

THE HOLY LAND FOR CHRISTIAN TRAVELERS

An Illustrated Guide to Israel

JOHN A. BECK



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*For Marmy,
my bride,
my soul mate,
and coadventurer,
whose longtime support
for my wanderings
made this publication possible*



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Look for These Symbols

-  Must-see location
-  Location description
-  Fees charged
-  No payment required
-  Modest dress required

INTRODUCTION

"The LORD had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.'"


GENESIS 12:1

It is time to go. The Lord is calling you to step away from all that is familiar, just as he once called Abram. He is inviting you to leave your home, your family, and the normal rhythms of life in order to show you a new land. But this is no ordinary place. The promised land shaped Bible events, molded the thinking of men and women of the Bible, and provided the images that communicate the thoughts of God. As you explore this land, you will quickly see that the Bible is at home here. And you will become more at home in your Bible as you travel the promised land.

I know that will happen because it happened to me and because I have seen it happen to others. I have studied the relationship between this Holy Land and the Bible for twenty years. Those years

have changed me. During that time I have led more than one thousand people on educational journeys here. Each person has been changed by the experience. So be ready to be transformed. The Lord brings people to the promised land to change them. Expect it. Expect to be changed in ways you cannot yet begin to imagine.

I wrote this guide to help with that change and to achieve the Lord's intentions for your trip to the promised land. Abram made a permanent home here. That is not true for you, so I wrote this guide to help you plan and execute a trip that makes the best use of your limited time. If you are on a guided tour, this guide will help you to find the things most important to the Christian faith and your Bible reading. If you are traveling on your own, this guide will help you to compose an efficient, enjoyable, faith-bolstering journey. Like all international travel, a trip to Israel comes with inherent risks. You should plan a trip that takes into consideration your own physical limitations and the conditions in the state of Israel at the time of your trip. This includes consulting the travel alerts and warnings issued by your home country with regard to travel in the Middle East.

To navigate this land you will first need to navigate the pages of this guide, so let me offer you a few thoughts on its composition. First a word on my selection of sites for inclusion in the book. I started with sites that tour groups are most likely to visit and then added sites critical to our understanding of key Bible stories and Bible passages. As a further aid, I have marked the must-see locations with .

I gathered these important stops into chapters that connect those sites regionally. That is the way you are most likely to encounter them when traveling. For example, I have gathered all the sites in the Jerusalem area or the coastal plain. If you are having trouble finding a specific place you plan to visit, the index of locations will quickly get you to the correct page.

You will find considerable variation in the length of the entries. I determined the length of each entry on the basis of the likelihood of

your visiting the site, its contribution to Bible reading, and the degree to which the interpretation of the site is advanced by on-site signs and literature. This allowed me to give you more where there is less otherwise available to you.

Finally, you can expect to find the same kind of content in each site-specific entry. The first paragraph will give you an overview of what the site has to offer. The paragraphs that follow will provide information about the history associated with the site and will guide you around the site to the most important things to see, explaining them as necessary. But most important, this guide will build the vital link between the location, what you are seeing, and your Bible reading. That is where it stands apart from those that focus more on restaurants, hotels, and beaches. It is designed to stimulate insight and reflection in Bible readers who have come to the Holy Land. At the close of each entry, you will find a few pieces of practical information like the site's location (📍), fees (💰 or 🚫), and dress requirements if they apply (👕).

Now it's time to get under way. I am excited to be part of this spiritual journey with you and anxious to see what the Lord is about to do in your life. The horizon of change lies just ahead. May this guide be a blessing to you as you begin this spiritual adventure.

A BRIEF HISTORY of the LAND

3300–1200 BC: Canaanite Period

3300–2300: Early Bronze Age I–III

Bronze became the primary metal for making tools and weapons as writing developed in the Fertile Crescent. Fortified cities complete with temples and palaces developed in Canaan by about 3000 BC. Abraham's forebears lived in Mesopotamia.

2300–2000: Early Bronze Age IV (Middle Bronze Age)

The larger urban centers collapsed and were replaced by unfortified settlements and camps used by those migrating in rhythm to their animals' needs. Abraham's family arrived in Canaan.

2000–1550: Middle Bronze Age

Larger walled cities and greater signs of wealth returned to Canaan together with a nomadic people known as the Amorites. Abraham's family lived in Canaan until famine drove them to Egypt.

1550–1200: Late Bronze Age

Egypt's power extended over the Canaanite city-states. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt to Mount Sinai and then to the edge of the promised land. Joshua led Israel in the conquest of Canaan. The time of the judges began.

1200–586 BC: Israelite Period

1200–925: Iron Age I

The Philistines arrived in Canaan and dominated the lowlands using iron technology and chariots. The time of the judges continued and concluded. Philistine dominance propelled the Israelite tribes to seek unification under a king. Samuel anointed Saul and David, Israel's first two kings. Its third king, Solomon, was the last to rule Israel as a united kingdom. By 930 BC the united kingdom became the divided kingdom.

925–586: Iron Age II

Israel was ruled as two kingdoms, each with its own capital and king, yet with a shared spiritual responsibility. As both kingdoms struggled spiritually, the corrective words of prophets like Elijah and Elisha failed to elicit the urgent changes needed in the northern kingdom (Israel). The Lord used the Assyrian Empire to punish Israel. Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, was destroyed in 722 BC; its people were removed from their land and scattered around the Assyrian Empire. The southern kingdom (Judah) also failed to make needed changes when chastised by the prophets but survived the Assyrian assault. It succumbed to the Babylonian Empire, which began a series of deportations that took Judeans from the promised land to Babylon (605 BC). The siege and destruction of Jerusalem and its temple followed in 586 BC.

586–539 BC: Neo-Babylonian Period

Daniel and Ezekiel spoke to God's people exiled to Babylon while a small remnant of Jews remained in the land; all awaited an Israelite return to the promised land that was to occur seventy years after their exile began.

538–332 BC: Persian Period

Persia displaced Babylon as the empire that controlled the known world. A Jewish woman by the name of Esther became queen of Persia, and Judah was known as the province of Yehud. Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah worked to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, the walls of Jerusalem, and the faithfulness of the returning exiles sent back to their homeland by Cyrus, the Persian king.

332–167 BC: Early Hellenistic Period

Alexander the Great displaced Persia and established an empire that stretched from Macedonia to India. In the wake of his conquest, Greek became the language of international commerce, and Greek culture flowed throughout the known world. Upon his death in 323 BC, Alexander's generals and their families took the reins of power; the Ptolemies (Greek kings in Egypt) and Seleucids (Greek kings in Syria) battled one another for the upper hand, while the Jews and their land were repeatedly caught in the middle of this fight. The darkest days were associated with the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whose plan of radical Hellenization sought to eradicate the worship practices that made the Jewish people unique.

167–31 BC: Late Hellenistic Period (Hasmonean)

Jewish revolutionaries led by the Maccabee family fought back against the radical Hellenization of Antiochus IV, reestablished Jewish political

autonomy, cleansed the temple, and liberated the Jews so that they could practice their religion without penalty. Jewish kings (Hasmoneans) again ruled Israel and expanded the state's land holdings. The destruction of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim created enmity between Jews and Samaritans that lingered into the time of Jesus. But Hasmonian succession problems brought Rome's unwelcomed presence and the loss of Jewish autonomy by 63 BC. Ptolemaic Egypt maintained its autonomy until it was defeated by Rome in the Battle of Actium (31 BC).

31 BC–AD 324: Roman Period

The Roman senate had appointed Herod the Great as king of Judea in 40 BC. This began his storied political and building career that overlapped with the birth of Jesus. Upon Herod's death, his kingdom was divided among his three sons: Herod Antipas (Galilee and Perea), Herod Philip (Iturea, Tracónitis, and Gaulanitis), and Archelaus (Judah). Archelaus was removed from office, and Judea was ruled directly by Roman governors starting in AD 6. The early part of this era was the time of Jesus's ministry on earth, the expansion of the Christian church recorded in the book of Acts, and the letters of the New Testament. The Jewish people revolted twice against Rome. The First Jewish Revolt (AD 66–73) ended with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by Titus (AD 70) and the fall of Masada (AD 73). The Second Jewish Revolt (AD 132–35) resulted in widespread destruction and renaming. Jerusalem was now called *Aelia Capitolina* and Judea was renamed *Palestina*. The Jewish oral law known as the Mishnah was put into writing in about AD 200.

AD 324–640: Byzantine Period

With the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine (AD 306–37), Christianity enjoyed a season of growth under the toleration

championed by the Edict of Milan (AD 313). Constantine's mother, Helena, began a vigorous campaign of building churches on locations in Israel associated with the life of Jesus. As pilgrims flocked to this land, some elected to remain and establish monastic communities. There was frequent destruction and rebuilding of Christian compounds during this era, much of it related to the Samaritan uprising (AD 529) and the Persian invasion (AD 614).

AD 640–1099: Early Arab (Islamic) Period

Byzantine rule, weakened by Persian invasion, collapsed quickly in the face of Arabian invaders who captured the city of Jerusalem in AD 638. Respectful of both Judaism and Christianity, these Muslim rulers protected and enhanced Jerusalem with new architecture that celebrated the city's relationship to Islam. The Dome of the Rock was built in AD 691, and the El-Aqsa Mosque in AD 715. The exception to tolerance is linked to the rule of Caliph Hakim, who unleashed a persecution against Christians and their churches. During his rule, the tomb of Jesus at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was destroyed (AD 1009).

AD 1099–1291: Crusader Period

At the close of the early Arab period, Christians faced increasing restrictions as they sought to visit their holy sites. This led Pope Urban II to call for military action designed to remove those restrictions. During the course of five Crusades, access was restored for European pilgrims, churches were rebuilt or founded, hospitals were established, and castles found their place on this land. Unfortunately the Crusaders also attacked and killed many Muslim and Jewish citizens of this land, imposing a negative image on the Crusades that lives to this day in the memory of many. By the close of the thirteenth century, the Crusaders

had been defeated and driven from the promised land, largely because of the efforts of Saladin, the first sultan of Egypt and Syria.

AD 1250–1517: Mameluke Period

In the middle part of the thirteenth century, a class of slave soldiers known as Mamelukes (Arabic for “slaves”) rose to power in Egypt and Syria. Given challenges faced on other fronts, they gave little attention to the area of Palestine other than to destroy all the fortifications that might prove useful to those who wished to reoccupy this land. Palestine became a remote outpost.

AD 1517–1918: Ottoman Period

Early in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Turks dominated the region. At this time Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–66) established the system of walls and gates in Jerusalem known today as the modern Old City wall. In the latter part of this era, increasing geographical and archaeological inquiry brought new understanding of Bible history and culture. During World War I the Ottomans allied themselves with Germany. When the war was lost, Britain became the ruling authority in Palestine.

AD 1918–Present: Modern Period

Between 1920 and 1948 Britain’s ability and passion to manage this land as a mandate waned. At the same time, the desire to establish a modern Jewish state was on the rise. In 1947 the United Nations Partition Plan called for the formation of a joint Jewish-Arab state. This state formed in 1948, but with territorial concessions that would come back to haunt this land’s history. The modern state of Israel consisted of the territory of the coastal plain and west Jerusalem. The Old City

of Jerusalem and the west bank of the Jordan River, including most of the mountainous interior from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, was given to the modern state of Jordan. The newly formed state of Israel was immediately beset by attacks from without and within, leading to the Israeli War of Independence (or Arab-Israeli War). At the close of this war, the independent Jewish state was confirmed, but it continued to face unrest in the years that followed. The Six-Day War of 1967 dramatically changed the map again. During this war, Israel seized the Old City of Jerusalem and much of the modern Sinai and militarily occupied the Golan Heights and the West Bank.

The GEOGRAPHY and CLIMATE of the PROMISED LAND

Geographical Zones

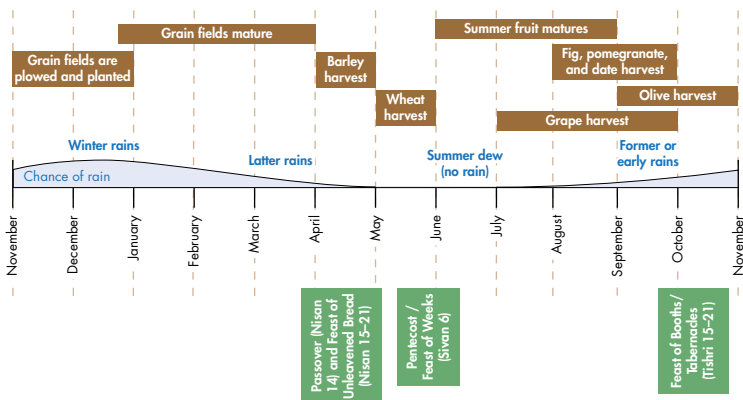
GEOGRAPHICAL ZONE	GEOGRAPHY	CULTURE
Coastal Plain	Low in elevation Generally level terrain close to the Mediterranean Sea	Grain agriculture Easily traveled (International Highway) Easily invaded
Central Mountains	High in elevation Steep-sided mountains and narrow, V-shaped valleys (most prominent in south)	Terraced agriculture for olives and fruit Difficult to travel Difficult to invade
Jordan Rift Valley	Elevations below sea level Sea of Galilee, Jordan River, and Dead Sea	North: fishing and agriculture South: mining for salt and bitumen Lightly traveled because of swamps, large-predator attacks, and high temperatures
Transjordan Plateau	Highest in elevation Mountains and high plateaus	North: grain agriculture and cattle Middle: olives and fruit, sheep and goats South: camels and trade Travel on the King's Highway



26 The Geography and Climate of the Promised Land

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The Agricultural Year



Seasons and Culture

SEASON	MONTHS	CLIMATE	CULTURE IN BIBLE TIMES
Summer	May–September	Stable atmosphere Sunny skies Warmer temperatures (Jerusalem average high, 83°F) Pleasant westerly sea breeze No rain High humidity and dewfall	Overland travel Mediterranean shipping Season for war Maturing of olives, dates, grapes, and figs People look for ways to stay cool Cisterns empty and water table drops Flowers wither Pastures dry out
Winter	October–April	Unstable atmosphere Frequent cloudy days Cooler temperatures (Jerusalem average high, 63°F) Gusty winds Rain and occasional snow	Overland travel diminishes Mediterranean shipping ceases Season of peace Maturing and harvesting grain People look for ways to warm up Cisterns fill and water table recharges Flowers spring to life Pastures turn green

Winds

WIND	SOURCE	CULTURAL IMPACT	EXAMPLES
Pressure-Induced Winds	Created as air moves between high and low pressure areas	High winds associated with deep lows of the winter season that can destroy structures and threaten shipping on the Mediterranean Sea	Ezekiel 13:13–14; 27:26; Matthew 7:27; Acts 27:13–14
Mediterranean Sea Breeze	Created during the summer months when air cooled over the Mediterranean Sea moves inland to replace the warm air rising over the land	Celebrated winds that provide natural air-conditioning and a predictable breeze that farmers used to winnow their grain	Job 21:18; Psalm 1:4; Isaiah 17:13
Sharqiya	Created when cool air on the ridges above the Sea of Galilee descends violently into the lake basin	Destructive and unpredictable winds that can catch even experienced fishermen off guard and fill them with terror	Matthew 14:22–24; Mark 4:35–37; Luke 8:22–25
Khamsin	Dry south and southeast winds that bring high temperatures and fill the air with gritty, yellow clouds of dust as the atmosphere changes between seasons	Harsh winds that suddenly and totally decimate pastures and wildflowers in early summer and that irritate people and shorten tempers; a symbol of divine judgment	Psalm 103:15–16; Isaiah 27:8; Jeremiah 18:17; Hosea 12:1; Luke 12:55

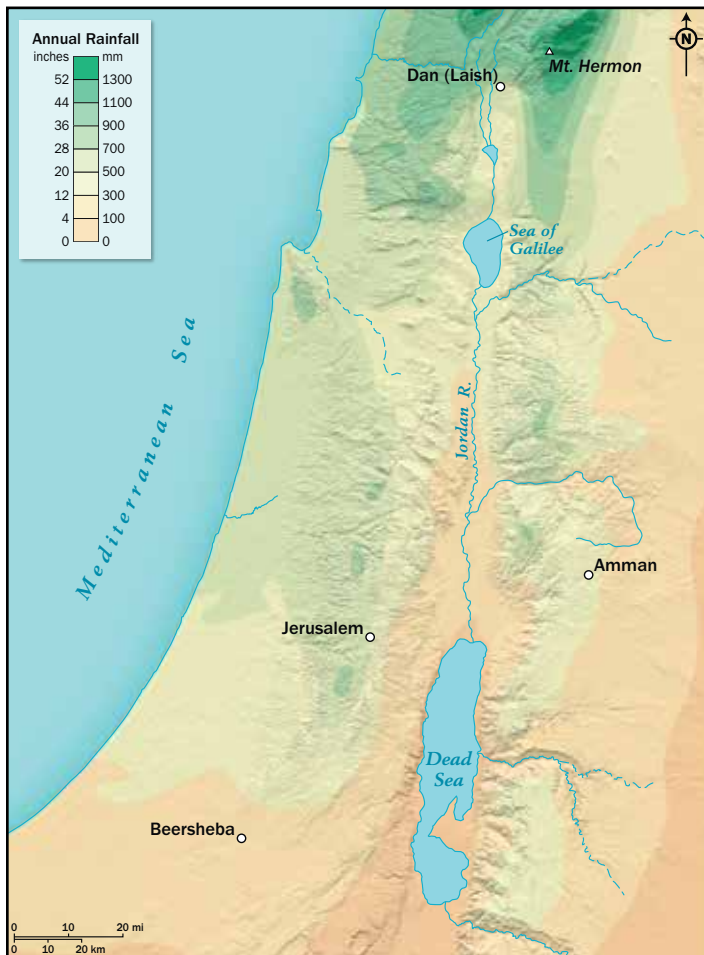
Water

In contrast to Egypt or Mesopotamia, where major rivers and irrigation provide access to fresh water, the promised land is dependent on rainfall (Deut. 11:10–11). Because rainfall virtually ceases for seven months of the year (April–October), the rainwater has to be captured or underground water has to be accessed to assure a yearlong supply.

SOURCE FOR WATER	CHARACTERISTICS
------------------	-----------------

Spring	Springs occur naturally when the land's surface coincides with the elevation of the water table. They offer clean, filtered water with minimum need for development or maintenance.
Well	Wells are shafts dug down to the water table. Their sides are lined with fieldstones to prevent collapse. A cap and cover are added to prevent evaporation and contamination. Yearly maintenance is required.
Cistern	Cisterns are underground chambers dug into bedrock to store runoff water captured during the rainy season. They have a narrow neck near the surface, which widens into a bell-shaped body. A cap and cover are added to prevent evaporation and contamination. Yearly maintenance is required to replace the plaster that waterproofs the sides.
Aqueduct, Tunnel, and Reservoir	These major construction projects, undertaken by strong central governments, are meant to access, move, and store water at locations more convenient for those living in large cities. Yearly maintenance is required.

Rainfall



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ITINERARIES

If you are composing your own itinerary for one or more days of your experience in the Holy Land, this section offers suggested stops for trips of varying length. The order in which the sites are listed reflects just one possible itinerary. Your personal plan will depend on a number of factors including where you are spending the night, the length of your touring day, the particular day you will be visiting these locations, the amount of time you wish to spend at each location, and your level of interest in a particular site. As you make your plan, be sure to take into account driving or walking time between sites as well as the opening and closing times at the sites you plan to visit on the day you plan to visit.

Three Days in Jerusalem

DAY ONE | Old City of Jerusalem Area

- ▶ Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Church of the Resurrection)
- ▶ Garden Tomb (Gordon's Calvary)

- ▶ Bethesda Pools (Saint Anne's Church)
- ▶ Ecce Homo Convent of the Sisters of Zion
- ▶ Chapels of Flagellation and Condemnation
- ▶ Burnt House
- ▶ Wohl Archaeological Museum
- ▶ Upper Room
- ▶ Saint Peter Gallicantu

DAY TWO | Old City of Jerusalem Area

- ▶ Temple Mount (Haram esh-Sharif)
- ▶ Jerusalem Archaeological Park
- ▶ Western Wall (*HaKotel*)
- ▶ Broad Wall
- ▶ City of David
- ▶ Akeldama and Hinnom Valley
- ▶ Via Dolorosa
- ▶ Tower of David Museum (Citadel)

DAY THREE | Jerusalem outside the Old City

- ▶ Kidron Valley Overlook
- ▶ Mount Scopus Observation Point and First-Century Tomb
- ▶ Chapel of the Ascension (Mosque of the Ascension)
- ▶ Pater Noster Church (Eleona Church)
- ▶ Dominus Flevit
- ▶ Church of All Nations (Basilica of Agony)
- ▶ Tisch Family Zoological Gardens
- ▶ Israel Museum

Five Days in Jerusalem and Judea

➔ DAY ONE | Old City of Jerusalem Area

- ▶ Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Church of the Resurrection)
- ▶ Garden Tomb (Gordon's Calvary)
- ▶ Bethesda Pools (Saint Anne's Church)
- ▶ Ecce Homo Convent of the Sisters of Zion
- ▶ Chapels of Flagellation and Condemnation
- ▶ Burnt House
- ▶ Wohl Archaeological Museum
- ▶ Upper Room
- ▶ Saint Peter Gallicantu

➔ DAY TWO | Old City of Jerusalem Area

- ▶ Temple Mount (Haram esh-Sharif)
- ▶ Jerusalem Archaeological Park
- ▶ Western Wall (*HaKotel*)
- ▶ Broad Wall
- ▶ City of David
- ▶ Akeldama and Hinnom Valley
- ▶ Via Dolorosa
- ▶ Tower of David Museum (Citadel)
- ▶ Israel Museum

➔ DAY THREE | Mount of Olives and Bethlehem

- ▶ Kidron Valley Overlook
- ▶ Mount Scopus Observation Point and First-Century Tomb
- ▶ Chapel of the Ascension (Mosque of the Ascension)

- ▶ Pater Noster Church (Eleona Church)
- ▶ Dominus Flevit
- ▶ Church of All Nations (Basilica of Agony)
- ▶ Bethlehem and Shepherds' Fields
- ▶ Herodium (Herodion) National Park

DAY FOUR | Dead Sea and Judean Wilderness

- ▶ Masada National Park
- ▶ En Gedi Nature Reserve
- ▶ Qumran National Park
- ▶ Dead Sea
- ▶ Jericho of the New Testament (Tulul Abu El-Alaiq)
- ▶ Jericho of the Old Testament (Tell es-Sultan)
- ▶ Judean Wilderness (from Wadi Qelt)

DAY FIVE | Judean Hill Country and the Shephelah

- ▶ Ein Kerem
- ▶ Neot Kedumim Park
- ▶ Beth Shemesh
- ▶ Elah Valley (from Tel Azekah)
- ▶ Beit Guvrin National Park
- ▶ Lachish
- ▶ Hebron (Al-Khalil)
- ▶ Gezer

Twelve Days throughout Israel

➔ DAY ONE | Jerusalem

- ▶ Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Church of the Resurrection)
- ▶ Garden Tomb (Gordon's Calvary)
- ▶ Bethesda Pools (Saint Anne's Church)
- ▶ Ecce Homo Convent of the Sisters of Zion
- ▶ Chapels of Flagellation and Condemnation
- ▶ Burnt House
- ▶ Wohl Archaeological Museum
- ▶ Upper Room
- ▶ Saint Peter Gallicantu

➔ DAY TWO | Jerusalem

- ▶ Temple Mount (Haram esh-Sharif)
- ▶ Jerusalem Archaeological Park
- ▶ Western Wall (*HaKotel*)
- ▶ Broad Wall
- ▶ City of David
- ▶ Akeldama and Hinnom Valley
- ▶ Via Dolorosa
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- ▶ Jericho of the Old Testament (Tell es-Sultan)
- ▶ Judean Wilderness (from Wadi Qelt)

DAY FIVE | Benjamin and Samaria

- ▶ Nebi Samuel National Park
- ▶ Shiloh
- ▶ Jacob's Well
- ▶ Shechem (Tell Balata)
- ▶ Samaria/Sebaste

DAY SIX | Judean Hill Country and the Shephelah

- ▶ Ein Kerem
- ▶ Neot Kedumim Park
- ▶ Gezer
- ▶ Beth Shemesh
- ▶ Elah Valley (from Tel Azekah)

- ▶ Beit Guvrin National Park
- ▶ Hebron (Al-Khalil)
- ▶ Lachish

➔ DAY SEVEN | Negev

- ▶ Beersheba
- ▶ Arad
- ▶ En Avdat National Park
- ▶ Makhtesh Ramon
- ▶ Timna Valley National Park

➔ DAY EIGHT | Coastal Plain

- ▶ Ashkelon
- ▶ Jaffa (ancient Joppa)
- ▶ Caesarea Maritima

➔ DAY NINE | Jezreel Valley

- ▶ Mukhraqa Monastery on Mount Carmel
- ▶ Haifa and Israel's Ancient Maritime Culture
- ▶ Megiddo
- ▶ Mount Tabor

➔ DAY TEN | Golan Heights

- ▶ Hazor
- ▶ Dan
- ▶ Banias (Paneas, Caesarea Philippi)
- ▶ Har Bental (Mount Bental)
- ▶ Katzrin Historic Village

- ▶ Gamla Nature Reserve
- ▶ Bethsaida (Julias)

➔ **DAY ELEVEN | Sea of Galilee**

- ▶ Sea of Galilee
- ▶ Korazim National Park (Chorazin)
- ▶ Capernaum
- ▶ Heptapegon (Tabgha)
- ▶ Mount of the Beatitudes
- ▶ Mount Arbel National Park and Nature Reserve
- ▶ Kursi National Park

➔ **DAY TWELVE | Lower Galilee and the Harod Valley**

- ▶ Nazareth
- ▶ Mount Precipice (Nazareth)
- ▶ Sepphoris (Zippori National Park)
- ▶ Jezreel
- ▶ En Harod
- ▶ Beth Shean National Park