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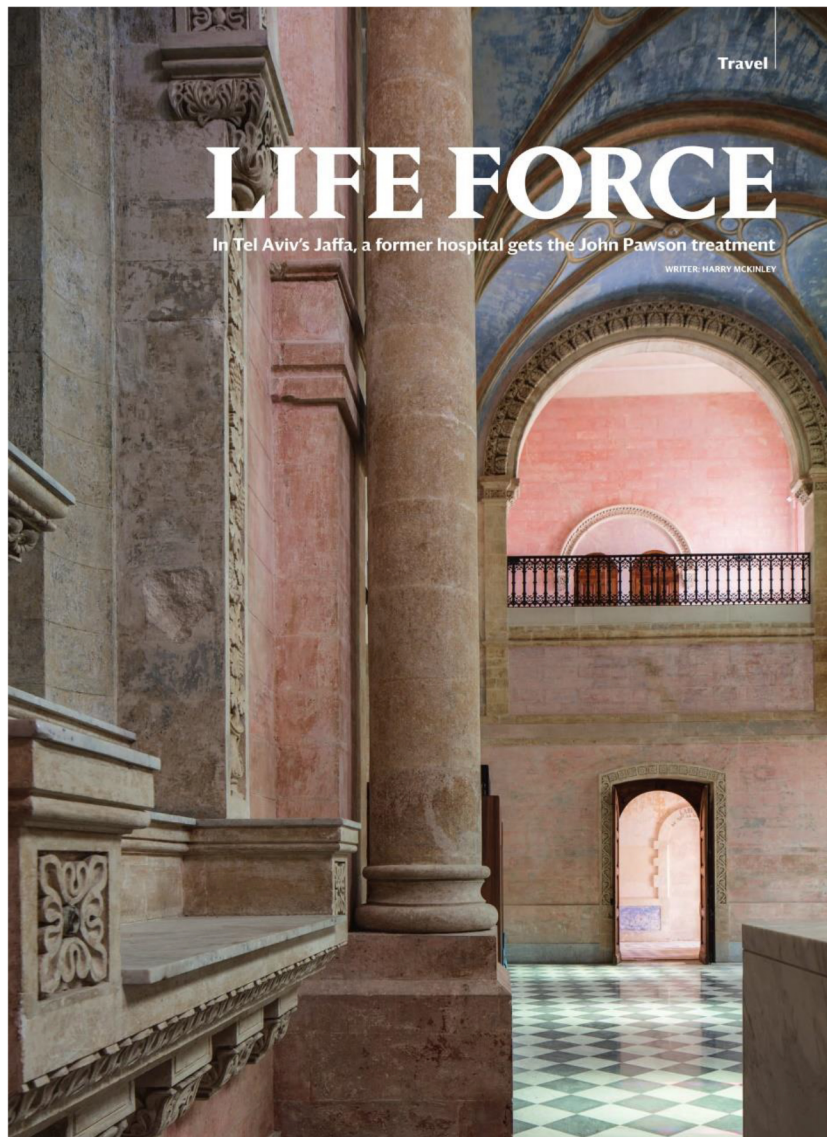


LIFE FORCE

In Tel Aviv's Jaffa, a former hospital gets the John Pawson treatment

WRITER: HARRY MCKINLEY

Travel



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Jaffa, the oldest neighbourhood in modern-day Tel Aviv-Yafo, is famed as the port of departure in the biblical story of Jonah and the whale. Today, cranes punctuate the skyline, scaffolding is as synonymous with the area as its golden cobbled streets, and there have long been gripes that Jaffa would eventually share a similar fate to the man in the tale and be swallowed up – in this case by glossy hotel and residential developments. Thankfully, most recent projects have been sympathetic to the area's historic character and distinct aesthetic, the latest being The Jaffa Tel Aviv, a 120-room luxury hotel and 32 residences close to the district's ancient centre.

A renovated 19th-century hospital combined with a substantial new-build, the hotel is a cross-continental collaboration: the original structure, crumbling and deserted, was purchased by US-based RFR Holding's Aby Rosen, who saw its potential

and enlisted British designer John Pawson to help oversee its impressive transformation. 'I'd invited John to Jaffa to study the property and its surroundings. He immediately picked up on the historical importance of the port; the textures, patterns and cultural diversity of the area', recalls Rosen. 'He understood that I wanted the design of the hotel to reflect this extraordinary legacy.'

Along with local architect Ramy Gill, Pawson devised a scheme that would juxtapose contemporary and classic elements, and also designed the adjoining new building. The result sees grand Roman columns with Corinthian cornices branch, tree-like, above

a minimalist marble reception desk in the lobby; ornate stained-glass windows throw pillars of mottled colour across austere furnishings; while outside, the façade of the old hospital, with its arched windows and sturdy architectural detailing, sits neatly beside the contemporary wing, with its robust, angular lines. Here, window boxes bring to mind an inventive new take on the classic mashrabiya, an apt reference to the area's intrinsically Arab personality.

The hotel's rooms, meanwhile, reflect the warm, neutral tones of Jaffa's rampant stonework, and in the furniture there's arguably a wink to the Bauhaus style for which wider Tel Aviv is renowned. And while the area is home to some of the city's best eateries, guests will find a diverse collection of restaurants within The Jaffa, from a Jewish deli to a New York-style Italian. ★
4 Louis Pasteur Street, Tel Aviv; tel: 972 3 516 2000, thejaffahotel.com. Rates: from \$500

THE 19TH-CENTURY BUILDING'S NATURAL STONE (ABOVE LEFT) SETS THE TONE FOR THE UNDERSTATED ROOMS (ABOVE RIGHT). THE FORMER CHAPEL (COMPOSITE) HAS BEEN RESTORED AND REPURPOSED AS A LOUNGE AND BAR

Photography: Amiri Ceron