



Thursday, June 6 – Saturday, June 15, 2024
Holy Land Pilgrimage
Itinerary

Day 1:

Chicago - Tel Aviv

Depart Chicago O'Hare in the afternoon or early evening. After an overnight flight the group will arrive in Tel Aviv, Israel, in the afternoon the following day. The flight will likely have one layover. (The pilgrimage cost presupposes departure from O'Hare.)

Day 2:

Tel Aviv - Caesarea - Haifa

Welcome to Israel! After arrival at Ben Gurion Airport in the afternoon, go through immigration, pick up your luggage, go through customs, and then meet up with your tour guide and bus. Your tour will begin by travelling up the Mediterranean coast to Caesarea, an hour north of Tel Aviv. Caesarea is an ancient port which is now a spectacular archaeological park full of Roman ruins. Herod the Great built the city in the century before Christ, and it remained the capital of Palestine for hundreds of years. There is a restored Roman theater, an aqueduct, a harbor, and a crumbling 12th century Crusader fortress. After Caesarea go to a Carmelite Shrine near Haifa where tradition says that Elijah, the great Old Testament prophet, slayed the false prophets of Baal. Overnight in Haifa at a hotel or at the Stella Maris Carmelite guesthouse overlooking Haifa Bay.

Day 3:

Haifa - Acre - the Sea of Galilee

Breakfast at the hotel. The group will have Mass at Stella Maris church in Haifa. It incorporates in its nave a cave where the prophet Elijah may have lived as a hermit. After Mass make a quick stop to see Haifa's beautiful Bahai gardens. From Haifa travel north to the city of Acre (modern Akko), the last Crusader holdout before the Holy Land fell back into Muslim hands in the 13th century. Visit the enormous Crusader fort and related museum. From Acre travel east to the Sea of Galilee for a group dinner and lodging near the Sea of Galilee.

Day 4:

Mount of Beatitudes - Capernaum - Jordan River

Breakfast at the Hotel. Travel to the Jordan river to renew our baptismal vows in the very same river where Jesus was baptized by St. John the Baptist. The group will also visit Capernaum, Christ's home-town early in his ministry, and the home to several of the apostles, including Peter and Matthew. Capernaum is the site of an ancient synagogue where Jesus gave his famous Eucharistic discourse in the Gospel of John Chapter 6. Capernaum also has the interesting remains of the house of St. Peter. The group will also visit Tabgha, where Jesus performed the miracle of the loaves and the fishes and where he gave St. Peter primacy over the Church. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 5:

Nazareth - Cana - Mount Tabor

Breakfast at the hotel. Take the bus to Nazareth, the home of the Holy Family. Pray in the Church of the Annunciation, where the Archangel Gabriel told Mary she would conceive and give birth to the Son of God. Then head to Cana of Galilee for a brief visit. It's the site of the famous miracle where Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding. After Cana, head to impressive Mount Tabor, the likely site of the Transfiguration. It has commanding views of the surrounding terrain and a mighty church. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 6:

Bet She'an - drive to Jerusalem

Breakfast at the hotel. Take the bus south toward Jerusalem. We'll stop at Bet She'an, a wonderfully preserved Roman city and UNESCO World Heritage Site with a Roman theater and bathhouses. Then head to Jerusalem, perhaps visiting, if time permits, the enchanting Greek Orthodox monastery of Saint George, hidden in the middle of the desert east of Jerusalem. The day concludes with arrival to Jerusalem and accommodations in the old city or near its walls.

Day 7:

Jerusalem

Breakfast at the hotel. A full day of sightseeing starts with a walking tour of Jerusalem and its environs. Do the Stations of the Cross along the Via Dolorosa (Way of the Cross), following the traditional path Jesus walked as he bore the cross to Calvary. Visit the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, the Crusader Church built over Calvary. You will pray at the Mount of Olives and visit the church of Dominus Flevit, where Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed so intensely the night before he was arrested. You will also have a chance to visit the Western Wall, so central to the Jewish faith. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 8:

Dead Sea - Masada - Jerusalem

Breakfast at the hotel. Leave Jerusalem by bus and head to the Dead Sea, earth's lowest point on land. You can float on the salt laden water, if you wish, or just look at it and marvel at the vistas of the Judean Desert. The group will make a brief visit to the Qumran Caves, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in earthen vessels. We'll then travel to the impressive fortress of Masada, which reigns over the surrounding landscape. Masada is the fortress where 900 Jewish rebels made their last stand against Roman forces in 73 AD. Return to Jerusalem in the early evening.

Day 9:

Jerusalem and Bethlehem

Breakfast at the hotel. The pilgrimage continues with a visit to Bethlehem, birthplace of Jesus and King David, on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The group will tour the Church of the Nativity, built over the cave established as the location where Jesus was born. A silver star under the altar, and a Latin inscription, mark the place of Jesus' birth: HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS (Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary). Mass in a chapel adjoining the Church of the Nativity. The afternoon includes a visit to Shepherds Field on the edges of Bethlehem and a visit to Ein Karem, the birthplace of St. John the Baptist, on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The evening will include free time for shopping and wandering the crowded streets of Jerusalem at your leisure.

Day 10:

Departure for Chicago

Your pilgrimage ends with transport in the morning to Tel Aviv for a late morning flight back to Chicago with one layover.