The Bahá'í Gardens



The Bahá'í Gardens in Acre (Bahjí): The Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and the Mansion of Bahjí

The **Bahá'í Gardens in Acre**, at **Bahjí**, about 3 km north of the Old City of Acre, surround the **Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh**, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, the holiest place for Bahá'ís worldwide and the direction they face in prayer. The site began as a garden planted by Sulayman Pasha, the Ottoman ruler of Acre, in the early 19th century. A mansion was later built there by a Christian merchant of Acre, and

Bahá'u'lláh lived in it from 1879 until his death in 1892. It lies beside the lands of the Palestinian village of al-Manshiyya, captured and depopulated in May 1948. Since 2008 it has been part of a UNESCO World Heritage site. This guide covers the history of Bahjí, its gardens and buildings, the other Bahá'í sites in Acre, and the Palestinian story of the place.

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Quick facts

The Bahá'í Gardens in Acre at a glance

Arabic name	حدائق البهائيين في عكا / البهجة
Location	Bahjí, about 3 km north of the Old City of Acre
Origin	Garden planted by Sulayman Pasha, ruler of Acre, early 19th century
Mansion of Bahjí	Built 1870 by Udi Khammar, a Christian merchant of Acre
Bahá'u'lláh	Lived there from 1879; died 29 May 1892

Shrine	Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, the qiblah of the Bahá'í Faith
Gardens	Laid out from the 1950s; "Most Holy Precincts" of about 13,000 m² designated 1953
Neighbouring village	Al-Manshiyya, depopulated 14 May 1948
UNESCO	World Heritage since 8 July 2008, with the Bahá'í holy places in Haifa
Entry	Free; outer gardens daily, shrine Friday–Monday mornings

The name: Bahjí

"Bahjí" comes from the Arabic word بهجة (bahja), meaning delight or joy. According to Bahá'í sources, the name was given by Fatima, daughter of Sulayman Pasha, the ruler of Acre, for whom the original garden was planted. The place was known in Arabic as Qasr al-Bahja (the Palace of Delight).

Location

Bahjí lies on the coastal plain about 3 km north of the walled Old City of Acre, close to the road to Nahariya. Its gardens stand on the lands of the former village of al-Manshiyya, and from the site one can see the walls of Acre, Haifa Bay and Mount Carmel, where the Shrine of the Báb rises above the terraces of Haifa.

History of Bahjí

- **Sulayman Pasha (early 19th century):** the Ottoman ruler of Acre planted a garden here for his daughter Fatima, who named it Bahjí.
- **Abdullah Pasha:** his successor developed the property and built a small residence for his mother. During the siege of Acre in 1831–1832, Ibrahim Pasha, son of Muhammad Ali of Egypt, used it as his headquarters.
- **The Jamal family and Udi Khammar:** the property passed to the

Jamal family of Acre. In 1870 Udi Khammar, a wealthy Christian merchant from Acre, bought land from them and built the present mansion over Abdullah Pasha's earlier building.

- **Bahá'u'lláh (1879–1892):** exiled by the Ottomans to Acre in 1868, Bahá'u'lláh lived first in the citadel and the Old City and then at the Mansion of Mazra'a. In September 1879, after an epidemic drove the owners away, he moved to Bahjí, where his son Abdu'l-Bahá first rented and later bought the mansion. Bahá'u'lláh died there before dawn on 29 May 1892 and was buried the same evening in an adjoining house.
- **Shoghi Effendi (1920s–1950s):** the head of the faith after Abdu'l-Bahá restored the mansion, which opened to pilgrims in 1932. From the 1950s he laid out the gardens, designated the "Most Holy Precincts" (Haram-i-Aqdas) around the shrine in 1953, and set up the wrought-iron Collins Gate in 1952.
- **1948:** during the war, Israeli authorities designated the shrine a holy place, while the neighbouring village of al-Manshiyya was captured and its people expelled.

The Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh

The shrine is a modest building next to the mansion, originally the house of Bahá'u'lláh's son-in-law. Its northernmost room holds Bahá'u'lláh's grave, surrounded by a covered garden courtyard with plants and Persian carpets. For Bahá'ís it is the holiest spot on earth and the **qiblah**, the direction they face in their obligatory prayers, fixed when Bahá'u'lláh was buried there in 1892. Shoghi Effendi planned a future superstructure of 95 marble columns, which has not yet been built.

The gardens

The gardens are laid out geometrically around the shrine and mansion, in four quadrants. The north-western quadrant, the "Most Holy Precincts" of about 13,000

m², was completed by Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice completed the other three. Gravel paths, lawns, flower beds, cypresses and old olive and citrus trees are punctuated by ornamental gates, wrought-iron lamps and stone and marble ornaments. The gardens are maintained by the Bahá'í World Centre with gardeners and volunteers from many countries.

Other Bahá'í sites in and around Acre

- **The prison in the citadel:** the cell in the Ottoman citadel of Acre where Bahá'u'lláh and his family were held after their arrival in 1868.
- **The House of Abbud:** a house in the Old City, originally owned by Udi Khammar, where Bahá'u'lláh lived in the 1870s.
- **The House of Abdullah Pasha:** a historic Ottoman house in the Old City where Abdu'l-Bahá later lived with his family.
- **The Mansion of Mazra'a:** a country house north of Acre where Bahá'u'lláh lived before moving to Bahjí.
- **The Ridván Garden:** a garden by the Na'aman River, about 2 km from the Old City, which Bahá'u'lláh often visited. In 2019 the Universal House of Justice announced a plan to build a shrine for Abdu'l-Bahá nearby.

Al-Manshiyya: the village beside the gardens

Just south of Bahjí stood the Palestinian village of **al-Manshiyya** in the Acre district, which in 1945 had 810 Muslim and 270 Jewish inhabitants and lands of about 14,886 dunums. On 14 May 1948, during the operation known as "Ben-Ami", Zionist forces attacked and captured the village, and its people fled east under fire. The village was then razed, days before Acre itself fell on 17–18 May 1948. According to the historian Walid Khalidi, only the mosque, the Islamic orphans' school, a few houses, a neglected cemetery, the al-Basha canal and an aqueduct remained. The settlements of Shomrat and Bustan HaGalil were established on its lands in 1948, and the village site is today part of the city of Acre. Its refugees and

their descendants are among the Palestinians still denied the right of return.

UNESCO World Heritage

On 8 July 2008 UNESCO inscribed the "Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee" on the World Heritage List under criteria (iii) and (vi). The property covers about 62.6 hectares and includes 26 buildings, monuments and sites in Acre and Haifa, centred on the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí and the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel, together with the houses, gardens and other places associated with the faith's history in the region.

Bahjí today (2026)

In 2025 the Bahá'í World Centre closed Bahjí to visitors for a time, out of concern that it was being treated mainly as a tourist destination rather than the faith's holiest place. It reopened on 19 October 2025 for guided tours and self-guided visits, with free entry. The outer gardens are open daily from 9:00 to 17:00, the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh is open from Friday to Monday, 9:00 to 12:00, and the site closes on some Bahá'í holy days. Modest dress and quiet are expected near the shrine.

Frequently asked questions

Where are the Bahá'í Gardens in Acre?

At Bahjí, about 3 km north of the Old City of Acre, on the road towards Nahariya.

What is the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh?

The burial place of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, who died at Bahjí in 1892. It is the holiest place for Bahá'ís and the direction they face in prayer.

Who built the Mansion of Bahjí?

Udi Khammar, a wealthy Christian merchant from Acre, built it in 1870 on a garden first planted by Sulayman Pasha, the Ottoman ruler of Acre.

What happened to the village next to Bahjí?

The Palestinian village of al-Manshiyya was captured by Zionist forces on 14 May 1948, its people were driven out, and the village was razed.

Is entry to Bahjí free?

Yes. The outer gardens are open daily, the shrine opens Friday to Monday mornings, and guided tours require advance booking.

Conclusion

From a garden of an Ottoman pasha to the holiest place of a world faith, Bahjí carries layers of Acre's history: the rulers of the city, its merchants, the exiles who came to it and the pilgrims who still arrive. Beside its quiet paths lies the memory of al-Manshiyya, a Palestinian village erased in 1948, whose people remain part of the story of this land.

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Last updated: October 18, 2026