

The year is 1896. In the Neftali Mountains up North, isolated from any other settlement and surrounded by Arab villages, another village is established by the House of the Baron of Rothschild. Metula is the northern most town in Israel, a pastoral place surrounded by high mountains which are blessed with gentle touches of snow in the winter, covered with layers of primroses and anemones in the springtime and in the summer abundant with red apple trees. This is a place of old European style stone houses adorned with Oriental archways, of small restaurants with wooden tables and flower-print tablecloths, but most of all, Metula is a rich source of stories and legends.

Tough Beginnings

Ehud Nishtein, whose grandfather belonged to one of the 59 families that were chosen by the Baron of Rothschild's people to settle Metula over some 100 hundred years ago, excitedly points towards the Ayun waterfall - one of the four waterfalls which surround the settlement. "Move to Metula, beat the malaria epidemic and save yourself", he quotes what could easily have been the Israeli Zionist Movement's first slogan in 1901, designed to persuade the pioneers to come to Metula and fight malaria. The settlers spent their first years in Metula struggling with disease, theft, and other hardships. Following the British conquest of Palestine, the Galilee region was handed over to the French, under whom the area became a lawless Wild West. Things were so bad that the inhabitants of Metula had to abandon the village in 1920. The settlers returned after a short while and built Metula anew. During the War of Independence, the villagers fought at the Northern front and remained in the line of fire until the Golan Heights were captured in 1967.

Ever since, the village has been branded in the collective memory of Israel because of the Lebanon War, which had a strong impact on daily life in the village. One of the most famous sites associated with Metula is the **Good Fence**, established in



NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Stroll through Israel's northern most town and enjoy its breathtaking natural surroundings, its modern treats, and the abundance of its contemporary history - recounted by primary sources. Courtesy of the Baron of Rothschild

Eldar Galor



order to provide humanitarian help to inhabitants of southern Lebanon.

A Preserved Heritage

HaRishonim St., Metula's main street, embodies the heart of the charming village and presents the town's elaborate history in a nutshell. It is also one of the country's most pleasant streets, overflowing with serenity, romance and a country atmosphere. Signs narrate the history of every building, some of which are over 100 years old, and of the families that lived in them, while Metula's doyens are often happy to recount some of the town's eccentric legends.

HaRishonim St. starts out at the **library** (1 HaRishonim St, 04-6950777), a large public building which was used in the past as the village school. Further down, the **Rabbi's House**, which used to house the village's rabbis, has been conserved in its original form since 1902. Over the years it was turned into the Farmer's House and today it houses the museum and archives. Another interesting building is the village **synagogue**.

Don't miss the **Arts House** (6 HaRishonim St., 052-2354885), an old building which was renovated and transformed into a modern art gallery. A breathtaking view of the Neftali Mountains, the Lebanon Valley, Mount Hermon and Syria spreads out from the gallery.

A Taste of History

Most of Metula's finer restaurants are located along HaRishonim St. **Beit Lishansky** (42 HaRishonim St., 04-6997184) was built in 1936 on foundations dating back to 1896. The Lishansky family prepares their dishes according to the same cooking techniques used for over 100 years. Like the architecture, the menu combines elements of western and Turkish-Arabic cuisine. Recommended dishes are: the lamb Osso Bucco stew, cooked with root vegetables and herbs and served on a bed of mashed potatoes in cream, and the yoghurt soup in a purée of nectarines and white peaches, glazed with olive oil. Chef Clary Lishansky promises that the place has more to offer than fine food, →



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you'll also get your full of fascinating stories about Metula's history and her own family.

The **Farmer's House** restaurant (21 HaRishonim St., 04-6997177) is located in an authentic 19th century building. It was founded by the sons of Israel Prize winner Ester Levit, and between the walls of stone and chaff you can still detect the scent of her famous apple pies, which she used to bake for the soldiers who served at the northern border. Today the restaurant is run by chef Yossi Weintraub, who offers a diverse menu, ranging from lamb spareribs cooked in honey and soy sauce and served on a bed of mashed potatoes in sweet and sour barbecue sauce to Metula apple strudel.

A Tibetan Trumpet and Squash

Get ready for a magical journey through the history of musical instruments with **Zami's Music Box** (5 Mitzpe Achula St., 04-6997073). Zami, a talented musician and quite the connoisseur, will accompany you, with the over 200 instruments he has in his home, including an ancient harpsichord, an organ, a



Tibetan trumpet, a bagpipe and an Indian conch.

The **Canada Center** (1 HaRishonim St., 04-6950307) is a sports training colony with a European atmosphere, the highlight of which are two ice skating rinks – Israel's largest. One of them is an Olympic rink and hosts national and even international competitions. The center also offers two swimming pools, one of which is indoors and heated, a sophisticated spa center, squash courts, volleyball, basketball, judo, bowling and football.

Galilean Hospitality

Metula has dozens of rooms and guesthouses to let scattered across

the town. **BeGoren** (14 HaGoren St., 04-6940464) is owned by the Nishtein family and offers 4 family units, 4 double units and a luxury suite. The rooms are located around a large lawn with a pool and fruit tress.

Another recommended place for the night is the **Rozenthal Estate** (3 Duvdevan St., 04-6940791). It offers 8 double units which can be extended into family units. The rooms are spread out around a large lawn with lots of fruit trees, sitting areas and a barbecue area.

Along HaRishonim St. you'll find several hotels, the most famous of which are the **Alaska Inn** (No.15, 04-6997111), **Erezim Hotel** (No.46 04-6997143) and **HaMavri Hotel** (No.15, 04-6997337). All prices vary around NIS 500 per night including breakfast.

Nearby

There are a number of hiking routes outside of town. There is 1.5 hour trek along **Nachal Ayun**, through the four beautiful waterfalls of Ayun, HaTachana, HaAshed and HaTanur. During the spring, the strong flows and the blossoming of rare wild flowers attract many visitors.

If you're up for a drive, try the **Dado lookout**, named after the late Chief of Staff David Elazar, which is located above Metula and offers a panoramic view of the region. On the way to the lookout, you can visit the ruins of the biblical city of "Avela Beit Ma'acha".

The Upper Galilee region has an array of other fascinating cultural sites to offer. A short drive from Metula towards Kiryat Shemona will lead you to the **Photography Museum** at the Tel Hai industrial park (04-6950769), where alternating exhibitions are on display. **Beit HaShomer** (04-6941565), the HaShomer organization's historical museum, is located on Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, where you can see the organizations' secret stash that dates back to before the establishment of Israel and has just recently been divulged. Another museum in the area is the **Nature Museum** on Kibbutz Dan (04-6941704), where you can observe the rich variety of Upper Galilean fauna and flora. ●