

SAMFORD ISRAEL INFORMATION

Dates

May 17-29, 2016

Itinerary

May 17 (Tue): Arrive Tel Aviv

After our meet-up at **Ben Gurion Airport** in Tel Aviv, we take an easy bus ride to the coastal town of **Netanya** for a restful afternoon and dinner.

Overnight: Seasons Hotel, Netanya

May 18 (Wed): From Caesarea to the Sea of Galilee

Our first day of exploring takes us to **Caesarea Maritima**, center of Rome's rule over Israel and headquarters for Pontius Pilate. As we head north, we visit **Mt. Carmel**, the site of Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal. 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 Megiddo, best known through its Greek name, Armageddon, we can imagine the scene envisioned by the author of Revelation. To close out the day, we ascend to the town of **Nazareth**, setting for the boyhood years of Jesus, before settling in at our hotel in the lakeside town of **Tiberias**.

Overnight: Caesar Premier Hotel

May 19 (Thu): North to the Golan

Today we head north to explore the Upper Galilee. Our first stop is the important city of **Hazor**, famously conquered by Joshua during the time of the Conquest and again by Deborah during the time of the Judges. Leaving Hazor, we travel to ancient Israel's northernmost city, **Dan**, 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**, the location where Peter famously said, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." As we turn southward again, we visit the famous zealot outpost of Gamla before stopping at **Kursi**, the site where Jesus cast the demons into a herd of swine.

Overnight: Caesar Premier Hotel

May 20 (Fri): The Sea of Galilee

Our day begins with a breathtaking overlook of the Sea of Galilee from the heights of the **Arbel** cliff. From this vantage point, we can see then entire Galilee, and with a bit of luck, even far off Mt. Hermon. From Arbel, we begin a tour of the key sites from Jesus' ministry. Our first stop is at the **Mount of the Beatitudes**, where we reflect on the meaning of these treasured words from Jesus. Next, we travel to **Capernaum** to see both the remnants of the many ancient Galilean houses at the site and the ancient

synagogue which Jesus no doubt visited on many a Sabbath. At our next stop, **Tabgha**, we visit the location of Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Finally, we end the day with boat ride on the Sea of Galilee itself.

May 21 (Sat): South to the Dead Sea

In preparation for our journey south, we first stop at lovely **Yardenit** for a chance to see the headwaters of the famous Jordan River. Near the foot of Mt. Gilboa, we arrive at the enormous 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. Over the course of an hour's journey south, we move from the fertile fields of the Galilee to the dry hills of the Judean wilderness. 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

May 22 (Sun): The Dead Sea

We begin our day with a visit to the ruins of **Jericho**, the world's most ancient city. Driving south along the shores of the Dead Sea, we arrive at the spring, **Ein Gedi**, where David once hid from Saul and his forces. After a short hike to see Ein Gedi's waterfalls, we return to the bus for the short trip to **Masada**, one of Israel's most important sites. Here, the last remnants of the Zealots held out against the Roman legions who surrounded them. We will take a cable car to the top of the site where we will have ample time for exploration and reflection.

Overnight: Inbar Hotel, Arad

May 23 (Mon): The Negev

Today, we journey to the southernmost extreme of our trip, getting a glimpse of the land in which the patriarchs lived and the Israelites wandered. We begin our day with a visit to the Canaanite city of **Arad**. Continuing south, we arrive at the beautiful wadi (canyon) of **Ein Avdat**, where an easy hike will take us to a location where we can gain a new perspective on the twenty-third psalm. At day's end, we arrive at **Mitzpe Ramon**, where we can catch a breathtaking view of the 3000' cliffs of the Ramon Crater.

Overnight: Ramon Inn, Mizpeh Ramon

May 24 (Tue): From the Negev to Jerusalem

Leaving behind the quiet solitude of Israel's southern reaches, we head north toward the important town of **Beersheva**, home to both Abraham and Isaac. After exploring this site, we travel to the border fortress of **Lachish**, which the powerful Assyrian dynast Sennacherib once attacked in his assault against the land of Judah. Continuing north, we arrive at the **Elah Valley**, site of David's famous battle with Goliath, before our final journey to the center of the world, the ancient city of **Jerusalem**. With any luck, we will arrive just in time to see the last rays of the sun shimmering against the walls of building

of the most important city on earth.

Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

May 25 (Wed): Jerusalem

We begin our exploration of **Jerusalem** with a tour of the oldest part of the city, the famous **City of David** just south of the wall of the Old City. Here, the brave among us can hike through the ancient **Hezekiah's Tunnel**, built by the famous king to protect the city's water supply from Assyrian invaders. After the City of David, we head to an archaeological park near the walls of the Old City to consider the development of the location over the course of nearly four millennia. A short walk will take us to Judaism's most sacred site, the **Western Wall** where we may offer a prayer for the peace of Jerusalem. We close our day with a tour of the **Citadel** and its important displays of the development of the city through the years.

Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

May 26 (Thu): Jerusalem

Our first stop for today is the famous **Israel Museum**, home to innumerable artifacts and displays of Israel's history. From here, we travel just a few miles to the outskirts of Jerusalem and the important town of **Bethlehem**. After a visit to the Church of the Nativity, we continue on to the **Herodium**, site of one many impressive archaeological remains left by the brilliant but corrupt King Herod the Great.

Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

May 27 (Fri): Jerusalem

Free. No one trip to Jerusalem could begin to cover every site. Today, you are free to dig in at one of any number of places: the fascinating Wohl Archaeological Museum, the Garden Tomb, the moving tribute to the Holocaust at Yad vaShem, or just a day of wandering about the Old City.

Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

May 28 (Sat): Jerusalem

We cap our final day in the Holy Land with a tour of sites from the last hours of Jesus' life on earth. Our trek begins 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. Traveling down the Via Dolorosa or "Way of Sorrows," we continue on to the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, marking the site of Jesus' crucifixion and burial. We end our day with a walk to the **Coenaculum** near the place, where Jesus celebrated the last supper with his disciples, and the **Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu**, where Peter denied knowing Jesus. Each spot offers its own insight into the life of Jesus and provides opportunity and to spare for reflection on the Messiah's life, death, and resurrection.

Overnight: Ambassador Hotel, Jerusalem

May 29 (Sun)

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