

DREAMS COME TRUE

This holiday season, come visit the Western Galilee. Enjoy scenic views and nature walks, stop at unique tourist attractions, and meet people who are living their dreams

Dan Zeller

Living Our Dreams" is in fact the motto of the Western Galilee Now association, which unites artists, wine-makers, cheesemakers, chefs, tour guides, craftsmen and boutique lodge operators in the region, emphasizing Western Galilee's culinary, cultural, historical and geographical riches.

These small business owners serve as a direct link between tourists and the region's unique products and services. They include Jews, Muslims, Christians and Druze, who put politics aside and joined forces to promote tourism in the Western Galilee. At the association's information center, in a beautiful old building on Salah Din Street in Old Acre, which

was set up by JNF-USA, you can get recommendations for one or several days of travel, learn about small and magical places, and meet special people. You can use the association's advisors or go to the website which is packed with information and recommendations: www.westgalil.org.il. In anticipation of the Jewish holidays, we decided to introduce you



Tour guide Omri Avidar

"LIVING OUR DREAMS" IS THE MOTTO OF THE 'WESTERN GALILEE NOW' ASSOCIATION, WHICH UNITES SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS CATERING TO THE REGION'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

Itai Avidar



Dalit Ben Shalom in her mosaic studio

Naama Amirav

to people who have achieved their dreams by opening a tourism business into which they put their hearts and souls.

Dalit Ben Shalom's mosaic studio at Kibbutz Yehiam

Even before entering Ben Shalom's studio at Kibbutz Yehiam, you can see the mosaic statues that she created and placed among the surrounding trees. Ben Shalom, who has been a mosaic artist for over 15 years, works in her colorful studio, which used to be used for drying tobacco leaves. The place is decorated with a large variety of items and decorative sculptures made of pottery, ceramics, mirror parts and sometimes also iron. Her inspiration for opening the studio and for the pieces she creates was her grandmother, who lost her entire world during the Holocaust, but did not lose the spirit of volunteerism and compassion and was a revolutionary feminist from an early age. Therefore, Ben Shalom chose to make the studio a place that is mainly for women, who come to tell their story through art and are

given complete freedom to express their feelings, compassion and love. In her studio, Ben Shalom presents her work, leads workshops for families and individuals, and offers special workshops for birthdays and events. She also creates large projects on commission.

Dalit Ben Shalom, Mosaic Studio, Kibbutz Yehiam, Tel: 052-3224431, www.mosaica.co.il

Omri Avidar: tour guide supreme

"I came to Kfar Vradim from Beit Zayit near Jerusalem to work with a small high-tech company that grew over time. About six years ago, I decided to change my life and I turned my hobby and love into a profession. I replaced buttoned shirts with my walking shoes, executive meetings with a cup of authentic coffee with my new friends, and instead of being a VPI became a tour guide. Since then, I am constantly smiling," says Omri Avidar, a certified tour guide and leader of high-adrenaline excursions. Avidar offers a wide range of expe-

riences in the Galilee landscape, including personal encounters with locals. His repertoire includes full-day adventures for companies or families, and entertaining games in the style of The Amazing Race TV show.

"Many times, when I visit people or special places here in the Galilee, I think to myself that I have traveled so far in the world in order to reach remote villages and experience folk festivals, when we actually have it all here in the Galilee, with an unusual wealth of cultures and customs, of history and religions and also of nature and landscapes. You just have to know, reach, be and experience... On my trips, I bring my travelers together in an experiential way with this wealth and leave them with unforgettable memories."

Omri Avidar, Tel: 054-4957737, www.omri-travel.co.il

Stern Winery in Kibbutz Tuval
The tall man with the big smile and bright eyes who meets the visitors at the Stern boutique winery is



Johnny Stern at his winery

Anatoly Michaelo

* WESTERN GALILEE

the owner and winemaker – Johnny Stern. His impressive height attests to his life-long love of basketball. He played for Israel's national youth team, for Hapoel Nahariya and other teams. Stern, who immigrated from Brazil at the age of 15, worked as a sales manager for a chemical company, but decided 15 years ago that his mission was to make wine. He set up a boutique winery with the help of his family and friends.

The winery, which is located in Kibbutz Tuval, is a magical site with intoxicating aromas of wooden barrels and wine, a large table at its center for welcoming guests and a luxurious seating area. Stern produces unique blends, such as Rotem, Peleg and Yonatan, and wines from single varietals – Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Petit Verdot, Sauvignon Blanc and Rosé. These wines bring the winery many accolades and awards in local and international competitions. In addition to wine tastings, visitors can also sample boutique cheeses and even indulge in pre-arranged meals.

Stern Winery, Kibbutz Tuval, Tel: 054-3034361, www.stern-winery.co.il



Tamar & Gefen B&B

Amaly Michaleo

La Pampa restaurant in Mitzpe Hila

In Mitzpe Hila, on a spacious home balcony overlooking the Galilee's green landscape, lies La Pampa, an Argentinian smoked-meat restaurant. Ilanit and Eran Tabachnik, who own both the home and the restaurant, serve fine cuts of meat from the smoker. Argentinian specialties, such as empanadas, fatty chorizo sausages, homemade bread, chimi-

churri and various salads, accompany the meat. Eran, an accomplished cooking enthusiast who was born in Argentina, and Ilanit, an Israeli native of Nahariya and a graduate of design studies, love to eat, cook and host. They decided to set up the restaurant of their dreams right inside their home in Mitzpe Hila, where they live with their two children. The special, laid-back atmosphere that surrounds the home infuses the hospitality experience. The dishes flow leisurely and are brought to the table with a smile and with explanations about the meat-smoking process. Their daughter was also recruited into the business and is in charge of preparing the empanadas.

La Pampa Restaurant, Mitzpe Hila, Tel: 052-2951177, www.lapampa.co.il

Tamar & Gefen B&B and Winery in Mitzpe Hila

Tamar and Yaron Cohen built the lodge and winery with their own hands, with rare attention to the beautiful and intimate spots, among oak trees, olives and vines in Mitzpe Hila. The complex has three luxury cottages, a boutique winery, a vineyard and a wine culture center. In the family vineyard, grapes are grown from a unique Spanish variety –

tempranillo. The guests at Tamar & Gefen are invited to tour the winery and hear about the wine-making process on site.

The worlds of wine and vineyards are not strange to Tamar and Yaron. Tamar, a graphic designer by profession, is from a family that produced wines and alcoholic beverages in Europe. Her grandparents, upon immigrating to Israel, set up a nursery for vines, which was the first to grow vine seedlings using modern and clean methods. Yaron, who comes from a family of farmers from Moshav Avdon in the Western Galilee, grew up among orchards, chicken coops and tractors. Over the years, he decided to follow his heart, planted a vineyard in Mitzpe Hila right next to the house, and specialized in winemaking. With his golden hands, he built the three cottages and created his own wooden and ornamental items that decorate the surroundings. In every corner you can feel their love for hospitality and the warmth and comfort they give their guests from the first moment.

Tamar & Gefen, Mitzpe Hila, Tel: 050-9978911, www.tamar-gefen.co.il

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For more information, go to www.westgalil.org.il



The Tabachniks at their restaurant

Amaly Michaleo