



SARA LIEBERMAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A taste of Israel worth savoring

ISRAEL FROM F3

It would be a little over an hour's drive back to Amirim, a small vegetarian community where I'd booked an Airbnb — not because I don't eat meat but because it was well situated for the places I'd be visiting. Also, it looked peaceful.

My so-called "Solitary Cabin," however, ended up being a bit too remote — despite the presence of countless ants, mosquitoes, cats and, I learned after two sleepless nights, a wild pig. So the following day I high-tailed it back to the coast and checked into the lovely Shtarkman Erna Hotel in the resort town of Nahariya. Run by two generations of women, the 30-room guesthouse is yet another example of keeping it all in the family, complete with heirlooms and sepia-toned portraits hung as decor.

It's a good thing I filled my plate (twice!) at the extensive breakfast buffet because my first stop of the day was back inland at Malka Brewery in Tefen.

Forget Goldstar, the Budweiser of the Holy Land. Malka, which means "queen" in Hebrew, offers those with discerning tastes something a bit more, well, royal to guzzle — and two different spots from which to do so: Queen's Court, overlooking Yehiam Valley and Haifa Bay, hosts live music in an outdoor courtyard setting; while Queen's Salon, which I visit, has a second-floor taproom overlooking the production warehouse, where tasting flights feature an Irish stout, Belgian blond and more.

It only takes a pint to make my stomach rumble again. And what's the next best thing to an ice-cold beer on a hot day? Ice cream, of course. Or, as it's known in Hebrew, glida. Which is precisely why the founders of Buza Ice Cream, which has six locations throughout the country, decided to call their brand Buza: ice cream in Arabic.



ORI ACKERMAN



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ABOVE: The view from the outdoor tasting area at Lotem Winery looks out over the Sakhnin Valley on Kibbutz Lotem in Western Galilee. **LEFT:** Dried fruits and fresh salads are a highlight of the breakfast buffet at Shtarkman Erna Hotel in Nahariya. **BELOW LEFT:** Visitors can stay in a chic cabin at the Assaf Winery in the Golan Heights. **BELOW RIGHT:** The latest varietal at Lotem Winery is an orange wine named after one of the co-owner's dogs — Shnorkel.

"It's better than just saying ice cream in Hebrew," says 33-year-old Adam Ziv, who founded the company with 36-year-old Alaa Sweitat, a chef from Tarshiha. "It gives a little bit of mystery to the Jews and a bit of respect and familiarity to the Arabs."

The pair believes uniting the two cultures is just as important as making flavorful spoonfuls of salted toffee and mascarpone cherry.

"We can use business as a bridge to connect," says Ziv, who is Jewish, while Sweitat is Muslim. "We can compromise and learn from each other."

At the parlor and production facility on Kibbutz Sasa, a uniformed Israeli soldier tucks into a cup of strawberry sorbet while a family of four samples seemingly every flavor.

"I think we understand two things when other [businesses] only understand one," says Ziv. "First, we are precise and we have knowledge; and the second is we are creative and we care about raw materials. We see the whole picture."

As I attempt to keep my two-scoop cinnamon cardamom cone from dribbling down my arm, I recall that expansive view back at Lotem. By immersing themselves in such a rich land and focusing on both quality and community, these Israelis really are making masterpieces.

travel@washpost.com

Lieberman is a writer based in Paris. Her website is saralieberman.com. Find her on Twitter and Instagram: @saraglieberman

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If you go

WHERE TO STAY

Assaf Winery

Route 91, about a mile north of Archery Junction

011-972-54-391-5552

assafwinery.com

This multigeneration estate in the Golan offers a variety of wine experiences to day-trippers and those seeking a longer respite thanks to cozy cabins, a gastronomic cafe and more. Rooms from about \$440, including wine tastings and meals.

Shtarkman Erna Hotel

Jabotinski St. 29, Nahariya

011-972-04-992-0170

sernahotel.co.il

With 60 years under their belt, the Shtarkmans treat guests like family and their boutique hotel feels both contemporary and nostalgic at the same time with ancestor portraits

hung above plush velvet sofas. Rooms from about \$195, including breakfast.

WHERE TO EAT

Pelter Winery

Kibbutz Ein Zivan, Route 91

011-972-77-910-0355

pelter.co.il

This well-known family winery offers visitors to its production facility a degustation with places to sit and imbibe both inside among steel tanks full of fermenting wine and outdoors where used oak barrels act as tables. Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Wine and spirit tastings about \$14 per person.

Lotem Winery

Kibbutz Lotem

011-972-73-394-3305

lotemwinery.co.il

Come for the variety of organic

wines and seasonal small plates, but stay for the incredible valley view at this kibbutz-based winery where music plays on speakers 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to help "make the wine better," according to winemaker Jonatan Koren. Open by appointment only Sunday through Wednesday; open 7 p.m. Thursday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and open 11 a.m. Saturday. Closing times vary. Starting price per person for five-wine tasting is about \$14.

Malka Brewery

ET Migdal Tefen

011-972-54-871-3311

malkabeer.co.il

Find tastings and free tours that show the beer-making process at the production facility of this craft brewery, founded in 2006 by former Tel Aviv bartender Assaf Lavi. There's also a taproom with a horseshoe-shaped bar and communal tables where customers

can eat cafe-style fare. Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday through Friday. Tours offered between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Friday only. Tastings about \$8 per person, tours free.

Buza Ice Cream

Kibbutz Sasa

011-972-04-691-8880

buzaisrael.co.il

The kibbutz location of this artisanal ice cream brand, whose goal it is to bridge cultures through a love of raw ingredients, acts as both a public parlor and a visitor center that hosts production tours and children's workshops. Open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. Production tours and children's workshops about \$17, ice cream about \$3.50.

INFORMATION

westgalil.org.il/

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