



JCF Biblical Study Tours

Introductions to the Land, Languages, and Literature of the Bible

Israel Wilderness Experience including Petra in Jordan

The Exodus and the Gospels (16 Days)

This tour focuses considerable attention on themes from the Exodus narrative, as well as possible routes the Israelites may have followed through the Great Wilderness (portions of which include the modern Negev Wilderness). Attention will be given to life-styles of desert peoples from ancient times to the present. One of our themes will entail comparisons between the task of Moses and the role of Messiah as seen from various Jewish perspectives. Other subjects will include the conquest of the land of Canaan, and the development of Judaism through the Temple periods to the days of Jesus.

Day 1 – *Arrival and transfer to modern Be'er Sheva*

Day 2 – *ANCIENT WELL DIGGERS and THE GREAT WILDERNESS*

NORTHERN NEGEV: After an Israeli styled breakfast we will begin our Wilderness experience with a glimpse at shepherding in the southern Judean hill country with a visit to ancient Arad (Num. 21) and Be'er Sheva (Gen 21-26) to discuss many aspects of life during Abraham's day.

Day 3 – *ROCKS, WATER AND MOSES' MESSIANIC ROLE*

CENTRAL NEGEV: Today we will ponder the many facets of biblical rock and water imagery as we hike through the beautiful Zin Canyon (Num 20). Other sites will include Avdat, the principal farming center of the ancient Nabateans. Overnight at Mitpe Ramon on the edge of the great Ramon Crater

Day 4 – *SPYING OUT THE LAND and THE SPICE ROUTE*

CENTRAL and SOUTHERN NEGEV: This morning we will set out on foot to explore sections of the Nabatean 'Spice Route' where it meanders through some of the most magnificent landscapes of the central Negev region. In this area we will also consider the Wilderness of Paran (Num 13) where the spies first launched out to discover the land of Promise. We will finish the day with a short hike in one of the beautiful canyons near Eilat, on the Red Sea (or optional snorkeling in the Red Sea).

Day 5 - *PETRA, THE ROSE OF EDOM*

MOUNTAINS OF EDOM: This morning we will cross over into the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at Aqaba and travel north through the Mountains of Edom to visit Petra, the capital city of the ancient Nabateans. Here we will explore some of the most colorful and spectacular ruins from the ancient world (Petra is now listed as a World Heritage site and is considered to be one of the ancient wonders).

Day 6 – *SOLOMON'S MINES and THE DEAD SEA MINES*

THE ARAVAH VALLEY (Lower Jordan): This morning we will travel north through the Arava Valley to Timna, a fascinating copper mining district used during Egyptian and early Israelite periods. From here we will continue north to the shores of the Dead Sea and take time for a float in the most unique waters at the Dead Sea. Overnight on the Dead Sea at En Bokek (an ancient resort first developed by Herod the Great).

Day 7 – *MASADA, EN GEDI and QUMRAN*

THE JUDEAN WILDERNESS: We will begin our day at Masada, the imposing fortress palace built by Herod the Great. Here in the southern Judean wilderness we will consider one of the disasters of the Zealot Revolt against Rome during the final moments of their struggle. We will also visit the area of En Gedi, the region where David hid from Saul (I Sam.24). At Qumran we will discuss the site where the famous Dead Sea Scrolls were first discovered in 1947.

Day 8 – *TO THE SOURCES OF THE JORDAN RIVER*

UPPER GALILEE AND GOLAN: This morning we will journey to Israel's border with Lebanon at the base of Mt. Hermon to enjoy the nature along the bountiful springs that form the upper Jordan River. We will consider the extent of Jesus' ministry in this northern part of the country. Sites will include: Tel Dan Nature Reserve, Banyas (Caesarea Philippi, Matt. 16), an overview of Lebanon and Syria.

Day 9 – *STRINGING PEARLS WITH JESUS*

AROUND THE SEA OF GALILEE: Today we will explore the deeper teachings of Jesus as he ministered in the Sea of Galilee region. In this beautiful setting we will give attention to various texts and traditions from his day, including the curious rabbinical technique of ‘pearl stringing.’ Sites will include: Capernaum, Mt. of Beatitudes, Tabgha, an ancient boat museum and a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee and more. We will conclude this day with a scenic overview atop the cliffs of Arbel.

Day 10 – *CROSSROADS AND CONFLICTS*

COASTAL PLAINS: After breakfast we will follow one of the main land passages along the Eastern Mediterranean, which connected the super powers of the ancient world. Our study themes will include trade and commerce from the days of Herod the Great and his seaport project at Caesarea. Here we will discuss some of the conflicts between Gentiles and Jews during the first centuries B.C. and A.D. We will reflect on the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10) and the subsequent emergence of Christianity into the non-Jewish communities. Later we will travel to Mt. Carmel and through the Jezreel Valley.

Day 11 – *OBSTACLES FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN*

JORDAN VALLEY TO JERUSALEM: This morning we will leave the Galilee and journey down the Jordan Valley to Jerusalem. Along the way we will view the principle city of the Decapolis, Scythopolis (or Beit Shean) where we will experience the capital of the Decapolis region. Here we will give some thought to some of the major impediments that interrupt the Gospel message from penetrating the Gentile world. Time and weather permitting we will relax in the picturesque waters of Sachne (a freshwater spring) at the base of Mt. Gilboa. We will finish our day with an overview of Jerusalem from the Mt. of Olives.

Day 12 – *THE ENVIRONS OF JERUSALEM*

Today we will journey along some of the scenic heights of the Judean hill country to gain perspectives of important approaches to Jerusalem during biblical times. We will view the Central Benjamin Plateau to the north and the area of Bethlehem to the south. In the Shphelah region (lower Judean foothills) we will see important battle sites such as between David and Goliath in the Elah Valley (I Sam. 17). Other sites to include Yad ve Shem (Holocaust Memorial)

Day 13 – *JERUSALEM THE HOLY*

Today we will consider some of the most important historic and religious sites to Jews, Muslims and Christians. We will begin our day at the famous Western Wall, which is an open-air synagogue for the modern Jewish community. Afterwards we will ascend the nearby Temple Mount of Herod the Great, now also a sacred site for Muslims. From here we will walk along the traditional Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the prize of orthodox Christianity. Sites along this way will include the pools of Beit Zaita (John 5), and some existing portions of the Antonio fortress of Herod the Great. We will also walk down part of the Mt. of Olives to Gethsemane.

Day 14 – *JERUSALEM THAT JESUS KNEW*

During our journey today inside the walled Old City and its enchanting quarters we will inspect several important archaeological sites from Jesus’ day. One of these will be a wealthy high priest’s home (possible house of Caiaphas). We will conclude our day at the exciting Southern Wall Excavations (or Ophel Gardens), where some key New Testament passages are easily reconstructed. Time permitting we will also cool ourselves in Hezekiah’s Tunnel underneath the original City of David. We will conclude our tour with a time of reflection in the beautiful Garden Tomb.

Day 15 – Free Day for rest and shopping

Day 16 – Return Flight

The material content and order of sites in this itinerary are subject to change and not all sites in the scheduled program are listed. The price is subject to change according the flux of the U.S. Dollar.

Price includes round trip airfare to Tel Aviv, airport assistance upon arrival, 2 airport bus transfers, 3 and 4 star hotel accommodations (with 2 meals daily), luxury coach throughout, driver, JCF guide and study materials, all entrance fees (except where mentioned otherwise), all tips and hotel portorage.

Price does not include lunches, extra drinks at meals or travel insurance (trip cancellation and travel health recommended).