



MEJDI TOURS

Interfaith Council of Southwestern Connecticut

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP

8 Days, 7 Nights

Take a fresh look at an ancient land, with this groundbreaking multiple perspective tour. Experience the sacred shrines, cosmopolitan cities, and scenic landscapes of this diverse region through the eyes of its residents. Beginning with the religious histories of Jerusalem, continuing into Bethlehem and the North, and ending on the shores of the Mediterranean, this tour offers travelers the opportunity to meet local residents and NGO's, to share your experience and learn about contrasting national narratives, and explore future prospects for justice, security, and peace in the region. A unique approach that accesses contemporary issues through personal storytelling, relationship-building, and facilitated discussions, the tour features a diverse array of guides and speakers—Israeli and Palestinian, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Druze. Discover how cooperation affects environmental concerns in the Dead Sea Valley, enjoy home-cooked cuisine with local families, and enjoy bustling and colorful bazaars. With time for discussion, reflection, and fun, join us for this unique tour that explores the power of faith and reconciliation.

Days 1— U.S./Tel Aviv, Israel/Jerusalem Wednesday May 25th

Take an overnight flight to Tel Aviv, and transfer to Jerusalem. Relax at the hotel before our reception and welcome dinner tonight.

[D]

Hotel: Jerusalem

Day 2 — Jerusalem: Exploring Sacred Spaces Thursday May 26th

Begin the day on the **Temple Mount**, capped by the shining cupola of the Dome of the Rock. Meet a representative of the Muslim faith, who will explain the importance of the holy site to Muslims. Then visit the **Western Wall**, touch the ancient stones, and learn about the significance of this sacred place. Meet with a rabbi over lunch. A local pastor then joins us at the **Church of the Holy Sepulcher**, home to six Christian sects and, according to tradition, the tomb of Jesus. In the afternoon,

ascend to the top of the **Mount of Olives**, and take in a panoramic view of the domes, spires, and golden stones of Jerusalem's Old City. Take some **free time to explore the city**.

[B, L]

Hotel: Jerusalem

Day 3 – Jerusalem Friday May 27th

Visit **Yad Vashem**, Israel's moving memorial to the Holocaust, meet with a Holocaust survivor (who was saved by a Righteous Gentile) for a personal glimpse into the pain and light during one of the darkest moments in history. In the afternoon, have a **brainstorming session with the Interfaith Encounter Association** to share each other's experiences with interfaith coalition building and learn from one another. This evening, gather for a discussion with members of the **Parents Circle Families Forum** and learn how they have worked together to turn grief into reconciliation and action. [Jumma prayer and Shabbat] Shabbat dinner at the hotel.

[B, D]

Hotel: Jerusalem

Day 4 — Bethlehem Saturday May 28th

Travel to Bethlehem and meet with a local clergyperson to learn about the city's challenges including its shrinking Christian population. Stop by **Manger Square** and, at the **Church of the Nativity**, descend into the cave revered by many as the birthplace of Jesus. For lunch head to **Shepherd's Field** to savor fresh local cuisine at a Bedouin tent. This afternoon visit **Heaven's Field**, a cooperative organic farm in the West Bank created by Israelis and Palestinians, nurturing the land and neighborly relations. Close the day with a traditional, **home-cooked meal** and live music, hosted at the home of a Palestinian family in Bethany (alternate program can be arranged for those wishing not to travel on Shabbat).

[B, L, D]

Hotel: Jerusalem

Day 5 — The Jordan River Valley/Tiberias Sunday May 29th

This morning meet with the **Friends of the Earth Middle East** in Jerusalem, FOEME is a unique organization that brings together Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli environmentalists to promote cooperative efforts to protect their shared environmental heritage learn from one another's challenges and triumphs. Before leaving Jerusalem, **stop by the Hand in Hand school** and see shared society at work in Jerusalem. Along the way North, stop to dip your feet in the **Jordan River** where Christian pilgrims come to get baptized. Then follow the Jordan Valley north

to the Roman city of **Bet She'an** to see its remarkably preserved amphitheater, baths, and column-lined streets.

This evening enjoy a boat ride on the **Sea of Galilee** and learn about the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim histories of the area.

[B, D]

Hotel: Tiberias

Day 6 — Galilee/Nazareth Monday May 30th

Start the day early with a visit to **Capernaum**, where Jesus lived and preached, and many apostles, including Peter, made their home. From here, drive to **Tsfat**, the birthplace of Kabbalah where you can visit its famous synagogues and the artists quarter and perhaps discover its ancient mysteries. This afternoon continue on to Nazareth for a tour of the **White Mosque** and **the Church of the Annunciation**, one of the largest churches in the Middle East. Meet with Sheikh Ghassan Manasra, the director of the **Islamic Cultural Center in Nazareth**, a center promoting tolerance and interfaith dialogue, share your stories of successful coalition building and hear about the work that he is doing in the region.

[B, D]

Hotel: Haifa

Day 7 — Haifa and Caesarea Maritima Tuesday May 31st

Haifa and visit the magnificent **Bahai Gardens**. At the heart of this complex stands the golden-domed Shrine of [the Báb](#), which is the resting place of the Prophet-Herald of the Bahá'í Faith. Take some quiet time to meander through the tiers of the garden or meditate quietly in the Shrine. Meet with **Shatil**, an organization that was founded to help build and strengthen civil society in Israel. Discover the secretive traditions of the Druze, and enjoy lunch with a **Druze family** in their home. Then, head down the coast to Herod's port city of **Caesarea Maritima**, to tour the ruins and enjoy the ocean breezes. Enjoy the evening in Tel Aviv at leisure.

[B, L]

Hotel: Tel Aviv

Days 8— Jaffa/Tel Aviv Wednesday June 1st

Take a walking tour of the historic port city of **Jaffa**, shop in the artists' colony, and enjoy a delicious lunch. **Meet with regional journalist for an interview**. Discuss your group's efforts in the United States, how you have been affected by your visit to the region, the impact you feel you have had on the groups and individuals that you have encountered and what is your vision of for the future. This afternoon participate in a **facilitated discussion on interfaith peace building** with the **Peres**

Center for Peace and a group of local peace activists. Finally, visit **Rabin Square** to discuss Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, his memory today and the future of peace in the region before relaxing with free time to shop or enjoy the beach in Tel Aviv. Finally, bid your guides goodbye at a farewell dinner.

[B]