikowitz

All rights reserved by Eretz Ha-Tzvi Inc. (ERETZ Group)





6 City of the Mystics
Renaissance / Preserving the Magic

8 **History**Timeline / 2000 Years

#### **The Enchanted City**

- 11 Lecha Dodi / Safed's Hidden Charm
- 12 Synagogues / Yedid Nefesh
  - 22 Lanes / Echoes and Shadows
- 24 Artists' Colony / Light and Legend
- 26 Map of Central Safed
- 28 Old Cemetery / Everlasting Memory
- 33 Inner Courtyards
  Opposite Mount Meron / Lodgings
- **38 Safed Cuisine** Spinj and Calzones / Dining Out
- **44 Cave, Citadel, and Messiah Lane**Sites / Heritage and History
- **48 Quarters**The Old City / Tour Routes
- 50 Music for the Soul Kabbalat Shabbat / Shlomo Ron



# **Renaissance** • Preserving the Magic



t was a moonless midnight in the ancient cemetery of Safed, on the eve of the new Hebrew month. On the steep slope, hundreds of candles flickered among the graves of the *tzaddikim* (sages and holy men) buried in the cemetery, which was full of visitors as it always is on such nights. The plaza in front of the grave of Ha'Ari was crowded. Sounds of prayer rose up from the darkness. In the nearby Mikveh Ha'Ari, dozens of men were immersing themselves in the small rock pool filled with freezing water.



A local Safed legend recounts that when the Herzliya Hotel, the city's first modern hostelry, was built in 1925, a prehistoric human skull was found in the hollow trunk of the olive tree that still grows in the courtyard of the building. It showed how ancient Safed is, says local folklore. In the 1920s, the leaders of the Jewish community in Palestine sprawled on deck chairs around the famous tree, enjoying their vacations. There were artists, politicians, and anyone who thought himself worthy to be seen in the in-crowd of pre-State Israel.

By the 1930s, Safed had become the leading tourist resort in the country. Thousands came there to spend the summer in the cool

mountain air of the Upper Galilee. Dozens of hotels, restaurants, and dance halls awaited them.



In the early years of the State of Israel, tourism in Safed flourished. In the 1950s, Israel's leading artists established an artist colony in the town. Yitzhak Frenkel-Frenel, Ziona Tagger, Menachem Shemi, Moshe Kastel, Zvi Livni, and many other renowned artists settled in the colony. The summer vacationers were now bolstered by art lovers who made their way to Safed to wander through its many galleries and sit and talk with the painters and sculptors.

Toward the end of the 1970s, Safed tourism collapsed. The air conditioner, the relaxing of the stringent foreign currency rules, and the socialist ethos that had prevailed in the first 30 years were all to blame. But the



charm of the city remained – the unique hospitality, the blue-painted lanes, the ancient synagogues. Two years ago, the Ministry of Tourism, together with the Municipality and other government agencies, created the Safed Tourism Infrastructure Administration to revive tourism. Today, an enchanted city is reawakening in Safed's lanes.

Now is the time to visit Safed, before the crowds come back.

Unlike your everyday tourist site, with signs, souvenir shops, and tour groups, discovering the magic of Safed is the responsibility of the visitor. The Safed experience is hidden behind garden gates, in secluded courtyards, in galleries and small museums, in ancient synagogues, and in quaint coffee shops. When you visit Safed, you'll be regaled with local legends – such as the tale of the couple who came for a weekend and asked a passerby for directions to the guest room they had reserved. He escorted them to the place, and then urged them to come and have Sabbath dinner at his house. The couple sat, ate, drank, and sang Sabbath songs with the stranger and his family for hours, after which he took them on a nocturnal tour of the enchanted city.

"Three things captured my heart in Safed," wrote the mystic Shlomo Molcho 430 years ago to his beloved, who lived in the town. "The blue skies, the blue walls of the houses, and most of all, the dark blue of your eyes." Romance has always been part of a visit to this magic city

FRFT7 Guide

# **Timeline** • 2000 Years



Above: Rachamim outpost, from Israel's War of Independence. Below: Items on display at Beit HaMeiri Museum.

"Safed is at the top of the mountain, and around the mountain there are four quarters, two of them Ishmaelite. The houses on the slope all belong to Jews, and they are more than 300 homeowners. And there are three synagogues." First century CE - The historian Josephus mentions the citadel of "Safaf." Some think he meant Safed.

Second and third centuries – After the Bar Kochba Revolt, Jewish priestly families from Jerusalem settle in Safaf.

Fourth-tenth centuries – Documents from this period mention a Jewish community in Safed.

Twelfth century – The Crusaders build a large citadel in Safed. In 1188, Muslim sul-

tan Saladin captures the citadel. Sixty-two years later, the fortress is restored to Crusader control.

Thirteenth century – With the departure of the Crusaders, the Jewish community is revived in the area. Many Jewish villages spring up around Safed. In 1240, Safed once again comes into Crusader hands following an agreement with the Muslims. The citadel is renovated. In 1266, the Mameluke sultan Baybars lays siege to the citadel. After six months of bitter fighting, the knights surrender and are massacred by Baybars.

Fourteenth and fifteenth centuries – Safed becomes a center of government, churches are destroyed, and mosques are built. A large Jewish community continues to exist in the city.

**Sixteenth century** – The Ottoman Turks conquer Safed in 1516. A wool and flax industry is established by Jewish merchants in the city. Safed's proximity to the grave of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai attracts kabbalists and sages, making Safed a major Jewish spiritual center.

**Seventeenth century** – The Galilee falls to Fahr al-Din II, a Druze prince from Lebanon. In 1602, he conquers Safed. Under his rule, the city's population suffers hunger, disease, and crime. Most of the Jewish population abandons the town.

**Eighteenth century** – A massive earthquake strikes the city in 1759. The Beduin sheikh Dahir al-Amr conquers the Galilee and

the security situation improves. In 1764, a group of Hasidim from Lithuania, pupils of the Ba'al Shem Tov, arrives in the city. In 1777, they are joined by a group of 300 Hasidim. In the early 1800s, opponents of Hasidism, pupils of Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, settle in Safed.



Nineteenth century – Safed begins to recover, but epidemics are still rampant. In 1833, an epidemic claims many victims. A year later, the Jewish community is attacked by local Arabs. In 1837, the city is struck by the worst earthquake in its history. The Jewish quarter is destroyed and thousands are killed. The following year, Safed is sacked in the Druze revolt in the Galilee.

Second half of the nineteenth century – The city and its Jewish population recover. On the eve of World War I, Jews comprise about half of Safed's 25,000 inhabitants. Some of them leave Safed to found Rosh Pina and to settle on the Golan.

World War I – The population of the city suffers from hunger and disease. The young men are drafted into the Turkish army.

Twentieth century, Mandatory period – Safed becomes a center of Arab agitation against Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. In the Arab disturbances of 1929, the Jewish quarter is attacked together with the nearby Jewish settlement of Ein Zeitim. Twentyseven Jews are killed, and the Jewish quarter is set ablaze.

Israel's War of Independence – Following the departure of the British army, the forces of the Arab Liberation Army, a volunteer contingent from all over the Arab world, enter the city. The Jewish quarter is besieged, with the Arabs holding all the key positions in the city. On May 6, 1948, the battle of Safed begins, with the local Jewish defenders reinforced by members of the Palmah. On the night between the 9th and 10th of May, Palmah forces storm the Arab strongholds in the city. After heavy fighting, the Palmah gains control of Safed. The Arab residents flee the city.

After the War of Independence – Safed becomes capital of the Galilee. The artists' colony is founded. At the end of the 1980s, the city suffers a decline in tourism, the industry on which the inhabitants' main livelihood is based. In 2000, city and government agencies begin to rehabilitate the city's tourism infrastructures.

Items on display at Beit HaMeiri Museum.

"If it weren't for the sound of the chanting that rose from open windows, all of those white-blue houses that appear to be attached to the slope of Mt. Safed would be only tiny specks, a bit of color, a bit of light, a bit of shadow."



# **Lecha Dodi •** Safed's Hidden Charm

The 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the most important and wealthy Jewish community in the medieval world, caused intense anxiety in the Jewish Diaspora. The uprooting of thousands of families from their homes, widespread conversions, and the reign of terror of the Inquisition, revived the debate about the meaning of Jewish existence in exile. In the generations following the expulsion, messianic hopes were rekindled together with a preoccupation with Kabbalah and mysticism, in search of a path to redemption. These processes in the Jewish world coincided with

the conquest of the Land of Israel by the Turks, who welcomed Jewish settlement. The little town of Safed, near the tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai, who is considered one of the pillars of Jewish mysticism, now became accessible to Jews from all over the world.

In the sixteenth century, Safed became a center of Jewish learning, to which hundreds of rabbis, sages, and mystics were drawn. For the next 80 years, the vibrant Jewish community of Safed formulated mystical philosophies, composed liturgies,

and instituted religious customs that are an important part of Jewish life to this day. Yosef Caro wrote Shulhan Aruch; Moshe Cordovero wrote Pardes Rimonim; Ya'acov Beirav attempted to renew the practice of rabbinical ordination; Moshe Alsheikh wrote his popular collection of sermons; Shlomo Alkabetz wrote the hymn Lecha Dodi. And above all, Rabbi Yitzhak Luria Ashkenazi – Ha'Ari – devised a new system of kabbalistic thought.

To this day, sages and rabbis, students of Kabbalah, and pilgrims continue to flock to the city. Safed's mystical aura still envelops the lanes of the Jewish quarter, lingers in the ancient synagogues, and hovers over the graves of the masters of Jewish mysticism buried in the old cemetery.











# Synagogues • Yedid Nefesh

On the eve of the earthquake of 1837, Safed had more than 50 synagogues. Though the city recovered after the earthquake, the situation of the Jews in Safed deteriorated in the second half of the nineteenth century. During World War I, hunger and disease nearly destroyed the ancient community.

In the past 20 years, Hasidic Jews have settled in Safed and begun to restore the city's unique atmosphere and rebuild its synagogues. Most of these synagogues were founded in the sixteenth

> century, destroyed in the great earthquake in the nineteenth century, and rebuilt shortly afterward. Many of the synagogues serve the Hasidic communities of Safed today. Some of them are not open to the general public on a regular basis. One of the goals of the current tourism development project is to enable the opening of all of the synagogues to the public at regular times.

> Even today, it is possible to visit all of the synagogues. Regular services and ceremonies

are held in nearly all of them. Some have special services and festivities on Jewish holidays and during pilgrimage periods and some have regular visiting hours.

In any event, you can always stroll through the lanes of the Jewish quarter, find a synagogue that has just opened for services, and peek in. After all, in the city of the kabbalists, the hidden is only a continuation of the revealed.

In the following pages, you will find descriptions of eight of the Old City's 28 functioning synagogues. The name and telephone number of the caretaker is noted at the end of each section. A donation to the synagogue is customary.



Top: Decoration in the Abuhav Synagogue.
(Illustration: Sergio Lerman)

Above: Abuhav Lane in the Jewish guarter.

Below: Holy Ark. (Photo courtesy of the Safed Foundation)

Opposite page:

Top: The steps leading to the Ashkenazi Ha'Ari Synagogue. (Photo: Elana Lerman)

Center: The Holy Ark in the Ashkenazi Ha'Ari Synagogue. (Photo: Roni Yeshurun)

Bottom: The Holy Ark in the Ashkenazi Ha'Ari Synagogue. (Illustration: Sergio Lerman)



## The Ashkenazi Ha'Ari Synagogue

The Ashkenazi Ha'Ari Synagogue was built in the sixteenth century in an open field on the edge of the Sephardic neighborhood. It was founded by immigrants from Spain, who settled in Greece and then immigrated to Safed. They were joined by the pupils of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, including Ha'Ari. In the eighteenth century, after the arrival of the Hasidim, the synagogue served the Ashkenazi community and from then on it was called "the Ashkenazi Ha'Ari Synagogue." The synagogue was destroyed in

the earthquake of 1837, and was rebuilt 20 years later. A stone inscription in Hebrew above the lintel in the entrance reads: "How awe-inspiring is this place, the synagogue of Ha'Ari of blessed memory."

The Ark was carved of olive wood by a craftsman from Galicia, in the style of the synagogues of Eastern Europe and includes an anthropomorphic image of a lion, alluding to the acronym Ha'Ari, which means "The Lion."

During the 1948 War, a shell hit the synagogue, cut through the window's iron grillwork, and landed on the edge of the prayer platform without causing harm to anyone, despite the fact that at that moment many of Safed's Jews had taken shelter in the synagogue. This event was considered one of many miracles that have been said to have happened in Safed.

Though the synagogue is associated by name with the Ashkenazi community, it serves as a place of worship for Hasidic and Sephardic Jews and remains popular among worshippers of different affiliations.

Local legend has it that Ha'Ari and his disciples used to gather on the spot where the synagogue stands today for their outdoor Kabbalat Shabbat (Welcoming the Sabbath) ceremony. This tradition of welcoming the Sabbath outside is still echoed in every Kabbalat Shabbat service today when, during the singing of *Lecha Dodi*, the worshippers turn toward the entrance of the synagogue.

Contact: Moshe Gross, Tel. (04) 697-1722.





#### Rabbi Moshe Cordovero

Born ca. 1522 to descendants of Spanish exiles from Cordova, he was ordained by Rabbi Ya'acov Beirav at the age of 13, just before Beirav fled to Damascus. Cordovero continued his studies with Rabbi Yosef Caro and Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz. He instituted the custom of studying outdoors at ancient holy graves in the Galilee. His most famous book is Pardes Rimonim. considered one of the most important works of Kabbalah. He died in 1570 and is buried in the ancient cemetery of Safed.

## The Avrutz Synagogue

The synagogue is named for Rabbi Avraham Dov of Avrutz, who immigrated to Palestine from the Ukraine in his old age and settled in Safed in 1833. The following year, the Arabs of the Galilee raided Safed. The city's Jews fled and their property was stolen. When they returned to the city and found themselves desti-



Above and below: The Avrutz Synagogue. (Photography: Roni Yeshurun)

tute, the rabbi and his wife helped rehabilitate the community and arranged for the support of the survivors. In 1837 a massive earthquake struck. Legend has it that at that time, the rabbi had convened his congregation in the synagogue. suddenly shouting, "Everyone who values his life, come and hold the Torah scroll!" The congregants rushed to the Ark just as the earthquake began. The western part of the synagogue collapsed, but the

area near the Ark remained intact; all of the people around it were saved.

A year later, Rabbi Avraham was taken captive by the Druze. His captors tried to force him to write a letter asking his congregation to ransom him. The rabbi refused. Just as he was about to be killed, approaching horsemen frightened his captors away. The rabbi continued to lead the Safed community and later facilitated the procurement of aid from Moses Montefiore in order to help members of the community establish farms in the area. The synagogue was renovated at the initiative of the Hameiri family.

Contact: Meir Hameiri, Tel. (04) 692-1431.





### The Abuhav Synagogue

t is not clear which of the two rabbis named Yitzhak Abuhav inspired the naming of this synagogue, which contains a famous Torah scroll attributed to one of them. Popular tradition links the synagogue with the author of *Menorat Hama'or*, a well-known work on ethics. But it is more likely that the synagogue is named after the fifteenth-century rabbi who is considered one of the *gaonim* – great sages – of Castile. He served in the rabbinate in Toledo and headed a yeshiva for the study of Jewish philosophy and Kabbalah. Among his pupils was Rabbi Ya'acov Beirav, who later moved to Safed and became one of its foremost sages. It may have been Beirav who brought the Torah scroll attributed to Abuhav to the synagogue. The scroll is the old-

est Torah scroll in Safed and many traditions and legends are associated with it. It is kept locked up in the Ark and taken out for reading only three times a year: Yom Kippur, Shavuot, and Rosh Hashanah.

Another Torah scroll in the Abuhav Synagogue is the scroll of Rabbi Suleiman Ohana, a kabbalist from Fez, Morocco, who moved to Safed in the sixteenth century. For generations, the Jews of Safed gathered in the synagogue on the eve of Shavuot to celebrate the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people. It was also customary at weddings to bring the bride to the synagogue accompanied by music, dancing, and singing.

The synagogue was built in the sixteenth century and its southern wall contains three Arks. The *bima* is in the center and the benches for the congregation are arranged around it, as was customary in ancient synagogues. The interior of the synagogue dome is decorated with depictions of musical instruments that were used in the Temple in Jerusalem, symbols of the tribes of Israel, and four crowns, representing the Torah crown, the priestly crown, the royal crown, and a crown unique to Safed: "the crown of impending redemption." In keeping with the numerological tradition of Kabbalah, the design of the synagogue has numerical significance: one *bima*, two steps to it, three Arks, and so forth. The works of well-known Israel artist Ziona Tagger adorn the walls.

Contact: Meir Kressanti, Tel. (04) 692-3885.



Above: Abuhav Synagogue. (Photo: Roni Yeshurun) Illustrations: Sergio Lerman



FRFT7 Guide



#### Rabbi Yosef Caro

Born in Spain in 1488, Caro settled in Safed in 1536. At the age of 34, he began writing his life's work. Beit Yosef, in which he assembled all the halachic rulings to date, and devised a system for defining which of the rulings should be followed. In Safed he was ordained as a rabbi by Ya'acov Beirav. it took him 20 years to complete Beit Yosef, after which he spent another 12 years editing and proofreading it. He then produced a summary of it, Shulhan Aruch. This work became the main halachic authority in the Jewish world. Caro died on Passover eve, 1575, at the age of 87, and is buried in the cemetery in Safed.

Photographs on this page: The Caro Synagogue. (Photographs courtesy of the Safed Foundation)

Opposite page: Above: The Sephardic Ha'Ari Synagogue. (Photo: Noa Yeshurun)

Below: The Sephardic Ha'Ari Synagogue. (Photo: Roni Yeshurun)

Illustrations: Sergio Lerman

# The Caro Synagogue

This synagogue is named after Rabbi Yosef Caro. When he was four years old, his family had to leave Spain in the expulsion of 1492. Moving to Portugal, they were eventually expelled from there as well. Wandering arond the Mediterranean region, they eventually settled in the Ottoman Empire, taking up residence first in Istanbul and then in Edirne, where Caro was appointed head of a yeshiva and began writing halachic works. In 1536, he settled in founded a religious academy, and studied halachic issues.

Safed, founded a religious academy, and studied halachic issues. Due to the synagogue's uncharacteristic shape, it is assumed that the building originally housed the academy.

In the past, when tourism to Safed was in its heyday, the synagogue was open on a regular basis. Visitors were usually shown a small vaulted room beneath the synagogue in which, according to legend, Caro wrote his many works with the aid of a special angel, known as a *maggid*. Caro himself related that following his encounters with the *maggid*, he wrote a book recounting his visions, entitled *Maggid Meisharim*.

In an open area beside the synagogue, the burial place of Rabbi Yosef De la Reina, who tried in vain to speed up the arrival of the Messiah, is shown. In fact, De la Reina never visited Safed, but the tradition is very strong. Recently, the many members of the De La Reina family held a gathering in Safed.

Contact: Ephraim Ben Shimon, Tel. (04) 692-3284.





## The Sephardic Ha'Ari Synagogue

This synagogue is the oldest in Safed. Historical sources mention it as early as 1522, as the synagogue of North African Jews, known at the time as the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue. Ha'Ari preferred to pray in this synagogue, mainly due to the fact that its windows looked out onto Mt. Meron and the grave of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai.

It is said that Ha'Ari liked to sit in a little alcove on the eastern side of the synagogue, studying Kabbalah, and that while he was absorbed in his studies, the prophet Elijah, his personal *maggid*, appeared. The synagogue was apparently given its present name in the seventeenth century.

Despite its ancient, fortresslike appearance, not much of the original synagogue is left. Most

of it was destroyed in the massive earthquakes that struck Safed in 1759 and 1837. In 1840, the Italian Jewish philanthropist Yitzhak Guetta donated money for the renovation of the synagogue. A plaque commemorating his efforts hangs above the entrance.

As a building situated on the edge of the Jewish quarter and facing one of Safed's Arab quarters, the synagogue was an important defen-

sive position prior to and during Israel's War of Independence. During the siege of Safed in 1948, the defenders removed the Torah scrolls from the synagogue and bored holes in the walls for surveillance and shooting. Access to the synagogue was possible only via trenches that led down to the building from the Jewish quarter. The military position that was set up in the synagogue was one of the main barriers to the Arab invasion of the Jewish quarter during the war.

In the years that followed the establishment of Israel, the building was neglected. In the 1980s and '90s, radical changes were made in the buildings around it, when the large complex of the Braslav Hasidim was constructed. The building will be renovated as part of the Safed tourism development project. At present, this beautiful building is usually closed, except for a few hours in which Torah lessons are held.

Contact: Eli Levi, Tel. 050-445588.



#### Rabbi Yitzhak Luria Ashkenazi (Ha'Ari)

Born in Jerusalem, Ha'Ari grew up in his uncle's home in Egypt. In 1569, at the age of 35, he settled in Safed in order to study Kabbalah with Rabbi Moshe Cordovero. The rabbi died a short time later and Ha'Ari continued his kabbalistic studies on his own. He was soon joined by pupils seeking to study his unique system of Kabbalah. Ha'Ari was active in Safed for only about two years. He died in 1572 and is buried in the old cemetery.





## The Yossi Banaa Synagogue

The synagogue, one of the oldest in Safed, was founded at the end of the fifteenth century by Jews from Aragonia, in northern Spain. The building was constructed adjacent to the grave of Rabbi Yossi Banaa, a Talmudic sage of the third century, known also as the White Tzaddik.

The synagogue was severely damaged in the earthquakes of 1759 and 1837. In both earthquakes, the southern wall, containing the Holy Ark, was not harmed. The building was renovated after each of the earthquakes. Judging from the method of construction, the paintings, and the decorations, it is thought that the women's





This page:
The Yossi Banaa
Synagogue.
(Photos: Noa Yeshurun;
illustrations:
Sergio Lerman)



section and the arches above Yossi Banaa's grave belong to the original structure from the fifteenth century.

The interior of the synagogue and the furnishings are among the most beautiful to be found in the synagogues of Safed. The decoration of the building, the stone benches along the walls, the stone floor, the wooden prayer platform carved in Turkish style, the Ark, the wood ceiling decorated with paintings, and the massive entrance door are all architectural gems. All of these elements date to the nineteenth century, while certain motifs and sections may date to the sixteenth century. The synagogue complex includes several courtyards, a ritual bath, and Yossi Banaa's burial chamber. The synagogue is in the custody of Avraham Shababu, whose family has had custody of the building for generations.

Contact: Avraham Shababu, Tel. (04) 697-4086.



# The Beirav Synagogue

This synagogue was apparently built in the nineteenth century, after the great earthquake in Safed. The building was constructed originally as a religious academy and was named after Ya'acov Beirav, one of the great rabbis of sixteenth-century Safed. For many years, the synagogue was used by the Hungarian community of Safed, but when their num-

bers diminished, the synagogue ceased functioning.

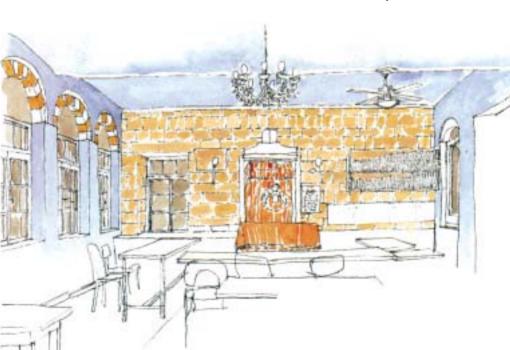
Several years ago, members of the American community in Safed renewed services in the synagogue. Today, visitors from all over the world come to the synagogue to take part in Sabbath and holiday prayer services, conducted in the lively, musical tradition of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. The "Carlebach *minyan*" that prays there warmly welcomes visitors, and holds many musical events featuring the melodies made famous by Rabbi Carlebach. The synagogue can accommodate about 100 people, but on Sabbaths and holidays the crowd overflows into the nearby lanes and square.

Contact: Meir Glazer, Tel. (04) 692-4805.

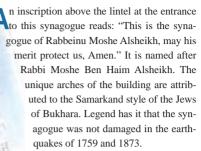
#### Rabbi Ya'acov Beirav

Born in 1475 in Castile. Spain, Beirav studied under the tutelage of Rabbi Yitzhak Abuhav. Eighteen years old at the time of the expulsion from Spain, he moved to North Africa and was appointed rabbi of the city of Fez. Several years later, he moved to Egypt and went into business, becoming a wealthy man. Eventually, he left his business, settled in Safed, and became the head of a yeshiva. Among his pupils were Yosef Caro, Moshe Cordovero, Moshe of Trani, and others. He was regarded in his time as the rabbi of the sages of Safed.

He tried to reinstate the practice of ordination of rabbis but had to flee to Damascus after his activities were reported to the authorities. He later returned to Safed and died there in 1546. He is buried in the old cemetery.







The synagogue is also called "the synagogue of the *ba'alei teshuva* (repentant Jews)." Visitors are shown a silver Torah scroll cover, bearing an inscription stating it was produced in 1434 "for the synagogue of the *ba'alei teshuva*."

It is assumed that this phrase refers to the Conversos,

Spanish Jews who converted to Christianity during the Inquisition and returned to Judaism after fleeing from Spain. Another name by which the synagogue is known is Kenis el Istambulia – the synagogue of the people who came from Istanbul, which could also allude to the *ba'alei teshuva* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The synagogue is built in the style of the Sephardic synagogues of the sixteenth century. It does not have a women's section.

The prayer hall has pointed arches that support the domed roof. An inscription on the facade of the building attests to a renovation carried out before the earthquake of 1837. This renovation apparently saved the building from destruction. Three people are mentioned in the inscription: the builder, Ya'acov Peleggi, philanthropist Yehezkel Reuven Menashe, and the intermediary, Rabbi Ya'acov Anavti, the rabbi of Damascus at the time. After the renovation, the synagogue was renamed Knesset Yehezkel, in honor of the philanthropist.

Contact: Shaul Halevi, Tel. (04) 692-0003.

## The Lemberg Synagogue

Only the western wall of this synagogue has survived. It was named after the Jewish community of Lemberg (Lvov) in Galicia. The synagogue was founded by Rabbi Mordechai Ze'ev of Lvov, apparently in the 1840s, and functioned until it was abandoned and destroyed following World War I. In the wall that survived, carved decorations in the image of lions and hands uplifted in the priestly blessing were preserved.

The Alsheik

#### Rabbi Moshe Alsheikh

Alsheikh was born in 1508 in Edirne, Turkey. Like many of the scholars who eventually immigrated to Safed, he studied in the veshiva of Rabbi Yosef Taitazak in Salonika. Full of messianic hope, he came to Safed to be ordained as a rabbi by Yosef Caro. Afterward he opened his own yeshiva. In 1578, fleeing famine and disease. Alsheikh left Safed for Damascus. where he wrote his great work, Torat Moshe, a collection of his sermons. It is one of the most revered commentaries on the Torah to this day. Alsheikh later returned to Safed, and died there around 1600, He is buried in the old cemetery.

Illustration: Sergio Lerman

















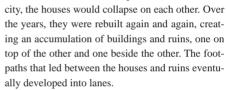


# **Lanes** • Echoes and Shadows



Safed's old quarters were built on the slopes below the Crusader citadel that stood at the top of Mt. Safed. The Kurdish quarter was built on the western side of the Citadel, the Muslim quarters on a convenient shoulder south of the citadel, the Christian quarter on the southern and southwestern slopes, and the Jewish quarter on the northwestern slope. The city's civic and business center was built just below the citadel's walls, while immediately above them were the houses of Safed's wealthy residents and government officials.

The quarters were situated on a very steep incline. The buildings were constructed one above the other, with each house leaning on the house below it. When an earthquake would strike the



The lanes of Safed, mainly those of the old Jewish quarter, have a special charm. They feature sharp angles and sudden curves, hidden courtyards, vine-covered pergolas, and views of Mt. Meron and Nahal Amud. The old houses open straight onto the lanes. Decorated doors of thick copper or





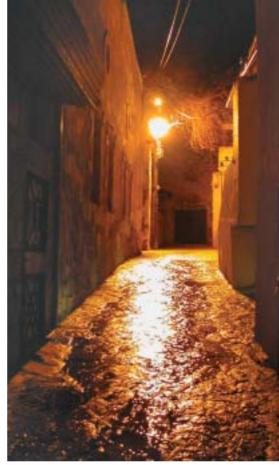




ancient wood lead to the inner courtyards. People strolling through the lanes cannot avoid peeking inside from time to time to get a glimpse of a lovely courtyard, a quiet corner, or a vine-covered balcony.

The lanes are painted the traditional blue of Safed – a special blue, deep and magical. Doors and windows are green. Some of the walls are painted in earth tones dictated by current fashion, or in the bright yellow and pink typical of the homes of the artists of Safed.

From the lanes themselves, timeworn stairs and narrow passageways lead to squares, springs, ritual baths, synagogues, venerable cypresses interlaced with vines, plays of light and shadow. All of these elements add up to a romantic and magical experience. Take your time and enjoy it to the fullest. In the slow lanes of Safed, there's no need to hurry.





# **Artists' Colony** • Light and Legend



Above: General Exhibition building in the artists' colony.

Below: Sculpture of King David by Phillip Ratner, Israel Bible Museum. The artists of the Land of Israel have been attracted to Safed since the 1920s. Reuven Rubin painted the dancers in Meron and the road to Meron in 1923; Yosef Zaritsky painted the people of Safed in 1924; Nahum Gutman, Israel Paldi, Haim Glicksberg, and many other local painters immortalized the city and its residents in their paintings.

After the birth of the State of Israel, the idea of an artists' colony in Safed appealed to many of them. Their strong ties with the French art world, where artists' colonies were common, made the idea even more interesting to them.

After the capture of Safed in Israel's War of Independence, several artists asked the mayor to allow them to settle permanently in the abandoned Arab houses of the Old City. Some of them knew the lanes and buildings from earlier times, and had even lived there at one point. The municipality responded positively to the idea. The news spread rapidly among Israel's artists. Yitzhak Frankel, who was teaching in Tel Aviv at the time, spoke of the establishment of an art school in Safed, and was one of the first artists to settle in the artists' colony. He was joined by many of his students. Other renowned artists settled in the city as well. Most of them purchased houses in the abandoned Christian and Muslim quarters.

The blossoming of the Safed artists' colony reached its peak in the 1960s, when over 50 famous artists lived there. Besides exhibiting their work in their studios, they also displayed their paintings and sculptures in the General Exhibition, situated in the former mosque in the center of the quarter. Art lovers flocked to the city, mainly in summer, and enjoyed being in the company of artists, purchasing works, and having lively discussions about art.

Dozens of hotels in the city offered accommodations, nightlife flourished, and clubs, bars, and little restaurants were a focus of pilgrimage. In the 1970s, the tourists arrived. Every day scores of buses packed with visitors stopped in Safed, enabling tour groups to explore the Old City, visit the synagogues, and browse in the artists' studios.

In the 1970s, air conditioning arrived in Israel. The artists, most of whom first settled in the city when they were in their thirties, moved away. At first, they went away for the winter, and then also for the summer. Some passed away. Their heirs,





who were not necessarily artists, did not know what to do with the large buildings, galleries, and collections that they had inherited. Some of the galleries and their collections were donated to the municipality. The demise of tourism in Safed coincided with the decline of the artists' colony. Immigration of artists from the former Soviet Union helped to bring a little life to the colony.

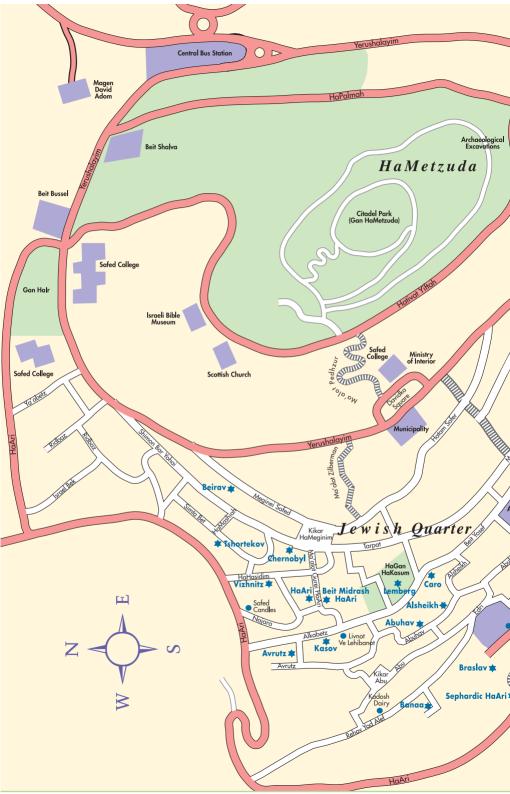
Today, reminders of the heyday of the Safed artists' colony can still be seen everywhere: sculpted signs, statues, and paintings, figures drawn on the walls of the houses, painted windows, carved doors. Here and there you can still find artists working in studios, and several of the old galleries are still operating. The General Exhibition in the old mosque presents works of past and present artists of Safed. Some of the houses of the famous painters and sculptors who lived in the colony have been converted into museums. The most prominent is the beautiful Frenkel Frenel Museum, run by the widow of the painter Yitzhak Frenkel Frenel. Dozens of his works, especially his large canvases, are on display. Visitors can also visit Beit Yitzhak Amitai, where the artist's works are exhibited. The works of other Safed artists can be seen in Ya'acov Hadad's gallery below the Safed mall and in many new galleries that have opened in the colony.

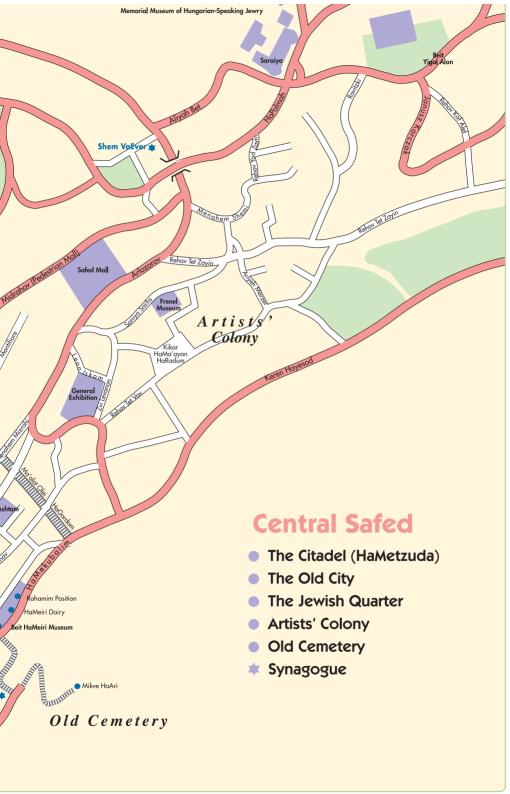
Images of Safed have been an integral part of Israeli art for over 80 years. For many decades Safed was also a world-famous center of artistic activity. With a new generation of artists beginning to work in the colony, its redemption may be at hand.

Above: The artists' colony. (Ceramic sculptures: Catriel Efrony)

Below: Decorated door in the home of artist Moshe Castel.









# **Old Cemetery** • Everlasting Memory

or over 2,000 years, the western slope of Safed has served as the city's Jewish cemetery. The number of graves in the cemetery is unknown—the registration documents vanished about 70 years ago. Earthquakes and landslides added to the confusion. Nevertheless, each year the cemetery attracts an estimated 700,000 visitors, who come from Israel and abroad on pilgrimages to the graves of *tzaddikim*, and other central figures in the history of the Jewish people.



Interred in the cemetery are the famous sixteenth-century rabbis Yitzhak Ashkenazi Luria (Ha'Ari), Shlomo Alkabetz, Moshe Cordovero, Yosef Caro, Moshe Mitrani, Moshe Alsheikh, and others. Also popular pilgrimage sites are the graves of Rabbi Leibel Ba'al HaYissurim, Talmudic sages such as Rabbi Pinhas Ben Ya'ir, and biblical figures such as Hannah and her seven sons and the prophet Hosea.

sons and the prophet Hosea.

The cemetery and Hosea's grave are mentioned by Jewish travelers as early as 1495, and burial in the ancient cemetery continued until the 1960s, when a new cemetery

Over the years, the cemetery was neglected, and apart from cosmetic modifications 15 years ago, its condition deteriorated and its footpaths became hazardous. In the early 1990s, the Ministry of Religious Affairs decided to improve the cemetery's paths in order to facilitate visits by large numbers of people. As part of the current Safed tourism development project, over NIS 30 million was allocated for a major renovation of the cemetery.



# **Tour of the Cemetery**

was established at the foot of the slope.

Begin the tour at the end of Ha'Ari Street, across from the Sephardic Ha'Ari Synagogue. Walk down to the bottom of the staircase. To your left, a path leads to the Mikveh of Ha'Ari. The *mikveh* is in a building constructed over a spring in whose waters,









tradition has it, Ha'Ari used to immerse himself. Entrance to the *mikveh* is for men only.

From the bottom of the staircase, follow the path to the plaza in front of Ha'Ari's grave. Here, in addition to his grave, you will find the graves of his son Moshe, Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, and Rabbi Moshe Cordovero. Descend southward via the stairs to the grave of Rabbi Moshe Alsheikh. Continue down the stepped path to the grave of Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of Shulhan

Aruch. A large tree is growing out of the grave. At the grave, leave the stepped path you have been following and take the stairs leading southward. The stairs and the path that begins at the bottom of the stairs lead to a series of caves. In one of the caves is the grave of Rabbi Ya'acov Beirav. Further down the path, in a building at the bottom of the slope, is the grave of the prophet Hosea.

From here, the new cemetery is clearly visible at the bottom of the hill. At the far end of the new cemetery is







a traffic circle, with a large tree growing on it. Colorful scarves and plastic bags hang from its branches. This

is the grave of Rabbi Pinhas Ben Ya'ir, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai's son-in-law, known for his extreme piety. Pilgrims customarily circle the grave seven times while praying.

Climb back up to Ha'Ari's grave and then take the path that leads northward. The path will lead you to the monument commorating the Jewish underground fighters who were hanged in Acre Prison by the British. Their graves are also here. From the monument, continue on the footpath down the slope to a grave painted blue. This is the grave of Rabbi Leibel Ba'al HaYissurim, where it is customary to pray for an easy birth. Now follow the path up the slope through the hundreds of nineteenth-century tombstones to the military cemetery and back to Ha'Ari Street.

Previous page:

Top: The graves of the masters of Kabbalah, surrounding Ha'Ari's grave.

Center and bottom:

The grave of Rabbi Pinhas Ben Ya'ir.

Opposite page:

Top: The grave of Rabbi Leibel Ba'al HaYessurim.

Center: The kvitelach box beside the grave of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero. Kvitl is Yiddish for a note with a request, submitted to a holy man.

Bottom: The grave of Rabbi Moshe Alsheikh.

This page:
Top: The grave of
Rabbi Moshe Cordovero.

Bottom left: The grave of Rabbi Yosef Caro.

Bottom right: Sign at the entrance to the Mikveh of Ha'Ari: "Mikveh of the Holy Ari, for men only, no women allowed."

date

# **Opposite Mt. Meron •** Lodgings

The aura of mystery that hovers over Safed also applies to finding a place to stay, but with a little effort, you will discover wonderful lodgings in the city of the kabbalists. You can choose from well-designed rooms whose windows overlook Mt. Meron, each with its own fireplace and Jacuzzi;

guest units built by a sculptor, with a spacious courtyard containing fountains and ornamental

pools complete with goldfish; rooms designed by artists; and a hotel overlooking the city from the top of Mt. Canaan and equipped with a heated

pool, a Turkish bathhouse, and a large spa. Nice lodgings can also be found in the Old City – either in the Jewish quarter or in the artists' colony. One of them is the Ruth Rimonim Hotel, whose original large arched rooms were built as a caravansary. The hotel was recently renovated and a new wing has been added.





#### **Guest Rooms**

#### Michal Auerbach

Painter Michal Auerbach's guest rooms are in the heart of the artists' colony. The rooms are built around a paved courtyard shaded by an old lemon tree. On the first floor are Auerbach's studio and her small cafe. Stone steps lead up to the guest rooms on the second floor and to a whitewashed roof, covered in summer with a vine pergolas and overlooking the Old City and Mt. Meron. The shutters and original grillwork on the windows are painted a Mediterranean blue, the floors are ornamented with original decorations, the ceilings are high, and the whole city can be seen from the windows.

The room has everything, from down comforters to delicate loveseats and flowered coasters. The decor is modest and tasteful. The rooms are comfortable, well-lit, clean, and colorful.

Auerbach holds art workshops and guided tours. In the pleasant cafe, she serves homemade quiches and soups.

Michal Auerbach, 27 Tet Vav Street, Artists' Colony, Safed, Tel. (04) 697-2759, 051-775616.



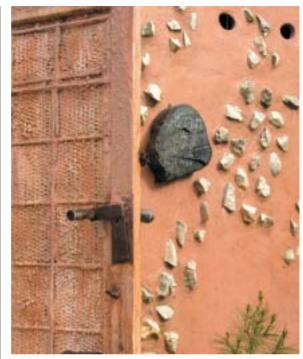
Interior courtyard and guest rooms, Beit Bar-El.







Above: Carved in Pink, and its creator, sculptor Daniel Blumenfeld.



#### **Harmony**

Varda Hoffman studied in Japan for many years. She made jewelry, arranged flowers, and even taught flower-arranging to the Japanese. In the old house situated in a large garden beside her home, she installed three guest units. Each unit is named after one of her children. The units are for two, and each one is equipped with a fireplace and Jacuzzi. The rooms have a beautiful decor and a wonderful view of Mt. Meron. Two of the units open to a small balcony and each of the units has access to the roof terrace and the garden. Breakfast is served in the small, attactively designed dining room on the ground floor of the building. We especially liked the Yasmin unit, but it's definitely a matter of taste.

Harmony, 28 Lamed Street, Safed, Tel. (04) 697-2361, 051-263230.

#### Carved in Pink

Daniel Blumenfeld is a sculptor, but he used to earn his living installing ornamental ponds. When he built his Carved in Pink guest units, he combined both of his passions. There are ornamental ponds, waterfalls, and goldfish in every corner. Wood sculptures are an integral element of the beds, handles, bureaus, and closets. Each unit has a large fireplace.

The many balconies around the house overlook the Biriya



Forest and Mt. Meron. Carved in Pink also has a small heated swimming pool and a pool whose water contains Dead Sea salts. Carved in Pink, Tel. (04) 682-1783, 050-286939.

#### **Beit Bar-El**

If you can find Yod Zayin Street in Safed, you'll be rewarded with the comforts of the Bar-El house, which offers a charming, inexpensive guest unit. The house has an interior courtyard and a roof terrace overlooking the city. On the terrace, you can spread out mattresses, sit in the shade of the little pergola, and enjoy the view. The furnishings, the wooden bed, and the wall closets are painted in the typical Safed blue. Roni and Janine Bar-El met in India, fell in love with Safed, and studied catering and entertaining. They prepare unique dinners and serve them in their home or in ancient sites throughout the city.

Beit Bar-El, 23 Yod Zayin Street, Artists' Colony, Safed. Tel. (04) 692-3661, 050-650073.

#### Beit Yeshurun

The guest units hosted by the Yeshurun family are situated among the narrow lanes of the old Jewish quarter. Noa Yeshurun, an architect specializing in preservation, and Roni Yeshurun, a photographer and graphic artist, designed the interiors of their historic



Top: Harmony.
Above: Beit Yeshurun.
(Photo: Roni Yeshurun)







stone house with good taste and meticulous attention to detail. Their two units, one for a couple and the other a spacious family unit, include a kitchen, cable TV, air conditioning, and other amenities. The arched windows face the Galilee landscape. The double unit affords access to a vine-covered roof terrace.

Beit Yeshurun, Tel. (04) 697-3167, 050-437288.

#### Bustan Sfaradi (Spanish Garden)

At the foot of Safed's Crusader citadel, in a renovated old house, Ya'acov and Sarah Ben Zikri have built three guest units. The units surround a beautiful courtyard boasting an ancient well. The large units are suitable for a couple and one child. The Ben Zikris are currently renovating the third, larger unit. Two of the units have a Jacuzzi; all of the units have cable TV.

Bustan Sfaradi, Tel. (04) 692-2266, 050-652121.



Ruth Rimmonim Hotel.
Other photos: Beit Yeshurun
(Photography:
Roni Yeshurun)

#### **Hotels**

#### **Ruth Rimonim Hotel**

The Ruth Rimonim Hotel is situated at the edge of the artists' colony. Its dining room used to be a caravansary and each room was originally a private house. The hotel has 32 "houses," one different from the other. Access to them is through a large garden. Some of the rooms have balconies with a view of Mt. Meron.

The hotel recently opened a new wing with rooms arranged around a courtyard. The rooms are built in the ancient Safed style, but everything is new.

Ruth Rimonim Hotel, Tel. (04) 699-4666, 1-800-766-766.

#### Canaan Spa Hotel

In the early 1930s, Sarah Levi, who had just immigrated to Palestine from Singapore, built the first hotel on Mt. Canaan.





Several months afterward, she was joined by other hoteliers, among them members of the Ruckenstein family. Mt. Canaan became a large and important hotel center. The Safed Hotel, the Canaan Hotel, the Ruckenstein Hotel, and others were famous vacation destinations. Subsequently, with the decline of tourism in Safed, nearly all of the hotels shut down.

Three years ago, on the site of the old Canaan Hotel, a new hotel, the Canaan Spa, was built. The hotel features a swimming pool, sauna, Turkish bath, treatment rooms, a pleasant dining room, and views of the Galilee, the Golan, and the Sea of Galilee. Canaan Spa Hotel, Tel. (04) 699-3000, Fax (04) 699-3001.









Top left and right: Courtyard, Michal Auerbach's guest rooms.
Above from top down: Michal Auerbach in her studio; Yasmin guest unit at Harmony; Canaan Spa Hotel.
Center left:
Canaan Spa Hotel.

FRETZ Guide 37

# **Spinj and Calzones** • Dining Out



Above: The Kadosh Dairv.

Safed cuisine reflects the city's history. For generations upon generations, the inhabitants cooked unique food – for weddings, the three Sabbath meals, holidays, and other special occasions. This knowledge has been preserved, locked up in household kitchens and recipes handed down within families. The city's eateries fit into two categories: restaurants and home hospitality. Here are a few examples:

### Restaurants

#### Etz Hahaim (The Tree of Life)

Feigi Pam, owner of the restaurant, immigrated to Israel with her family from Los Angeles about four years ago. When she reached Kikar HaMeginim in the

center of Safed's Jewish quarter, she knew she had to open a restaurant there. The home-cooked food is served simply and includes such fare as sweet potato and carrot soup, spinach quiche served with cut vegetables, and espresso coffee. The restaurant specializes in quiches and cakes based on whole wheat flour and rice; Feigi's muffins have become famous. It's dairy, vegetarian, and glatt kosher.

Etz HaHaim, Kikar HaMeginim, Tel. 056-839110.

#### Garden of Eden, Restaurant and Cafe

In a typical Safed house, with a view of Mt. Meron, this Italianstyle Mediterranean restaurant offers fish cooked in herbs; salads; wine; and desserts. This is the only restaurant in Safed that is open even on Saturday. Therefore, on weekends, it's best to make a reservation

Garden of Eden, Restaurant and Cafe, Mt. Canaan, Tel. (04) 697-2434.

#### Studio/Cafe Michal Auerbach

A cafe in a lovely setting, beside Auerbach's art studio and around a typical Safed courtyard. Light vegetarian meals, including excellent salads and soups, are served all day (by reservation only).

Studio/Cafe Michal Auerbach, artists' colony,



Tel. (04) 697-2759.

#### Cafe Mul HaHar

The entrance to the restaurant in the center of Safed's pedestrian mall is marked with colorful posters of mountain scenery. The narrow doorway squeezed in between the shops of the mall is no indication of the spacious restaurant, including the ubiquitous view of Mt. Meron. Every morning, the members of Safed's "parliament" gather at the

restaurant. The lively discussions held by these veteran citizens of Safed cover local, national, and world politics. Other regular customers include the city's blue-collar workers, taxi drivers, and merchants – people who know exactly where to eat. In the morning, burekas and other freshly baked goods are served here. In the afternoon and evening, the restaurant offers dairy and fish dishes. The brothers Avi and Amir Edri, natives of Safed, run the restaurant. The food is simple and tasty.

Cafe Mul HaHar, 70 Yerushalayim Street, Tel. (04) 692-0404.

# Bagelot Bageleh Tsfat

Bagelot are salted pretzels, in this case the large, soft ones that are usually served hot. Bageleh Tsfat can be found beside the Enchanted Garden (HaGan HaKassum), in a ramshackle house.



Above and below:

Garden of Eden Restaurant
and Cafe.



FRFT7 Guide



Above: Safed cheese advertised on the wall. Below: Safed's special cheeses.

There is no identifying or direction sign over the door or anywhere else – just a large sign announcing that the house is for sale. The *bageleh* baker, who is not interested in publicizing his name, has been there for 40 years, shoveling bagels into the oven and taking them out. His wife makes the dough at home. His father brought the profession from Romania, and the son continues the tradition.

Every morning, at whatever time he feels like coming in, the *bageleh*-baker opens the bakery. Several hours later, when the tempting aroma of freshly baked *bagelot* wafts through the Old City, a group of "Safed elders" turns up, each of them with an old shoebox with a copper-wire handle attached to it. Each one puts a pile of fresh hot *bagelot* in his shoebox and sets off for town and his regular spot on the street, where he hawks his products. Unfortunately, we can't tell you the exact time to come to the bakery, but if by chance you happen to be

walking around the Jewish quarter and the air suddenly fills up with the intoxicating fragrance of freshly baked *bagelot*, hurry to the Enchanted Garden and follow your nose.

Bageleh Tsfat, in the Enchanted Garden, Jewish quarter.

### Safed Cheese

Safed used to be a city with many little dairies. Most of them specialized in making a special kind of semi-hard salty cheese, which was kept in salted water in the pre-refrigerator days. "Safed cheese" was a well-known delicacy all over the land. But these days, of stringent health regulations and harsh competition from dairy conglomerates, only two of the original little Safed dairies have managed to survive: the HaMeiri Dairy and the Kadosh Dairy.

#### **HaMeiri Dairy**

Though Safed cheese is produced all over the country, the first to make the famous cheese was undoubtedly the HaMeiri Dairy in Safed. The dairy was founded by Meir HaMeiri, who came to Safed from Iran in 1840 and started a dynasty that today includes the mayor of Safed. In each genera-



tion, the dairy has passed to the firstborn in the family - who traditionally was called Meir in one generation and Shlomi in the next. Today the dairy is managed by Meir HaMeiri, the fifth generation. His son, named – of course – Shlomi, did not want to continue in the family trade, and therefore his younger brother Yaniv, an accountant by training, has agreed to do so. He will have to decide whether to continue the name tradition as well. Until recently, Meir HaMeiri sold the dairy's famous cheese only to gourmet shops in Tel Aviv. When Yaniv joined the firm, the two decided to reopen the dairy for visits. The tour of the dairy is fascinating. The dairy is located in the HaMeiri family's house, with family pictures on the walls, and the original nineteenth-century furniture still intact. The tour includes a glimpse of life in Safed in the nineteenth century and, naturally, an explanation of cheesemaking, with an option to purchase samples of the famous cheese if it is available.

HaMeiri Dairy, Tel. 050-525480 (Meir), 053-721609 (Yaniv). Sunday to Thursday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Fridays and holiday eves, 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Groups by reservation.

#### **Kadosh Dairy**

This dairy, run by Shlomo Kadosh and his children, is "only" 100 years old. Shlomo is not a young man anymore. His great-grandfather came from Morocco a century ago, walking to the Land of Israel when he was 12 years old. In Safed, he decided to become a cheesemaker. To start out, he would visit the Arab villages around Safed and prepare cheese on the spot for the





Below: One of Bar-El Catering's creations.







Top left and right: Bar-El Catering.

Above: Garden of Eden Restaurant.



villagers. The know-how was passed on from father to son. Their specialty is Safed sheep's-milk cheese. It is prepared in straw baskets; the straw adds flavor and serves as a purifying agent. The baskets used to be made from reeds that were brought from Nahal Amud.

The cheese is ready for eating after six months. Real connoisseurs allow the cheese to age for at least a year, and some even for two. As the cheese hardens, it acquires its unique texture, which enables it to be grated for use as a filling for the special *calzones* of Safed. *Calzones* is a pastry filled with soft Safed sheep's-milk cheese and topped with Safed's special kashkaval cheese. In Kadosh's dairy, five types of sheep's-milk cheese are produced, in addition to *labaneh* from goat's milk.

Kadosh Dairy, Jewish guarter, Tel. (04) 692-0326.

### Catering

#### **Bar-El Catering**

Janine and Roni met in India. He was on a spiritual Buddhist journey, and she, from a religious family, was on a trip. They met, married, and ended up in Safed. Roni went to study at a kabbalistic yeshiva, Janine organized visits of Buddhist teachers to Safed. When Roni graduated from the yeshiva, they decided to open a catering business. They provide much more than food – extras include explanations about mysticism, and performances by klezmer bands, such as Simply Safed, a group of three Braslav Hasidim, two Americans, and one Yemenite. Roni studied cooking at Israel's Tadmor Hotel Academy. He worked in restaurants in Tel Aviv, Europe, and New York. The couple hosts groups in their home and in other places in Safed.

Bar-El Catering, events with a special taste, Yod Zayin Street, Safed. Tel. (04) 692-3661.

# **Sites** • Heritage and History



Above and below: Items on display at Beit HaMeiri

#### Beit HaMeiri Museum

The best place to begin a tour of Safed is the Beit HaMeiri Museum, which documents the history of the city's Jewish community in the past 200 years. The museum was founded by Yehezkel HaMeiri, a fifthgeneration Safed resident. He collected tools, objects, and documents, and pho-

tographed and recorded stories told by the city's old-timers. The museum is situated in a complex of old buildings on the periphery of the Jewish quarter. It features exhibitions devoted to lifestyles, tools, furniture, and more. Guides dressed in period costumes show you around. The museum organizes tours of Safed on various themes, such as synagogues, the High Holy Days, welcoming the Sabbath, and the artists' colony.

Sun.-Thurs., 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Fri. and holiday eves, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tel. (04) 697-1307. Admission charge.

### Memorial Museum of Hungarian-Speaking Jewry

Before the Holocaust, the Hungarian-speaking Jewish population numbered about 1 million people. In Safed, from the sixteenth century on, there was also a Hungarian community. The museum was established in 1986 by Yosef and Chava Lustig, who operate it with the help of volunteers. Its collection consists of over 150,000 items, donated by Hungarian Jews from all over the world

Sun. – Fri., 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Tel. (04) 692-5881. Admission charge.



The museum was built in the home of the painter Yitzhak Frenkel Frenel in the artists' colony. In the museum, which is managed by Ilana Frenkel Frenel, the artist's widow, a collection of his works is exhibited.

Sun. - Thurs., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Fri. and holiday eves,







# 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tel. (04) 692-0235. Israel Bible Museum

This museum, which was established by the artist Philip Ratner in 1984, presents his works. They focus mainly on figures and scenes from the Bible. From 1952 to 1984 the building housed the Glitzenstein Museum, which presented the sculpture and paintings of the artist Hanoch Glitzenstein. October – April: Sun. – Thurs., 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. May – September: Sun. – Thurs.,

10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Fri. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.



#### Shem Ve'Ever Cave

In the Crusader period, this ancient Jewish burial cave was said to be the burial place of Tobias. After the conquest of Safed by Saladin (1188), the site was converted into a mosque. Jewish travelers in the Middle Ages identified the cave as the burial site of the Talmudic sages Hanina Ben Hyrcanus and Dosa Ben Hyrcanus. In the sixteenth century, the cave was attributed to Nehemiah. Jewish tradition today associates the cave with Shem and Ever, descendants of Noah



Twenty-two memorial plaques are affixed throughout Safed as places where fighters fell in Israel's War of Independence.

#### Rahamim Post

The Rahamim Post was a defense position in the Jewish quarter, erected on the balcony of the Rahamim family home after the Arab disturbances of 1929. The position served as a target for constant firing by the Arabs. In 1948, a total of 42 positions like this one functioned around the Jewish quarter.



Memorial Museum of Hungarian Jewry, and founder Yosef Lustig.



Right: The Scottish Church

Below: Children's paintings, Israel Bible Museum.

Center: Israel Bible Museum.









Bottom: Work of Phillip Ratner, Israel Bible Museum.



#### Messiah Lane

This steep stairway, the narrowest of Safed's lanes, got its name from the fact that Grandma Yocheved used to sit at the entrance to the lane every day and wait for the coming of the Messiah.

#### The Sephardic Quarter

The old Jewish quarter in Safed developed around the Mikveh of Ha'Ari. The first nucleus of residents was composed of Jews who were born in Palestine and North Africa. (The quarter's original buildings were destroyed in the 1970s to make way for the construction of Kiryat Braslav). At the end of the fifteenth century, the exiles from Spain who arrived in Safed settled in the quarter.

#### The Ashkenazi Quarter

The Ashkenazi quarter developed in continuation of the Sephardic quarter, spreading out above it toward the citadel. Its founders were 300 Hasidim who settled in Safed in 1777. In the early nineteenth century, pupils of Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, also came to the neighborhood.

#### The Municipal Police Station

This British police station was built at the end of the 1930s with a fortified courtyard surrounded by concrete walls. The building was handed over to the Arabs of Safed on the day the British left the city in 1948. Bitter fighting for control of the building broke out during the battle of Safed.

#### Ma'alot Olei HaGardom

This stepped street was built by the British as a buffer between the Jewish quarter and the Arab quarter. A large spotlight installed at the top of the stairs by the British stands there to this day.





#### The Scottish Church

The church, a remnant of the activity of the Scottish Christian mission in Safed in the nineteenth century, was never completed. After 1948, it served as a hotel and then as a religious school. Today the impressive building is deserted.

#### Business Center - Ashtam House

This building was constructed after the disturbances of 1929, on the border of the Jewish and Arab quarters. In the 1948 War it served as an important position in the defense of the Jewish quarter.

#### Mameluke Mausoleum

This burial structure from the fourteenth century was built as a mausoleum for the governor of Safed.

#### The Red Mosque

This mosque, one of the earliest Mameluke structures in Israel, was built in 1276 by Sultan Baybars.

#### Safed Citadel

The citadel apparently had its beginnings as the "Safaf Citadel," built by Josephus during the great Jewish revolt against the Romans in the first century. In 1102, a Crusader citadel was built

here. After the battle of the Horns of Hattin (1187), the citadel fell into the hands of Saladin. The Crusaders returned to Safed in 1240 and rebuilt the citadel, which was considered one of the largest castles in the East.

Twenty-six years later, Baybars, the Mameluke sultan of Egypt, captured the citadel and massacred the defenders. He built a round 60-meter-high tower on the site. In the Ottoman period, the citadel was neglected. In the eighteenth century it underwent partial renovation, but in 1837 it was destroyed in the great earthquake. Archaeological excavations are currently being conducted on the site.

Left: Safed candles.
Below: The "Davidka."
Center: Abu House, from
which processions leave for
Mt. Meron on Lag B'Omer.





Bottom:

Signs commemorating places and people in Israel's modern history.



# **The Old City** • Tour Routes



#### **Citadel and City Gate**

Start the tour in Davidka Square, go up the Moshe Pedhazur Ascent to Hativat Yiftah Road, Walk through Citadel Park to the lookout point. From there you can also view the archaeological excavations that are taking place at the site. Return to Hativat Yiftah Road and turn right. After passing the Scottish Church vou will reach the Israel Bible Museum. Continue on Hativat Yiftah Road to Safed College, in the old Hadassah Hospital. From there. follow Yerushalayim Street back to Davidka Square.

### The Ashkenazi Quarter

Begin the tour at the corner of Yerushalayim and Bar Yohai Streets. Enter Bar Yohai Street, which was one of the main streets of the Ashkenazi quarter in the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the street, beside the sign that reads in Hebrew "The home of Israel and Shoshana Hen of the Batit family," you can see the

remains of a large myrtle tree, whose top reaches the roof of the house. Under the house is a cave containing a *mikveh*, which was used for ritual immersion before the harvest of the myrtle branches prior to Sukkot. House No. 29, the Haviv Dahan House, served as a Betar clubhouse. No. 31 boasts a beautiful garden. House No. 37 is the religious academy of the Admor Rabbi Ya'acov Yitzhak of Makrab. No. 38 is the gallery of painter David Friedman. Between 47 and 49 is Messiah Lane – a narrow lane at whose entrance Grandma Yocheved would wait for the Messiah. According to legend, all those who pass through the lane will witness the Messiah's arrival.

No. 54 is a dormitory for young yeshiva students, a center of the Chernobyl Hasidim. The building was constructed in 1833 following the arrival of the Admor of Avrutz. Further along the street is the square known as Kikar HaMeginim, the center of the quarter. On the western side of the square is Pinhas HaCohen House, which served as local Haganah headquarters in Israel's War of Independence.

Walk up Meginei Tzefat Street. At the beginning of the street stands a house decorated with blue stained-glass windows. This is the home of Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, the Sephardic chief rabbi of Safed, son of the former Sephardic chief rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu. The houses along the street were built in the nineteenth century. Further up the street is the Beirav Synagogue, where services in the style of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach are held every Sabbath.

### The Sephardic Quarter

From Kikar Meginei Tzfat, walk down the Gurei Ha'Ari Ascent. On the way, you will pass Hasidim Street, where the religious academy of Vizhnitz-Tunis, an unusual Safed combination, is located.



Continue down the stairs to the Ashkenazi Ha'Ari Religious Academy. The sixteenth-century building was renovated in 1937. The original furnishings came from Frankfurt; about 20 years ago, they were moved to a synagogue in Jerusalem. Enter the Ashkenazi Ha'Ari

Synagogue across the street. The upper part of the Ark is adorned with a human-looking lion. In the rear of the synagogue stands an Elijah's chair, which is used for circumcision ceremonies. It is believed that any couple that sits on the chair and prays will have a son within a year. On leaving the synagogue, turn right and go along Najara Street until you come to Safed Candles, where special candles for Kiddush and Havdalah are produced.

Return to the Ashkenazi Ha'Ari Synagogue and go down the Gurei Ha'ari Ascent to Kasov Square. On a wall in the square hangs a sign commemorating the Hasidim of Kasov, who came to Safed in 1847. Members of the community who remained in the Diaspora died in the Holocaust. The Kasov Hasidim Synagogue is also in the square. From Kasov Square turn right into Alkabetz Street and left at the first lane. Walk down the steps to the Avrutz Synagogue.

Return to Kasov Square and continue along Alkabetz Street. Turn right at the first lane and follow it to the Abuhav Synagogue. Visit the synagogue, return to Alkabetz Street, turn right, and you will come to the Enchanted Garden, a small park in which you will find the remains of two synagogues — of the Lemberg and Sadigora Hasidim. The name of the street changes here to Beit Yosef, which used to be the main street of the Jewish quarter. On the right side of the street you will find the Yosef Caro Synagogue. Continue on Beit Yosef Street to the parking lot. Go down the Olei HaGardom Ascent to Mekubalim Street.

Turn right to the Beit HaMeiri Museum, a nice place to end the tour.





# A Stroll in the Artists' Colony

Begin on Palmah Street, south of the bridge over Yerushalayim Street. Walk down Yod Zayin Street toward the artists' colony. Visit the Frenkel Frenel Museum, the galleries near the General Exhibition, and the General Exhibition itself.

ERETZ Guide 49

### Kabbalat Shabbat • Shlomo Ron



Top: Decoration from the Karlin Synagogue. (Illustration: Sergio Lerman) Above: Sha'arei Rahamim Synagogue.

abbath eve in Safed should be devoted to a tour of the synagogues, where you will be warmly welcomed. Begin at twilight, when Sabbath eve singing echoes through the lanes. Your first stop should he the Reiray Synagogue, in the Ashkenazi quarter. Friday night services at the synagogue attract a large crowd of worshippers. The crowd overflows onto the street, where chairs are placed for the worshippers and a curtain marks off an additional women's section. The prayers are sung in the style of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. Unlike Carlebach, the middle-aged grevhaired cantor does not play the guitar or have a

After enjoying the service at the Beirav Synagogue, head down the slope of the Old City to the huge synagogue of the Braslav Hasidim. Usually, you will find large circles of dancers wending their way between the tables that are set up there. Some of them are in Hasidic attire, and some are wearing colorful shirts and jeans. They dance shoulder to shoulder, singing lustily. After a round of dancing, the worshippers sit down at the tables. The women go off to the women's section, behind a high fence and a curtain. The evening prayers begin with chanting of Shma Yisrael, during which the worshippers cover their eyes with their hands.

microphone, but his strong, deep voice can be heard inside the synagogue and on the street as he

leads the vast choir of worshippers.

From the Braslav Synagogue return to the Ashkenazi quarter for services at the Ashkenazi Ha'Ari Synagogue. The congregants here are young and the praying is full of ardor and joy. The average age of the worshippers does not exceed 25. Most of them wear knitted skullcaps. At the conclusion of the services, the worshippers disperse, wishing everyone in their path "Shabbat shalom."