

# Bruchim Ha'Ba

**F**OR MANY people around the world, Israel means war zone, bombings, danger and insecurity, religion... but we believe it is a little piece of heaven for expats living and working in this country.

Israel is a small country with a fast growing population, currently of around eight million.

The majority of the Israeli population lives in the central district, making Tel Aviv the most densely populated city in Israel (although Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, is much larger both in territory and in population – nearly 800,000 people).

Israel is also blessed with a long coast line. Tel Aviv is located on the coast, and the weather is warm and sunny for almost 365 days of the year. The city seems to be on permanent holiday and at any time of day or night you can walk along a main street and find crowded cafés, joggers, beach bums and dog walkers. Business is casual and only a few own a suit.

Mix it with plenty of night life activities, excellent restaurants and lots of entertainment and you have a

highly attractive city for youngsters and foreigners.

These days everybody wants to live in central Tel Aviv.

Israel is a country of extremities. The country possesses a diverse culture that consists of the traditions and customs of Jews from some 70 countries around the world. This includes influence on the Israeli kitchen, dress and fashion, music and art and even different accents of the Hebrew language.

However, as a whole, Israel's society is very westernized in its way of life. Expats and foreigners should always be aware that there is a strong underlying Jewish religion that requires respect and sensitivity at all times, even though most Israelis are secular and do not keep any or only small part of the Jewish religion rules.

Please do not also forget the other religious groups like Muslims and Christians and other minorities. Israel is the Holy Land not only for the Jewish people but also for the two other main religions. All of them definitely add colors, smells and tradition to the cultural life of this country.

The city of Tel Aviv for example is a leading city within the global gay community and attracts thousands of gay tourists into its main streets and beaches. "Live and let live" is the motto in the most liberal city of Israel, but beware – this lifestyle will not be welcomed in the capital of Israel, Jerusalem!

In the most vibrant city of Israel, Tel Aviv, in a country where religion has so much influence, it is more difficult these days to find a kosher restaurant than a restaurant that is not.

These non-kosher restaurants are open on Sabbath serving a wide variety of international cuisine including pork and seafood, which is not allowed by traditional religious rules and can't be bought in any supermarket in Israel (except for one chain that also operates its shops during the Sabbath).

The Israeli-born have a nick name: "Tsabar". In Hebrew it means the fruit of the cactus – indicating that Israelis are very prickly from the outside (sometime rude and quite noisy) but very juicy and sweet on the inside. So despite initial

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