



13-Day Custom Cultural Tour

DAY 1

DEPART USA FOR ISRAEL

Depart USA, bound for your culturally enriching experience in the ancient land of Israel. Prepare yourself for heroic and poignant stories of history leading you through centuries of ruins, losses, and triumphs, all serving as monumental backdrops to a modern country with sophisticated hotels, award-winning museums, world-renowned restaurants, stunning skylines, rolling landscapes, and blossoming deserts. Here you'll witness prophecy of the land coming alive again and again, where you'll touch stones that whisper tales of centuries-old events, when our forebears, sandaled and draped in robes, walked the terrain, overcoming harsh desert winds and torrential downpours, navigating sand dunes and climbing to mountaintops beneath the blazing sun and cool-to-cold evening skies. We await your presence for what promises to be your culturally rich experience of a lifetime.

DAY 2

ARRIVAL IN ISRAEL / WELCOME!

Welcome to Israel! Bruch'im Ha-ba'im! Upon clearing passport control, collecting your luggage, and passing through customs, meet your guide and continue to your hotel. The afternoon remains at leisure, allowing you to acclimate to your new surroundings. There are lots of things to do on your own: Take a segue along the beach promenade, catch your breath and enjoy a cup of aromatic coffee or tea at one of the many cafés dotting the Mediterranean shore while enjoying freshly baked pastries, and/or, weather permitting, relax and luxuriate at one of the glistening white sand beaches. In the evening, at your hotel, your group gathers for dinner and a private briefing with your tour guide who sets the stage for your upcoming week, reviewing your day-by-day itinerary and answering your questions. Dinner and overnight at our hotel in Tel Aviv.

DAY 3

JAFFA / OLD JAFFA PORT / NEVE TZEDEK / INDEPENDENCE HALL / TEL AVIV / BAUHAUS ARCHITECTURE / NAHALAT BINYAMIN / MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE AT BEIT HATFUTSOT

We begin the day with a tour of Jaffa, starting at the picturesque Old Jaffa Port, one of the oldest ports in the world. Recognized as the ancient port from which Jonah set off in the famous biblical story of Jonah and the Whale, we will visit the iconic whale statue and continue through Jaffa's maze of never-ending galleries, shops, and cafés weaving us through artistic and colorful alleyways. Next, visit Neve Tzedek, Tel Aviv's first Jewish neighborhood established outside of ancient Jaffa, now a trendy focal point for fashion aficionados and cultural attractions. Stop for lunch before heading to

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Israel's Independence Hall where the State of Israel was founded in 1948. Onward to explore the cosmopolitan city of Tel Aviv, the city that never sleeps. We'll enjoy a stroll through Tel Aviv's Bauhaus architecture, recognized in 2003 as a UNESCO "White City," along Rothschild Boulevard and its side streets, a must-see for the artfully inclined captivated by the German Jewish influence and its history-laden, functional, and pristine architectural design. The dynamic pedestrian mall at Nahalat Binyamin, with its many stalls and vendors displaying an array of handicrafts, is a welcome treat. Afterwards, we continue to the Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot for a private tour and rooftop dinner. Overnight in Tel Aviv.

DAY 4

TEL BE'ER SHEVA / KIBBUTZ SDE BOKER / DAVID BEN-GURION'S HOME / AVDAT / MITZPE RAMON / MAKHTESH RAMON

Immediately after breakfast, we depart our hotel and head south to Tel Be'er Sheva, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, an ancient town that overlooks the modern capital of the Negev (Israel's desert region). During the Iron Age, Tel Be'er Sheva served as the administrative center for the Judaeen monarchy some 2,800 years ago. Here we will find the cornerstones of an altar and a large-scale water project that sustained the communities under the weight of war and during the promise of peaceful times. Onward to Kibbutz Sde Boker, home of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. Walk through Ben-Gurion's private home and you'll be transfixed as you note his eyeglasses perched atop books on his desk, wondering how many dignitaries he hosted in this simple office. Enjoy the exhibition displaying his life and vision for the desert blossoming, and then pay tribute to this great man at his gravesite, overlooking the magnificent Tsin Valley. Continue to Avdat, the Nabataean trade route known as the "Spice Route." At Mitzpe Ramon, further south, we will find a small desert town built on the edge of a fascinating geological formation known as Makhtesh (crater) Ramon. This is a distinctly unique site with its water-erosion formation, found only in Israel. The region is surrounded by richly textured nature and indigenous wildlife. Dinner and overnight at our hotel in Mitzpe Ramon.

DAY 5

RAMON CRATER HIKE AND JEEP TOUR / SAHARONIM FORT / MASADA / DEAD SEA

After breakfast, we hike in the Ramon Crater and enjoy a jeep tour. Stop at the Saharonim Fort, once a caravan along the ancient "Spice Route." Continue northeast toward the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth, 1,300 feet below sea level, to Masada, a UNESCO World Heritage site capturing the heroic stand by Jewish patriots against the thousands-strong Roman legions nearly 2,000 years ago. We ascend by cable to the mountain fortress built by King Herod and witness the ruins left by the community who once inhabited this famous royal citadel. Learn their story, visit their homes, synagogue, ritual baths, bathhouses, and water cisterns. Close the day with an opportunity to float in the salty sea. Luxuriate in the mineral-rich properties of the water and atmosphere, just as Cleopatra and King Herod swathed their souls and soothed their spirits thousands of years ago. Dinner and overnight at our hotel at the Dead Sea.

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DAY 6

WADI QELT / ST. GEORGE MONASTERY / JERUSALEM / TOWER OF DAVID MUSEUM / JEWISH QUARTER / BROAD WALL / CARDO / HERODIAN MANSIONS AT WOHL MUSEUM / CITY OF DAVID / WARREN'S SHAFT / HEZEKIAH'S TUNNEL / EVENING "THE NIGHT SPECTACULAR" AT THE TOWER OF DAVID

Along our way to Jerusalem, from the depths of the Dead Sea, we drive up toward Jerusalem, stopping for a brief visit in Wadi Qelt, overlooking the St. George Monastery, located in the valley between Jericho and Jerusalem and built into the steep cliffs of the Judaeen Hills. This is a place of divine peace and contemplation. You'll marvel at the way in which the monastery is precisely fitted for its natural surroundings. After, we continue driving up to the holy and magnificent city of Jerusalem, the jewel in the crown, where, it is said, "God partitioned ten parts of beauty to the world, nine of them are found in Jerusalem" (Kiddushin 49:b). Our first visit is the Tower of David Museum, featuring the history of Jerusalem from its beginnings to the modern State of Israel we witness today. Onward to the Jewish Quarter, home to European and Sephardic Jewish communities during the centuries under the Ottoman rule. Visit the 2,700-year-old Broad Wall, the Cardo, and the Herodian Mansions at the Wohl Museum. We continue through the City of David and its ongoing excavations in the ancient core of Jerusalem built by King David, including a sophisticated underground water system. We walk through Warren's Shaft, Hezekiah's Tunnel, and touch the water that has flowed in this holy city since the days of King Hezekiah 2,700 years ago. We remain in the city for dinner, after which you will be transported through time and history at "The Night Spectacular," a magnificent multi-sensory encounter using advanced multimedia technology to project videography, sound, and lighting illuminated on the outer walls of the Tower of David. We return to our hotel for overnight in Jerusalem.

DAY 7

TEMPLE MOUNT / WESTERN WALL (THE KOTEL) / SOUTHERN WALL EXCAVATIONS / DAVIDSON CENTER / CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE / ARAB MARKET, THE SHUK / SHUK BITES

First thing in the morning, we visit the Temple Mount, some believing it to be located atop Mount Moriah, the famous mountain dating to the time of the Bible, a sacred site significant to the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths. This is the site where Abraham was prepared to sacrifice Isaac; the site of Jerusalem Temples I and II; the site of where the 7th Century CE Dome of the Rock, the site where it is believed the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven, still stands; and, the early-8th Century CE site of the Al Aqsa Mosque. Afterward, we visit the Western Wall, the *Kotel* in Hebrew, the holiest site to the Jewish people as this Holy Wall is the remaining retaining wall of the foundation on which the Second Temple was built and stood until it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. Next, visit the Southern Wall excavations, walking on the original 2,000-year-old pavement and climbing the ancient steps as did our forebears when they chanted the Psalms of Ascent in preparation of worship at the Holy Temple. Following, we visit Davidson Center, located in an 8th Century CE palace, with its abundant beauty, intriguing historical and impressive archaeological significance. Here we will witness artifacts displayed from the Holy Temples I and II periods. We will see the ancient city wall, the Temple's staircase, a preserved ancient street, ritual immersion baths (*mikva'ot*), and stores, with the ability to "see" where the vendors once stood thousands of years ago. It is here that Jesus

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overturned the stall vendors' tables. After lunch, we visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, believed by the Catholic community to be the site of Jesus' crucifixion and tomb. Many thousands of people visit this site from throughout the world, representing many denominations. Here, too, you will see this impressive church is holy to so many Christian faiths, each distinguished by their dress and liturgy: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syrian Orthodox. When we exit the church, we are near the Arab Market, the *Shuk*, with its hundreds of vendor stalls and colorfully tantalizing array of merchandise. Take in the sights and sounds, tastes and touches, the aromas and fragrances of this very special place. Be prepared to negotiate! Here you'll find treasures of all textures, shapes, and sizes. Before returning to our hotel, we stop for a taste, or *nosh*, of Israel via our scheduled *Shuk* Bites. Dinner and overnight at our hotel in Jerusalem.

DAY 8

YAD VASHEM HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL / KNESSET / US EMBASSY / ISRAEL MUSEUM / DEAD SEA SCROLLS / BOOK OF ISAIAH / SECOND TEMPLE JERUSALEM MODEL / FRIENDS OF ZION MUSEUM IN THE EVENING

Our first visit is to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, including the Valley of the Communities, the Hall of Remembrance, and Children's Memorial, a complex dedicated to remembering the atrocities of the Holocaust, and, too, with it, the promise of hope that was born in spite of it. Next, we visit the New City, viewing the Knesset (the Israel parliament) and its iconic menorah across the street, and the US Embassy not far away. Nearby, we visit the world-famous Israel Museum with its thousands of exhibits and witness the Dead Sea Scrolls and entire Book of Isaiah, discovered by a shepherd boy in the caves of Qumran, now on display at the Shrine of the Book. After, we visit the Second Temple Jerusalem Model, a re-creation of the City of Jerusalem in 66 CE, assuming 450 square acres at the time, and now a 1:50 scale model of Jerusalem, measuring 10,770 square feet. Return to our hotel for dinner, after which we visit the Friends of Zion Museum in downtown Jerusalem where we learn about Christian Zionists and their love of, their dedication to, and contributions toward the Jewish people and Israel. Return to our hotel for overnight.

DAY 9

TEL MEGIDDO / CAPERNAUM / TABGHA / CHURCH OF THE BEATITUDES / YARDENIT / PRIVATE BOAT SAIL ON THE SEA OF GALILEE

Bid farewell to Jerusalem in the morning and drive along the coast to Tel Megiddo, the site where it is believed that Armageddon will take place. Here we find a palace and walls of Solomon, a complex water system constructed by King Ahab, believed to be the backdrop for James A. Michener's novel *The Source*. An impressive place to visit, Megiddo is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Onward to the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee where we visit sites of significance to the Christian community: Capernaum (Kfar Nachum), the center of Jesus' ministry, where we visit the ruins of an ancient synagogue from the 4th Century CE. Following, we visit Tabgha, site of Jesus feeding the multitudes: With five loaves and two fish Jesus fed 5,000 people, as told by all four Gospels. Onward to the Church of the Beatitudes where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount on a hillside near the church building designed by architect Antonio Barluzzi and completed in 1938 in the

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Neo-Byzantine style. Next, we visit Yardenit, traditionally believed by the Protestant community to be the site of Jesus' baptism. For those wishing to be baptized, please notify us so that proper arrangements can be made in advance. We conclude this extraordinary day with a private boat sail on the Sea of Galilee. We return to our hotel for dinner and overnight in Tiberias.

DAY 10

MITZPE SHALEM / GOLAN HEIGHTS JEEP TOUR / MILITARY BASE / GAMLA / KATZRIN / DRUZE VILLAGES BUQ'ATA AND MAS'ADE / BIRKET RAM / NEBI YAFOURI / HULA VALLEY

After breakfast, we drive to the Golan Heights, stopping along the way at Mitzpe Shalem for a stunning view of the lake and an overview of the landscape of Israel. This is the region that was re-enlivened by the original pioneers who came to Israel, turning swampland into fields that have become the breadbasket of Israel. Take a jeep tour climbing to the Golan Heights in the footsteps of IDF soldiers and their battles in the Six Day War. Visit a military base and meet with a military staff person who shares information about the strategic position the Golan holds to all of Israel. We ascend the Golan Heights and stop for an overview of Gamla, a Jewish stronghold nearly 2,000 years ago. Following, we proceed to Katzrin, the central town of the Golan, and visit its Talmudic Village where the remnants of a restored home and synagogue are on site. Impressive archaeological discoveries have been uncovered in this area. Drive through the Druze villages of Buq'ata and Mas'ade, and visit the lovely pool of Birket Ram, stopping at the fascinating Druze shrine of Nebi Yafouri nestled amongst the apple orchards. Descend from the Golan along the tributaries of the Jordan River and settle down for the night in one of Israel's most serene regions, the Hula Valley. Dinner and overnight at our hotel in the Hula Valley.

DAY 11

HULA VALLEY / OFORIA / MANARA CLIFF AND ZUK MANARA / TEL HAZOR / SAFED

A wonderful way to begin the new day! We start with a visit to the Hula Valley Nature Reserve with its lovely walking trails and "floating bridge" over the wetland, with special lookout points where visitors can observe the avian wildlife. While we're here, we stop at Oforia, a fun and engaging multimedia display that recounts the story of the migratory route across the region and the millions of birds that use it. Keep in mind that Israel lies at the junction of three continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa, and is considered to be one of the best places in the world to witness bird migration. Twice a year, millions of migrating birds from hundreds of species pass through Israel, making it an impressive bird watcher's paradise. Continue further north to the Manara Cliff for a stunning overlook of the entire Upper Galilee, including the Hula Valley and Hula Lake, where we visited earlier in the day. Here you'll enjoy a breathtaking panorama of the richness the Upper Galilee region offers. Time permitting, take a break for ziplining, rappelling, or other extreme outdoor activities. Proceed to Tel Hazor, a once-principal city on the Fertile Crescent, having engaged in trade with cities in Babylon and Syria. Tel Hazor, as is the case with many of the sites incorporated in this program, is referenced in the Bible, "And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor," (Joshua 11:10). When you explore the ruins, including the beautifully restored palace, the water system and other hidden gems, you'll understand why Tel Hazor, too, has been declared a UNESCO World

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Heritage site. Onward to Safed, one of the four holy cities in Israel and the home of mysticism. Visit its many synagogues and artist's colony with colorfully designed galleries and charming and intricately patterned alleyways that seem to weave forever. Dinner and overnight in the Upper Galilee.

DAY 12

ROSH HANIKRA / ACRE (AKKO) / KNIGHTS' HALL / AL-JAZAAR MOSQUE / BATHHOUSE / HAIFA / TEMPLAR COLONY / BAHAI TEMPLE / MOUNT CARMEL PANORAMIC OVERLOOK / FAREWELL DINNER

Drive along Israel's northern road all the way to Rosh Hanikra on the Mediterranean Sea. The rocky cliffs seem to magically dip into the sea, creating multi-shaped grottoes in the rocky cliffs. Marvel at the power of the sea when you take the cable car down into the grottoes, taking note of the crags and dimly lit passageways carved by the force of the water. Next, we continue south to Acre (Akko), one of the oldest cities in Israel—known as the Gateway to the Holy Land. The apostle Paul visited this city for a day when it was called Ptolemais (Acts 21:7). It is the former capital of the Crusader kingdom and also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Let's discover the Knights' Halls, the Al-Jazaar Mosque, the bathhouse with its multimedia display, and the new ethnic museum built into the rooms of the old wall. Continue to the modern port city of Haifa and visit the picturesque restored Templar Colony and the gorgeous terraced Baha'i Garden, taking time to stop for a magnificent view from the top of Mount Carmel. Close the touring day with a cable car ride that runs from Mount Carmel to the Bat Galim promenade where we stop for a farewell dinner before checking into our hotel for the night in Haifa. Prepare your luggage for an early-morning checkout.

DAY 13

DEPART ISRAEL / RETURN HOME

Depart our hotel for Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion, returning home from our Israel experiences, culturally enlivened with the sights and sounds, tastes and touches of the hidden gems we will treasure for a lifetime.