



MEJDI TOURS

Visit Israel with Temple Emanuel of Andover

Group Leader: Rabbi Max Chaiken

Dates: February 15-25, 2024

>>> Highlights <<<

- Walk the beach promenade in **Tel Aviv** and through the old town of **Jaffa**
- Share moments of reflection at the **Western Wall** (the *Kotel*)
- Shop in the bustling **Mahane Yehuda** marketplace
- Explore the Herodian fortress of **Masada** and float in the **Dead Sea**
- Absorb the spiritual energy in the mystical town of **Tzfat** (Safed)
- Visit local **Israeli Reform Jewish congregations**
- Learn about **peacebuilding** efforts between Israelis & Palestinians

Itinerary

Day 0: Travel - Wednesday, February 14

Depart BOS to TLV (most are one-stop departures in late afternoon/evening, arriving in mid-late afternoon or evening the following day).

Overnight: in flight

Day 1: Arrival - Thursday, February 15 [Guide, Bus]

- Afternoon/evening arrival and transfer to your accommodations.
- Welcome to Israel! orientation and group dinner.

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Tel Aviv [D]

Day 2: Welcome to Tel Aviv - Friday, February 16 [Guide, Bus]

- *Israel and Beyond* - Consider modern Israel within a broader framework of peoplehood. Recently renovated and renamed (fka "Diaspora Museum"), the ANU:

Museum of the Jewish People portrays an uninterrupted story complete with evidence, artifacts, and experience.

- *White City, Hebrew City* - Take in seaside views from Jaffa before passing the Hassan Bek mosque and *HaTahana* terminal for the old Jaffa-Jerusalem railway turned urban hangout. Tour Neve Tzedek exploring the birth of Tel Aviv and reach the Carmel Market for lunch on your own. Later, stroll along "Independence Path" up Bialik street, learning about eminent figures of Cultural Zionism.
- *Kabbalat Shabbat* - Head to Kibbutz Gezer, home of Kehilat Birkat Shalom, a progressive/Reform synagogue serving the surrounding coastal plain. Enjoy Shabbat dinner with the community.

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Tel Aviv [B, D]

Day 3: Seaside - Saturday, February 17 [2 Guides, 2 Bus]

This day is tracked based on interest and/or prior experience in Israel. Guests will select from one of the two itineraries below. The group will gather together in the early evening for Havdalah on the nearby promenade or indoors, followed by free time for dinner.

Masada & the Dead Sea

- *Herod's Fortress* - Drive through the Judean desert en route to the mountaintop of Masada. Explore the extensive excavations of this vacation spot turned refuge for Jewish rebels following the fall of the Second Temple, and consider how their story figures in Israel's national mythology. How might your community respond if pushed to the brink?
- *Dead Sea* - Stop for a brief dip at the "lowest point in the world" (*weather permitting*), appreciating this unique waterfront and discussing regional preservation efforts. If time permits, the group may make brief stops at the Ein Gedi oasis or Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered over the course of a decade starting in 1946.

Jaffa in Depth

- *Art & Architecture* - Housed in the first Jewish home built outside of the Old Town walls in the 18th century, the Ilana Goor Museum is an architectural gem with a unique vantage point towards the Mediterranean Sea. Explore exhibitions and collections of world renowned artists whose works reflect a range of influences.

- *The Neighborhood* - Enjoy lunch with a local resident whose personal story offers insights into both history and day-to-day life here. Later, walk Jaffa's small alleyways to learn how an ancient port evolved into the Arab-Jewish city of today. See one of the seven limestone clock towers dating to Ottoman Palestine and track the growing lore of the Jaffa orange from 19th century Templar export to the subject of contemporary art.

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Tel Aviv [B, L]

Day 4: Beyond the Center - Sunday, February 18 [2 Guides, 2 Bus]

This day is tracked based on interest and/or prior experience in Israel. Guests will select from one of the two itineraries below. Both groups return to Tel Aviv in the late afternoon and will have free time for dinner.

Crossroads

- *Hasmonean Cave* - Remember the Hanukkah story? Journey into the nearby Ben Shemen forest in the center of the country, the largest "green lung" in central Israel. Visit the "Tomb of the Maccabees," a case study in casting powerful narrative.
- *Intro to "Shared Society"* - After lunch at renowned Samir's restaurant in Ramla, continue to Lod/al-Lydd for a walk through remnants of a once intact Old Town square. Discuss the challenging processes of urban revitalization and opportunities for Jewish-Arab cooperation in a city with a storied past.
- *Oasis of Peace* - Visit the unique planned Israeli-Palestinian town of *Neve Shalom - Wahat al Salam* to learn about its founding on land granted by a longstanding monastery, and unique framework for bi-lingual, bi-national communal life.

The Periphery: Then and Now

- *Underground* - Take a family-oriented tour of one of the most unique sites showcasing pre-state development and resistance to British Mandate rule. Between 1945 and 1948, a munitions factory disguised as a kibbutz was operated near the small town of Rehovot, producing some 40,000 bullets per day at its peak. Learn how organizers kept the secret and prepared to defend a nascent state.
- *Beta Israel* - Enjoy hospitality lunch and discussion with representatives of Israel's more than 160,000 strong Ethiopian Jewish community.

- *Dig for a Day* - Get a feel for how history is brought to light through archaeological excavation. Based in Israel's Bet Guvrin National Park, this seminar offers hands-on insight into the field and its techniques.

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Tel Aviv [B, L]

Day 5: Road North - Monday, February 19 [Guide, Bus]

- *By the Bay* - Drive up the Mediterranean coast for a view over Haifa's Baha'i Gardens and visit a cutting edge community institution in Israel's third largest city. Take a tour of the Leo Baeck Education Center, a school-meets-pool-meets-shul model affiliated with the Israeli Reform movement. Hear from students (*as available*) and leadership about their efforts to foster diversity and multicultural education.
- Join the *Druze* community for a traditional lunch in the Carmel mountains, meeting a local village resident to discuss their unique customs and minority status within Israel.
- *Tsippori* - Religions and cultures converge in this once prominent town of the Central Galilee. See remnants of a Roman Theater, a 5th century synagogue mosaic and a Crusader tower, among other highlights of the site's excavation. Also known as Safuriyya to mostly Muslim inhabitants during the Ottoman period, the town appears on a map of Napoleon's invasion of 1799.

Overnight: Kibbutz Lavi Hotel [B, L, D]

Day 6: Galilee & Golan Heights - Tuesday, February 20 [Guide, Bus]

- *Tzfat* - Imagine the city abuzz at the end of a busy week, and bring to mind the words of Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz, 16th century author of *L'cha Dodi*. Walk winding alleyways, stand under the arches of synagogues centuries old, and step into galleries of artworks inspired by the Jewish mystical tradition. Enjoy lunch on your own in town.
- *Mt. Bental* - Gazing east from this Golan Heights peak into Syria and over the "Valley of Tears," recall tales of Israeli heroism and discuss the region's tenuous geo-politics. Descend into a decommissioned bunker that reinforces a stark reality of conflict.

- Wrap up the day exploring the thousands of years long tradition of olive production. See modern adaptations of ancient practices, try out local products, and taste the rich oils made on site.

Overnight: Kibbutz Lavi Hotel [B, D]

Day 7: Along the Borders - Wednesday, February 21 [2 Guides, Bus]

- *River Jordan* - Take the highway south, discussing Israeli-Jordanian relations across the nearby border, and environmental challenges impacting the Jordan River and Dead Sea. That this road through the West Bank is nearly indistinguishable from those in “pre-1967 Israel” belies a complicated reality for residents of the region.
- *West Bank, Ezion Bloc* - Arrive in Bethlehem for lunch, then hear from your two guides - one Palestinian, one Jewish Israeli - about competing claims to a region of great significance in both Jewish and Christian traditions. Visit Manger Square and the Church of Nativity, and discuss the politics of painted murals along the separation/security barrier.
- *Panorama* - Reach Jerusalem in the late afternoon (*just before dark, time permitting*) to take in an impressive East-West view from its southern promenade. Enjoy a group dinner upon arrival at your accommodations.

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Jerusalem [B, L, D]

Day 8: Jerusalem, Old City - Thursday, February 22 [Guide, Bus]

- *Pinnacle* - Ascend as a group to the Temple Mount / Noble Sanctuary. Remember Jewish Temples of previous millenia and come to understand Islamic attachment to *Al Aqsa*. Stroll the vast plaza surrounding the Dome of the Rock, calling attention to underlying national and political sensitivities that make this remarkably tranquil site so volatile.
- *Quarters* - Make your way through the Cotton Market of the Muslim Quarter, through the Christian Quarter and along the Roman Cardo into the Jewish Quarter. After lunch on your own, visit the remains of a Second Temple period home, pass the Hurva Synagogue, and reach the Western Wall plaza where we will have the opportunity to pray together, and individually, at Judaism’s holiest site.

- *City of David* - See the underground city of millenia past and walk through Hezekiah's Tunnel, a primary source of water for ancient Jerusalem (*there's a wet and dry option*). Consider the remarkable archaeological findings here, controversy around ongoing excavation, and its impact for residents of the surrounding area.

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Jerusalem [B]

Day 9: West Jerusalem - Friday, February 23 [Guide, Bus]

- *Tragedy & Memory* - Pay tribute to those lost in the Shoah with a visit to Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum and memorial*. Remember this most painful moment in history and reflect as a group on the "Never Again" imperative.
- *Markets* - Visit Mahane Yehuda as it picks up energy then begins winding wind down in anticipation of Shabbat. Explore the market's diverse Jewish cuisines, taking time to shop and find lunch on your own here or in downtown Jerusalem.
- *Kabbalat Shabbat* - Celebrate the good fortune of having a second weekend in Israel, joining as a group for evening services (optional, together or with local congregations) and dinner.

**The group will visit Yad Vashem's outdoor monuments together; families with young children may elect to visit the Bloomfield Science Museum while others continue through the main exhibit.*

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Jerusalem [B, D]

Day 10: Conclusion - Saturday, February 24 [Guide, Bus]

Begin reflecting on your journey by first retracing history on a short walk through the ancient agricultural terraces of **Sataf**. Enjoy lunch in the nearby town of Abu Ghosh then continue to **Ein Karem**, a Second Temple period village whose prominence is attributed to Byzantine period associations with John the Baptist, a pivotal role in the 1948 war, and the current site of world class Hadassah medical center. In the afternoon, visit the **Israel Museum**, including the "Shrine of Book," for an up close view of sections from the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. Your itinerary concludes with *Havdalah* as a group.



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**Group airport transfer offered for departing flights this evening; others will have time on own*

Overnight: Dan Panorama, Jerusalem [B, L]

Details on optional extension (February 25-27) to Petra, Jordan forthcoming.