

# ISRAEL

## September 4-12, 2020 (8nights/9days)

### Double \$1,974 / Single \$2,771

#### **Day 1: Arrival in TLV**

Travelers arrive in Tel Aviv today. Dinner and overnight in Tel Aviv.

**Day 2:** Visit Caesarea National Park to see the remains of the former Roman capital, including the ancient theater and hippodrome. Continue driving north to Mount Carmel to the forested Carmel National Park to a Druze village on Mount Carmel, Isfiya or Daliat El Carmel, where you can enjoy a slice of Druze life and culture and a taste of traditional Druze home hospitality. Then, it's on to Haifa, Israel's third largest city, to see the magnificent Baha'i Shrine and Gardens, the world center for the Baha'i faith. Next see Akko - Acre - a 4,000 Year Old City. Step back in time as you walk this ancient port city. Check into your hotel in Akko and enjoy an included dinner.

**Day 3:** Drive inland heading to upper Galilee and stop at Hazor and then to Safed overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Continue to the Hula Valley Nature Reserve. The reserve has lovely walking trails, including a "floating bridge" over the wetland, and special lookout points where visitors can observe the avian wildlife. We continue up the Golan Heights to and for a view of Mount Hermon and its surroundings. Onward to Dan, where we combine a nature walk beside the Upper Jordan with views of the ancient ruins, including the Israelite high place that supported a golden calf. A short drive then takes us to the spring of Caesarea Philippi (Banias), where Peter confessed his recognition of Jesus as Christ. (Matthew 16.) Here we can visit the stunning remains of a first-century AD palace belonging to Agrippas II. We then drive down to Tiberias and check in at a Kibbutz Guest House along the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

**Day 4.** First thing this morning we take an hour boat ride on the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum and then drive to nearby Tabgha, areas of strong Christian history. Continue on to the Mount of Beatitudes where Jesus gave the Sermon of the Beatitudes. Stop for a panoramic view of the Sea of Galilee from the Arbel Cliff which is also the location of the Horns of Hittin where Crusaders were defeated by the Ayyubid dynasty. We then stop at Cana, the site of the first miracle of Jesus of Nazareth when he turned the water into wine at the wedding at Cana. Next arrive in Nazareth. We spend the rest of the day visiting Mary's Well and the Church of the Annunciation. Drive up to the summit of the Mt. Precipici to have a panoramic view of the Jezreel Valley and the connection with Mt. Tabor and the Mt. Carmel range in the west. Drive down into the Jezreel and head east through the Jezreel Valley to the strategic point of the crossing of the Jezreel Valley with the Jordan Valley at Beth Shean.

#### **Day 5: Tiberias, Beth Shean, Megiddo, Jericho, and Jerusalem**

This morning, we drive south along the western shores of the Sea of Galilee into the Jordan Valley. Further south, we come to the strategic crossing point between the Jordan Valley and the Jezreel which is located in the city of Beth Shean (aka Scythopolis). We shall survey the magnificent Roman and Byzantine ruins: theatre, bathhouses, ancient rest rooms, market areas, colonnaded streets. Drive west through the Jezreel Valley and stop at Megiddo - har megiddo in Hebrew, which gave its name to Armageddon. The former regional capital of King Solomon, Megiddo's fortifications, water system, palaces, stables and dwellings have spanned thousands of years and are of great biblical significance. Retrace our steps heading back east in the Jezreel valley back to Beit Shean and drive south to Jericho. Here, we visit the Tel of this oldest city and view the traditional mountain of Jesus' temptation. Arrive in Jerusalem later today and check into your hotel.

#### **Day 6: Jerusalem**

This day will include an orientation of the beautiful city of Jerusalem, the hub of the three monotheistic religions. Ascend up the Mount of Olives for a panoramic view of the Old City, continuing to drive through the Kidron called the Valley of Jehosafat and the Vale of the King. We pass Zechariah's Tomb, named after a First Temple priest, the Tomb of the Sons of Hezir, a Second Temple-era priestly family, and Absalom's Tomb. Next walk up to the Western

Wall, Judaism's holiest site and view the Dome of the Rock, the masterpiece of Islamic art. Just to the north, we reach the Church of St. Anne, a Byzantine basilica that houses amazing acoustics perfect for Gregorian chants, with sounds moving across the open space and up from the grotto. In the same compound, view the two Pools of Bethesda built during the Roman period as a pagan shrine to either the Egyptian god Serapis or the Greek god Asclepius, both gods of healing. This is also the site where it is claimed that Jesus famously healed the crippled person. We walk along the Via Delarosa, the traditional Byzantine Way of the Cross, to the church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Mosque of Omar across from it. You'll end the day strolling through the bustling and aromatic Arab Souks and bazaars to Damascus Gate before returning to our hotel.

**Day 7:** Jerusalem, Qumran, Masada, Dead Sea, Ein Gedi, Wadi Kelt

Our day tour begins with a descent into the Judean desert, a barren wilderness in the heart of the Holy Land. En route to the Rift Valley, we will pass the Inn of the Good Samaritan before driving south towards the Dead Sea, stopping at the ancient settlement of Qumran. Here, we'll have the opportunity to view the many caves where approximately 900 parchment documents of religious significance were discovered - the fabled Dead Sea Scrolls. Driving along the western shores of the Dead Sea, we reach Masada, whose summit we will reach by cable car. The cliff's remoteness and difficult approach made it a perfect fortress, and it was here that King Herod built two fortified palaces over 2,000 years ago. After exploring the archeological ruins, the next stop is the Dead Sea where we will have the opportunity to enjoy the surreal experience of floating in the salt-rich water -1,312 ft below sea level! And we cannot miss the chance to have a mud bath in the world's richest source of natural salts. After floating in the Dead Sea, we proceed to the nature reserve of Ein Gedi, rich in flora and fauna, and walk to a lovely waterfall. We then drive back to Jerusalem along the Old Roman road which links Jerusalem and Jericho along Wadi Qilt. We stop for a look at the picturesque Greek Orthodox St. George's Monastery built deep in the gorge of Wadi Kelt. Enjoy your final night in Jerusalem!

**Day 8:** Jerusalem, Bethlehem, West Jerusalem/Evening Departure

This morning, we drive south to the region of Bethlehem passing by Rachel's Tomb at the outskirts of the city. We will drive to a hilltop for a view of Bethlehem, noting its relation to the rest of the central mountain range, including Jerusalem, as well as to the desert and the area of ancient Moab. Driving south, we visit Solomon's Pools, Jerusalem's main source of water for almost 2000 years. Passing the monastery of Hortus Conclusus you'll then arrive in Bethlehem, walking through the restored old town to the Church of the Nativity, visiting the manger and the cave of St. Jerome. Return to Jerusalem, passing by the Israeli Knesset. West Jerusalem boasts many internationally acclaimed buildings and museums including the Israel Museum, home to the Dead Sea Scrolls (the Shrine of the Book), a huge scale model of Jerusalem during the Second Temple time period, and an outstanding permanent collection of art, archaeology, sculptures and artifacts. There is also Yad Vashem, Israel's national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, extremely moving and meaningful, particularly in the context of understanding the history and the people of the modern State of Israel. Tonight, we will enjoy a Farewell Dinner before we drive down to TLV airport or your return flight back home.