# Jerusalem & the Holy Land

# (Oct 23—Nov 4, 2023)

(itinerary draft, as of 6-Jan-23)

**with Douglas Kenning**

**& Mimi Oppenheimer**



*Jerusalem is the center of the world on medieval maps, the epicenter of Western spirituality, for three millennia a cauldron of ferocious passions, and the place most sacred to God Himself for a third of humanity. Let us go there ourselves to seek the seekers, the timeless city eternally in the thrall of a past that is continually present, a city more fraught with human fears and human certainties than any spot on earth.*

[NB: *this itinerary is an approximation, the timings of some activities will change or be on different days than here listed*.]

Day 1 (Mon. Oct 23). **Arrive** at Ben Gurion Airport (a.k.a. Tel Aviv or Lod)--we’ll meet those arriving within the arrival window—and go up to Jerusalem and check-in at the hotel. After a chance to clean up, we’ll meet in lobby and discuss the tour. Possible panoramic overlook of the city, depending on when everyone arrives. Welcome Dinner at a favorite local restaurant *(Olive & Fish, incl.)* and overnight in Jerusalem (Three Arches Hotel, a Jerusalem institution).

Day 2 (Tue. Oct 24). **Jerusalem of the First & Second Temple Periods**. 0830 departure. We start with an orientation on the Old City and its history beginning with the City of David, the walled Jebusite city captured by King David ca. 1004 BCE and made the capital of his kingdom. From here, we’ll visit the Jewish Quarter, where we’ll lunch (*not incl*.) while visiting the Cardo, the Herodian Quarter excavations, the Sephardic Synagogues, and the Burnt House. Finally, we’ll go down to the Western Wall (*Kotel*) and the newly opened Western Wall Tunnel. Dinner on your own (we’ll have recommendations) and overnight in Jerusalem (Three Arches Hotel).

Day 3 (Wed. Oct 25). **Roman and Christian Jerusalem** (part 1). 0830. We’ll drive up to the Mount of Olives, descending to visit sites of the Ascension, Church of Paternoster, Tomb of David [CLOSED ON SATURDAY], Tombs of the Prophets, the Dominius Flevit, Garden of Gethsemane, and the Tomb of Mary. We’ll ascend to lunch in the Old City (*not incl*.). In the afternoon, we’ll visit the Armenian Quarter, including Mt. Zion, with Church of the Dormition, Crusader chapel above a possible site of the Last Supper, and attend a service at the evocative orthodox Cathedral Church of St. James (1500). We’ll finish the day with the Syrian Church of St. Mark, another possible site of the Last Supper and the gathering of the disciples after the Crucifixion. Dinner (on your own) and overnight in Jerusalem (Three Arches Hotel).

Day 4 Thurs. Oct 26). **Roman and Christian Jerusalem** (part 2). 0830. We’ll begin at St. Stephen’s Gate to visit St. Anne’s Basilica and the Bethesda Pools and the site of the healing of the crippled man. Then, starting in the Antonia Fortress and stopping at Ecce Homo, we’ll follow the Stations of the Cross along Via Dolorosa. This will lead us to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, site of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. Lunch on your own. Afternoon free to explore the Old City or do what you will. Possible visits include walks along the Ottoman wall, Old City rooftop walks, the Garden Tomb, and the Rockefeller Museum. Dinner (on your own) and overnight in Jerusalem (Three Arches Hotel).

Day 5 (Fri. Oct 27). **Hebron & Bethlehem**. 0800. In the morning, we’ll drive to Bethlehem, with a visit to the Church of the Nativity, including St. Catherine’s and the grotto of St. Jerome. Then we’ll go to Hebron [CLOSED ON SATURDAY], where we’ll lunch and visit the Tomb of the Patriarchs (Cave of Machpelah), where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, and Leah all are buried. We’ll return to Jerusalem by way of the Herodion (seeing as much or as little as time allows): the lower city (pool, Roman bath, monumental building, Byzantine church) and the palace/fortress on the man-made mountain top built by King Herod, including the latest excavations of the tomb and Roman theater. Dinner (on your own) and overnight in Jerusalem (Three Arches Hotel).

Day 6 (Sat. Oct 28). **Dead Sea and Masada.** 0800. We drive from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea and Judean desert, the lowest point on earth--driving 42 km while descending 1170 meters--talking about the African Rift valley, water disputes, the shrinking of the Dead Sea, sink-holes, and unique flora and fauna. We’ll visit Masada, the Hasmonean fortress in the desert extensively renovated by Herod, used by the Jewish rebels in their famous last stand against the Romans. Returning, we’ll grab some quick lunch where and when we can and visit Ein Gedi, with optional hiking Nahal David to waterfalls and natural pools. Depending on the schedule we could make an afternoon stop for a dip in the Dead Sea (*not incl.*) and/or visit the Essene site and museum at Qumran, speaking of the Dead Sea scrolls and early religious fundamentalism. There might have be a vote among these options. Dinner (on your own) and overnight in Jerusalem (Three Arches Hotel).

Day 7 (Sun. Oct 29). **Jerusalem of the Arab Period and the Crusades**. 0730. We’ll visit (early) the Temple Mount, [CLOSED FRI & SAT] where are found the Al Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock, and the Golden Gate. We’ll plunge again deep into the Old Town, through the suq of the Cloth Merchants, past a succession of Mamluk doors along Al-Takiyya Street, the Muristan of the Hospitallers and other Crusader sites, plus the Citadel (Tower of David). Then there’ll be an option to go to the great and bustling Mahaneh Yehuda market, were there’ll be opportunities to lunch (*not incl.*). In any case, the rest of the afternoon is yours to visit East Jerusalem, do a rooftop or wall walk, or perhaps sit at a café inside the Damascus Gate and watch Jerusalem’s matchless human parade. Dinner (on your own) and overnight in Jerusalem (Three Arches Hotel).

Day 8 (Mon, Oct 30). **Jerusalem of modern Israel**. 0930. Today will start with a visit to the remarkable Israel Museum, including the Second Temple Model and the Shrine of the Book, with its exhibits of artifacts from Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls. From this point, you are on your own. You can lunch there (in the cafeteria, or even picnic if weather seems promising), and stroll through the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden. If you do not want to linger longer in the Israel Museum, you might go to the nearby Bible Lands Museum, Knesset, or Supreme Court building. Beyond, accessible by our own bus, if a majority want to go or by taxi, there are the Museum of Islamic Art, the Holocaust Museum, or you could just return to lose yourself in the Old City. All of Jerusalem is yours and if you want suggestions, we can advise on what you might do and how to get there. Dinner (on your own) and overnight in Jerusalem (Three Arches Hotel).

Day 9 (Tue. Oct 31). **Jericho & Tiberias**. 0800. We’ll drive down to Jericho, the oldest city in the world, then visit Qasr al-Yahud, the more authentic River Jordan baptism site. Then we’ll proceed up the scenic Jordan Valley, lunching enroute (*not incl*.), then touring the Hellenistic-Roman-Byzantine excavations at Beit She'an. Dinner (*incl.*) and overnight near Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. (hotel TBD).

Day 10 (Wed, Nov 1). **Galilee & Golan**. 0730. We’ll start with Magdala, home of Mary Magdalene, with its ancient synagogue,; visit Tabgha, the “Church of the Multiplication” (of loaves and fishes, that is); Capernaum, where Jesus based his adult ministry; and the Church of the Beatitudes (place of the Sermon on the Mount), with lovely gardens. We travel north into the Golan Heights and the Bental lookout over Syria, and lunch in Coffee Anan (*incl.*), with its amazing view and U.N. outpost. In the afternoon, we pass through Druze towns and view Nimrud Crusader fort on its magnificent site. Continuing through lovely mountain scenery, we come to Caesarea Philippi (a.k.a. Panias, a.k.a. Banias) where Jesus taught, with its Temples, its Shrine to Pan, its Shrine to Dancing Goats, Banyas Waterfall, and its woods and water-blessed peacefulness. Group dinner (*not incl.*) and overnight near Tiberias (hotel TBD).

Day 11 (Thurs. Nov 2). **Canna, Nazareth,**. 0830. We’ll pass the Horns of Hattin, where Saladin defeated the Crusaders, Canna, the wedding place where Jesus turned water into wine,. We’ll stop to tour Nazareth, home of Joseph and Mary, the place of the annunciation, where Jesus lived for four-fifths of his life. We’ll lunch somewhere along the way (*not incl.*), as we pass along the Valley of Megiddo (a.k.a Armageddon) to visit the archaeological site, then continue to Haifa, by way of Mt. Carmel monastery, with an overlook of Haifa, the place where Elijah killed the priests of Ba’al. and Baha’i Garden. Dinner (on your own) and overnight in Old Haifa (Carmella Boutique Hotel).

Day 12 (Fri. Nov 3). **Caesarea Maritima, Tel Aviv, Jaffa**. 0830. Our last day takes us down the coast to Caesarea Maritima (Caesarea on the Sea), the Roman capital of their province of Judea, where governors like Pontus Pilate lived. Then we take a driving tour of Tel Aviv, with visits to some interesting neighborhoods, enroute to a visit to Jaffa (Yafo), for a multimedia orientation of Jaffa (at Jaffa Visitor’s Center), followed by a few hours of wandering this lovely Roman seaside city, having time for lunch, shopping the narrow lanes, browsing the craftswork, or just walking the sea front. We’ll finish with a farewell dinner (*Haj Khalil*, *incl.*), and overnight near the airport (Sadot Hotel) with free airport shuttle (*incl.*).

Day 13 (Sat, Nov 4). **Departure Day**.

N.B.: This is a politically turbulent area of the world, much of the intensity focused on Jerusalem. This itinerary assumes a calm political climate. At any time, some sites may be closed to us, or some activities impossible. We’ll substitute other sites and activities as necessary.

N.B.: The Old City of Jerusalem is traffic-free, which means that we’ll be on foot, on rough cobblestones, climbing slopes and stairs, for most hours of most days. Be sure that you can walk at least three miles a day on uneven ground and climb three flights of stairs easily without resting. This is not a tour for people who have difficulty walking, or are slow walkers, or have shortness of breath.

COSTS & SERVICES

**Price**: $ **TBA** (in U.S. dollars) per person (land only)

**Tour Cost Includes:**

* Ground transport from & to Tel Aviv (Ben Gurion International Airport) at the beginning & end of the tour, within the arrival and departure windows. There will be only one airport run in each case, so you are requested to schedule arrival and departure flights appropriately. Contact us for details.
* Air-conditioned chauffeur-driven minibus throughout the tour.
* Overnight accommodation on twin-sharing basis. All accommodation will be of three-star or higher standard. All hotels have websites for your inspection.
* 11 breakfasts and 4 other meals indicated as (*incl*) in the itinerary.
* All entrance fees to sites indicated in the itinerary.
* An English-speaking host / guide to be with you throughout the tour.
* All presentations will be in English or an interpreter will be present.
* tips for driver, hotel & restaurant staffs, & local guides.
* All applicable government taxes, service charges, and paperwork.

**Tour Cost Does Not Include:**

* Airfare to and from Ben Gurion Airport.
* Passport applications and fees. Passports are required for entrance into Israel
* Travel or health insurance.
* Single supplement charge ($ 450)
* Meals or beverages not otherwise specified in writing in the itinerary.
* Items or concerns of a personal nature.



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