

Israel

Exploring the Land of the Bible

Atlanta Departure and Return:
January 2-17, 2018

Jan 2 (Tue): Departure

Our trip begins at **Hartsfield-Jackson airport (ATL)** in Atlanta where we check in for our flight to Israel.

Jan 3 (Wed): Arrival

After our meet up at **Ben Gurion airport (TLV)**, we drive one hour to the most important city in the world, **Jerusalem**. With any luck, we'll arrive in time to see the last rays of the sun reflecting off the walls of the Old City. Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem.

Jan 4 (Thu): South to the Wilderness

From Jerusalem we drive south to **Tel Azekah** and the **Elah Valley**, location of David's famous battle with Goliath. Next is the border fortress of **Lachish**, where the powerful Assyrian dynast, Sennacherib, waged war against the land of Judah. As we continue south, we arrive at **Beer Sheva**, focus of Abraham and Isaac's sojourns. At day's end, we arrive at **Mitzpe Ramon**, the southernmost destination of our journey. Here, we can catch a glimpse of



ibexes scrambling among the rocks of the Ramon Crater's 3000' cliffs. Overnight: Ramon Inn, Mitzpe Ramon.

Jan 5 (Fri): Life in the Negev

Our day begins with a sunrise overlook of the **Ramon Crater**. Next, we head north to the Nabatean palace of **Avdat** where we explore the vast ruins that bear witness to the legendary wealth and expert desert skills of the Nabatean merchants. Just a few miles further north, we test our own desert skills as we hike to a waterfall-fed pool in beautiful **Wadi Ein Avdat**. Our day concludes with a camel ride and Bedouin feast at **Khan**



HaShayarot where we spend the night in Bedouin tents. Overnight: Khan HaShayarot, Avdat.

Jan 6 (Sat): Along the Dead Sea

As we continue north, we visit the ancient Canaanite city of **Arad** and the Israelite fortress and temple built nearby. Our journey continues north along the shores of the Dead Sea, where we arrive at



the sheer cliffs of **Masada**, one of Israel's most important sites. Here, the last remnants of the Zealots held out against the Roman legions who surrounded them. A cable car will take us to the top of the site where we have ample time for exploration and reflection. Continuing along the shores of the Dead Sea, we visit the ruins of **Qumran**, home to the scribes who produced the famous Dead Sea Scrolls. The once-in-a-lifetime experience of a swim in the **Dead Sea** caps our day, before we head to our lodging for the night. Overnight: Oasis Hotel, Jericho.

Jan 7 (Sun): Through the Jordan Valley

We trek north today through the **Jordan Valley**. After a brief stop in **Jericho**, we drive to the vast ruins of **Beth Shean**, known in Jesus' day as Scythopolis. More than any other location in Israel, this site gives us a feel for the "other world" of Gentile life in Galilee. Our last stop is at **Belvoir**, a stunning mountaintop fortress built by the Crusaders. With each mile we drive north, the dry hills of the Judean wilderness transition to the fertile valleys of the Galilee. Overnight: Kibbutz Ein Gev, Galilee



Jan 8 (Mon): North to the Golan

Today, we head north to explore **Upper Galilee**. Our first stop is **Hazor**, famously conquered by Joshua during the Conquest and again by Deborah during the time of the Judges. Next, we travel to **Dan**, the northernmost city in ancient Israel and the place where King Jeroboam provoked the prophets' ire by installing a shrine housing a golden calf. We then visit the springs of nearby **Banias**, known in Jesus' day as Caesarea Philippi, where Peter famously said, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." We end the day with a breathtaking sunset view of the Sea of Galilee from the towering **Arbel** cliffs. Overnight: Kibbutz Ein Gev, Galilee.

Jan 9 (Tue): Around the Sea of Galilee

Today, we tour key sites from Jesus' ministry. We begin with a stop at **Kursi**, the site where Jesus cast demons into a herd of swine. Next, we walk through the ruins of **Korazim**, a hillside village Jesus chastised for rejecting his message. At the **Mount of the Beatitudes**, we can reflect on Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. Continuing on toward the Sea, we travel to **Capernaum**, base of Jesus' ministry in the Galilee. Here,



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we can explore remnants of the many ancient houses at the site and walk through the town's extraordinary synagogue. Finally, we end the day with boat ride on the **Sea of Galilee** itself. Overnight: Kibbutz Ein Gev, Galilee.

Jan 10 (Wed): Lower Galilee

As we leave the Sea of Galilee, our first stop is at **Yardenit**, a beautiful overlook of the headwaters of the **Jordan River**. From the Jordan, we head southwest to **Nazareth**, boyhood home of Jesus. Next it is on to **Megiddo**, a store city during the days of King Solomon, for a look at Canaanite temples and the town's ancient water system. From the top of Tel Megiddo, best known by its Greek name, Armageddon, we can imagine the scene envisioned by the author of Revelation. As we continue south, we visit **Muhraqa**, site of Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal. Overnight: Seasons Hotel, Netanya.

Jan 11 (Thu): Herod's Israel

Along the coast of the Mediterranean, we arrive at **Caesarea Maritima**, the city built by Herod the Great to be the center of Rome's rule over Israel. Just an hour's drive away, we arrive at the **Herodium**, Herod's magnificent palace and eventual tomb near the ancient city of **Bethlehem**. While we're in Bethlehem, we stop off for a visit at the **Church of the Nativity**, one of the most ancient churches in all of Christianity. We finish our trek at the final stop of our tour, **Jerusalem**. Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem.



Jan 12 (Fri): Jerusalem

We begin our exploration of Jerusalem at **Jaffa Gate**. A walk through the alleyways of the **Old City** brings us to Judaism's most sacred site, the **Western Wall**, where we may offer a prayer for the peace for Jerusalem. A short walk later, we arrive at the oldest part of the city, the famous **City of David** just south of the present city walls. Here, we can hike through the ancient **Hezekiah's Tunnel**, built by the famous king to protect the city's water supply from Assyrian invaders. Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem.



Jan 13 (Sat): Jerusalem

Today, we explore various sites from ancient Jerusalem. Near St.

Stephen's Gate, we consider the pools of **Bethesda**. Just a few yards away, we visit the **Lithostrotos**, a system of paved areas and cisterns dating to the time of Emperor Hadrian. After a walk through the



middle of the Old City, we consider the homes of wealthy Sadducees at the **Wohl Archaeological Museum**. We close out our day with an examination of the **walls** that Herod himself installed to support his magnificent temple. Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem.

Jan 14 (Sun): Jerusalem

A short bus ride takes us to the world-famous **Israel Museum** where we marvel at an enormous scale **model** of Second-Temple Jerusalem. Here, we visit the **Shrine of the Book**, home to the famous Dead Sea Scrolls. After a tour of the Israel Museum, we spend time at Israel's own Holocaust Museum, the **Yad va-Shem**. Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem.

Jan 15 (Mon): Free Day

After nearly two weeks of whirlwind touring, it's time for a **free day**, and opportunities abound for exploring the city. Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem.

Jan 16 (Tue): Via Dolorosa

We cap our final day in the Holy Land with a tour of sites from the last hours of Jesus' life on earth. We begin at the top of the **Mount of Olives** with a beautiful overlook of the city from the Seven Arches Hotel. As we make our way down the mount, we visit the **Dominus Flevit** church, commemorating the place where Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and the **Church of All Nations**, near the site of the Garden of Gethsemane. We continue on to the **Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu**, where we consider the last hours Jesus passed in the dungeons of Caiaphas' house. From the **Citadel**, site of Herod the Great's palace in Jerusalem, we trace Jesus' steps to the cross. We end our trip at this very spot, the location of Calvary preserved inside the walls of the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**. Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem.



Jan 17 (Wed)

Depart for Ben Gurion airport (TLV).

