

CityLife

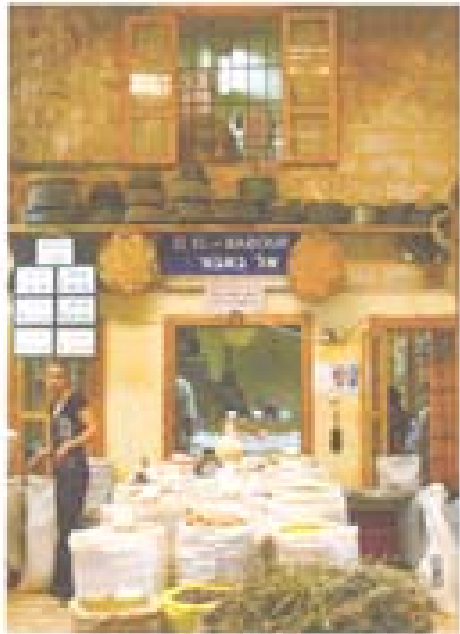
UP NEXT

And Now Announcing ... Nazareth

Israel's largest Arab urban center (pop. about 55,000) is forever identified with its most famous citizen, Jesus. Recently, more than a city stop for pilgrimage tours of Galilee, Nazareth was given a facelift for the Papal millennium visit. In the process, this city nestled in the hills of Lower Galilee revealed itself as a unique modern Arab cultural experience in the heart of a predominantly Jewish country. With its vibrant history and an evolving culinary scene, this formerly sleepy town is a worthy weekend stopover.

The four-bus park at the **Basilica of the Annunciation**, where Roman Catholics believe the Archangel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary. But just off of Paul VI Street, the traffic falls into meandering lanes and piazzas with centuries-old mansions. In one of these restored Arab mansions, entrepreneur Mazzi Iron opened the **Fauzi Azar Inn**. The friendly hostel has a high painted ceiling, marble floors, and a communal kitchen.

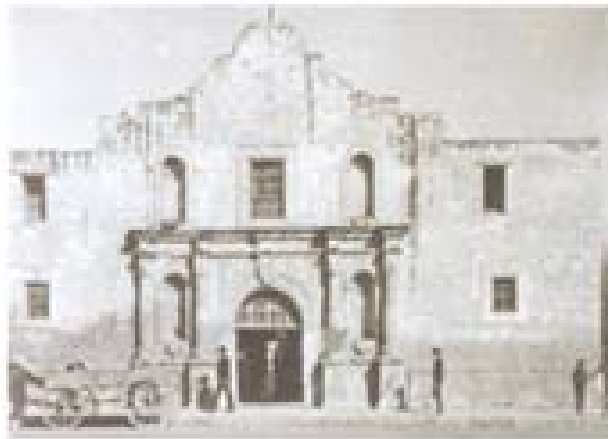
The **Synagogue-Church** is built on the site of the original synagogue where Jesus is supposed to have preached. On Annunciation Street, intoxicating smells waft from the **El Babour** mill and spice shop, where you can sample pine nuts, sugar-coated almonds, and freshly ground hysop. At local dining establishment **Diana**, try the house specialty, freshly ground lamb kebab. Before you leave Nazareth, take in the city's most unforgettable view from the **St. Gabriel Hotel**. Watch the sun set over the city, then stroll in the night breeze through the gardens of this former Catholic convent, as church bells ring and muezzins call for prayers from minarets below. —DAPHNE RAZ



Spices scent the air at the El Babour mill.

TRIP & MORE

"Cradle of Texas Liberty" Still Rocks



SAN ANTONIO By 1909, the Alamo (upper) had survived not only the legendary 1836 battle between Texas freedom fighters and the Mexican Army, but also occupation by Confederate troops and an attempt to turn part of the site into a hotel. Today, 2.5 million visitors a year walk the oak-filled gardens and check out artifacts like Davy Crockett's buckskin vest. All this traffic meant the chapel's interior limestone walls had become blackened by people running their hands along the stone. So staffers and history students armed with toothbrushes, sponges, and eco-friendly cleaning solution recently gave the place a good scrubbing. Now, the barrel-vaulted chapel (lower) is brighter and more serene than ever, making it impossible not to remember the Alamo. —CHRISTOPHER BURGESS

GOODS TO GO

Vancouver's Revolutionary Mall

"I think Vancouver is the new Venice," says architect Bing Thom, referring to the Italian city's medieval role linking Asia and Europe. "We're 11 hours to Beijing, and nine hours to London, so this is where the global economy is going to focus." If Vancouver is Venice, the Thom-designed **Aberdeen Centre** mall (www.aberdeen-centre.com) just might be its Rialto. "The owner wanted to build a shopping center like no other, so he went around the world shopping for shops. It's meant to capture the new international consciousness." The mall features the two-story Daiso, North America's first outpost of Japan's 100-yen department stores, where almost all merchandise—from socks and soap to CDs and ceramics—bears a \$2 (Canadian) tag. Another continental first is priced-right Hong Kong clothier Giordano (jeans from US \$24). Across the central atrium, A Light Idea purveys hard-to-find lighting fixtures. Living Colors hawks funky home decor (Thai silk Mao pillow cover, right, \$37). Upstairs, products range from curse-free voodoo dolls to name-brand luggage. Weary shoppers recuperate at the third-floor food court, where mountain views complement restaurant Aji-jiman's udon noodles. —JESSIE JOHNSTON

