

## Sample Israel Itinerary

### **Day 1 Fly**

Overnight flight

### **Day 2 Tel Aviv** *Meet, assist & Hotel Transfer. Welcome meal at the Hotel*

On arrival at the Ben Gurion International Airport we are met and transferred to our hotel. The remainder of the day is free to relax and recover from jet lag. In the evening we have included a welcome meal at the hotel. Evening meal. Overnight hotel and breakfast

### **Day 3 Tel Aviv** *Full day excursion Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Caesarea*

Following breakfast, we depart on a full day sightseeing excursion. Our guide will give a briefing of today's itinerary on the bus. First, we drive through Tel Aviv and Jaffa. These adjacent cities could not be more different. Tel Aviv (which means 'hill of spring') is Israel's newest city, and the center of the nation's politics, business, and night-life. By contrast, Jaffa (Yaffo in Hebrew, Joppa in Greek), is one of the world's oldest cities (circa 18th century BCE), famed as King Solomon's main seaport. 4,000-year-old Jaffa was largely Arab until 1948, and continues to have a large Arab population today. Architectural highlights include the Ottoman Clock Tower and the El Mahmoudiye Mosque in Haganah Square. The clock tower was built in 1906 to mark the 30th year of the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Stained-glass windows, added in 1965 depict events in Jaffa's history. Nearby is St. Peter's Monastery, built in 1890 by the Franciscans over the ruins of a Crusader citadel. St. Peter's Monastery was Jaffa's premier Roman Catholic Church, and Napoleon is said to have visited it when he fought in Jaffa in 1799. Taking lunch somewhere on route (not included), we then drive north to visit Caesarea, one of Israel's premier archeological sites. A Phoenician settlement between 3rd and 4th centuries BCE, Caesarea later became the most important port of Roman Judaea under the mad and brutal King Herod. Pontius Pilate lived in Caesarea between 26 to 36 ACE. The Bible also records that the first gentile to be converted to Christianity took place in Caesarea (Acts 10). In the afternoon we return to the hotel. Evening meal served at the hotel. Overnight hotel and breakfast.

### **Day 4 Galilee** *Haifa, Carmelite Monastery, Meggido, Nazareth, Cana*

Following breakfast, we depart for the Galilee. Passing under Mount Carmel we drive to Haifa, where we visit the historic Carmelite Monastery and take free time to purchase our own lunches. Our next stop is Megiddo, the prophesized Armageddon of the Bible. We then drive into hills to visit Nazareth, the city of Jesus, where we make a special visit to a reconstructed 1st century village and garner some idea of what it must have been like to live in Israel during the time of Christ. We also visit the Church of Transfiguration. As we descend into the Galilee region the views are amongst Israel's most stunning. Our last stop is the site of the first Christian miracle, Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine. Evening meal at the kibbutz will be served upon arrival. Overnight Kibbutz and breakfast.

### **Day 5 Galilee** *Galilee Experience, Boat trip, Tabgha, Beatitudes, Capernaum, Migdal*

Today we circumnavigate the north coast of the Sea of Galilee (Yam Kinneret), and take a boat trip on the lake. We visit the city of Tiberias, named in honor of the Roman Emperor, the adopted son of the great Augustus (formerly Octavius, who defeated Mark Anthony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in 29 BCE).

Stalls and restaurants offer a variety of Galilee fish. 'St. Peter's Fish' is a famous regional entree, and a very tasty dish. In Tiberias we view the multi-media Galilee Experience. This is a Christian perspective on the history and Biblical events of Galilee and Israel, and an excellent Christian introduction to our regional visit. En route we visit the fascinating remains of a fisherman's boat from the time of Jesus preserved in a small building next to the lake on the grounds of the Kibbutz Genosar. Our next stop is Tabgha, and the Mount of Beatitudes. Scene of the Sermon on the Mount, the Multiplication of Loaves & Fishes, and the Post Resurrection Appearance, the Mount of Beatitudes is justifiably considered the most appropriately beautiful Christian site in Israel. We also visit Mary's Well and St. Joseph's Workshop. Later, we visit Peter's house in Capernaum; a town whose population, along with that of Tabgha, was condemned for their lack of faith by Jesus (Matthew 11: 20-24). Our last stop before returning to the hotel is at Migdal, where we visit the birth place of Mary Magdalene. Evening meal at the kibbutz. Overnight Kibbutz and breakfast.

#### **Day 6 Galilee Full day Golan Heights excursion: Mettula, Banyas/Caesarea Philippi**

The Golan Heights is famous for its wildflowers. In April, magnificent lupis, whose palm shaped leaves are a splendid back-ground to its distinctive blue flowers, can be seen throughout the region. Driving north through the Golan Heights we first visit Mettula and The Good Fence border crossing to Lebanon. Continuing east we visit Banyas (Caesarea Philippi), the most popular site in the Golan. Located at the foot of Mt. Hermon, the cold waters of Banyas spring gush forth below a steep cliff, one of the main sources of the Jordan River. According to written sources, Banyas was first settled in the Hellenistic period. In 200 BCE, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III defeated the Ptolemaic army in this region and captured Banyas. In 20 BCE, the region was annexed to the Kingdom of Herod the Great and was ruled by his successors until the end of the first century CE. In the year 2 BCE, Herod Philip founded a pagan city and named it Caesarea Philippi (in honor of Augustus Caesar). It became the capital of his large kingdom which spread across the Golan and the Hauran. Contemporary sources refer to the city as Caesarea Panias; the New Testament as Caesarea Philippi. (Matt. 16:13). During the Roman period, the center of the city spread features protecting it on three sides. At its peak, it extended even beyond these natural boundaries. From the fourth century and until the Arab conquest, Panias functioned as an important Christian center. Today there is a Druze holy place (Weli Sheikh Khader) in a white-washed building on the cliff over-looking the spring. Since 1967, but mainly during the last ten years, major excavations at the site have focused upon two areas: the remains of the sanctuary complex to the god Pan; and the center of the city. We also visit Nimrod Castle & Gamla. Two thousand years ago the foliage-covered hump-shaped mountain called Gamla was a flourishing Jewish city in the Golan Heights. Often called the Massada of the North, it was the last northern hold-out against the Romans during the Great Revolt (66-70 CE). Five thousand men, women and children were killed by the Romans; 5,000 more committed suicide by jumping off the mountain. In its heyday, Gamla's observant residents congregated and prayed in this synagogue. It is one of only three Second Temple period synagogues so far uncovered (the other two are at Masada and at the Herodion, near Bethlehem). Return to Galilee late afternoon. Evening meal at the kibbutz. Overnight Kibbutz and breakfast.

#### **Day 7 Jerusalem Beit She'an, Baptism on River Jordan, Jericho & Hisham Palace**

Today we drive south to our first visit - the remarkable Roman ruins at Beit She'an. Beit She'an has remained occupied and active for the last 5000 years. Archeologists have discovered that Beit She'an is actually 18 cities built one on top of another. Today, the magnificent archeological site includes a 6000 seat amphitheater which hosted gladiator contests, several temples and a colonnaded street under reconstruction. There is free time for lunch en route (not included). Avoiding the non-authentic and unpleasantly commercialized baptismal site at the Galilee, we take a detour from our route to visit the Jordan River at the authentic spot at which John the Baptist baptized, possibly the very place in which Jesus was baptized. Here we conduct a baptismal ceremony and learn details of his life. Our next stop is Jericho, reputedly the oldest city in the world.

Famed for the Biblical story of its collapsing walls, Jericho's year-round temperate climate and its setting amongst a lush oasis of fruits and flowers make Jericho a wonderful place to visit. The first biblical records of Jericho are misleading, intimating that Jericho was located on the east side of the River Jordan. "And Moses and Eliezer the priest spoke with them in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho saying....." (Numbers 26:2). In Numbers 22:1, 26:3, 33:48, 34:15, 35:1, and 36:13, a similar impression is given. When describing the area to the east of the Jordan it is done with reference to Jericho. In Deuteronomy 33:49 when Moses was ordered to Mount Nebo in Moab, Mt. Nebo is described as 'against Jericho'. It must have been a large, powerful and important city indeed for sites so far away to be using Jericho as a landmark. The Children of Israel camped on the East Bank of the Jordan at Shittim and sent two spies over the river. They found Jericho was a walled town with a gate (the archaeologists definition of a city) and that Rahab the prostitute who became their informant had a flat roofed house actually on/in the wall itself. She was able to let the spies out of her house from a window by a cord, directly

#### **Day 8 Jerusalem** *Mt Olives, Garden Tomb, David's Tomb, Temple Mt. Via Delarosa*

The entire day will be devoted to exploring this beautiful city. Our itinerary may be adjusted to fit in with local festivals or events. After breakfast we drive directly to view the Model City where we get a historical perspective of Jerusalem's lay out. Taking advantage of the morning sunlight, we drive to view the city from perhaps its best vantage point, the Mount of Olives. We then visit the Paternoster Church, the Church of the Ascension, Gethsemane, and the Garden Tomb, one of the two contenders as the burial place of Jesus Christ after His crucifixion at Calvary. Discovered by Gordon in 1881, the tomb measures 14 feet wide by 10 feet deep and 7½ feet high. Only one of the two graves inside appear to have been used, yet it does not appear as though the body had been left there for very long - there are no bones or other signs of natural decomposition. The interior meets all of the requirements for the Bible's account - there is room for Peter and John to enter (John 20:3-9), and a place for the two angels to sit when they spoke with Mary Magdala (John 20:10-18). Our next stops are the Pool of Bethesda and St. Anne's Church. We then visit David's Tomb and the House of the Last Supper, before returning to the city walls to view the Lion's Gate and enter the Old City through the Dung Gate, visit the Wailing Wall, Temple Mount, and The Dome of the Rock. The rest of the morning we explore the old city and Arab markets. A lunch of falafel is commonly available in the Old City – a meal highly recommended and not to be missed (not included). The afternoon is spent walking the Stations of the Cross on the Via Delorosa, with its litany of important biblical sites including the Arch Ecce Homo, Pilate's Judgement Hall, the Chapel of Flagellation and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Late afternoon return to the hotel. Evening meal at the hotel.

#### **Day 9 Jerusalem** *Sunday Service Garden Tomb. Qumran, Masada, Dead Sea*

We begin the day attending the Sunday Service at the Garden Tomb, followed by a series of fascinating visits to site around the Dead Sea. We start with Qumran, site of the famous discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Following free time for lunch, we explore Qumran. The Essenes who occupied Qumran were an esthetic group with strict spiritual laws. They attracted much interest from devotees and spiritual pilgrims alike. The Essene sect of Qumran were considered by many scholars to represent the first significant steps toward Christianity. Most experts on the Scrolls agree that Jesus spent time in the caves in that area. Our next visit is the mighty Masada. Josephus Flavius, the Jewish-turned-Roman historian, wrote the famous story of the deaths and suicides during the Roman siege of Masada. Today, from the walls of Herod's Palace you can still clearly see the outlines of the Roman besieging encampments and the ramp they built with local slave labor up which they marched to breach the walls. Masada holds a deep place in the memories of the Israeli people. An ancient persecution which has become symbolic of all the pogroms and horrors suffered by Jews down through the centuries, and particularly poignant following the holocaust. Today, the Israeli armed forces swear allegiance to the nation of Israel at dawn on top Masada. The symbolism is clear. Our final stop on the way back to Jerusalem, is Ein Gedi, a beach resort on the Dead Sea where there is some free time for those who wish to go for a swim, or rather a 'float', on the Dead Sea. Return to Jerusalem late afternoon / early evening. Evening meal at the hotel.

**Day 10 Jerusalem** *AM tour of Bethlehem. Israel Museum, Yad Vasham*

Today we spend the morning in Bethlehem. The last few years have seen a remarkable change in the fortunes of the town; today, for the first time in over 470 years, the people of Bethlehem are in political control of their own town. It was in 1517 ACE that the Ottoman Empire overran Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The Turks were driven out by the Arab revolt during W.W.1, sponsored by British in the form of Lawrence of Arabia and other advisors, but the British did not fulfill their promise of an independent Arab kingdom and after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, to which the Arab armies contributed with crucial significance, the region was militarily occupied and political and military occupation divided between Britain and France. This betrayal caused deep unrest, which eventually led to the British withdrawal in 1947. Following the British withdrawal a brief Palestinian independence was quickly ended by the new Jewish army, who conquered the region and declared the state of Israel. Again Palestine was an occupied country. Today the Palestinians have wrested control of Bethlehem and by all accounts are doing an excellent administrative job. In Bethlehem we visit the Church of Nativity, with the Grotto of the Nativity, Manger Square, Church of St Catherine, Bethlehem Museum, David's Well, and the Milk Grotto. We also visit the Shepherd's Fields en route to the Israel Museum where we view the Dead Sea Scrolls in The Shrine of the Book. Our last visit today is to the moving and humbling Yad Vasham Holocaust Memorial commemorating the enormous loss of life during the period of Nazi domination in Europe. Few leave this museum untouched, and more determined that such crimes cannot be repeated. Return to Jerusalem late afternoon / early evening.

**Day 11 Jerusalem** *Free day. Farewell meal in 'Cardo' Roman restaurant*

Today is entirely at leisure in Jerusalem for personal exploration, shopping, or just to relax in one of the world's most notable cities. Tonight we have booked a farewell evening meal in the world renowned Roman period restaurant in the ancient Cardo section of Jerusalem. Evening meal. Overnight hotel and breakfast.

**Day 12 Jerusalem** *FLY Transfer to airport. Services End*

# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## SEASONAL CLIMATE

In general, the climate in Israel is hot, dry desert-like. The Mediterranean Coast, and the northern hills of the Golan and Galilee are the coolest. The further south, the hotter the temperature. In Eilat, 100 degrees Fahrenheit is not uncommon in the summer. In Jerusalem the spring temperature is typically 75 degrees Fahrenheit. At night, even in summer, the temperature can drop 30 or more degree. Winter temperatures in Jerusalem can be very cold with light snowfall not uncommon.

## VISA REQUIREMENTS

Entry visa are not required for US, CAN, UK, NZ, & AUS citizens. (Other nationalities should consult the Israeli consulate and / or your travel agent).

## VACCINATIONS & PROTECTION

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Yellow Fever, Cholera, and Infectious Hepatitis.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

## LUGGAGE / BAGGAGE

You are expected to carry your own luggage on the tour so don't over load. One suitcase or ruck-sac, and day-pack/ bag are advised. If you intend to extend your stay, and to use domestic (or any flight not originating or landing in the US) you should be aware that the international luggage weight limit of 44lb /20kg apply. (US regs are unique in that they allow travelers a much larger). Please be aware of this when packing.

## PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, optional tours, other sightseeing, airport taxes, souvenirs etc., and items of personal nature (laundry, sun screen etc.).

## TIPPING (or backshish)

In the Middle East, as everyone rather suspects, tipping is a necessary evil. Your tour leader will help you with any tipping, which should be organized to avoid embarrassment or misunderstanding. Consult your tour leader.

## INCLUDED MEAL PLAN

Local food and drink; Meals other than those included in the itinerary are paid for separately by the traveler. You should calculate in snacks and drinks that you may want along the way. Some examples of comparative costs are given below.

ITEM	USA	ISRAEL
Tea	\$0.50	\$0.25
Soft Drink	0.75	0.60
Beer	2.00	3.00
2 Coarse Meal*	5.00	4.00
3 Course Meal**	15.00	12.00

\* Cheap local fare in small cafe/restaurant

\*\*Typical food in mid-range restaurant.

## PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

*Clothing. For an Israeli spring you should pack for warm days / cool nights; Modest shorts, T-shirts, cotton shirts and slacks etc. The evenings can be cool, so a light jacket and sweatshirt is appropriate. You should also bring swimsuit for swimming.*

**Footwear** Sandals and comfortable walking or hiking shoes are advised.

## OTHER USEFUL ITEMS TO BRING WITH YOU

- \* Medical Kit
- \* Flashlight
- \* Sewing Kit
- \* Sunscreen
- \* Sunglasses
- \* Feminine Items