



POSSIBLE HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE ITINERARY

10 days/9 nights

Days 1 & 2: USA to Tel Aviv

Arrive in Tel Aviv and board a new, climate-controlled motor coach where our guide will greet us and give us an orientation to the land as we travel toward Jaffa. There we will consider the vision of Peter (Acts 10) and start following the sequence of events that led to opening the gates of the early church to Gentiles. As we look at the very place where Jonah ran from the Lord, we will also reflect on our own walk with God. Check into our hotel on the coastal plains of the Mediterranean Sea. Dinner included.

Day 3: Caesarea Maritima – Mount Carmel – Megiddo – Nazareth – Sea of Galilee

After a buffet breakfast, we depart the hotel en route to Caesarea Maritima, where we will visit the magnificent city with its Roman, Byzantine, and Crusader ruins. Here we will elaborate on the story of the baptism of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to Christianity (Acts 10), and on the travels of Paul. Those events led Caesarea Maritima to become the springboard of Christianity to the West. We will then continue to Mount Carmel and consider the contest between the Prophet Elijah and the false prophets of Baal (I Kings 18), discussing the reasons why the Prophet chose that place for the contest and the lessons we learn from the story. We then travel to Megiddo and explore the Tel that goes back in history to 4000 BC, looking at ruins from the times of Kings Solomon and Ahab. Overlooking the Armageddon Valley, we will also discuss the reasons why this will be the setting for the final battle between good and evil mentioned in Revelation 16:16. After lunch we travel to Nazareth, where we will climb the Mount of Precipice, the brow of the hill on which the city was built (Luke 4). There we will reflect on the rejection of Jesus by his family and friends in Nazareth. In addition to discussing Jesus' boyhood, we will also consider the life and times of Deborah (Judges 4). We check into our hotel on the Sea of Galilee for the next three nights and enjoy another dinner together.

Day 4: Bethsaida – Mount of Beatitudes – Capernaum – Boat Ride

After a buffet breakfast, we begin our day with a breathtaking view of the Sea of Galilee from the Peace Vista lookout, where we can see the entire lake. From this viewpoint, we will consider why Jesus chose to begin delivering his message from there. We then travel to Bethsaida, the hometown of Peter, Andrew, and Philip. This is one of three cities that make up the Gospel Triangle, where Jesus spent two of his three years of public ministry. We then proceed to the Mount of Beatitudes and discuss the Sermon on the Mount, finishing the theme that was started earlier that day. We will hear our guide recite the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic, the language that Jesus himself spoke. During our lunch, we will have the opportunity to try St. Peter's fish, commonly eaten by people in Jesus' day. We will then visit Capernaum, Jesus' Galilean ministry base. There we will see the house of Peter's mother-in-law in addition to other ruins of the village. We will stand in the ruins of the ancient synagogue where Jesus was confronted by the demoniac. We will then visit a museum containing a recently discovered 2000-year-old fishing boat. We end our day by sailing on the Sea of Galilee on a replica of that boat, then return to our hotel for dinner.



Day 5: Tel Dan – Tel Hazer – Caesarea Philippi – Jordan River

After a buffet breakfast, we begin our day by traveling to the northern boundary of Israel to visit Tel Dan, the northern extremity of Biblical Israel. Our first stop will be Tel Hazer, where we will view the ruins of the largest Canaanite city and the only place that Joshua burned. This is one of three cities mentioned in the Book of Kings as being built by King Solomon. We will visit the location of the altar where the golden calf was placed by King Jeroboam. There we will discuss the idolatry and downfall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. We will move on to the Dan Stream, the largest tributary of the Jordan River and possibly the place where Psalm 42 was written (“As the deer pants for the water brook, so my soul pants for Thee...”). We will then continue to Caesarea Philippi, where we will visit the ruins of the pagan altars and consider the confession of Peter in Matthew 16 (“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”) At lunch, we will be invited to try falafel, a typical Middle Eastern meal. We will then drive further north to the border with Syria, where we will consider the dramatic conversion and life-transformation of Saul of Tarsus: the Apostle Paul. We then travel to one traditional baptismal site of Jesus on the Jordan River. We will be offered the opportunity to be re-baptized in the waters of the Jordan. We then return to our hotel on the Sea of Galilee for the evening. Dinner included.

Note: During one of these days in Galilee, there will be an opportunity for any married couples who wish to do so to renew their wedding vows in the ancient Hebrew style. Others in the group may want to witness this amazing event. Weather permitting, we will also have an optional evening program of viewing the amazing night sky and discussing how the fishermen in Jesus’ day navigated by the stars.

Day 6: Beth She’an – Jericho – Dead Sea

After a buffet breakfast, we leave the Galilee area, following the Jordan Valley Road to Beth She’an, capital of the Decapolis. There we will see the ruins of the Roman and Byzantine cities. We will also discuss the demise of King Saul and his sons, whose bodies were hanged on the walls of Beth She’an. We will then continue traveling south to the actual location where John the Baptist was baptizing in the Jordan River. Jericho will be our next stop, where we will visit the Tel of Jericho with its ancient ruins, including what possibly could be the foundations of the ramparts that Joshua and the Israelites brought down. After lunch, we travel to our hotel spa on the Dead Sea where we will have the chance to enjoy the hotel facilities and experience floating in the Dead Sea. Dinner will be served at the resort.

Day 7: Masada – Ein Gedi – Qumran – Jerusalem

After a buffet breakfast, we begin our day by visiting Masada, the fortress built by King Herod the Great and made famous by the Zealots’ standoff against the Romans in 73-74 AD. The fortress and ruins are considered a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and some may choose to hike down the mountain after our visit. We then continue to Ein Gedi, the desert oasis where David spared King Saul’s life (1 Samuel 24) and where David wrote many of the psalms. After lunch we visit Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found by a Bedouin boy in 1947. There we will see the caves and other buildings once inhabited by the Essenes, the group of Jews who wrote and preserved the scrolls. We then drive north and prepare to enter the Holy City of Jerusalem, beginning with an orientation to the city and “a Genesis Welcome” from Mount Scopus, overlooking the city. We then check into our hotel, where we will stay for the remainder of our time in the Holy Land. Dinner included.



Day 8: Mount of Olives – Southern Wall Excavations – Bethlehem

After a buffet breakfast, we begin our day with an orientation to the holy city from the Mount of Olives, pointing out important locations within the Old City and connecting them with Biblical stories and prophecies about the return of Jesus. We will then walk down the Palm Sunday Procession road to the Garden of Gethsemane, where the passion of Jesus began. We will experience some personal time in a private section of the Garden. We will then visit the Southern Wall excavations where the ruins of the retaining walls of the Temple Mount are still visible. We will then gather at the teaching steps, the main entrance to the Temple where Rabbis met and taught their disciples. After lunch we will travel to Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. We begin with a visit to the Shepherds' Fields, where the angels appeared to the shepherds and announced the birth of Our Lord. These fields are also the setting of the Book of Ruth. We will then travel to the Church of the Nativity and view the actual place where Our Lord was born. Time will then be given to shop for olive wood and other items in a shop run by Palestinian Christians. We return to our hotel in Jerusalem to enjoy dinner together.

Day 9: Western Wall Tunnels – Temple Mount – St. Anne's and Pool of Bethesda – Via Dolorosa – Israel Museum

After a buffet breakfast, we begin our day by entering the Old City to visit the Western Wall, a section of the retaining wall of the Temple Mount that is Judaism's holiest site. We will ascend the Temple Mount, discussing its connection to both the Old and New Testaments. We will also discuss why it is considered the third holiest site in Islam. Leaving the Temple Mount, we will visit the Church of St. Anne's, a perfectly intact Crusader church with incredible acoustics. It is a wonderful place to sing a song, sometimes with fellow Christians from all over the world. There we will also visit the Pool of Bethesda, where Jesus healed an ill man (John 5). We will then walk the Via Dolorosa (The Way of Suffering), the actual path that Jesus walked from the Antonia Fortress to the crucifixion site. We will also visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which houses the crucifixion site and Jesus' tomb. After lunch in the Old City, we travel to the Israel Museum where we will visit a 1:50-scale model of Jerusalem from the Second Temple Period, year 66 AD. We will also visit the Shrine of the Book, where the Dead Sea Scrolls are on exhibit, and the archeological section where many artifacts are displayed. We will pay special attention to those items that relate to Bible history. We then return to our hotel for dinner.

Day 10: Hezekiah Tunnel – Upper Room - Caiaphas' House – Yad Vashem – Garden Tomb

After a buffet breakfast, we begin our day with a visit to the original location of the city of Jerusalem, going back in history 3000 years. We will visit Hezekiah's tunnel, a 1749-foot-long tunnel that was dug by King Hezekiah as he prepared for the Assyrian King Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BC. Those interested in walking the tunnel (in foot-deep water) will have the chance to do so. We will visit the Upper Room, the place of the Last Supper, and also the home of the High Priest, Caiaphas. We will then visit the Jewish Quarter. After lunch, we will visit Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum. We end our day with a visit to the Garden Tomb, where we will worship together and celebrate communion. We return to our hotel for our last dinner together.

Day 11: Departure

Travel to the airport. Return home with unforgettable memories, amazing new friends, and a life-changing understanding of our roots in the Fifth Gospel and the Bible.