

Shabbat



TEL AVIV

FRIENDLY LOW FARES

in Tel Aviv

Friday morning in the holy city of Jerusalem and many of its Jewish residents are deep in preparation for a weekend of peace, quiet and devout reflection. For as the sun sets upon the ancient, pink stone buildings **Shabbat** gets under way and the city seemingly breathes a tranquil sigh of rest. But all is not what it seems, as **Samantha Wilson** discovers.

A mere 40 miles away, a very different scene emerges as the weekend kicks off in the seaside city of Tel Aviv. The black sheep of the family, Tel Aviv is seen as Israel's rebel, a city whose fast-paced, hard-working and fun-loving way of life has drawn people from all over the country and abroad to make money and have plenty of fun spending it.

The first port of call for a true Tel Avivian Shabbat morning is breakfast in one of the city's profusion of open-air street cafes. One-of-a-kind clothes bought from the trendy Sheinkin Street boutiques are given an outing as the city's young, energetic residents sip perfectly blended coffees, recount the week's events and plan the weekend ahead. The UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site of Rothschild Boulevard forms the heart of cafe culture, the wide, tree-lined street dotted with pricey cafes whose patrons sit shoulder-to-shoulder. Sandwich bars, an unlikely super-trend, sit contrastingly amongst the clean, white Bauhaus

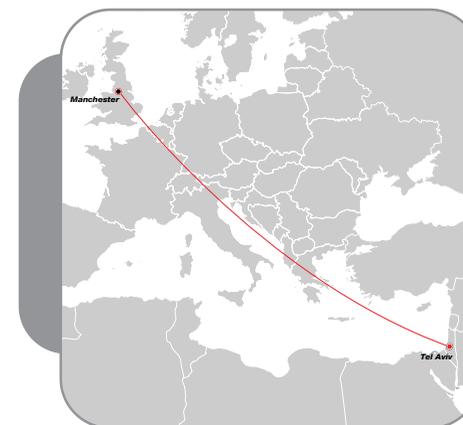
architecture that defines the boulevard. Musicians strum away at their chosen instruments while families, couples and the young and single chatter away on their mobile phones, nibble at non-kosher sandwiches and enjoy a morning of leisurely indulgence.

Tel Aviv's expanse of white sandy beach forms another hotspot for a Shabbat outing, the Herbert Samuel Promenade that stretches from the northern tip of the city to the old city of Jaffa, a traffic jam of pushchairs, bicycles and skateboards. Be it the ultra-orthodox or the secular, the excitable young or the elderly, the foreign or the local, the promenade forms a cosmopolitan highway of cultures, faiths and interests. Strutting is the name of the game here and all and sundry come to parade their pedigree dogs, muscular army bodies, designer sunglasses or bat-and-ball skills.

Come nightfall and Tel Aviv's laid-back atmosphere disappears with the setting sun and it's time to party. Through to the small

hours and the heart of Shabbat, Tel Avivians dance the night away. From the boho pubs to the raucous bars to the racy, pumping techno clubs, Tel Aviv's nightlife is a sight to behold in a country often regarded as being under the thumb of religion and tradition.

For Tel Avivians have chosen to defy the traditions and leave religious adherence to others. In this city, Shabbat is not a time to hunker down for a weekend of quiet reflection; it is a time to unwind from a week of hard-work in a competitive, progressive city. Here in Tel Aviv, the main Shabbat concerns are what to wear, where to be seen and where to party.



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