

Cutting-Edge Tourism

Hof Ashkelon has some of the country's most interesting sites.

By BARRY DAVIS

While areas close to the Gaza Strip may largely attract headlines for the wrong reasons, Yair Farjoun and his friends from the area say there are a lot of positive aspects to life in the Hof Ashkelon Regional Council area and many reasons to take a trip there.

As head of the council, Farjoun is the brains and the driving force behind the local Tourism to the Edge program, which is designed to bring in people to get a closer look at some of the attractions in the area.

One of the attractions is, quite literally, on the edge – the crossing point between Moshav Netiv Ha'asara and the Gaza Strip just a few meters away. The high gray concrete security wall is the physical basis for the creation of The Peace Path mosaic, using colorful pieces of pottery made in the moshav, which are glued to the wall. Farjoun started the project in the summer by putting in the first mosaic parts, and now anyone can come along, buy a small bag of pottery and add to the growing mosaic.

You can come and take part in some hands-on agriculture by picking your own organic fruit and vegetables, putting them in a basket and buying produce you have picked with your own hands.

Farjoun and his partners also wish to bring religious Jews to the area, so the council has lined up tours for that sector.

The tour takes in the Gush Katif Heritage Center on Moshav Nitzan. The center holds exhibitions, films documenting the early days of Jewish settlement and stories of the settlers.

The tour also takes in a visit to the synagogue at Kibbutz Nitzanim and visitors can learn about the history of the kibbutz, as well as present-day life there.

The compact kibbutz museum houses some impressive artifacts from the very beginnings of the state, such as a Rosh Hashana prayer book written from memory by two Israeli soldiers during nine months of captivity in Egypt.

All that walking and learning about the local history can make one hungry, so the kibbutz restaurant offers excellent meals for very reasonable prices.

Over at Moshav Berechya there is the interesting Djerba Jewry Center, which shows cultural items and offers information about the history of the Jewish community of southeastern Tunisia. The story of the Yemenite community is retold at Moshav Mashen.

One of the main items on the Hof Ashkelon attractions list is the Coast to Coast Path of Light road.

The trail, which is still in the works, takes a twisting road around the area's limits from Zikim Beach to Nitzanim Beach.

The 50km trail is designed for all ages and all levels of fitness and comfort. Once finished, it will be possible to walk its full length on foot, by bicycle or by car. Parts of the trail are already open to the public, and the project is going to be finished next year.

Visitors can also get a close look at a local agricultural work at the Yemini family greenhouses to the south of Ashkelon.

There are more tasty foods on offer at the Kmehin restaurant at Kibbutz Yad Mordechai, which is famous for the honey made there and sold all over the country.

For more information: 052-396-2520, www.hof-ashkelon.org.il and www.goisrael.gov.il.



(SAPIR BUCHRIS)

Dictionary

Headlines	הדלינו	כותרות
Regional Council	ריג'ל קאונסיל	מועצה אזורית
Force	פורס	כוח
Local	לוקל	מקומית
Literally	ליטרלי	באופן מילולי
Concrete	קונקרטי	בטון
Mosaic	מוזאיק	פסיפס
Pottery	פוטרי	חרס
Agriculture	אגריקולצ'ר	חקלאות
Produce	פרודוס	תוצרת
Heritage	הריטג'	מורשת
Exhibitions	אגזיבישנז	תערוכות
Settlement	סטלמנט	התיישבות
Synagogue	סינגוג	בית כנסת
Impressive	אימפרסיב	מרשימים
Artifacts	ארטיפקטס	חפצי אמנות
Captivity	קפטיביטי	שבי
Reasonable	ריזנבל	הגיוניים
Community	קומיוניטי	קהילה
Path	פת'	דרך
Trail	טריל	שביל
Comfort	קומפורט	נוחות
Possible	פוסיבל	אפשרי
Greenhouses	גרינהאוסז	חממות

