



In the Footsteps of Jesus
Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 2023
With
Rev'd Michael Armstrong

Day 1: Monday 27th February 2023

Departure from Sydney to TEL AVIV, ISRAEL. (Meals in Flight)

Day 2: Tuesday 28th February

Morning arrival in TEL AVIV, ISRAEL. To enable us to best program our body clock to the new time zone we will begin a refreshing seaside visit to the ancient Port of **JOPPA**, home of **Simon the Tanner**, and where Jonah embarked on his eventful voyage. We will have lunch at the Mediterranean Port of **CEASAREA**, site of Herod's Palace, home of Cornelius and where Paul was brought to trial before an afternoon check-in to your hotel by the Mediterranean Sea. **Overnight Tel Aviv - Leonardo Plaza/Haifa** (Meals in Flight, D)

Day 3: Wednesday 1st March

Today our journey takes us to **NAZARETH**. We visit the **CHURCH OF ANNUNCIATION** that covers the boyhood home of Jesus, including museum and the caves beneath. We visit the recreated **NAZARETH VILLAGE** experiencing lifestyle as it was during the time of Jesus and share in a traditional lunch. In the **CHURCH OF ST JOSEPH** we admire the beautiful stained glass window depicting the marriage of Mary and Joseph. Take in the view from the **MOUNT OF THE PRECIPICE** before our stop at **CANA** where Jesus performed His first recorded miracle and take an opportunity to enjoy a glass of the local wine! We finish our day at **MT ARBEL** overlooking Lake Galilee. **Overnight Sea of Galilee - Ron Beach/Tiberias.** (B,L,D)

Day 4: Thursday 2nd March

We visit **CAPERNAUM**. We will visit **ST PETER'S PRIMACY CHURCH** and **TABGHA** before taking time to reflect upon the Sermon on the Mount at the **MOUNT OF BEATITUDES**. We ascend to **MT TABOR** (Church of the Transfiguration) before we visit the **JORDAN RIVER** baptismal site and those who wish will have the chance to renew their baptismal vows, or be baptised. **Overnight Galilee - Ron Beach/Tiberias..** (B,D)

Day 5: Friday 3rd March

We start early to spend our morning in the ancient port and Crusader City of **ACCO**. This UNESCO site offers fully preserved underground ruins of a once flourishing Crusader City, ramparts and a colourful market. We

depart after lunch back to **HAIFA** to enjoy the early morning views over the beautiful cascading gardens overlooking the bay before ascending **MOUNT CARMEL**, where Elijah called down fire from Heaven to defeat the prophets of Baal. Our last stop for the day is **TEL MEGIDDO** with its 26 layers of civilisation revealing thousands of years of settlement due to the strategic location. **Overnight Galilee - Ron Beach/Tiberias..** (B,D)

Day 6: Saturday 4th March

We visit the **JESUS BOAT**, found by Lake Galilee, before taking a ride on a historical fishing boat across the lake and celebrating Holy Communion on the boat. We visit **MAGDALA**, a newly excavated site and thought to be the home of Mary Magdalene. We will share a St Peter's Fish lunch together. **Overnight Galilee - Ron Beach/Tiberias.** (B,L,D)

Day 7: Sunday 5th March

After breakfast, we travel to the **GOLAN HEIGHTS** via **TEL DAN** and **BANIAS**, visiting **CAESAREA PHILIPPI**, where Peter confessed his faith in Jesus. From **MOUNT BENTAL** there is a spectacular view into Syria (do not fear – we are a long way from any hostile action). Attend a screening, at **KIBBUTZ EL ROM**, of the Oz 77 film about the Yom Kippur War. Visit an Israeli army base on the **GOLAN**. **Overnight Galilee - Ron Beach/Tiberias.** (B,D)

Day 8: Monday 6th March

Travelling south through the Jordan Valley, we begin our day with a tour of **BEIT SHEAN**. We then travel on to **JERICHO**, where we will travel by cable car up to the Monastery which commemorates Jesus **TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS**. We will also visit the **SYCAMORE TREE**. We visit **AL-MAGHTAS BAPTISMAL SITE** on the Jordan before we continue south to the lowest point on earth to our resort hotel by the Dead Sea. In the evening we can enjoy a 'float' in the medicinal mineral rich waters. **Overnight Dead Sea - Hod Hamidbar/Ein Bokek.** (B,D)

Day 9: Tuesday 7th March

We break Pilgrimage and relax at our hotel by the Dead Sea. **Overnight Dead Sea - Hod Hamidbar/Ein Bokek** (B,D – lunch can be purchased at hotel, or at nearby restaurants/café's, including Maccas). This is a wonderful hotel, and worth indulging in the day spa, a massage, or floating by the sea, or the indoor pool.

Day 10: Wednesday 8th March

This morning we ascend by cable car to the fortress of **MASADA** for magnificent views of the DEAD SEA and across to Jordan. From the Dead Sea we travel to David's place of refuge from Saul, **EIN GEDI**. Take your swimmers to have a paddle in the waters before we travel to **QUMRAN**, where the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered. Climbing up through the 'Mountains of Israel' we stop briefly at the **INN OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN** before we enter the City of the Great King. **Overnight Jerusalem - Grand Court/Jerusalem.** (B,D)

Day 11: Thursday 9th March

We begin our day with a pilgrimage to **BETHLEHEM**. We take some time in visiting **MANGER SQUARE** and the **CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY**. We visit the **SHEPHERD'S FIELDS**, en route passing by Rachael's Tomb. In the afternoon we will visit the **CARDO**, the heart of Jerusalem, the **UPPER ROOM** and the **TOMB OF DAVID**. That night we will enjoy the wonderful light show at the Tower of David. **Overnight Jerusalem - Grand Court/Jerusalem.** (B,D)

Day 12: Friday 10th March

We begin our morning at the **MT OF OLIVES** and walk down the road to **DOMINUS FLAVIS CHURCH** and then to the **GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE** and **CHURCH OF ALL NATIONS**. Entering into the **OLD CITY** through **ST STEPHEN'S GATE** we visit the **POOL OF BETHESDA**, and continue to the **ECCE HOMO CONVENT** to view the **LLITHOSTRATOS**, the Pavement and to visit the **PRAETORIUM**, the site of the public trial and condemnation of Jesus. Passing along the **VIA DOLOROSA** we arrive at the **HOLY SEPULCHRE CHURCH**. We will climb the Tower of the Lutheran Church for a spectacular view of the city, before returning to our hotel to prepare for a 'Shabbat of a Lifetime'. **Overnight Jerusalem - Grand Court/Jerusalem. (B,D)**

Day 13: Saturday 11th March

Shabbat – we take a day off, and are free to wander the city at our leisure. After dinner Rev'd Michael will lead a walking group into the Old City to visit the Holy Sepulchre Church and enjoy evening prayer sung by the various Christian traditions, and we will witness the locking of the doors. **Overnight Jerusalem - Grand Court/Jerusalem (B,D)**

Day 14: Sunday 12th March

After celebrating Holy Communion at St George's Anglican Cathedral, we visit the **ISRAEL MUSEUM** with its first century model of Jerusalem, and take in some of the many amazing artefacts throughout the morning. We will enjoy lunch in the Mamilla Mall in Contemporary Jerusalem and have a time to shop, before visiting the **YAD VASHEM HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL** in the afternoon. **Overnight Jerusalem - Grand Court/Jerusalem (B,D)**

Day 15: Monday 13th March

We head to the **CITY OF DAVID** and prepare to walk through **HEZEKIAH'S TUNNEL** to the **POOL OF SILOAM** and then back up to the **WESTERN WALL TUNNELS** via the **PILGRIMS PATHWAY** (a new excavation). After we have some lunch (and dry out a little) we will then visit the **WESTERN WALL**, and later we ascend the **TEMPLE MOUNT** to the **DOME OF THE ROCK** (security permitting) the site where Abraham offered up Isaac. We visit the **HULDA STEPS** in the Davidson Museum believed to be the very steps taken by Jesus up to the Temple Mount. **Overnight Jerusalem - Grand Court/Jerusalem (B,D)**

Day 16: Tuesday 14th March

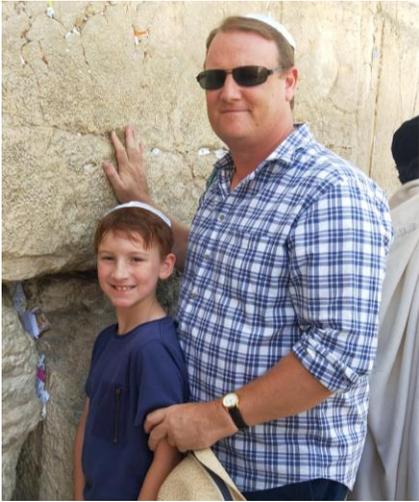
We visit the Church of **ST PETER IN GALLICANTU**, believed to be the home of Caiaphas and where Peter denied Christ and Jesus was tried before the Sanhedrin. We visit the **GARDEN TOMB**, where we will take time to pray with the empty tomb in the background and celebrate Holy Communion together. The serenity of this place makes it a spiritual oasis within this bustling city. We end our day with a **CELEBRATORY DINNER** in a nearby restaurant which specialises in traditional Israeli and Arab foods. **Overnight Jerusalem - Grand Court/Jerusalem (B,D)**

Day 17: Wednesday 15th March

We celebrate Holy Communion together at St George's Cathedral in the morning before a free day for last minute shopping in the city. We depart in the afternoon to Tel Aviv International Airport to return home (or some may choose to stay on, or go and visit other parts of the world). (B, D on flight)

Practical Information

Who?



Shalom! My name is Rev'd Michael Armstrong. I am married to Angela and have three children. My eldest, Elijah, accompanied me on my last Pilgrimage to the Holy Land (pictured left).

I am the Rector of Hunters Hill in Sydney. I am privileged to be in a Parish that while being evangelistic also treasures the beauty of worship and keeps the traditions of our church.

I have led over ten Pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Each time I feel that I come to a slightly deeper understanding of the scriptures (as well as contemporary issues around the Middle East) as we visit the places where the sacred stories occur, and are able to hear from our guides, the people we meet and one another as we journey together.

Pilgrimage

It is possible to do all we are doing in half the time, but in all honesty, you will feel like you have “seen” these sacred places, and not “experienced” them. I like to think that we will be on Pilgrimage, as opposed to a “tour”.

While the pace won't be slow, like a retreat, we will have time at places to explore, sit, listen and read. We also take an extra day or two to rest and to have some space of our own. These are vital days because there is so much to take in and process.

The pilgrimage does involve daily prayer, times of bible study and engagement with the scriptures, Holy Communion celebrated with the group, or through participation in local communities. You may be invited to partake in this, but Rev'd Michael will prepare all aspects of this, and negotiate directly with the guide.

Boutique Experience

I call this a “boutique experience” as this Pilgrimage has been designed and created after experiencing larger groups, and seeing the massive advantages of being a smaller group.

We are limited to no more than 18 people. This means we do not spend hours (literally) waiting for people, counting off one another as we get on and off buses or walk through sacred places – and starting to feel like a number, rather than a Pilgrim.

We also get to know one another – which is an important part of Pilgrimage.

Below are some further examples of why being a smaller group is advantageous, but the one disadvantage is that it impacts cost – but I would argue that it is certainly worth the extra if that is possible for you.

Qualified Guide

We will have our own highly qualified Israeli Guide. They will help with organisation of the group, and dealing with local needs, but most importantly at each and every location they will assist us to interpret what we are seeing and experiencing – both the sacred and the secular.

Luxury Bus and Driver

We travel in a quality mini-bus that allows for ample seating for each of us and our luggage. Being on a smaller bus means that it can often travel into places and be dropped at the entrance or door, which saves time in walking to a site, gives us more time on site – and saves our legs. We have our own dedicated driver throughout the time.

Good Quality Hotels

We stay in quality hotels which are in good locations. Staying in fewer hotels means that we don't need to pack and unpack so often, which is timely and can be stressful. We also get to know our surrounds and appreciate the facilities.

Leonardo Plaza/Haifa – 1 night

This is the only hotel we will stay in for one night only. After long flights, and then a day of visiting sites it is a wonderful hotel by the Mediterranean Sea and will give us the chance for our bodies to catch up to local time. <https://www.leonardo-hotels.com/haifa/leonardo-plaza-haifa>

Ron Beach/Tiberias – 4 nights

Ron Beach is a stunning hotel on the shore of Lake Galilee. It is a short walk into the township of Tiberias. <https://www.ronbeachhotel.com/>

Hod Hamidbar/Ein Bokek – 2 nights

This hotel is a wonderful place to stop, rest, relax and enjoy this unique site and place. Go for a float in the sea, or enjoy a massage or a spa – or just hide in your room and sleep. <https://herbertsamuel.com/en/hod-dead-sea/>

Grand Court/Jerusalem – 7 nights

This hotel is lovely to stay in, but importantly is also close to St George's College, and a short walk to the Old City. <https://www.grandhotels-israel.com/grand-court-hotel-jerusalem>

Meals, Flights and Costs

Based upon a minimum number of ten participants, the current estimated cost in AUD would be \$8,650.00 per person. Single room supplement is estimated at \$2,100.00 additional. Tipping is additional and a budget of approximately 14USD per day is recommended.

This is certainly more expensive than much larger groups – but we are a boutique group, we have more days and are likely to stay in better hotels 😊. Flight costs are incorporated.

The maximum size of our group will be 18 persons, and further discounts per person may be possible should we achieve this number – but should not be budgeted for.

Meals provided are indicated above (B = breakfast, L = Lunch ,D = Dinner). Lunch is often “on the run” and may cost between US\$10-25, depending on what you wish to buy. We usually try and get a coffee where possible for morning tea.

I am also available to provide a great deal of practical information, and will engage pilgrims prior to the trip through both zoom and face to face meetings where possible (revmichael@aphh.com.au).

Rev'd Michael Armstrong