

THE LAND OF THE BIBLE

A Study Tour of Israel and the Palestinian Lands

June 2 – June 14, 2017

Allen P. Ross

Our next trip to Israel is scheduled for June 2-14, 2017. The design of this study tour is to trace the biblical and historical roots of the Christian faith as they find full meaning in Jesus the Messiah. It will include archaeological remains, biblical settings, geography, culture, traditions, and several Christian missions and other activities. It can truly be a life-changing experience – people who go say they do not read the Bible the same again. But it is also a very enjoyable trip with so much to discover and experience first hand.

I have found that late May and early June is the best time of the year to go: it will not be rainy or cold as in the winter and early spring, it will not be extremely hot as in the later summer, it will not be too crowded because we will miss the holy days and festivals that draw crowds to compete for hotels and restaurants, and the days will be long enough to see much more.

We are constantly aware of the political situation in the region and do everything to make sure it is a safe and enjoyable experience. If truly serious trouble flared up, we would cancel the trip of course. But even though there may be conflicts from time to time (usually in areas where we never go), things stay settled most of the time. I have been doing these trips for many years and have never encountered any difficulty, not even seen a stone thrown in anger, and have never had to cancel. But we are very careful when we go and where we go in the land (or anywhere else these days).

The trip is arranged to make it as easy as possible; there will still be a fair amount of walking in places, and not usually on smooth pavement; and there will be quite a few steps in places in Jerusalem. But we go at the pace that the people on the trip can handle. Before the trip I send out a packets of things to think of for getting ready; in the meantime, if you need to, contact me send me an email and if helpful I can telephone you (drapross@aol.com).

Scheduled Itinerary

Fri June 2 Departure Flight from the USA

Our flight to Israel will leave Atlanta at 5:50 p.m., arriving in Paris at 8:10 a.m. the next day. Then we will leave Paris at 10:50 a.m. and arrive in Tel Aviv at 4:20 p.m., Saturday, the Sabbath, when the airport will be almost empty.

Sat June 3 Arrive in Tel Aviv

After we clear passports and customs we will find out bus and transfer to the hotel. There will be just a little time to relax a bit before dinner; after dinner we will meet for a short time for introductions and preliminary orientation.

Overnight: Metropolitan Hotel, Tel Aviv

Sun June 4 “How long will you halt between two opinions?”

This day will be a study of the clash of cultures. We will begin with **Caesarea by the Sea**, up the coast, Herod’s gem of a city built to appeal to the Gentiles. Here is where Philip lived, Peter met Cornelius and the Gospel went to Gentiles; King Agrippa I died after his presumptuous performance on stage in the theater here, and Paul was imprisoned here before being sent to Rome. Then we will drive through the **Mount Carmel** range to lunch and then to visit our first archaeological *tel* (*tel* means “mound of layers of ruins”): **Tel Megiddo** (*har megiddo*, “Mount Megiddo,” or **Armageddon**); we will recall the major military conflicts that this place has seen over the ages and consider what is yet to come. Our last stop today will be in **Nazareth** to see the Church of the Annunciation, built over the first century ruins of the village in which Mary and Joseph and the child Jesus lived. Then we will go to our hotel on the shores of Galilee. After dinner we will have a short time of worship with reflection on the ancient and continuing conflicts in this region.

Overnight: Maagan Holiday Village, Sea of Galilee

Mon June 5 “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

Today we will focus on locations around the lake. First, we go to the ruins of ancient **Bethsaida**, the home of some of the disciples, and then **Chorazin**, one of the cities Jesus cursed. Here we will talk about ritual baths and ancient synagogues. Then, in the gardens at the **Church of the Beatitudes** overlooking Galilee we will recall the Sermon on the Mount, and particularly the beatitudes. We will then descend to the lake to the **Church of the Multiplication** (of loaves and fish) and of **Peter’s Primacy** (where Jesus commissioned Peter to feed his sheep). After lunch at **Gennesaret**, we will see the “**Jesus Boat**” that was discovered in a drought when the water receded. Afterwards we will take a boat ride on the lake up to **Capernaum**; here we will see the remains of **Peter’s house** that became a church, as well as the great **synagogue** close by. If time permits we will drive up to the top of **Mt. Arbel** for an overview of Galilee. In the evening for those still able and interested, we will gather briefly to discuss the setting of some of the teachings of Jesus.

Overnight: Maagan Village, Sea of Galilee

Tues June 6 “Who do you say that I am?”

In Upper Galilee we start with an overview of the lake from the edge of the **Golan Heights**.

From here we will drive to **Qatzrin**, a Talmudic village where archaeologists have reconstructed (with the original stone) and re-furnished an early house (using many original parts), providing us with many clarifying settings for the teachings of Jesus. Our drive north will then give us a sighting of the way of the **Road to Damascus**. We will stop for lunch at a **Druze** village in the mountains, and then go on to **Banias**, at **Caesarea Philippi**. Here against the backdrop of the remains of the temples to the god Pan, Peter made his great confession of faith and Jesus announced the foundation of his Church on a **rock**, before going up **Mount Hermon**, the most likely site of the transfiguration. We will have a short communion service. Then we will go down to the **waterfalls**, one of the sources of the **Jordan** and the setting for Psalm 42. We will then walk alongside the rushing stream of “living water” to **tel Dan** to the ancient Israelite altar and high place (made for the golden calf), an early arched entrance gate to the Canaanite city and the

judicial entrance gate where Israel's king and the elders sat to settle cases. In the evening we will discuss Peter's confession of faith.

Overnight: Maagan Holiday Village, Sea of Galilee

Wed June 7 “Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by John in the Jordan.”

As we begin down the *Jordan Valley* we will see the place where the Sea of Galilee flows

into the Jordan, a place conveniently set up for baptisms. Then, our first major stop will be at *Beth Shean*, to see another Old Testament *tel*, but more significantly a city of the *Decapolis*, the Roman city *Skythopolis*, with its theater, bath houses, temples, shops, public toilets, and streets – a good example of a Roman city, as pagan as they come, the kind that would attract any prodigal. After leaving this place we will have lunch in a Palestinian restaurant at the site of Old Testament *Jericho*, and then have a brief look at the ruins uncovered on the site and talk about the discoveries and the limitations of archaeology. We will be able to look across the valley to the *Steppes of Moab* where the Israelites gathered to march against Jericho. From here it is a short drive to the remains of *Qumran* at the northwest corner of the **Dead Sea**, where some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. After this there will be time for a swim (a float) in the Dead Sea nearby.

Overnight: Kalia Holiday Village, Dead Sea

Thur June 8 “The Voice of One Crying, ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD’.”

Our day in the desert will begin with a walk up the valley of *En Gedi* to the waterfalls, hopefully seeing some of the wild animals along the way (ibex and rock badgers or conies); this is where David encountered Saul in the cave. Then we will go up *Masada* (by cable car), and investigate the desert palace and stronghold that Herod built and that was the last holdout of the Jewish zealots until their deaths in 73 A.D. We will walk down the Roman siege ramp at the back to our waiting bus and drive to modern Arad for lunch.

Then we will visit *tel Arad*, an ancient Canaanite city below (from 2700 B.C.), and above it on the hill an Israelite fortress, built in the Solomonic time (950 B.C.), that had a temple of its own, high altar, holy of holies, incense altars and other features. Afterward if time permits we will drive over to *Beersheba* to see the ancient ruins of the city and the well. Finally, we will have a pleasant drive up to Jerusalem through the hills. In the evening for those who are game, we will take a short walkabout to get our bearings in the old city.

Overnight: Christ Church Guesthouse, Jaffa Gate, the Old City, Jerusalem (our final lodging place)

Fri June 9 Remembrance; Free Afternoon

In the morning we will visit the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, *Yad w'Shem*, to remember this great devastation and to try to understand the spiritual causes and effects of it in light of God's eternal plan.

The afternoon will be free for you to wander, shop, or relax. Jewish businesses will begin to close mid-afternoon to prepare for the Sabbath.

Sat June 10 “Out of Bethlehem will come the ruler”

First we will travel the few miles to the region of *Bethlehem*. We will begin with a stop at

Herodium, one of Herod’s fortresses, and the place where he was buried (his tomb was discovered a few years ago). Then we will pass by the **Shepherds Fields** as we make our way into *Bethlehem* where we will visit the ancient **Church of the Nativity** and the grotto of **St Jerome** next to it. An excellent lunch in Bethlehem follows.

Conditions permitting, we will go into *Samaria* to visit the ruins of the ancient city, then see **Mount Gerizim**, and also **Jacob’s Well**. If time permits, we will make a brief stop at *Shiloh* where the ark of the covenant was during the time of Samuel. If we do not go into the West Bank, we will drive to *Maresha* to see the caves, then visit *tel Lachish*, a Solomonic city and military outpost for Jerusalem, and on the way back stop briefly in the **Valley of Socho**, where David fought Goliath. In the evening we will reflect on the significance of Bethlehem in the Bible for the faith.

Sun June 11 “I will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel”

The morning is set aside for divine service; you may worship at Christ Church itself, or one of the other churches nearby, or engage in private meditation and prayer, or wander about and try to take everything in. After lunch we will visit *The Israel Museum* for a full display of all the findings in the archeological sites, as well as a marvelous reconstruction of Jerusalem in Jesus’ day, and a display of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Then, if time permits, we will go to *Yad Hashmoneh* and see how out of the ashes of the holocaust sprang new life in Christ, and, how Jewish believers in Jesus live as a witness. For those interested we will meet in the evening to survey (briefly) biblical prophecy and current world affairs.

Mon June 12 “Jerusalem, that kills the prophets”

In the morning we will visit the **Temple Mount** itself, and all the areas related to it, especially the **Southern Steps** of the Temple where the disciples preached on Pentecost and thousands were baptized. Then we will walk back to the Jewish Quarter to see the *Herodian Villas*, the likely palaces of the high priests and therefore the place of Jesus’ trial by Annas and Caiaphas.

After lunch we will go to the area the crusaders called Mount Zion, to the place of the **Upper Room**. We will then go down to the **Church of Gallicantu** (the “cock crow”) for an overview of the city and the valley and *Aceldama*, where Judas hung himself. Finally, for those ready for more, we will go along the road to the **City of David**, and walk through the ancient site and down into and through the **water tunnel of Hezekiah**, which leads to the **Pool of Siloam** – yes, there is water in the main water tunnel, but there is also a dry tunnel if you wish. From there it is all uphill to Christ Church (by foot or by taxi). What is left of the afternoon is free, to rest or shop or visit an antiquities dealer. In the evening we will have a **Passover Seder**, to help us think through the events in the Upper Room and prepare for the Passion of our Lord.

Tues June 13 “Jesus Wept”

Our day will be focused on the Passion of Christ. We will start with an overview of the city

from the top of the **Mount of Olives**. Then we will walk down to the **Garden of Gethsemane** and visit the grotto and the **Church of All Nations**, designed to make you feel that you are in an olive garden at night. From there we will go up to **St Stephens Gate** and into the old city, stopping immediately at the place of *Bethesda* where we will recall the healing of the man and the troubled water. Here also is the **Church of St Anne** (the mother of Mary); its acoustics are so fine we have to sing! Then we will begin our journey up the “Way of Tears,” called the *Via Dolorosa*, stopping at a few of the designated biblical **stations of the cross** to consider the suffering of our Lord, until we reach the **Church of the Holy Sepulcher**, the traditional place of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. Lunch will be in the area, or around Christ Church five minutes away. (Sometimes we do this walk in reverse—not the order of the events, but it enables us to miss the crowds at the end, and it is all downhill).

Our last event will be an afternoon visit to the **Garden Tomb**, the other place suggested for the burial of Jesus; here we will have a short worship service with holy communion. The rest of the afternoon and evening is free to pack, visit, or wander. After dinner we may have time to relax, walk about, or finish packing. The time spent in bed will be most welcome in view of the trip home, even though it will be an early rising in the morning (a little before 4:00 a.m.).

Wed June 14

Our flight home will leave Tel Aviv at 8:05 a.m., so we will want to check in at the airport about 5:00 a.m. The flight will arrive in Paris at 12:05 a.m., and depart for the USA at 1:50 p.m., arriving in Atlanta at 5:15 p.m.

The Cost

We calculate the price in two parts, the travel cost and the land price. Some may prefer to arrange their own travel, perhaps by frequent flyer miles; their land price will be a little higher because the pricing is a package deal.

AIR PRICE

The price for the flight covers the round trip from the gateway city and back (usually Atlanta); it does not cover your trip to that city (suggestions will be made in the information packet). The price we estimate at this time would be **\$1659.00**; exact prices confirmed later.

LAND PRICE

The land price for Israel for this trip for those flying with the group (the pricing of air and land costs works together for a lower price) is estimated as follows:

\$2,879.00	if 14 are going
\$2,553.00	if 20 are going
\$2,454.00	if 30 are going (we had 33 on our last trip)
\$2,287.00	if 40 are going

There is a fee due when you sign up (which is partially refundable if you cancel); the final invoice for the balance will be mailed about 2-3 months before the trip. This land price covers hotels, breakfast and dinner, transportation, guides, entrance fees, tips for driver and guide and hotels, and all study materials. It does not cover airfare, travel insurance (mandatory), lunches and snacks, special drinks at dinner, individual transfers to and from Tel Aviv airport, discretionary gift for driver and guide, and personal spending. The price is per person with two sharing a room. If you want a single room, a single supplement fee is \$559 (number of single rooms are very limited in Israel).

It is helpful to find out well ahead of time how many are going in order to adjust plans and prices accordingly. So if you want to go you will need to contact Trinda Lim. Reservations will be secured upon payment of

a deposit (last time it was \$500 per person); later you will be invoiced for final payment.

Trinda Lim,
Group Travel Consultant
124 E. Main St., 4th Fl.
Ephrata, PA 17522

Trinda.lim@raptim.org

Direct: 800 418 2929, ext 12305

Fax: 866 638 3630

Recommended: Travelex Insurance