

## Afula – capital of the Jezreel Valley

### Background

Afula, also known as "The Capital of the Valley," lies in the center of the Jezreel Valley (Emek Yizre'el) in the north of Israel. The city was founded in 1925 by a Zionist settlement company named "The American Zion Commonwealth" and at first was populated by Polish Jews who bought plots of land and settled in Afula. In the first years of the state, Afula absorbed thousands of immigrants from Iraq, Yemen and Romania. Two new neighborhoods were then built in the 1950s: Afula Illit and Givat HaMoreh, where new immigrants from North Africa and other places settled. In 1973 Afula became a city. In the 1990s the city also absorbed immigrants from Ethiopia. The great wave of immigration from the former USSR brought a considerable growth in the number of the city's residents, which today estimated around 50,000.

### Afula today

In recent years Afula's status has become stronger as capital of the Valley, in practice, and as a leading city that provides a high standard of living for its residents. The wave of development the city has achieved is expressed in the execution of projects in the fields of culture and leisure, infrastructure, construction, commerce and services, at the same time as development of the social services and concern for the individual. The city is divided into four major quarters: Downtown Afula, Afula Illit, Givat HaMoreh and Rova Yizre'el. In recent years the population of the city has grown, due to an accelerated wave of construction. According to the city plan, the municipality of Afula aspires to increase the city's population to 100,000 residents, while continuously improving and developing the standard of living and level of municipal services. Afula benefits from developed commercial enterprises that fit in with the mosaic of services and institutions enjoyed by the city's residents. The wave of real estate development is well felt throughout Afula, which is developing at an impressive pace. Residential building is continuing in full spate and consists of apartment buildings and private homes. Particular attention is devoted to the city's appearance: playgrounds, avenues and squares, gardening, lighting and landscaping make Afula a flourishing and well-kept city.

## **Education above all**

The Afula municipality meets the educational and social needs of 9,200 students in a variety of educational institutions, which address the needs of the secular, traditional and religious public. There are schools in Afula suitable for all the religious streams: state, state-religious and Haredi. Immigrant students will receive assistance and all their needs will be met when they join the municipal education system. The municipality encourages excellence in achievements and values in all the city's education systems, from the age of three until matriculation and readiness for academic studies. About a third of Afula's municipal budget is spent on education, which is at the top of the municipality's list of priorities. All the schools are near residential areas and are conveniently accessed by public transport. The high schools focus on the fields of science and the arts and encourage excellence and a significant matriculation diploma. The municipal conservatory is one of the best schools for the study of music in Israel. This institution teaches instrumental playing and musical theory and has representative choirs, classical music ensembles and more. The average percentage of students taking matriculation exams in the city is above the national average and the percentages of IDF enlistment among men and women are above 90%. Near Afula, a few minutes journey from the city, is the Yizre'el Valley College, a leading academic center in the region, which offers a variety of opportunities to study for Bachelor's and higher degrees.

## **Housing in Afula**

In recent years, Afula has undergone an accelerated process of development and construction. The city offers dozens of new residential projects, which are under construction in different areas of the city, in accordance with the potential growth in population. Housing prices in Afula are among the lowest in Israel for new projects. A new four-room apartment purchased from a contractor in an apartment building in a new neighborhood costs from 220,000 dollars and a five-room apartment from 255,000 dollars. A large stand-alone house in a prestigious neighborhood costs from 390,000 dollars. Among the main projects under construction in the city today are:

- Rova Yizre'el, located near to the Afula–Tiberias road. There are plans for 4,500 apartments and houses to be built in this neighborhood. So far, more than 1,800 have been built and construction continues at an energetic pace. The neighborhood's proximity to the city's park, the shopping complex, the railroad and public buildings, makes the area particularly attractive for new residents.
- The C1 complex, which is located near the Afula–Nazareth road and the Afula–Tiberias road, is planned to include 1,850 apartments and houses. The new neighborhood is within short walking distance of the train station, which is under construction, and is expected to become even more in demand because of its proximity to public institutions, the excellent road system and the railroad.
- Complex 17,000, which is located in Afula Illit, is expected to come onto the market soon as a new community neighborhood, consisting of some 1,700 apartments and houses. Construction of the residential neighborhood in the area between Afula Illit and Route 65, which is planned to be built nearby, will include fast access to an intercity road. The planned neighborhood's surroundings are characterized by outstandingly large green areas and an amazing view, and nearby public institutions.

### **Employment in Afula**

The Afula municipality will guide residents seeking employment in the private and public sectors, in accordance with their qualifications and with the aim of integrating them in the labor market as quickly and effectively as possible. The sources of employment in Afula are varied and they include industrial zones, commercial areas, government offices, medical services and professionals who serve the residents of the city and the entire region. Afula's unique location on central crossroads also enables its residents to have fast and convenient access to large centers of employment near the city. The Emek Medical Center is the biggest employer in Afula – more than 2,000 employees in a variety of medical and auxiliary jobs. The regional Medical Center located in the city's center, has some 550 beds and contains advanced medical departments. The city's industrial and employment areas include the Alon Tavor industrial zone, with over 50 factories employing some 5,000 people, two industrial zones in Afula Illit that contain advanced factories employing hundreds of workers, and the Kiryat Amitay

employment zone for commerce and services. The Emek Yizre'el college, where some 5,000 students study, is located a few minutes' drive from the city and also has hundreds of employees. A high tech park is planned to be built near the train station, and will include knowledge-based industry: high tech, biotech and med tech, and other innovative industries.

### **Culture and leisure in Afula**

Afula offers its residents a wide variety of cultural and leisure activities. The Auditorium, located in the city center, is a home to the dramatic arts in the metropolitan area of Afula and has more than 700 seats. The Auditorium stages series of the best plays, concerts, dance shows, entertainment performances, and children's plays, and hosts leading artists. The municipal art gallery, adjacent to the Auditorium, has a permanent exhibition "Afula – First Days and Renewal" and a number of exhibition halls for changing art exhibitions. The Afula city park, located in Rova Yizre'el, covers an area of 120 dunams and has extensive lawns, an amphitheater for plays and performances with 2,400 seats and room for some further 10,000 people on the open lawns, sports grounds and facilities, and a petting zoo, which adds to the enjoyment of the visiting children. There are four large shopping complexes in the city, with leading brands and chains from Israel and abroad and also a mall, in the heart of the city's commercial area. The shopping centers offer a wide range of shops, a number of good restaurants and numerous cafes.

### **Sport in Afula**

Afula encourages a healthy life and popular and professional sport. The country club, located in the city, is among the most beautiful health and fitness centers in Israel. The facility has a covered swimming pool, heated in the winter, a large outdoor pool, a well-equipped gym, a spa, and activity rooms for children and adults. The sport and leisure complex in Afula Illit, the most central and biggest in the city, contains another swimming pool, a football stadium of international standard, training facilities and an upgraded basketball hall. A new tennis center is now being built and it will become an attraction for sport enthusiasts from the entire area. The city of Afula encourages sport as a way of life among students

and adults, and hundreds of children take part in many varied sport activities, including soccer schools, basketball, artistic gymnastics, acrobatics, boxing, swimming, volleyball, and more.

### **Afula – a safe city**

A special Ministry of Internal Security program in Afula makes it possible to operate a municipal police force, which combines police officers and municipal inspectors. Vehicles patrol the city and its neighborhoods 24 hours a day. The city patrol works in addition to the police force, with the aim of improving the quality of life in the city, increasing availability to residents, preventing vandalism, maintaining order and cleanliness in the city's streets and public facilities, enforcing city bylaws, preventing burglaries and increasing the feeling of personal security.

### **Afula – a green city**

Green thinking is an inseparable part of municipal planning and the residents' lives. Afula leads in the field of garbage recycling and 40% of household waste is recycled. The Afula municipality encourages environmental planning and gardening that suits Israel's climate. In the near future, a revolution will begin in the city's streets, when the street lighting will be replaced with economical, visually pleasant LED lighting. The Afula municipality is building cycle paths to encourage the use of green transportation and improve the residents' health.

### **Young people and teenagers in Afula**

Afula attaches supreme importance to fostering youth, the future generation, as leaders of the environment. 3,200 young people aged 12–17 participate in the activities of youth movements, youth centers, the municipal leadership center, encouragement of social involvement, the center for preparation for significant IDF service and a variety of other activities, which are united under the municipal youth department. The municipal youth council and the active youth movements make Afula a lively and attractive city for all ages. The Young People's Center

meets the overall needs of ages 18–35 in the fields of higher education, employment, and career development, as well as social involvement, absorption in the city, culture and leisure.

### **Absorbing Aliya and incentives for new immigrants in Afula**

Each new immigrant who comes to the city will be accompanied personally by the Absorption Division, including a comprehensive explanation of municipal services and the department's activities. The immigrants are invited to take part in projects initiated by the municipality for new immigrants, including activities for all the family, special events, etc. The division will make arrangements for immigrants of all ages in the first stages of absorption until their complete integration in the life of the community, with emphasis on help for schoolchildren. The Absorption Division coordinates the different organizations' activity, according to countries of origin, and maintains close contact with them, in order to advance activity and contact with the immigrants. The public enquiries coordinator fully responds to enquiries relating to the municipality and municipal services. The division runs groups for studying Hebrew, at various different levels, as a first bridge to the link to the community and the country. The authority encourages immigrant artists and multicultural art and their exposure in the community.

**We invite you to live in a city with a high standard of living, pleasant residential surroundings and a variety of housing opportunities at particularly attractive prices.**

**Come and build your home in Afula – the capital of the Valley.**