

ETC EDUCATIONAL to Israel

Innovative Israel

June 1-10, 2009



Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Prepared for the Israel Ministry of Tourism

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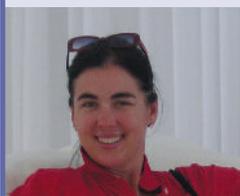
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Jerusalem, Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

I. Overview of ETC “EDUCATIONAL”

The “**EDUCATIONAL**” was designed under the auspices of the Israel Ministry of Tourism, and managed by Michal Hershkovitz, Deputy Director for the Northeast Region. The purpose of the ETC “**EDUCATIONAL**” was to invite nonprofit travel planners to provide firsthand feedback on the potential for educational travel to Israel. Based on travel planners’ specific itinerary recommendations, their evaluation of the region and experiences, and their assessment of local suppliers’ services, the Israel Ministry of Tourism will proceed to assist U.S. travel planners and tour operators in developing lifelong learning tour programs and promoting Israel to the educational and cultural travel market.



*Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus Campus. Pictured near the center is Paul Manor, who coordinated “Innovative Israel”; pictured far right is Michal Hershkovitz, the Israel Ministry of Tourism representative who accompanied the “Educational.”
Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli*

This “**EDUCATIONAL**” Summary Report is based on the participating nonprofit travel planners’ daily “**EDUCATIONAL**” debriefings and recommendations. Supporting documents are listed in the Table of Contents. Based on their collective experiences, the Educational Travel Planners strongly recommend development of educational programs in Israel, with particular emphasis on cuisine, culture, the environment, history and archaeology, international affairs/politics, and religion/spirituality. All planners have agreed to serve as product development resources for Israel within the ETC community.

A total of ten nonprofit travel planners from the Educational Travel Community participated in this “**EDUCATIONAL**,” each bringing a distinctly different nonprofit travel program perspective. An excellent balance of diverse institutions were represented ranging from a small, private liberal arts college to a large state school to an Ivy League university to the U.S.’s oldest and largest nonprofit public affairs forum.



*An important component of the “Educational” is a daily debriefing—the notes from which are included in this report. Here the group is pictured meeting in the Dan Tel Aviv Hotel.
Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli*

Needs of North American Travel Planners in the Educational Travel Market

Demographics of Travelers Served by the Educational Travel Community:

Understanding the quality of and level of inquisitiveness of the educational travel market versus the mainstream travel market is essential if Israel would like to attract this highly desirable audience of “lifelong learners.” The Americans who travel with Educational Travel purveyors typically comprise a select audience of well



A behind-the-scenes tour of old Akko with archaeologist Shelley-Anne Peleg (pictured left), Director of the International Conservation Center, is a highlight for the travel planners, who will replicate such experiences for their clients. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

educated professionals, including doctors, lawyers, educators, business leaders, politicians, etc. They are curious, adventurous, and interested in having a high-level educational experience. They want to focus on content and learning as much as they can while they are traveling. They don't have much time for beaches and are, instead, interested in understanding a destination through its culture and history (i.e. visiting museums, attending traditional celebrations, touring archaeological sites), and through meeting with local people. The tour itineraries offered must be unique, compelling, and relevant, and the guides must be exceptionally versed in culture, history, and the interpretation thereof.

The following are some general characteristics of educated travelers:

- They are often retired, affluent, and well educated.
- They tend to be philanthropic and want to forge relationships with educational institutions.
- They are accomplished professionals who have opinions and maintain healthy curiosities.
- They generally have an annual income of \$150,000.
- They have at least a bachelor's degree, and many have further education such as a master's degree and a doctorate degree.
- They are interested in intellectual engagement.
- They are looking for unusual, new, and emerging destinations.
- Safety and security are tantamount concerns.
- Many of these travelers do not have children; if they do have kids, the kids are in secondary school.
- They travel 4 to 5 times per year.
- They have an annual budget of \$15,000 to \$30,000 per couple.
 - Their annual incomes begin at \$150,000 with many paying for their vacations with trust funds.
 - They live in or near major urban areas.
 - They have at least a university degree.
 - Their average age is 57 years old.
 - They have children who are in secondary schools or universities.
 - They travel internationally once a year for pleasure, if they are a couple; once every two years, if a family.

***Psychographics/Lifestyle
(*highlighted from a research
paper by Harmony Project):***

- *They need to “Take care of me”: Most are overcoming the effects of too much work and too little time. Why work so hard if earned money can’t be spent on one’s self?

- *They are “Questing”: They want to venture into the world, gaining new experiences and overcoming personal limits.

- *They are “Connecting”: They are finding, building, maintaining, and deepening relationships.

- *They are acknowledging their own “individual style”: Their consumer choices demonstrate one’s success in life and express one’s individuality and personal values.

- They are eager to connect and find ways to deepen relationships.
- They spend money on themselves as they travel.
- They choose trips that will help them connect with destinations in meaningful ways.
- Authenticity of experience is very important to them.
- Typically, they are curious. They are quickly bored by overly tourist and luxury attractions.
- They are interested in engaging with professionals and those who are leaders in any number of given professional fields, from medicine and law to higher education to social entrepreneurship to conservation and the environment to politics and social justice.



Trearty Bartley, Director of Alumni Education for Harvard Alumni Association, talks with one of the Haifa co-existence discussion panelists during a dinner reception. The co-existence discussion was noted as an “important” experience for the educational travel planners’ clients. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

The following is information about how the U.S. Educational Travel industry works:

- Many nonprofit educational institutions in the U.S. have a travel program (i.e. museums, zoos, universities) because travel provides a powerful engagement tool/opportunity for the institution to bond with its members and alumni.

- U.S. higher education institutions, non-profits, museums, and zoos view travel as a way to provide an educational experience for their members and alumni and create lasting relationships with the travelers and institutions.

- Travel planners often work with operators in the U.S. who have a specialty in the area where the travel planner is considering organizing a trip.

- Operators require great expertise. They will go on trips themselves to research Destinations in order to create itineraries for planners.

- Operators assume a great deal of the up-front marketing costs.
- Often operators will specialize in certain areas of the world.

Nonprofit Alumni Program Point of View and Needs of North American Tour Operators:

- The alumni travel program often sits within the university's alumni organization.
 - The purpose of alumni travel is to make connections to institutions' constituents, such as former students who entered the institution at the age of 18 and studied at the institution for four years.
 - These institutions are often privately organized and funded.
 - For the individuals traveling with alumni travel programs, opportunities for lifelong learning are important.
 - Many institutions include a faculty member, such as a professor of economics or art history, to bring deeper understanding to the places they are visiting.
 - Alumni travelers are looking for deeper understanding—not for a leisure experience.
 - Tour operators and providers need marketing support from the tourism board and they need innovative marketing ideas, as well as education in the form of meetings, brochures, and power points to inform their offices and staff members about the region in order to inspire innovative programming. This type of assistance would allow travel planners to pitch trips more powerfully to their constituents. It also would enable them to answer questions regarding security and other challenges (real or perceived).
 - Tour operators and providers need recommendations for local scholarly and cultural resources; in-country people and organizations to serve as liaisons with the government and to make high level government introductions for their groups, as well as for their senior management (in the case of cultural institutions, perhaps more than tour operators).
 - The tour operator will explore a destination and come up with a program idea to present in a proposal to non-profit organizations, museums, zoos, and alumni groups. The sponsoring university then puts together a catalogue to showcase and explain the trip, usually about one to one-and-a half years in advance.
 - The travel planner reviews proposals from the operator to choose what will work best for his or her program.
 - While some operators can place faculty on their tours others can't. Those who can't are often looking for operators and suppliers to secure home visits, lecturers, and professionals who can help bring an educational component to trips.
 - Guides who speak excellent English and who are native to the area (or who have lived in the region for many years) are needed in order to provide accurate local information and so that the guide and his or her story become part of the trip memory.
 - High level of safety standards and quality control (e.g. emergency preparedness plan, the highest levels of insurance and business standards available in the country, strong financial records indicating business stability).
- Tour operators and planners that specialize on the environment and ecology of a destination have special needs. They provide exciting travel opportunities that offer a better understanding and appreciation of the beauty and wonder of the natural environment. Contacts in the destination should be able to assist with "must-see" locations. Knowledge of the natural habitats, flora and fauna, and indigenous peoples are key to successful nature-based tour programs.
 - Tour operators and travel planners need to be informed about what conservation efforts are taking place to minimize impacts to natural areas, wildlife, and their habitats. This is especially critical for institutions like the Philadelphia Zoo, which needs to connect a mission statement to each trip. For these types of trips it is important to have quality guides who have experience working with small groups on experiential education—the more "hands-on" the better. Programs are also needed that enhance the senses and create an enriched appreciation of the natural world.
 - Natural History, Aquarium, Conservation, and Zoo travel planners need to know of opportunities for natural history experiences and ecotourism in the destination.

While travelers within the Educational Travel market are seeking a "unique" experience, they still want access to many of the comforts of home, such as high-quality accommodations, connectivity to their home/work with phone or internet service, authentic and safely prepared local cuisine, and safe and reliable transportation.

The following are important factors:

- Non-smoking hotel sleeping rooms and public areas
- Safe, secure, and reliable ground services
- Educationally oriented attractions
- Opportunities for unique experiences to interact with/learn from the people and culture
- Educational Travel planners/operators often use their hotel rooms/lodging as a home base and as a place to gather, debrief, and have discussions. Three to four times during their stay, they may need a meeting room or facility at the hotel/lodging site that can accommodate groups as small as 15 but as large as 50 (audio/visual may be required, depending on the region).
 - Opportunities to experience authentic food (i.e. food that is representative of the destination)
 - Friendly and helpful staff. Educational travel guests come with lots of questions like how to access the internet, where to get a local newspaper, etc.
 - The concept of “going green” and ecotourism is important to educated travelers, who are likely to be socially responsible, desiring environmentally friendly hotels/lodging (e.g. not washing towels every day) and hotels/lodging that contribute to the local economy and/or the ecosystem. Having opportunities to volunteer is also important for some of these travelers.
 - Variety of hotel/lodging pricing, as not all educational institutions stay in the 4-star or diamond rated facilities.
 - Hotels/lodging with a computer area in the business center provided to guests with Internet access so travelers don’t need to carry laptops.
 - Hotels/lodging with local flavor—not “institutional brand” hotels.
 - Superior service from housekeeping, concierge, front desk staff, as these individuals are typically the first point of contact and the most frequent point of contact for the guests—“family feel.”
 - Locations providing “ease of access” either to public transportation and/or to immediate downtown so guests can move about with ease during unscheduled time.

Table 1.1 – Summary of Needs Representative of North American Travel Planners

- Good value overall.
- Experienced and professional tour operators who understand the Educational Travel market.
- Superior local guides.
- High-quality services and 4-star accommodations.
- Additional amenities creating a perceived value: internet, easy access to potable water, comfortable accommodations, and American-style breakfast.
- Unique itineraries that can be completed in 10-17 days.
- Opportunity for cultural exchange and people-to-people contact.
- Visits with local business and community leaders, schools, and artists.
- Special access to attractions and venues typically unavailable to the general public.
- Strong educational component, including local expert lecturers and speakers.
- Service components for trips.
- Easy access to and/or online resources with in-depth information about accommodations, itinerary, and destination.
- Safe and reliable transportation.
- Authentic, local cuisine.
- Pre- and post-trip extensions for additional exploration.
- Resources and contacts to assist planners in answering their travelers’ questions.
- A list of references of similar organizations that have conducted trips to the same destination.
- Current information about safety, health, and other travel concerns.

Individual Participants' Identification of Travel Program Needs

The following pre-travel questions were posed to all “**EDUCATIONAL**” participants, and their responses are noted below:

What criteria do you use for the selection of specific destinations?

Trearty Bartley – Harvard Alumni Association

- Strong study leader to develop an itinerary and lead the trip
- Harvard alumni in the area
- Special access
- Interesting destination

Michelle Bell – Arkansas Alumni Association

- Popularity of the destination (amount of media coverage, increase in visitors, etc.)
- The last time we traveled to that destination
- If we have traveled to that destination in the past, how successful was the trip and how does that itinerary and activity level compare to the one currently being considered
- Relative safety of the destination (use State Department or equivalent sources from multiple countries and reports from risk management companies)
- Interesting or unique itineraries that would make a particular destination more interesting to particular groups
- Destination that corresponds to the specialties of particular professors or programs
- Other destinations that are available/selected at the same time (i.e., we would not offer Scotland and Ireland at the same time of year, but would offer Ireland and China at the same time)

ELIZABETH BIGWOOD – ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION OF SMITH COLLEGE

I gauge the pent up interest in the destination, Smith faculty available to lecture in that destination, and the opportunity to broaden minds.

Jennifer Bohac - Texas A&M Association of Former Students

- Past history of trips (success of the destination and how often we have offered the destination)
- Surveys of our past travelers on their suggestions
- Input from the vendors we work with
- Information gathered at conferences like ETC
- Sharing of ideas from other travel directors on what has worked for them
- Gathering info from magazines
- Internet and other media on destinations and what seems to be “hot”
- We ask our past travelers for suggestions/ideas for future travel on our post-trip surveys and evaluations—so their input is very useful in our planning.

Rachel Davies - Duke Alumni Association, Duke University

Expressed interest from alumni, faculty expertise, past successes in the country.

Robert Fure - Washington and Lee University Special Programs

- Historical, cultural, and political interest
- Timing of previous visit
- Recommendation of escorting faculty
- Physical challenge of sites to the visitor
- Financial cost of the trip and its relation to a range of price options

Allie Hill - Emory Travel Program, Emory Alumni Association

- What vendor is offering the program?
- Is it competitively priced?
- Does it include all of the destinations that one would want to visit in that area/region?
- What is included/not included (meals, entrance to sites)?
- Itinerary
- What time of year is the trip being offered?
- Is it a destination that our travelers have expressed an interest in visiting?

Abigail Jansen - Northwestern University Alumni Education and Travel

- We aim to have a well rounded calendar that visits all parts of the world.
- We consider government travel warnings, however, we understand the political bias that occurs with them.
- We travel to destinations that provide cultural, historical and/or natural interests.
- It is increasingly important to seek destinations that that seem exotic or destinations that travelers have a difficult time planning independently.

Kristina Nemeth - Commonwealth Club of California

- Is the destination safe?
- Have members expressed interest in visiting there?
- Does the destination fit with the Club's mission regarding current events and public policy?

Chloe Wicks - Tulane University

- Safety
- Ample environment for learning
- Attractions & excursions with broad appeal & variety
- Reliable tour operator offering destination

What are the specific itinerary needs of your institution for its travel programs?

Trearty Bartley – Harvard Alumni Association

Well rounded program presenting all aspects and meeting with local leaders either in education, government, art, etc.

Michelle Bell – Arkansas Alumni Association

- 1) General itineraries that provide a good overview of a city, country or a particular region
 - a. History
 - b. Culture
 - c. Major tourist sites
 - d. Lesser known sites or those that are difficult to get into on your own
- 2) Very unique itineraries that would appeal to a specific group of people
 - a. Very active (walking, biking, hiking, canopy tours, etc.)
 - b. Voluntourism projects
 - c. Ecotour itineraries
 - d. Topic-related (architecture, art, theater, etc.)

Elizabeth Bigwood – Alumnae Association of Smith College

Well balanced itineraries, top notch local guides, high quality, comfortable accommodations.

Jennifer Bohac - Texas A&M Association of Former Students

We want to offer a great destination at a competitive cost. The itinerary needs to have an educational component

as well as a broad variety of activities. We want the itinerary to be reflective of the destination and the experience to give them a strong sense of the country, people, and culture. Our goal for each trip/traveler is they have a trip of a lifetime—getting to experience and live the culture of a destination, while getting to know their fellow alumni.

Rachel Davies - Duke Alumni Association, Duke University

Strong educational component, special unique destinations.

Robert Fure - Washington and Lee University Special Programs

Generally, we focus on the history and culture of our destinations. We prefer to have at least one people-to-people experience that affords us the opportunity to converse with local citizens. We also need to have venues for talks by escorting faculty. We prefer four-star or better hotels and excellent motorcoaches.

Allie Hill - Emory Travel Program, Emory Alumni Association

Our school and surrounding area has a large Jewish population. We are offering our first trip to Israel this fall. Before the brochure came out, this was the trip that had the most brochure requests. However, it has not translated into a lot of trip bookings. This could be due to the fact that the trip is not religiously focused. That may have been more of a draw for my travelers.

Abigail Jansen - Northwestern University Alumni Education and Travel

We rely on our vendors to provide a solid educational base so itineraries must include local lecturers and/or University lecturers. Each year we choose itineraries with different formats; i.e. Unpack only once, cruising, traveling from city to city, free time verse scheduled time, etc.

Kristina Nemeth - Commonwealth Club of California

Educational at the least, and ideally with some focus on relevant current events and issues.

Chloe Wicks - Tulane University

Itinerary needs to reflect value & price point of trip. There needs to be educational opportunities; i.e. forums, lectures, etc. Time on the trip needs to have balance and be able to accommodate the passengers needs.

What key factors and considerations go into your selection process when choosing a tour operator?

Trearty Bartley – Harvard Alumni Association

- Reputation/trust
- Years in the industry
- Proven success – track record in a destination under consideration
- Cooperation and willingness to work outside the box in itinerary development
- Great listening skills

Michelle Bell – Arkansas Alumni Association

- 1) Itineraries/destinations they offer
 - a. Uniqueness
 - b. Coverage of the area
 - c. Pricing
- 2) Recommendations from other Associations who have worked with them
 - a. Administrative issues (how they work with the Association personnel)
 - b. Traveler evaluations
- 3) Financial stability, insurability, etc.

- 4) Ability to take care of all needs of the travelers (air, excursions, etc.)
- 5) Marketing and administration policies
- 6) Length of time they have been in business (to some degree—we have worked with new companies at times)

Elizabeth Bigwood – Alumnae Association of Smith College

The reputation the company holds within the industry, ability to customize, expertise in the area being visited, excellent customer service.

Jennifer Bohac - Texas A&M Association of Former Students

- Past working relationship
- Previous history with their tours and the success of their programs
- Referrals from other schools
- Input from other colleagues that have offered the trip and/or destination
- The proposal for the trip from the vendor and how competitive the trip is (in terms of cost, itinerary, hotels, etc.) is used in selecting future trips/destinations. We also use the evaluation reports from the vendor/destination in the selection process as well.

Rachel Davies - Duke Alumni Association, Duke University

Financial stability, reputation as an affinity tour provider among our peer groups.

Robert Fure - Washington and Lee University Special Programs

Expertise in the destination, financial stability, operational reliability, superb field resources—guides, managers, etc., customer service, recommendation of colleagues, compatibility with our mode of operation, and excellent reception services in the U.S.

Allie Hill - Emory Travel Program, Emory Alumni Association

How are they to work with on a day to day basis, do they provide good customer support to me and to my travelers, will they produce a full color trip brochure and pay for the mailing costs, do they send me materials to help me answer the questions of my travelers, is good customer service a top priority for them, what airlines do they work with, will they contribute to the cost of my annual travel catalog.

Abigail Jansen - Northwestern University Alumni Education and Travel

Partnerships are most important to us. Several of our vendors have been partners for decades and we appreciate the relationship. We are conservative when choosing new vendors. Many times, we let other Universities vet new vendors before we partner with them. We research the vendors to ensure they are financially solid businesses. If they have a product that our tenured partners cannot produce, then we will partner with them.

Kristina Nemeth - Commonwealth Club of California

Expertise in the region, references from like organizations, quality of tours in terms of hotels, transportation, etc. Competitive pricing. Ability to handle reservations and marketing needs.

CHLOE WICKS - TULANE UNIVERSITY

Reliability, experience, good customer service, good references, variety of programs and pricing, eagerness to accommodate educational institution and ability to market & promote the trip.

What key factors and considerations go into your selection process when deciding to add new destinations to your travel offerings?

Trearty Bartley – Harvard Alumni Association

- Safety

- University resources
- Compelling itineraries and destination

Michelle Bell – Arkansas Alumni Association

- Popularity of the destination (amount of media coverage, increase in visitors, etc.)
- Relative safety of the destination (use State Department or equivalent sources from multiple countries and reports from risk management companies)
- Interesting or unique itineraries that would make a particular destination more interesting to particular groups
- Destination that corresponds to the specialties of particular professors, programs, or groups
- Multiple requests and inquiries about a specific destination

Elizabeth Bigwood – Alumnae Association of Smith College

That the trip offers an experience individual travelers would not be able to organize by themselves in a region that some might feel nervous about visiting by themselves.

Jennifer Bohac - Texas A&M Association of Former Students

We talk to our vendors on what they are offering and new destinations and itineraries. What has worked well in the past and what are places we have not tried in the past or recently. We look at survey responses from our travelers, input from our website, and the sharing with colleagues. The key factors of the trip/destinations need to be; it is safe, has a lot to offer, great itinerary, competitive pricing, reputable hotels. We want every trip we offer be a success.

Rachel Davies - Duke Alumni Association, Duke University

Interest from our base, faculty expertise.

Robert Fure - Washington and Lee University Special Programs

There is no place in the world that is not of interest to us, but we must be assured of the safety and general comfort of our travelers and the ability of a tour operator to assure excellent English-speaking personnel in the region.

Allie Hill - Emory Travel Program, Emory Alumni Association

We try to offer a mix of trips to appeal to a wide audience of travelers. Most of our trips (75%) are reasonably priced to typical destinations like Europe and South America. 25% of our trips are a mix of exotic or unusual destinations or trips with higher price points. I also tend to repeat trips that do well every two years.

Abigail Jansen - Northwestern University Alumni Education and Travel

- Demand for geographic location
- Safety
- Types of accommodations

Kristina Nemeth - Commonwealth Club of California

- Provide variety
- Interest of members
- If we haven't been to a place in a while
- Destination growing in popularity

Chloe Wicks - Tulane University

Safety, what experience is being offered, current market trends, what companies are offering the new destination, cost for experience.

What are the expressed travel needs and expectations of your travelers?

Trearty Bartley – Harvard Alumni Association

- Harvard travelers expect the best available in quality when they travel
- Special access and behind the scenes offerings
- Creative itineraries and a well balanced program

Michelle Bell – Arkansas Alumni Association

Our traditional travelers are accustomed to having everything handled for them—air, transfers, itinerary, excursions, etc., and expect to be accompanied by a host from the University or the Alumni Association, as well as qualified travel directors and guides. There is a subset of this group who will prefer to make their own air arrangements and be able to purchase airport transfers separately. They also want time on their own for exploration, shopping, trying different restaurants, etc., and they want that time to be more than 1/2 hour in each location.

We also have a group who prefers a looser itinerary without everything planned—they like to pick and choose what they do and what they skip.

Both groups prefer deluxe accommodations and exclusive activities or excursions that they would not be able to do on their own—something they can tell their friends about and be the only ones who have done it. They also want excellent meals that offer a taste of the country they are visiting, but in local establishments, rather than having every meal in a hotel.

There is an emerging group that does not seem to mind that all excursions are included, but want them to be more active, hands-on, etc. They want nice accommodations, but not necessarily 5-star.

Elizabeth Bigwood – Alumnae Association of Smith College

Smith alumnae are intrepid, demanding, and very well traveled so the trips they choose to do need to offer them an out of the ordinary experience that they could not find elsewhere. They love traveling together and expect an in-depth learning opportunity. They often travel alone so trips need to be priced so that the single supplement is affordable.

Jennifer Bohac - Texas A&M Association of Former Students

Our travelers want a great trip at a competitive price to a fabulous location, they want to travel with other Aggies and be well taken cared of; but also learn as much as they can about the destination, people, and culture and have a great time. Our travelers want to be safe, have nice accommodations, be offered options and a variety of activities, learn, and have a hassle-free vacation.

Rachel Davies - Duke Alumni Association, Duke University

Solid educational programming, unique one of a kind experiences.

Robert Fure - Washington and Lee University Special Programs

Information, inspiration, safety, general comfort, conviviality, good value, and institutional identity in providing educational tour services and hospitality.

Allie Hill - Emory Travel Program, Emory Alumni Association

Good customer service, timely response to their pre-departure questions or needs, lots of pre-departure materials, reading list, direct flights whenever possible out of Atlanta (preferably on Delta), flexibility to eat in local restaurants and have free time if they want, excellent guides and tour directors, a study leader on the trip from the University, minimal moving from hotel to hotel (river cruises are preferred because you only unpack once), good value for the money on the trip pricing.

Abigail Jansen - Northwestern University Alumni Education and Travel

- High Quality Accommodations (accommodations need to be clean, fairly large, updated and include a great hotel staff).
- The trip must be logistically flawless in the eyes of the passengers. Obviously, every trip has its issues but it is how we handle those problems that determine the success of the tour.
- Some free time and/or shop time but mostly scheduled tours.
- Excellent guides that are open about their own experiences and are knowledgeable about the destination. Our travelers are well read and they will ask detailed questions and expect answers. If a guide is bad, it can affect the entire tour.

Kristina Nemeth - Commonwealth Club of California

- Good value
- Good quality for what you pay for
- Educational and cultural

Chloe Wicks - Tulane University

Group travel needs to be worry and hassle free. Guides need to be personable, knowledgeable and engaging. Destinations have to be quality and offer a unique experience. Accommodations need to be clean and comfortable.

What objectives do you hope to accomplish by participating on this Educational and what are your key expectations?

Trearty Bartley – Harvard Alumni Association

- To have a better understanding of Israel/Israelis.
- To feel comfortable offering the destination.
- To be able to develop a robust itinerary for future Harvard Travel and to weed out tourist events that could be viewed as space fillers.

Michelle Bell – Arkansas Alumni Association

- Knowledge about and understanding of the country and its people that will allow me to be successful in marketing our 2010 Israel tour, and make the trip so successful that we can continue offering a complete Israel experience for years to come.
- Interaction with Ministry Officials and tour operators that will allow me to better understand the benefits and challenges of tourism.
- Experience with eco- and volunteer projects, which I hope will allow me the knowledge to evaluate and eventually offer new and different experiences to our alumni and friends.

Elizabeth Bigwood – Alumnae Association of Smith College

- To learn more about the region and get a real sense of how it feels to travel around Israel.
- To experience some of the things I hope to offer on the trip I will plan for 2010 and other future trips to Israel. (I want to get a firm sense of how I will present the trip.)
- To brainstorm with my counterparts from other colleges.

Jennifer Bohac - Texas A&M Association of Former Students

- I want to get to know the destination in order to be able to fully promote it to our alumni for potential trips.
- Since we are offering Israel in 2009 I want to be able to answer questions about the destination and help our travelers prepare for the trip.

•I want to use Israel as a future destination and this “Educational” will help me choose vendors and itineraries in planning our trips in the next few years.

Rachel Davies - Duke Alumni Association, Duke University

- Determine if this is a workable destination for Duke alumni.
 - Discern whether safety is really an issue for this destination.
 - See if an itinerary can be suitably varied, and not biased in one direction.
- If I can get clarity on these three objectives, my expectations will be met.

Robert Fure - Washington and Lee University Special Programs

A re-acquaintance with the history and remarkable cultural diversity of Israel. Our trip will not be a “Stations of the Cross” kind of trip, but rather a tour that focuses on Israel’s complex religious heritage and historical record. I also hope to meet personnel whom we can call upon in planning our future trip.

Allie Hill - Emory Travel Program, Emory Alumni Association

- Learn as much as I can about the area so that I can promote it to my travelers and help increase travel to Israel.
- Provide good feedback and insight to the Ministry of Tourism.
- Share my experience with other travel planners upon returning.

Abigail Jansen - Northwestern University Alumni Education and Travel

- Experience and learn about Israel (history, Israeli and Arab citizenry experiences, variety of religious cultures and pilgrimage sites, etc).
- Return from the trip and have the necessary knowledge to sell the destination (talk about handicapped accessibility, safety concerns, level of accommodations, food, etc).
- I critique tours often but I am interesting in learning how other travel planners critique tours. I hope to hone my constructive critiquing skills.
- Northwestern is located in Chicago, IL ,which has expansive Jewish and Catholic communities. I hope to return with a better understanding of how to engage these two communities to help promote our trips to Israel.
- I hope to experience “authentic Israel” by encountering and understanding everyday life in Israel. Israel is a complicated country and I want to return to the states with a better understanding of this country’s complexities. I also want to have an understanding of Israel’s future goals and objectives.
- Personally, I am a spiritual person and I hope to have a greater understanding of all the religions that inhabit the Holy Land and understand their connections to this sacred ground.

Kristina Nemeth - Commonwealth Club of California

- To learn more about the destination.
- To formulate ideas for a unique tour developed for our organization.
- To make in-country contacts for possible future tours and meetings for Commonwealth Club events and tours.

Chloe Wicks - Tulane University

I would like to be able to communicate effectively why Israel has an experience to offer to everyone. I would like a firsthand understanding of the experience of visiting such historical & biblical sites and how they impact culture, tourism, and the local economy. I would like a solid understanding of how Israel’s Ministry of Tourism wants to communicate its message. I want to be able to communicate the ease and safety of traveling to Israel and how it compares to other destinations.

What, if any, drawbacks or obstacles do you see at this point (prior to traveling to Israel) that would prevent you from offering a trip to Israel or, more specifically, a trip such as the “Innovative Israel” itinerary?

Michelle Bell – Arkansas Alumni Association

I don't think there are any drawbacks. I do think that an obstacle may be people's perception of the safety of traveling to Israel, but believe that can be overcome fairly easily. Another obstacle may be the long flights. A direct flight is certainly preferable to changing planes multiple times, but there will be some who will stay away from the trip because of the length of the flight. Because of the historical and spiritual significance of the destination, however, I do not believe this obstacle will make that much of a difference.

The “Innovative Israel” itinerary itself seems extremely busy, which is perfect for our purposes, but would probably be too intense for most alumni travelers. Several things would have to be removed or the itinerary lengthened in order to provide travelers with plenty of free time to relax and enjoy individual pursuits.

Elizabeth Bigwood – Alumnae Association of Smith College

Obviously, it would be a problem if there were a travel warning. I do not see anything else that would stop me. I am committed to a trip to Israel as it is something I have been planning to do for sometime and I think there is enough pent up demand amongst our alumnae. By coming on this educational I hope to get a good sense of the safety issues so that I can confidently promote a trip to Israel.

Jennifer Bohac - Texas A&M Association of Former Students

Unless there are any changes in the world or restrictions, we will offer Israel in 2009 as well as in future years. I think it will be a popular destination for our Aggies.

Rachel Davies - Duke Alumni Association, Duke University

The question of safety.

Robert Fure - Washington and Lee University Special Programs

I continue to monitor the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory site as well as the general political situation. I remain very hopeful that President Obama's administration will help to reduce tensions in the area over the next year or two.

Allie Hill - Emory Travel Program, Emory Alumni Association

I don't see any drawback to offering a trip Israel. I think what keeps many people from taking a trip to this region of the world is the violence that you hear about in the media. This frightens people into thinking that it is very risky to travel to this part of the world.

Abigail Jansen - Northwestern University Alumni Education and Travel

We are offering tours to Israel and I do not foresee us changing our current policy. Ultimately, we want to offer tours to Israel that have a broad range of subject matters. We feel that those that want to travel with their specific religious group will travel with their synagogue, church, or mosque. Our Israel itineraries should be diverse and include religious and cultural history from a wide variety of standpoints.

Kristina Nemeth - Commonwealth Club of California

The itinerary is wonderful and varied and many parts would appeal to our organization. We are a non-religious organization and also non-partisan. We are also an organization known for great debates and to NOT address the

Israeli-Palestinian issues and U.S. foreign policy in the region would be an obvious oversight. So, it is figuring out how to handle this in a way that is respectful and educated. For example, some of our members might very well be interested in visiting the occupied territories or at least learning more about these areas. There might be organizations we could meet with to talk about work being done to deal with the very complex issues.

Chloe Wicks - Tulane University

Drawback & obstacles are the current economy, length of flights, and the perception of safety in Israel. I have been scanning the local media for stories on Israel and two things consistently come up: the peace process and religious group travel to Israel. Only one story on current local culture was shown and that was on Ariel the young pianist. The image of Israel being shown in our media is quite limited and a challenge if you want to show that there is broad appeal to travelers. New Orleans has a similar problem with perception and the message it needs to communicate to attract travelers. On the itinerary I would suggest changing Day 7 for our alumni since it has three lectures—that might be a bit too much in one day for our alumni. Other than that itinerary change I don't have any suggestions yet. I do like that a voluntourism opportunity is included.



(Top row): A colorful display of spices in a local market near Haifa; Local residents enjoy a Germany Colony cafe in Haifa. Photos by Chloe Wicks. (Bottom row): Tel Aviv's Carmel open-air fruit and vegetables market. Photo by Elizabeth Bigwood; Tel Aviv's Nachlat Binyamin Pedestrian Mall with its colorful arts and crafts bazaar. Photo by Kristina Nemeth.

Table 1.2 – Representative Institutions’ Israel Trips 2008-2009 and Beyond:

HARVARD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

A summer school program for undergraduates in Israel (with Professor Jay Harris)

ARKANSAS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

First Israel trip scheduled for February 2010

ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION OF SMITH COLLEGE

Has not offered Israel for some years; plans to offer a trip in the fall of 2010

TEXAS A&M ASSOCIATION OF FORMER STUDENTS

Israel Trip November 28-December 7, 2009, with AHI Travel

DUKE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, DUKE UNIVERSITY

Has not offered trips in the recent past to Israel. Duke University faculty have taken students there for archaeological digs.

WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The W&L Traveller offered a well-subscribed trip to Israel and Jordan in 1996. It is likely that The W&L Traveller will offer a trip to Israel in 2010-2011.

EMORY TRAVEL PROGRAM, EMORY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Israel Trip fall 2009 with AHI Travel

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY ALUMNI EDUCATION AND TRAVEL

Alumni Campus Abroad Israel from February 21 – March 2, 2009
Plans to offer Israel and Jordan, 2010

COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

None in 2008-2009

CHLOE WICKS - TULANE UNIVERSITY

Israel Trip (Tel Aviv, Galilee, Jerusalem) from November 28 to December 7, 2009, with AHI Travel

II. ISRAEL OVERVIEW



*On the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jerusalem.
Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli*

Israel is a life-changing experience. To quote from an Israel Ministry of Tourism brochure, “Israel ... Land of the Bible ... Land of Faith ... the Holy Land.... revered throughout recorded history as the cradle of monotheistic religion. ...in this narrow strip of land lies the source of religious belief of much of mankind. Records of the Holy Land go back over 5,000 years, bearing witness to the fact that this stretch of land was never a quiet, peaceful region. Situated as it is, straddling the divide between Africa and Asia, the area has almost always been a battleground. Wave after wave of conquerors poured into it, each anxious to control the strategic trade routes linking the centers of the ancient world. With almost predictable regularity, control swung from one victorious power to the next.”

As the birthplace of Christianity and Judaism, and with Islam considering Jerusalem to be its third-holiest city, one cannot experience Israel without religion being part of the backdrop. And yet, it is a misnomer to say Israel is only a place for religious tourists and pilgrims. “There is so much more to Israel than meets the eye,” says Treaty Bartley. “It’s not just a religious destination. It’s endless what can be developed here.” Israel is modern and westernized, with excellent transportation systems, accommodations, infrastructure, and many English-speakers. It is home to both religious and secular Jews (about 80% of the population), Arabs, Baha’i, Christians, Druze, and Muslims. It is a country of impressive



Scenes from Jerusalem: Israel is holy to the three monotheistic religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Photos (left and right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, (center) by Chloe Wicks

academic institutions, agricultural pioneering achievements and advancements, arts, architecture, business and technological innovations, culture, cuisine, wineries, history, museums, and nature and adventure opportunities—making for a unique and appealing destination for the educational traveler. Arguably, for anyone interested in international affairs, there may be no better gateway for learning about the history, current state of, and perspectives on the Middle East conflicts and the Peace Process than visiting Israel.

“It is difficult to summarize in the space of a few paragraphs the many impressions that a visit to Israel inevitably stirs in the mind of an American traveler,” writes Rob Fure. “While geographically Israel is the size of New Jersey, culturally it is the size of a continent. Even within its small territory, one travels through a variety of climates and populations, from the arid south to the cooler, fertile area of the north; from the sparsely populated desert and Dead Sea region to the teeming complexity of Tel Aviv, Nazareth, and Haifa. And yet what dominates the imagination of the visitor in every region of Israel is the tremendous depth of its history. By its very position on the map, and by its place in the heritage of the world’s three great religions, Israel has been for millennia the great intersection of Western and Eastern civilizations. Each civilization that has claimed this land has left as much of itself behind as it has borne away in flight before the next conqueror. Even today, in speaking about the ‘Occupied Territories,’ one cannot help but savor the irony of the term. All of Israel is ‘occupied,’ haunted by the history of those who have built its roads and temples, imbued by the many convictions and cross purposes of those who have known it and regard it still as ‘the Promised Land.’”

Starting in Jerusalem and concluding in Tel Aviv, travel planners had the opportunity to view a country of complexity, depth, beauty, diversity, and modernity juxtaposed against the ancient stones and wisdom of ages. In this discovery process the days were long, the meetings extensive, and information and impressions gleaned invaluable. A 10-day “Innovative Israel” itinerary was a study in contrasts, connections, and cultures: Tel Aviv is the face of Israel, Haifa its heart, and Jerusalem the soul.

The travel planners participated in the 2009 ETC Israel **“EDUCATIONAL”** to have a better understanding of this destination, its people, safety, and to secure the knowledge to develop a robust itinerary for future trip programs as well as evaluate the most worthwhile site visits firsthand for the educational travel community.

On the **“EDUCATIONAL”** of the 10 participants, only three had traveled to Israel before either for professional or personal reasons. Half of the planners’ institutions were offering (or had offered) trips to Israel in 2008-2009 (see Table 1.2), and four planners have scheduled or plan to schedule trips to Israel in 2010 or 2011.



Tareq Shihada, General Manager of the Nazareth Cultural & Tourism Association, meets with the “Educational” travel planners to share his organization’s long-term tourism strategy for preserving the Old City’s “special character” and heritage through restoration projects. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli.

All of the planners looked forward to going behind the scenes at special organizations, meeting with political leaders and artists, discussing issues of co-existence between faiths and learning more about peace-building efforts, visiting ancient religious sites and touring important modern sites, seeing the Dead Sea, learning about eco-tourism opportunities and environmental initiatives, and interacting with local people, with the possibility of a Shabbat dinner at the home of an Israeli family. While the proposed itinerary (see page 186) was different from the final itinerary, the types of opportunities mentioned here are what the planners stated before and after the **“EDUCATIONAL”** would be of most interest and value to their travelers.

Of key importance to the participants was meeting with tourism industry professionals to learn more about the unique opportunities available for their future Israel program offerings and interacting with guides, museum hosts, and hotel service providers. Practically, the trip enabled them to vet Israel as a destination, learn as much as they could to share it with their travelers, and gain the knowledge and insight needed for effective marketing and promotion of Israel for future educational tours.

Evaluating the safety of traveling to and within Israel was paramount to many of the **“EDUCATIONAL”** participants—and, by the end of the trip, most expressed confidence in traveling there and felt comfortable that their standard risk management practices and protocols such as monitoring the U.S. State Department’s Travel Advisory and keeping abreast of the regions’ foreign affairs were adequate measures. Most felt that the greatest challenge in attracting travelers to Israel would be overcoming the perception of the country that many Americans have formed from media coverage, which “frightens people into thinking that it is very risky to travel to this part of the world,” as one planner articulated. All of the **“EDUCATIONAL”** participants now say their firsthand travels in Israel would allow them to speak factually and positively about the question of safety.

Daily Debriefing Summaries

The following is the *executed* daily itinerary for the “**EDUCATIONAL**” Program. The *complete*, original daily itinerary is available in the Supporting Documents section, on page 180. The *executed* itinerary features notes summarized from the daily de-briefings with “**EDUCATIONAL**” participants and reflects the re-scheduling of certain site visits.



Scenes from Jerusalem's Old City. Photos clockwise (top and bottom right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, (bottom left) by Chloe Wicks



Jaffa. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Monday, June 1, 2009 – Arrival at Ben Gurion International Airport

The **“EDUCATIONAL”** participants arrive at **Ben Gurion International Airport** at 9:35 a.m., after an overnight flight from Newark Airport (departing 16:05) on Continental Airlines, with the exception of Allie Hill and Michelle Bell, who are flying from Atlanta on Delta. Both flights are direct to Ben Gurion. Opened in 2004, Ben Gurion International Airport is inviting, modern, and easy to navigate.

Allie and Michelle say they flew on a “new” plane and their flight was fine; whereas the Continental Airlines travelers say the service was lacking and the flight cramped. The plane was “nice” but completely full, and it took a long time to get food; water was not provided regularly; the flight attendants were not attentive; and one bathroom was out of service. To put it into context, another traveler says, “What U.S. airline does have good service?” All of the travelers say the safety measures seemed adequate, as Israel performs an internal security bag check once inside the gates. Rob, who had traveled to Israel before on El Al, comments that an El Al flight “begins with a conversation because you have a security check-in first.” The Israel Ministry of Tourism can provide a full list of nonstop flights from the U.S. to Tel Aviv.

Although tired, everyone moves through Immigration smoothly, with the exception of Treaty, who recently traveled to Iran and has an Iranian stamp in her passport. She was separated from the group for questioning, but she says the experience was “fine,” adding that the Israeli officials were “nice.” If asked not to stamp your passport, the Israeli immigration agents will oblige by stamping a separate piece of paper.

Michal Hershkovitz, of the Israel Ministry of Tourism, and Mr. Amir Orly, the tour guide selected specifi-

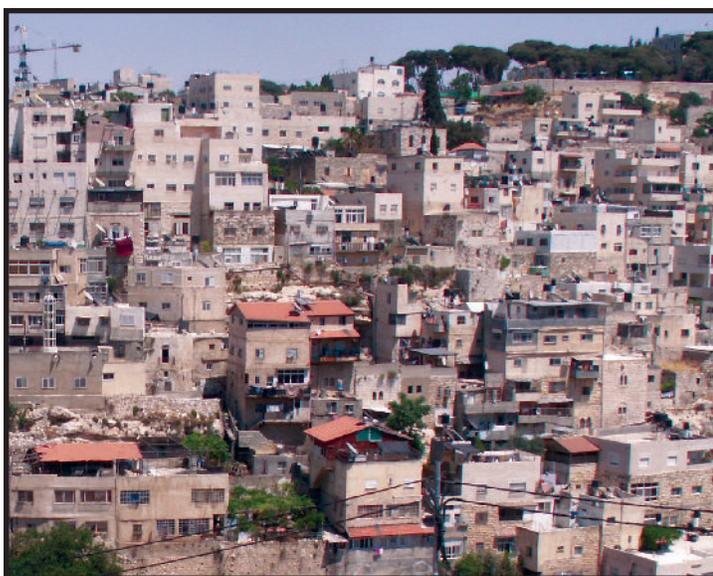


Pictured from left to right: Amir and Michal, Tyre, and the Nazarene Express bus. Photos by Elizabeth Bigwood, J. Mara DelliPriscoli, and Sherry Schwarz

cally for the **“EDUCATIONAL,”** welcome the group to Israel. Everyone boards a private bus operated by Nazarene Express, driven by Tyre, a Palestinian-Arab Israeli. It’s about an hour’s drive (35 km) from Tel Aviv, through the Judean Hills to Jerusalem. Along the way, Amir introduces the group to Israel. “The first surprise for most travelers in Israel is that people don’t walk around traumatized here,” he says. “You don’t need to wear bullet proof vests.” Amir’s good humor and informative background information on Israel’s history and current affairs provide an interesting introduction. “Judaism in Israel is either a religion or a nationality; it is a cluster of identities,” he says. “Everything is political in Israel—even religion. You can’t separate politics from religion here. Judaism in ancient times was a nationality, because it had a country; it was also a religion, because it had a God. Now it is a nation of refugees.”

Among the facts Amir impresses upon the group is the small size of the country: one can drive across Israel in two hours and vertically in six hours. Along the drive, Amir points out groves of olive and pomegranate trees, as well as grape vineyards, in this “highly cultivated” part of the country. He explains that a forestry agency is working on a campaign to reforest the country and that Israel is at a turning point because of a shortage of water. While there has been no countrywide water rationing and conservation practices to-date, Israel is well known for its sophisticated methods of irrigations such as the development of drip-irrigation.

As the group enters Jerusalem, it is the modern city and not the ancient city that first comes into view. “Jerusalem is built on mountains,” explains Amir pointing toward the hillsides of houses. “There is no safety problem



Hillside of houses, Jerusalem; Israeli-grown dried fruit. Photos (left) by Chloe Wicks, (right) by Kristina Nemeth.



Jerusalem. Photo by Sherry Schwarz

many dishes provided a sampling of the fresh foods available in Israel. They were delicious and spiced quite uniquely. It was a great way to be introduced to Israeli food.”

Following lunch, the group boards the bus for a general orientation tour of Jerusalem, though many are too tired from the overnight flight and filling lunch to stay awake! “[*The first day*] provided a very full program. I don’t think it’s a particularly good idea to have an extensive tour after a big lunch and right after you crossed the ocean,” says Rob.

One stop brings the group to an area of Jerusalem from where the security wall can be seen. Everyone is surprised that in this location the wall is largely an unguarded barbed wire fence snaking through the desolate landscape separating the Palestinian Territory from Israel. Though the group would later see other areas of the security wall, this part was of particular interest, as the settlement where Amir lives can be seen on a distant hill-top on the other side of the security wall within the Palestinian Territory. When the fighting between the Israelis and Palestinians was at a peak, Amir’s family left its house to live in Jerusalem for several years.



Photos by Michelle Bell and Elizabeth Bigwood

for children. Here, many children walk to school on their own. The tourist experience in Jerusalem is not that you are entering a war zone. You are exposed to everyday life and the landmarks of Jerusalem. In Israel, nothing can be built without first conducting an archaeological survey to uncover ruins and to ensure that any antiquities are taken to a museum.”

The group arrives at the **Inbal Hotel**, and the remainder of the morning is spent at leisure until 13:30, when it is time for a special lunch at the **Olive and Fish Mediterranean-style restaurant** conveniently located across from the Inbal Hotel. The meal begins with a spread of “*meze*,” a selection of appetizers or small dishes typical of Israeli lunches and dinners. The selection includes tabouli with strawberries, a beet salad, eggplants, sweet potatoes with spicy peppers, and an Israeli salad of tomato and cucumber. For the entrees, some order talapia from the Sea of Galilee, and one orders chicken liver. There’s a delicious chocolate torte or sorbet for dessert, and as is customary there is an option of coffee or tea made with mint leaves. *One participant’s comments about the lunch summarize the experience at this sophisticated yet unpretentious restaurant:*

“I particularly enjoyed the food at the Olive and Fish. I thought the



The Night Spectacular at the Tower of David Museum. Photos by (left) Sherry Schwarz, (right) by Chloe Wicks

Everyone enjoys the “tasting” dinner at the Inbal Hotel with Mr. Ilan Brenner, Deputy General Manager for Marketing at the hotel, who introduces each of the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean dishes. The opportunity to sample different foods is appreciated. “The flavor is excellent,” and the setting is “wonderful.” Even at the end of the **“EDUCATIONAL,”** the Inbal dinner remains ranked as one of the best. *“It’s a good idea for an operator to greet a country through it’s comestibles...to give you little light touches,” says Rob. “It’s a great way to begin a trip. It was great to do a tasting menu.”*

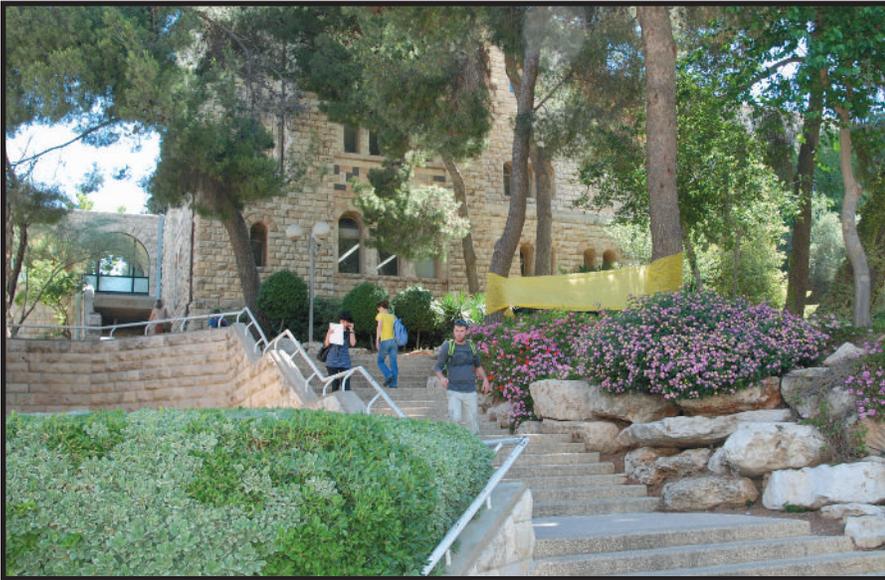
To cap off the evening, the group attends the **“Night Spectacular,”** at the nearby Tower of David Museum in the ancient Citadel. This is the group’s first glimpse of the old city illuminated against the dark sky. All can see what an interesting site the impressive Citadel and Tower of David Museum would be to explore in the daylight. *While the group expected an Americanized laser light show, this show was far more technologically impressive and intricate in its visual and audio display of Jerusalem’s thousands of years of history. As Kristina says, “it was much more artistic and interesting.” It should be featured on an itinerary as a “visual summary” of Jerusalem’s history depicting the waves of conquerors who poured in, each assuming control only to yield to the next victorious power as the city transformed and developed into modern times. Rob says, “The context of how the show is explained is important.”*

While everyone agrees the show was unexpectedly “worthwhile,” most say it was hard to take in at such a late hour on the first night in Jerusalem. Treaty says, “The ‘Night Spectacular’ was worth it. I can appreciate that it had to be fit in, and I am glad we did it. It’s something to build a little more time in for, though. If we were to bring a group, I’d add more time to walk through the exhibits, as they were as interesting as the show).”

It should be noted that the “Night Spectacular” is a new exhibit and the Tower of David Museum’s evening exhibits and performances change. Michal says she has seen four different performances there, and they all have been “phenomenal.”

As a summary of everyone’s short-stayed experience in Jerusalem to this point, there is a consensus that Jerusalem is about “the old and the new—it’s as simple as that,” says Liz. Everyone agrees and a few add that it’s vibrant and you can feel the excitement. There’s a spring in people’s steps.”

Tuesday, June 2, 2009 – Jerusalem, the Old City



Hebrew University, Mount Scopus Campus. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

day begins with a 9 a.m. tour of the **Hebrew University of Jerusalem Mount Scopus Campus**. Founded in 1918 by the likes of Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, and Martin Buber and opened in 1925, The Hebrew University teaches some 22,000 students from Israel and 70 additional countries. It has seven faculties: Humanities, Science, Social Science, Medicine, Dental Medicine, Law, and Agriculture, Food, and Environment. It is ranked among the world's leading universities, and it has 100 research centers with more than 3,000 ongoing research projects. Educational travel groups can choose one of 12 “tour” tracks to experience the university's activities in greater depth and/or specific lectures can be arranged on topics from brain research to nano technology to the environment to Biblical plants (which can be seen in the university's botanical gardens). The pre-arranged tracks include the Steven Spielberg Film Archive, Rothberg International School, Israeli Politics and the Middle East, Archaeology and Jewish Art, Contemporary Jewry, Melton Center for Jewish Education, Student Involvement in Israeli Society, Tour of the Mount Scopus Campus, Jewish National and University Library, Science in Jerusalem, Ein Kerem Campus, and the Rehovot Campus.

The **“EDUCATIONAL”** combines the **Steven Spielberg Film Archive** tour and the tour of the Mount Scopus campus for an enriching and full morning. The Steven Spielberg Film Archive is one of the world's largest collections of films and videos relating to the Jewish/Israel experience and Jewish life in the 20th century. It was established in 1969 at a time when using film as a means of documentation was a revolutionary idea. The group meets with the Archive staff to learn about the Archive itself, archiving and the digitizing of films today, and to watch excerpts from the film collections and footage of life in pre-Holocaust Europe and the early settlement of Israel.

A tour of the Mount Scopus campus gives the group access to the Hecht Synagogue, with spectacular views of Jerusalem, and a brief introduction to some Jewish religious traditions. Walking around the campus, the group not only sees the original buildings from the 1920s and the post-1967 buildings, but it also learns about student life and academics. Most of the university's Israeli students attend school between the ages of 21-23, after their Army service. A number of participants feel this



*Chaim Green, Spielberg Archive Technician.
Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli*



Spielberg Archive: Posters of the Archive's films like "Land of Promise," which was made in an effort to showcase Jewish Palestine to the world. The film features early pioneers, refugees from Europe, and the commerce, agriculture, and industry of the period. Photos (far and right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, (center) by Chloe Wicks

could be an interesting topic for an educational tour, and they are also interested in the population of Arab students on campus, as well as the smaller number of students from Palestinian territories. Discussions range from how the university is structured and funded to the important role of student government organizations in Israeli politics to the university's patented agricultural and technological innovations. The tour ends at the Rothberg Amphitheater, with an expansive view of the Judean desert extending across to Jordan.

Overall, everyone enjoyed the experience of being on campus and learning about the students, academics, and student life. Rob explains that he is wrestling with how to use the Hebrew University. "Universities are time bandits on a tour. You can never get out. It's a labyrinth...everything is interesting and suddenly the day is gone." Rachel agrees that she too is wondering how best to use the university and appreciates that it is "willing to answer questions and have a dialogue." She would reach out to the contacts at Hebrew University as a conduit for information added to contacts from her own university. Liz thinks a lecture on Israel's education and military system would be interesting. "[It'd be interesting to learn] how people are going forward building this society. Teenagers here are so much more serious about their lives [than American teenagers]. I think it would be an incredible topic that people should learn about early on in their trip to understand modern Israeli society. Michelle agrees and adds that it could be interesting to do a lecture comparing how the Israeli military is run compared with the U.S. military, specially for schools with a military history. She notes this would be especially apt for her travelers of the WWII-era and those of the Korean War and Vietnam War eras. The morning's academic experience opened Liz's eyes to the fact that a tour on Israel is very much about the past, present, and future—and how Israel is going to evolve.



Rothberg Amphitheater, Hebrew University. Photo by Chloe Wicks

By group consensus, an unscheduled stop is made to the **Garden of Gethsemane**, where Jesus is believed to have been arrested. The garden is entered through a narrow, steep alleyway behind the church, and it has some of the world's oldest olive trees, three of which have been scientifically dated as more than 2,000 years old. *Everyone thinks the Garden of Gethsemane is wonderful. "There was something very touching about the combination of thousand-year-old olive trees and the chapel," says Rob. This visit provides the group's first understanding of how one holy site is built over another throughout Israel. For example, says trip coordinator Paul Manor, "Byzantine and Crusader churches are built over the modern 19th century churches."*



Garden of Gethsemane. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

A brief drive from the Garden of Gethsemane up to the **Mount of Olives** leads to a beautiful view of Jerusalem's Old City, from where one can see an ancient Jewish cemetery and several important churches related to the last week of Jesus' life, including the Garden of Gethsemane. *While the extra view and photo opportunity are appreciated, participants note that it is not necessary to have views from both the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Mount Scopus Campus and the Mount of Olives.*

Not far from the Mount of Olives, the group makes a spontaneous stop at the Mount of Olive Restaurant for a light Middle Eastern lunch of pita, falafel, and hummus. *Many enjoy the "local" eatery but say it is important to check on venues ahead of time. Some do not think the quality of food is good, while others think it is fantastic. Everyone agrees that opportunities to eat at local eateries should be incorporated into an Israel itinerary.*



Amir and Paul explain the views from the Mount of Olives. To the left is the Church of All Nations with its mosaic depicting Jesus's suffering (built at the Garden of Gethsemane); To the right is Temple Mount's Dome of the Rock covering the stone that is sacred to both the Jewish and Muslim faiths. The group is standing above the world's oldest continually used cemetery. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Mount of Olive Restaurant. Photos (left) by Sherry Schwarz, (right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

The group proceeds to the **City of David** at 12:45 to visit an **Israel Antiquities Authority archaeological excavation** of an area captured by King David 3,000 years ago. Dr. Doron Ben-Ami, the archaeologist overseeing the excavation, explains that a parking lot previously existed above the ruins, which were only discovered when the ground was surveyed ahead of a proposed construction project. At the time of the group’s visit, Israeli and U.S. college students were participating in the dig. Their job is to very carefully dig bucket after bucket of dirt, sifting the buckets and then rinsing the shards to uncover “every little artifact left behind.”

“We are not only dealing with archaeology and science; we’re dealing with people,” says Dr. Ben-Amir. “Volunteers and professionals who come to dig experience the thrill of exposing ancient Jerusalem.” The group learns that archaeology is “political” in Israel, because every discovery reveals proof of one people’s history versus another. “There is a struggle in Israel questioning whether archaeology is needed to know what is past. There’s what happens above and below the ground,” explains Dr. Ben-Amir.

Less than an hour is spent at the archaeological excavation, which does not allow the group to “participate” in the dig as fully as it had expected.

The group assists the students in cleaning the shards. Some participants are pleased by the short visit, while others are disappointed not to have a more hands-on experience. The group seems to agree that participation in an archaeological dig should be optional, if offered at all. It is summed up by a common-sense sentiment: “Volunteering would be for a specific type of person. There are a lot of people who would want to do a dig and a lot who wouldn’t. You’d have to consider whether it appeals to a certain demographic.” Most feel this day’s “dig was built up to be more than it was” and that



Archaeological excavation, City of David. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Student volunteers excavate the archaeological site bucket by bucket; Shards are collected and organized; Abby, Liz, and Chloe clean the shards. Photos (left and right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, (center) by Chloe Wicks

it should have been listed on the itinerary not as volunteer work but as a site visit, as the group did not particularly learn about the process of cleaning the shards nor was there much of an opportunity to engage and interact with the student volunteers. The experience for the group was valuable in that it led to a discussion about the importance of archaeology in Israel. “ I thought visiting a dig was good because it helps you discover the deep history of Jerusalem, but it also brings into vivid view the political issues and the political problem,” says Rob.

Michelle also says that visiting the dig was valuable: “Being there [offers] an exclusive experience my travelers would love.” Rachel, who has visited Israel previously, reminds the group that for those interested in incorporating an archaeological component, there are digs all over Israel and many universities such as hers send students to work on sites throughout the country.

In the afternoon, around 14:30, Amir and Paul lead the group to the **Jerusalem Archaeological Park** and to the **Western Wall, Judaism’s most sacred site**. Amir shares with everyone a deeply personal and moving story about his own Western Wall Bar Mitzvah—one of the very first after Jerusalem’s Biblical sites were accessible to Israel following the 1967 Six-Day War between the Israel army and the armies of the neighboring states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.

A sea of humanity is gathered at the Western Wall, where all faiths can pray every day of the year, at all times of day, with the wall only divided into sections for women and men. *Not all of the group’s participants were prepared with the proper clothing and note that it is critical that passengers be advised when more modest dress and coverings are needed.*



A bride and her bridesmaids at the Western Wall. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

The **Western Wall Tunnels** were excavated by archaeologists exposing “magnificent underground structures, comprising a continuous chain wrought in stone stretching from the Has-monean era until modern times,” according to the Western Wall Heritage Foundation. These excavations revealed the entire length of the Western Wall. The stones of the “Master Course” are enormous. One stone is the largest building stone found in Israel weighing approximately 570 metric tons. The northern extension of the Western Wall is at the original street level and tour guides have nicknamed the main tunnel Market Street, as it is believed to have been a shopping area. The foundation stones are enormous. The group finds the Western Wall Tunnels tour “fascinating.” Many place prayer notes within the tunnel wall, rather than outside at the Western Wall, as Amir advised of an appropriate spot. *Within the walls, there is a special area for prayer for men and women and some felt conflicted as to whether it is appropriate to linger in such sacred areas. Depending on the age group and ability of travelers they should need be apprised of the condition of the tunnels (e.g. uneven walking surfaces and low ceilings).*



Western Wall Tunnels. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Exiting from the Western Wall Tunnels, the group proceeds on a **walking tour of the Old City**. The itinerary planned for a visit to the **Moslem Quarter** including part of the **Via Dolorosa** and **Arab market**, the **Christian Quarter with the Stations of the Cross** and **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, and the **Jewish Quarter**; however, there is not time for the Jewish Quarter.

Everyone finds the afternoon explorations of the Old City “very moving.” Michelle says, “it was really amazing, something I thought I’d never have opportunity to do. I only wish we’d had more time, which is indicative of the value I placed on the experience.” Michelle’s sentiments are echoed, as others agree there was so much to see and do and not nearly enough time. Kristina suggests primer would be particularly useful for Jerusalem, as “this is the type of destination where people have to do a lot of reading beforehand to understand. You need a head start for Israel—maybe even more than a guidebook. It is so much more important to have this information beforehand for this destination than for other destinations like Paris. Plus, as said previously, so many of us get our information from the media, which focuses on contemporary politics not the past.” Michelle recommends the Insight Guide by Discovery Channel. The first part of book is dedicated to the background and history of



Following in Jesus’s footsteps along the Via Dolorosa (Way of the Sorrows); the Muslim Quarter and Arab market; The Second Station, where Jesus is believed to have received the cross. Photos by Elizabeth Bigwood

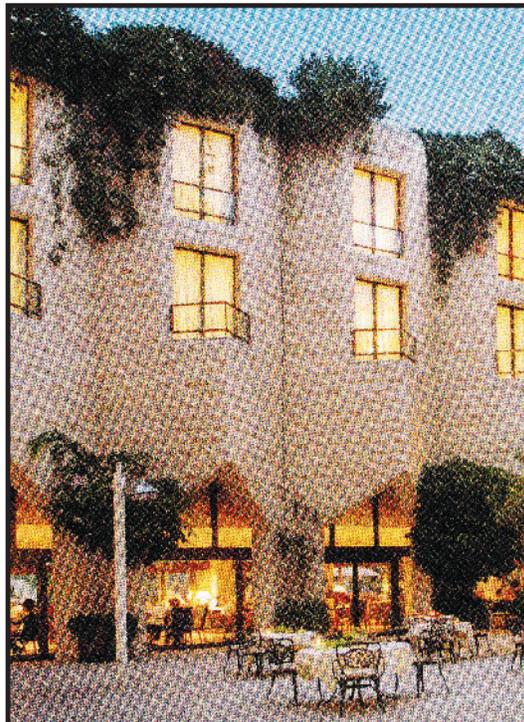
Israel. It offers a lot of information on different religions and cultures, and all the people who have conquered Israel over the years. “I heard our guides say so much today that if I hadn’t had background I had from reading the Insight Guide I would have been clueless,” says Michelle. Trearty recommends giving travelers “time to wander.” She noted the importance of having free time to “experience” a place like Jerusalem.

All comment that for such a divided, fractious place, Jerusalem is also a city of surprising peace where multitudes of religions, cultures, and people of different ethnic backgrounds unite.

At 18:30, the group tours the stately **King David Hotel**, one of Israel’s most famous hotels. Everyone is treated to a spectacular view of the Old City from the presidential suite, while having drinks with Mr. Benny Olearchik, Assistant General Manager, Mr. Rafi Beeri, Marketing Manager, Ms. Deborah Manzur, Marketing Control & North American Desk, and Ministry of Tourism “La Regence.” The reception is “fabulous.” All agree it is “a real treat, and “the views are amazing.” The service for the dinner is “impeccable, and the presentation impressive,” but most say it was hard to talk at the long banquet table and the meal was heavy compared to the preferred sampler dinner at the Inbal.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Photo by Chloe Wicks



Before returning to the Inbal for the night, the group visits the Dan Panorama Jerusalem. Most say the hotel is “okay depending on the price point and how you market it.” The rooms are efficiency-style compared to the distinctive rooms of the King David or the newly renovated rooms of the Inbal Hotel. One drawback is that on this group’s visit to the Dan Panorama its lounge is filled with cigarette smoke. Abby had a previous Israel tour group stay at the Dan Panorama and she says that there were no complaints.

King David Hotel banquet table; The Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem. Photo (left) by Elizabeth Bigwood, (right) courtesy of the Inbal Hotel

While the group summarizes the King David Hotel as high-end, classy, and elegant, everyone generally prefers the Inbal Hotel for a number of reasons. One fears the King David Hotel might “become the destination,” and another thinks her travelers would prefer returning to a more modern hotel after a day of touring the Old City, stating it is “airy, light, and bright.” Another says it is “nice, clean, and modern.” All feel the Inbal Hotel is well located, and although it’s not as close as the King David to the Old City, it is considered to be in the Old City and is only a 10- to 15-minute walk to the Citadel. Most state that the Inbal has everything they need for their travelers and that its executive lounge is an especially nice feature. It is suggested that planners ask the Inbal Hotel if it can secure the Executive Lounge for a group gathering/debriefing.

Wednesday, June 3, 2009 – Jerusalem, Modern City

Buffet breakfast at the Inbal Hotel.

At 9:00 the group departs for a visit to **Yad Vashem**, the National Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust. It is considered “the Jewish people’s living memorial to the Holocaust” and is intended to “safeguard” the memory of the past and impart its meaning for future generations. Established in 1953, as the world center for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust, Yad Vashem, which means “a Memorial and a Name,” describes itself today as a “dynamic and vital place of intergenerational and international encounter.” Excellent guides are available to help interpret and explain Yad Vashem and, most importantly, share the stories of the people affected by and caught in the Holocaust. As one crosses over the “Bridge to the Vanished World” it becomes clear that the architecture of the building is highly symbolic and the experience ahead an unthinkable tragedy from which the nation of Israel grew. The main building is a history museum underground displaying art, personal belongings, photos, multimedia displays, and Holocaust survivors’ testimonies. The guide’s powerful personal stories of those who experienced the Holocaust moved the group beyond words. Toward the end of the museum is the “Hall of Names,” the Jewish People’s memorial to all of the Jews who perished in the Holocaust—a place where they may be commemorated. The group silently ascended out of the museum into the sunlight, and then underground again to the Children’s Memorial with a single flame reflecting off hundreds of mirrors, as recorded voices read the names of perished children. Each visitor is asked to remember one name.

Along the “Avenue of the Righteous” are planted trees in honor of those who risked their own lives to save Jews from the Holocaust. “Planting a tree is such an unselfish act,” says the guide, as he shares the story of Boris Saksier Korczak (known to Israelis as Janus Korczak) who ran a ghetto orphanage. The Nazis offered Korczak the opportunity to go free, but he refused to leave the children and dressed them up saying they were going on a trip to comfort them, as he accompanied them to a death camp.



Yad Vashem. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Everyone, emotionally wrought and speechless, is grateful Amir relays a story to help ease the transition from Yad Vashem. He explains it is difficult to leave Yad Vashem and go on with our lives and that it seems “improper” even to eat lunch, but he says, “it is actually very proper in the sense that it is the Jews’ revenge to be able to keep living, to renew themselves, to build families, and to prosper.”

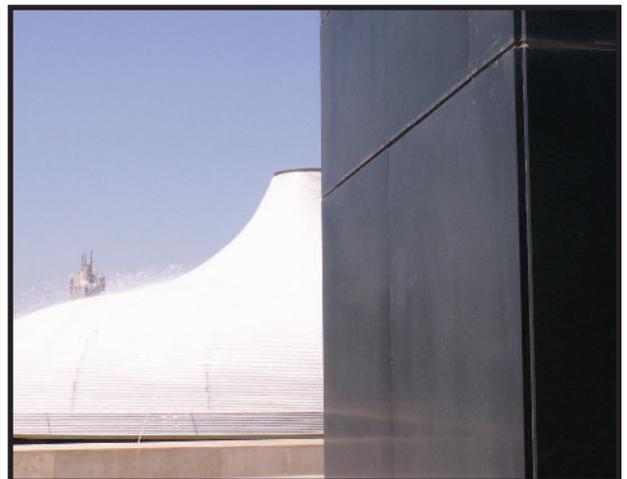
The walk through Mount Herzl, Israel’s national cemetery with the graves of the leaders of the nation including Herzl and Rabin, is cancelled due to a shortage of time, and the group heads directly for lunch on their own at the **Mahane Yehuda fruit & vegetable market**, a colorful and lively place of commerce to wander and sample fresh and dried fruits, freshly squeezed fruit juices, pastries and breads, falafel, and sandwiches.

Following lunch Amir guides the group through the **Supreme Court Building**, which is at the head of the judiciary branch of Israel’s democracy and known for its symbolic architecture. It is designed literally and figuratively as a “crossroads,” where Israelis can come together. “In the eyes of the law everyone has the same rights and all individuals are equal,” explains Amir.

It is then off to a 14:00 meeting at the **Israel Museum** with Mr. Adolfo Reutmann, curator of the **Shrine of the Book**. Mr. Reutmann begins the tour with a viewing of a scale model of Jerusalem (as the city looked at the end of the Second Temple era, AD 66). The group says this is a wonderful way to *see* Jerusalem and gain a better understanding of its layout. Some recommend starting a Jerusalem tour at the Israel Museum to give visitors a foundation for their travels. Note, however, that for two years only a few galleries will be open while the Israel Museum undergoes renovation. The Shrine of the Book, where the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (the earliest discovered Biblical texts) are kept, is notable for its symbolic architecture. “Entering the building is like entering a temple,” explains Mr. Reutmann, who feels it is his “obligation to share this treasure with people from all over the world.” He stresses the universal nature of the Dead Sea Scrolls and says most of the visitors are non-Jews.



A painting of the Supreme Court. Photo by Chloe Wicks



The Israel Museum’s scale model of Jerusalem; The Shrine of the Book. Photos by Chloe Wicks



Scenes from the Neve Shalom Educational meeting. Photos (left and center) by Elizabeth Bigwood, (right) courtesy of Neve Shalom

Of the 800 scrolls, both religious and secular, the most important is the Great Isaiah Scroll, the largest and best preserved. It is the only Biblical scroll that has survived in its entirety and predates what was previously thought to be the oldest Biblical document ever discovered. *Overall, the group is fascinated by the Dead Sea Scrolls and impressed by the “expert” curator; however, there is some regret that the visit was made toward the end of an already exhausting day, as the group’s enthusiasm was waning. Another advises that there should be more preparation and reading about the architecture of symbolic buildings like the Shrine of the Book, Yad Vashem, and the Supreme Court.*

The final site visit of the day is to **Neve Shalom** for a 16:00 meeting at this “Oasis of Peace,” a unique cooperative settlement established by Jewish and Palestinian Arabs of Israeli citizenship in 1972. Currently about 50 families live in the village, with an equal number of Jews and Arabs. Eventually, the hope is for the village to include about 140 homes. The members of Wahat al-Salem - Neve Shalom (WAS-NS) are trying to demonstrate the possibility of coexistence between Jews and Palestinians by developing a community based on mutual acceptance, respect, and cooperation. There is bilingual, binational schooling, a youth club, humanitarian aid, a pluralistic spiritual center, a volunteer program, and a hospitality/visiting program, among other activities and initiatives. Groups can visit for different lengths of time and for structured learning programs on specific topics. The **“EDUCATIONAL”** participants have only a quick tour of part of the village and meet with two community leaders (pictured above) for a presentation and discussion on the history, ideology, successes, and challenges of WAS-NS.

Everyone agrees that winding down the day at Neve Shalom provided an interesting and important contrast to the day’s experiences, particularly to Yad Vashem. Most felt it provided the “hope” that everyone needed, although one participant disagrees and finds Neve Shalom interesting but gets the sense that the leaders are tired. She feels this is “such a small step” and that perhaps taking a group to an occupied territory would be more insightful. Another is glad the group didn’t go in singing “Kumbaya” and agrees Neve Shalom doesn’t offer solutions to the extent that it is an “unusual situation.” Although the group feels the Neve Shalom leaders’ palpable sense of frustration at the slow road toward peace, it is also quite apparent that the leaders, even with their reservoir of emotion, are committed to the exercise and that “it is what it is.”

The majority of the group feels that visiting Neve Shalom is important for seeing “a small group trying to make a difference,” as Michelle says. “They are making a statement that peace is possible.” Liz appreciated learning about the every-day experience of living at Neve Shalom and says, “there was a tranquility there in that they allowed themselves to agree to disagree and that brings about a sort of sense of peace.” Trearty agrees, commenting: “what is special is having Arabs and Israelis coming together for a dialogue with respect. Even though they agree to disagree, they still have a conversation.”

Michal adds perspective to the group’s extensive debriefing on Neve Shalom saying, “a lot of times you can

learn so much about a majority from meeting a small group. It's not that easy to meet with Palestinians in Israel. Neve Shalom is easy because you can be exposed to both sides as long as you let your travelers know this [situation/lifestyle] is not representative of all of Israel."

Abby says, "visiting Neve Shalom [was] of great interest to me. I studied the Israeli / Palestinian conflict for a semester at university and I read about the settlements but we never read about cooperatives in the region. These communities are rarely mentioned in the media, and I think for many travelers this unique experience may seem as a 'value added' that they could not plan independently."

Most say they would be remiss if they didn't offer an opportunity to their travelers to talk about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that this is a component that obviously has to be brought into the tours. Trearty says, "it's like the elephant in the room. Our travelers aren't coming on a religious trip. They are coming for the big picture." She did feel, however, that the group should have prepared questions ahead of time for the speakers, as there were so many questions that arose in the debriefing. Rob agrees that the visit could be better crafted. He'd probably go to Hebrew University first and then do a tour of the school at Neve Shalom before having a roundtable with questions on larger issues. "I'm not much interested in touring their facilities or garden, but I'd like to see their school facility and how children are interacting," he says.

Suggestions for future groups include: talking to the Palestinian and Israeli students either at Neve Shalom or at Hebrew University of Jerusalem about day-to-day life; organizing a tour of the village's grounds, including its homes and agricultural lands; planning a roundtable discussion; and arranging a lunch with community members. While it was thought that students could have a "great retreat" at Neve Shalom, the planners agree an overnight probably would not work for their passengers.



Jerusalem's Old City. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Photo by Elizabeth Bigwood

The day concludes with dinner hosted at the "**Little Jerusalem Restaurant**" **Ticho House** by Mr. Pini Shani, Deputy Head of Tourism Marketing Administration, **Israel Ministry of Tourism**. Originally built in the late 19th century by an Arab dignitary, the Ticho House was then purchased in 1924 by an ophthalmologist, Dr. Abraham Ticho, who ran the mansion as an eye clinic, saving hundreds of Palestinian Arabs from blindness. After his death, his wife Anna donated the building as an art center and museum. Its restaurant has indoor seating and outdoor seating in a charming garden. A meze table of fresh salads and appetizers such as marinated eggplant, root-vegetable salad, tobouleh, and tehini and fresh bread is served first. Many order the "Denise" fish dinner, which they say is superb and others mention enjoying pumpkin ravioli and mushroom ravioli dishes.

Much of the dinner is devoted to discussing how the Israel Ministry of Tourism has made a strategic decision to focus on marketing Israel as a destination for "sophisticated travelers." Mr. Shani says that in the past few years



There are dozens of boutique chocolate shops in Israel today. Pictured here are gourmet chocolate desserts at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Photos by Elizabeth Bigwood

the Ministry of Tourism has seen an increasing number of American companies selling Israel. “We realize Israel is not a cheap destination and never will be because of the cost of land and labor [and thus] we need to approach markets that appreciate a good product and can pay for it,” says Mr. Shani. He cites the many programming possibilities from culinary to historical to ecotourism to Israeli culture and contemporary society. “There are many angles from which you can look at Israel when you travel here. When you become familiar with Israel new ideas will come, because there is so much to see here. It’s a small country that allows you to travel a lot.”

As part of the general debriefing when returning to the Inbal Hotel that night, there was a consensus that the day was “emotionally exhausting, emotionally devastating.” There were a number of recommendations for how the day could be choreographed differently:

Rob says, “with a group you couldn’t do all of the things that we did today. You left Yad Vashem ashamed of your own humanity and then you came to a place that seems to offer hope” (speaking of the Mahane Yehuda fruit and vegetable market). “The Holocaust framing was useful for putting Israel today into context. It was an interesting parent to have that and then Neve Shalom.”

Most agree that travelers should go to Yad Vashem in the morning, and then use the fruit and vegetable market as a transition, as Amir did. “I appreciated going out into the market after this nightmare (seeing the abundance of fruit and vegetables...commerce in both a commercial and civic setting),” says Rob. Others say that they would have preferred to return to the hotel to absorb what they’d experienced. Allie and Liz suggest adding more time to walk around Yad Vashem, while Chloe suggests going to the university and seeing the Steven Spielberg Film Archive. Kristina agrees this could be a good option, as would be Neve Shalom. Trearty is not sure that she would include Neve Shalom or the university after Yad Vashem, “because the uni-



Mahane Yehuda fruit and vegetable market. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

versity could be done on another day given how much one could make of it.” She things perhaps offering lunch in the Jewish Quarter and/or giving people a chance to visit a synagogue would be appropriate after Yad Vashem.

Jennifer and Rachel liked the visit to the Supreme Court, as they feel it balanced the day. Trearty thinks one tour theme could focus on how thoughtful and beautiful the architecture is: “from Yad Vashem to the Supreme Court to the Israel Museum, everything keeps connecting architecturally and symbolically.” Everyone agrees there could be a tour on architecture. Rob says that even when describing a visit, the architecture should be framed, as this commentary enhances the experience.



City Hall, Jerusalem. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Thursday, June 4, 2009 – Jerusalem and Bethlehem

Buffet breakfast at the Inbal Hotel.

The group arrives to **City Hall** for a 9:30 tour, including an overview of a model of Jerusalem used for urban planning, a view of the city, and a meeting with Municipality of Jerusalem representatives: Director of Overseas Marketing Mr. Eli Nachmias, City Council member Mr. Hilik Bar, and Director of International Exchange Division Francoise Cafri to discuss “alternative tourism” in Jerusalem.

Mr. Bar and Mr. Nachmias explain that Jerusalem is the poorest city in Israel: for every 100,000 tourists there are 4,000 employees. Their goal is to triple tourism to Jerusalem within 10 years by attracting 3 million tourists a year to Jerusalem every year. They say this is achievable when comparing Jerusalem to European capitals that receive 50 million visitors a year. As a “Middle East” destination, Israel sees itself in competition with Egypt,



Meeting with Jerusalem officials at City Hall. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Jordan, and Turkey and realizes it is much more expensive than its neighbors, but Jerusalem is unique in that it “symbolizes coexistence between Jews, Christians, and Muslims,” says Mr. Bar. “It represents freedom of practice for every religion.” Jerusalem will be building a “museum of tolerance” and a light rail system, along with which they are planting 3,000 trees. Additionally, they are aiming to market Jerusalem as a place you have to visit at least once in your life. It is not only a pilgrimage destination, however. Their aim is to promote Jerusalem as a cultural center with a thriving arts scene, theater, movie-making industry, philharmonic



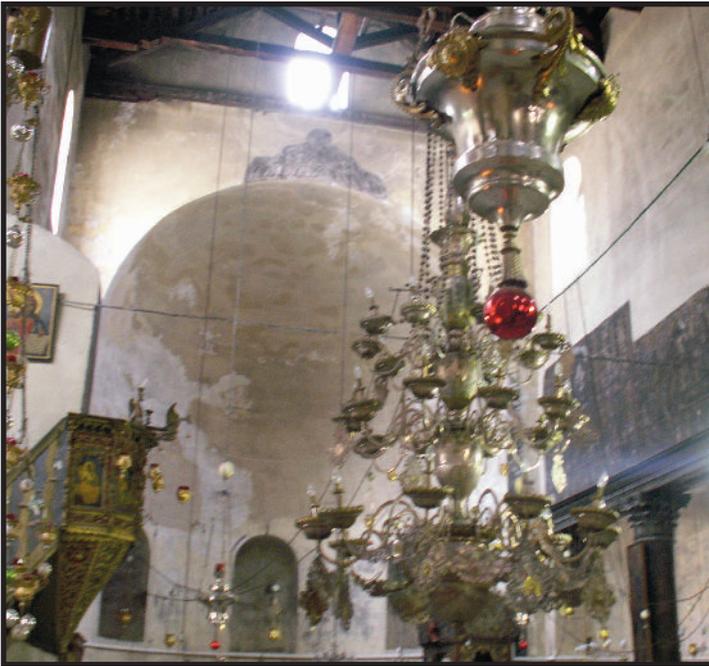
The lion of Judah engraved on “Jerusalem stone,” the stone quarried for building purposes ranging in color from white, pink, yellow, and tawny; Mr. Hilik Bar, a Jerusalem City Council member. Photos by (left) Chloe Wicks, (right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

orchestra, and top-of-class events. “Jerusalem is a city that caters to every taste; in a small place you have everything: religion, culture, modern versus new, ethnic food,” says Mr. Bar. “It’s also a city of education. There is a lot happening around intercultural education, peace education projects, and cultural diversity. Jerusalem has a new, open-minded, young administration who will move international relations and tourism forward.” Mr. Bar emphasizes that the Educational Travel market has good partners in Jerusalem and is open to new ideas and making connections to see these ideas take flight.

Mr. Nachmias mentions a number of ideas on **“alternative” tourism in Jerusalem**. He says, “We haven’t set up intercultural exchanges for alumni yet, but we are ready to try new challenges. We can arrange meetings with political figures, students, and academics. We can also help create tailor-made programs for groups with special interests. We’re thinking of meaningful travel opportunities like working with curators at the Israel Museum, conducting archaeological digs with the Israel Antiquities Authority. You can apply voluntourism in Jerusalem through cultural, archaeological, welfare and wellbeing issues. Bring your thoughts, write to us, and e-mail us. We are most eager and willing to assist.” *Everyone is impressed with the level of commitment of Jerusalem’s officials and appreciates that they are willing to collaborate on developing special-interest tourism. They also note how much they love the lion of Judah pin from Mr. Bar.*

The primary purpose of visiting City Hall was for the group’s meeting, and most agree there is not enough value in taking travelers there; however, a few think it may be effective to share the city-planning model of Jerusalem with travelers and to use it as a venue for a potential speaker. Michelle says that if a group were focusing on the Israeli government, it would be worth pairing a visit to City Hall with a visit to the Supreme Court.

At noon, Amir preps everyone for the **Bethlehem** trip, as he will leave the group at the Bethlehem border crossing. As an Israeli, Amir cannot accompany travelers into a Palestinian Territory; however, Tyre, the Nazarene Express bus driver is Palestinian and will drive the group to meet its Palestinian tour operator Shukra, who works in partnership with **Edward Lama Souvenirs**. A fee of approximately \$30 per person is paid to the tour operator and then it is expected that at the end of the Bethlehem visit, the group will have lunch at and patronize the souvenir store, which depends on tourists to sustain it. For other tour groups interested in traveling to a Palestinian Territory, Amir recommends contacting him or the front desk of any Jerusalem hotel for contacts. Amir also invited Isaac Jenkins, a bilingual Arabic and Hebrew speaker and Pomona College Class of 2010 student studying at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, to accompany the group. *(Everyone says meeting Isaac was “fantastic,” and they appreciate his company to Bethlehem).* Amir explains that once inside a Palestinian Territory, “you are out of Israel in every aspect. Israel assumes no liability for anything that happens in Bethlehem.” He says that many hundreds of travelers cross from Jerusalem to Bethlehem everyday. Tipping is expected in Bethlehem, and \$10 per person is recommended for both the tour guide and driver.

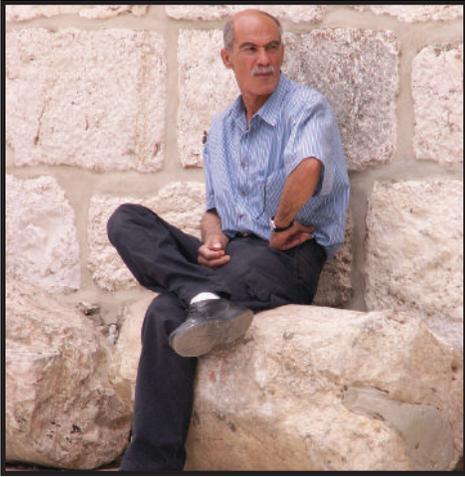


Glimpses of Bethlehem. Photos (top left, bottom right) by Chloe Wicks, (top right) by Michelle Bell, (bottom left) by Sherry Schwarz

Bethlehem's Old City, built along ancient footpaths, is visible on the hillside when driving along the main road, Manger Street, toward Manger Square. The group's primary visit is to the Church of the Nativity, one of the few places populated with tourists. The quick visit is followed by a light falafel or shawarma lunch at the Edward Lama Souvenirs store where everyone makes purchases, mainly of locally made olive wood carvings.

As the group leaves the store, Palestinian men and boys try to sell packs of gum, souvenirs, and postcards. Shukra and Tyre ask them to leave; and, less than two hours after having entered Bethlehem, the group is on its way back into Israel.

Overall the visit to Bethlehem "was much easier" than most had anticipated. The checkpoint crossing was "smooth," and the experience overall was "sort of seamless." Everyone agrees Bethlehem is a "necessary"



(Clockwise, from top left) Shukra, the group's Bethlehem tour guide, photo by Elizabeth Bigwood; Church of the Nativity photo by Mara DelliPriscoli; Bethlehem resident, photo by Chloe Wicks.

visit. They say it “went very well” and most “would have liked to stay in Bethlehem longer,” with one person noting, it would have been nice to “walk the streets or at least a city block.” A number of people in the group wanted to learn more about Bethlehem’s three refugee centers and day-to-day life. Others would have liked to stop at the “security wall” to learn more about it and to look at the graffiti, which many had heard about prior to their visit. Some suggest there could be a lecture on how the wall has become a canvas for artists, self expression, and communication. A few people observe the graffiti slogan, “we love tourists.” All say Shukra, the guide in Bethlehem, was “much better than expected,” and comment that it was “great to go into the Church of Nativity after a group of Russians” given that the Russians couldn’t express their faith in Russia for so long. Another person comments that she “expected the sales pitch in the store to be much stronger than it was,” and everyone agrees the experience in the store was pleasant and the products of a good quality.

Circling back to Amir’s logistical comment that some U.S. tour operators do not allow their travelers to go into Bethlehem, or that it’s up to individual travelers to arrange their visit to Bethlehem, Treaty raises the point that planners offering Bethlehem should develop terms of disclosure and a statement of security about what the procedure would be if something were to happen there. The group then discusses that any guide should be advised to inform travelers who visit Bethlehem that they do so at their own risk.

To everyone’s delight, after driving through the Bethlehem border crossing and picking up Amir, he makes a surprise visit to his house, located in an Israeli settlement established



Security wall, Bethlehem. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Amir and Rob converse in the comfort of Amir's living room; Amir's son and Isaac Jenkins befriended one another during Isaac's semester abroad at Hebrew University; Amir and his wife, Hannah, share a laugh in their garden. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

in the 1970s within a Palestinian Territory. The group meets Amir's lovely wife Hannah and one of their three sons, who works for the Israeli Defense Forces. Hannah graciously hosts everyone serving delicious pastries, fresh dates, and tea made with herbs from her garden. Everyone so enjoys the visit that they are reluctant to leave when Amir reminds the group it is past-time to make the drive through the Judean Desert to the Dead Sea region.

Crossing back into Israel, the group experiences Amir's and Palestinians' daily drive through a Jerusalem checkpoint. Along the main part of the drive on Route 90, paralleling the **Dead Sea** (the lowest place on Earth at approximately 400 meters below sea level) and Jordan beyond, Amir shares facts about the **Judean Desert**, the Great Rift Valley, and the Dead Sea, which is mainly fed by the Jordan River. He also takes the group's suggestion to trace the route on a map so that those interested can gain a better geographical understanding of Israel. This becomes a much appreciated operating procedure on all subsequent bus rides and is recommended for all tours. The group drinks in the expansive views of sea, sky, desert. A few ask questions about Israel's water management initiatives and the disappearance of the Dead Sea, with its dropping water levels and sinkholes and the affect on tourism.

The group arrives in **Ein Bokek**, a health and tourism resort on the southern part of Dead Sea with approximately 3,000 hotel rooms, just in time for check in at **Le Meridian Hotel**. Everyone is greeted with glasses of refreshing passion fruit juice and orange juice. The group decides who will take the first pre-scheduled mud bath treatment at the hotel's spa facilities, while most of the others make their way to the beach to experience the Dead Sea's high salinity, with ten times more salt content than the ocean.

While most were excited to see the Dead Sea and feel their travelers will be, too, there is a general sense of disappointment about the experience, in part colored by the "crowded, resort feeling" of Le Meridian Hotel. No one finds the mud bath particularly enjoyable saying, "it felt more like a surgical procedure than relaxing," though again most attribute this assessment to the facility.

Ms. Ofra Gazit, **Tourism Department Marketing & Spokesperson for Dead Sea "Tamar" Regional Council**, hosts the group for dinner at



The Dead Sea as seen from Masada. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



The Dead Sea's Ein Bokek resort area; Enjoying the obligatory float! Photos (left) by Michelle Bell, (right) by Sherry Schwarz

the **Rancho Retro Restaurant, Isrotel Hotel**. Regrettably the atmosphere is noisy and the acoustics make it hard to hear, but Ms. Gazit does her best to share the cultural, arts, environmental, and wellness options available in the Dead Sea Region. The group appreciates her offer to assist in helping tour operators and travel planners make the most of the area. An unscheduled room inspection is made at the Isrotel Hotel before returning for an overnight and debriefing at Le Meridien Hotel.

In general, there is a low opinion of Le Meridien Hotel, and most feel they can “do better for the same price point.” Complaints include a lack of cleanliness, professionalism, and customer service. Some also note that the hotel is geared for families and is too busy and crowded for Educational Travel groups. “Since most of our itineraries in the other cities are going to be go-go-go, when people think of coming to the Dead Sea they will think of it as a place where they can relax,” says one planner. “They need a clean, modern, fresh hotel where they can relax, and this hotel does not deliver this product.” A few others have a different opinion, and say they’d rather bring down the trip price for the Dead Sea, so whatever the best rate is would make a difference for them—as it seems the region’s other hotels such as the Isrotel are “half a dozen of one, six of the other.”

Another says, “You don’t go to foreign countries to stay in hotels; you go to have a foreign experience. “I find frequently with my travelers when they ask about hotels I try to be really honest. I don’t obsess on hotels as much, because I am more concerned about what people will get out of the daily experience.” Someone else agrees saying the most important elements are cleanliness and safety, whereas the experience of the trip, not the hotel, is key. One high point for Le Meridian, says one planner is its view: “you cannot beat Le Meridian’s room view of the Dead Sea; the Dead Sea is the focal point for me.”

**Friday, June 5, 2009 –
Dead Sea Region**

Buffet breakfast at Le Meridian Hotel.

Before departing the Ein Bokek region of the Dead Sea, the group makes an



Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

unscheduled site inspection at the boutique **Hod Hamidbar Resort & Spa Hotel**.

Most expect that their passengers would have a better experience at Hod Hamidbar than Le Meridian (“there are not a million kids running around ... service immeasurably better, cleaner, friendlier staff...”).

“Hod Hamidbar is not as busy and would be more calm and welcoming for our clientele,” says one planner. Another, less enthusiastically, comments that the rooms are “fine,” and they are “comparable, not necessarily that much better than those at Le Meridian and Isrotel Hotel.



Atop of Masada. Photo by Michelle Bell

Around 9:30, the group arrives at storied **Masada**. As its UNESCO World Heritage description states: “Masada is a rugged

natural fortress, of majestic beauty, in the Judean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea. It is a symbol of the ancient kingdom of Israel, its violent destruction and the last stand of Jewish patriots in the face of the Roman army, in 73 A.D. It was built as a palace complex, in the classic style of the early Roman Empire, by Herod the Great, King of Judaea, (reigned 37 – 4 B.C.). The camps, fortifications and attack ramp that encircle the monument constitute the most complete Roman siege works surviving to the present day.” Depending on a group’s level of interest in archaeology (and travelers’ tolerance for standing in the sun), an hour, or many hours, can be spent at Masada. There are footpaths leading to the top, and some groups hike up around dawn (Amir takes groups before sunrise, and he says it takes approximately one hour to hike); most groups, like this one, ascend via a cable car that is accessible from the large visitor’s center. Once on top of Masada, Amir guides the group



and explains the fascinating excavations. Lines of black paint delineate which parts of the remains are original versus reconstructed parts. In one of the few excavations with a thatched roof shading visitors from the sun, Amir tells the unforgettable account of Masada, as recorded in the chronicles of 1st-century historian Flavius Josephus. *Everyone comments that Amir’s lecture at Massada was “fantastic” and no one would skip Masada, “especially if they had a talk like Amir gave, in which he put his heart into it.” Rob says of Amir’s presentation of the story: “It’s a wonderful way to tie in contemporary problems with history: the myth of Masada and Zionism and zealotry.”*



Following the tour, the group patronizes the souvenir shop and takes advantage of the opportunity to purchase Ahava skin care products, as well as distinctive jewelry from the Museum Store. There is not time to visit the small archaeological museum with its artifacts from Masada.

It is then on to **Kibbutz Ein Gedi**, established as a civilian kibbutz in 1956, for a tour of the botanical garden, lunch at the guest house, and a lecture on kibbutz life and desert ecology by a kibbutz member. The area of Ein Gedi, meaning “Spring of the Kid,” is an oasis of freshwater springs and tropical vegetation. Kibbutz member Zab provides a tour of the impressive botanical garden, an example of the Israelis’ desire to

Masada cable car; Descending Masada. Photos (top) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, (bottom) by Sherry Schwarz



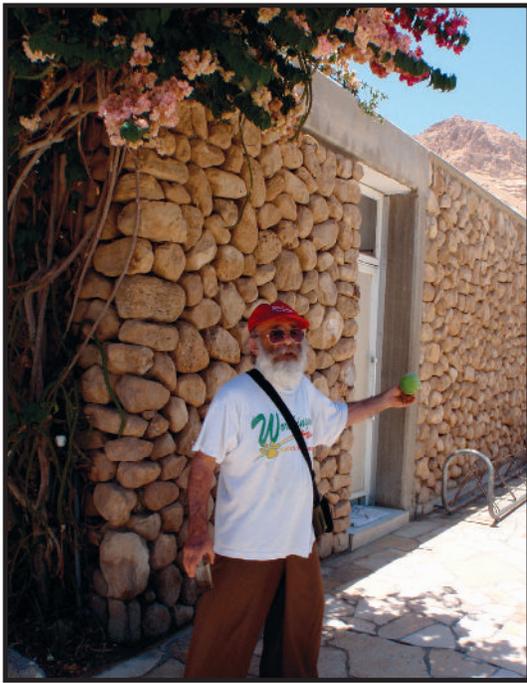
Amir uses a model of Masada to describe the layout's fortress; Jennifer, Rachel, Michelle, and Liz listen to Amir tell the story of Masada. Photos (left) by Sherry Schwarz, (right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

“make the desert bloom.” It has been delegated by UNESCO as an “international botanical garden (one of the 10 most recommend in the world), and Zab says there are up to 1,000 species of different plants from desert to subtropical to tropical and rainforest plants from around the world, all established and cared for by kibbutz volunteers through the years. “Culture” and “family” are very important to the kibbutz, and it focuses on art and self-development offering many changing exhibitions at its cultural center. “I have here everything, but my pocket is always empty,” says Zab.

Over a delicious and generously sized lunch of salads, hummus, vegetables, soup, and salmon, Mani Gal shares how the kibbutz meets with special interest groups to provide education and lectures on the local geology, geography, botany, and water issues, among other topics. Whereas in the past the kibbutz was more self-sufficient and grew its own food, today the kibbutz’s main income is not from agriculture but, rather, from tourism. There are accommodations, a dining hall, and a private spa and beach for kibbutz members, guests, and travelers. There are now more tourists than Israelis at the kibbutz, and there are no longer volunteer opportunities for visitors. Ownership is collective, and everyone gets their own salary — though there’s an emphasis on sharing and giving security to people in need. Dr. Eli Raz, a geologist and kibbutz member, lectures on the area’s ecology, environmental issues, and also the history, current culture, and structure of the kibbutz, as well as challenges it faces today, such as how to continue the expensive school it runs for such a small number of kids. In concluding, Dr. Raz says that the kibbutz is dealing with an aging population and the challenges of how best to change, develop, and transition. “I think it has been a fantastic adventure,”



Kibbutz Ein Gedi. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Kibbutz member and botanical garden guide Zab; Ein Gedi residence established within the botanical garden. Photos (left) by Sherry Schwarz, (right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

he says of his years living on the kibbutz.

Ms. Avishag Agalon shows the group a few rooms, which most planners find to be “clean, airy, and nice”—with a few commenting they are “beautiful.” The cost about 1,000 shekels per room for two people, with meals and access to the spa. One planner notes it would be a particularly suitable accommodation for “conservation minded” travelers. Most everyone sees value in taking a group to Kibbutz Ein Gedi. One planner says, “It’s a beautiful

botanical garden; it’s an interesting concept; it tells a piece of Israel’s story and its own story. It adds a lot more to a tour than staying at another hotel.” Another says, “Let’s face it no one understands a kibbutz until you come here, and I thought it was very educational.” Everyone agrees with this statement. Most in the group like Dr. Raz’s ecological lecture and would want their travelers to hear a similar lecture, as well as about the kibbutz’s experience and history. Mara recommends that the lecture incorporate a component about kibbutzim’s impact on Israel (in terms of its economy, infrastructure, development, and agriculture). Amir agrees and provides the group such a lecture on the drive toward Tiberias. All say this added lecture provide a deeper understanding of kibbutzim’s significance in Israel. Kristina and Chloe suggest groups arrange a dinner at Kibbutz Ein Gedi with kibbutz members so that passengers can talk with them and learn from them.

Time does not allow for a visit to **Qumran**, notable for its remains of the ancient Essenes settlement in whose caves the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. The group drives along the **Jordan Valley**, passing Jericho and agricultural lands. The scenery leads naturally into educational discussions about the Bedouin. The group drives through another checkpoint with Amir at the wheel. (Tyre felt ill and asked Amir to continue driving. The next day Tyre is temporarily replaced by an Arab-Christian driver who remains with the group until Haifa). In all, the drive from the Dead Sea to Tiberias takes about 2 1/2 hours. The group comments: “The border crossing was easy [and] our travel so seamless.” Almost everyone thought there would be security issues or problems cross-



Learning about desert ecology; Ein Gedi’s dining hall for visitors; Freshly made hummus. Photos by Sherry Schwarz



Looking across to the Jordan Valley from Route 90. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

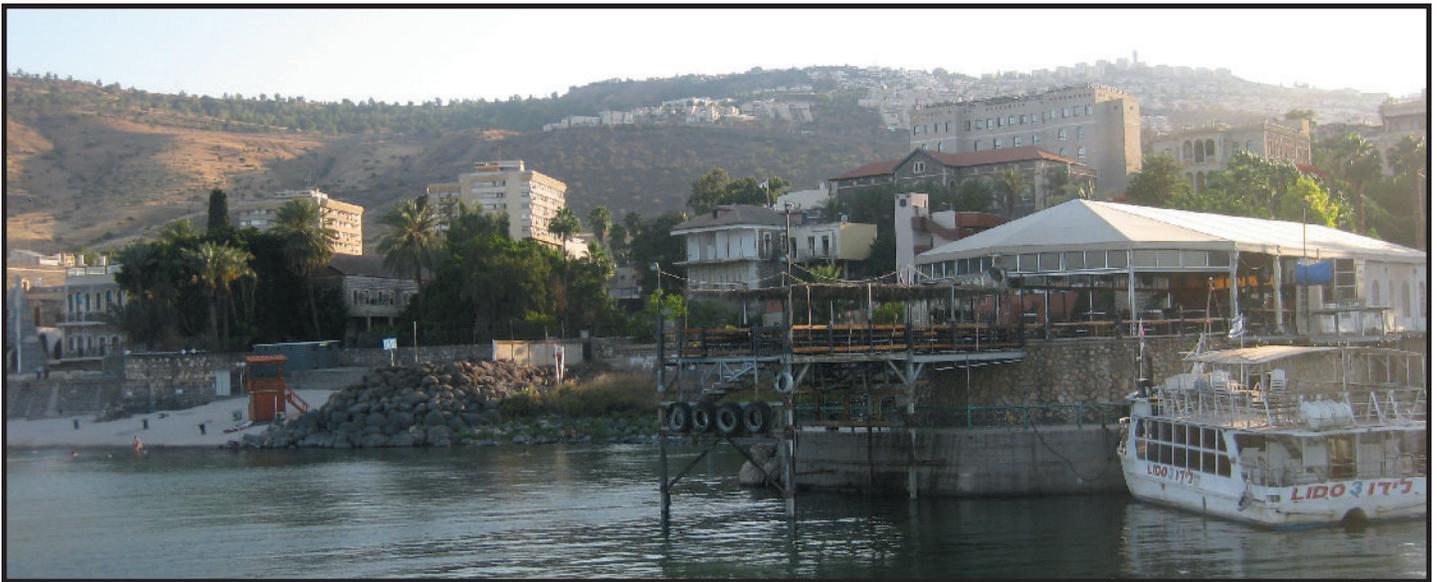
ing to and from the West Bank. A few add, “We didn’t even know we were in the West Bank.” Most had anticipated, prior to visiting Israel, that there would be guards with guns at the checkpoints, and possibly snipers, but no one imagined how friendly the guards would be, at least those encountered at this crossing.

Arriving by late afternoon at the destination of **Tiberias, a historical resort town on the Sea of Galilee** and one of Israel’s four holy cities, the group decides to switch the itinerary. The **Lido Sailing Company cruise on the Sea of Galilee** was moved ahead of dinner so that the group could experience the Sea of Galilee in the daylight. The Sea of Galilee is about 21 km long and 55 km in circumference and fed by the Jordan River, which also provides Israelis’ water supply. From the boat, the hillside city of Tiberias is prominent, as is Golan Heights in the distance on the shore opposite Tiberias. *Everyone “loves” having the boat ride directly after getting off the bus, saying “it was a good transition time after the bus ride,” though adding, “it would be nice to do a cocktail dinner or pre-dinner affair on the boat.” Amir notes that a guide could also provide narration and an introduction to the Galilee/Golan region, as this group did not have a lecture. This leads to some discussion among the planners as to whether narration is needed or if having quiet time on board for reflection and quiet conversation would be better. This group listened to pop music, which some feel was “a jarring juxtaposition” if thinking about the Golan Heights conflict or the the Biblical significance of the Sea of Galilee.*

Check in is at the **Tiberias Sheraton Moriah Hotel**. At 19:30, the group walks to the **Torrance Restaurant at the Scots Hotel St. Andrews Galilee** noting the irony that one of Israel’s holiest cities is also a popular holiday spot with a “sea-side resort feel,” including a promenade of restaurants and open-air market stalls. Ancient Tiberias was destroyed by a series of devastating earthquakes and also much of what was rebuilt was then destroyed in the 1934 flood. The urban renewal of the 1960s created more parks, shopping streets,



Sea of Galilee. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Tiberias, as seen from the Sea of Galilee. Photo by Elizabeth Bigwood

restaurants, and modern hotels, and there are some carefully preserved churches, including one with foundations dating from the Crusader period, two Ottoman-era mosques, and a few ancient synagogues. Many of Tiberias' traditional houses built with local black basalt, and white limestone windows and trim, are protected.

The 5-star **Scots Hotel**, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, was completed in 2004 by the Church of Scotland, which owns and manages it. It is built on the site of the refurbished historical buildings of the Scottish Hospital, "allowing guests to enjoy a unique fusion of 19th century basalt stone buildings combined with a modern and innovative hotel facility that meets international standards." Dr. David Watt Torrance, a young Scottish doctor who arrived in Tiberias in 1884 to head the Church of Scotland mission and "heal the people of the Holy Land," originally established the medical complex. As the first hospital of Tiberias, opened in 1894, it was established with a purpose to serve all people, regardless of race or creed. Dr. Torrance held weekly services in Arabic and English. It continued into the 1950s by Dr. Torrance's son, Herbert.

Following a buffet dinner, on Shabbat, at The Torrance Restaurant, the group visits the Scots Hotel museum dedicated to the Torrance family's lifelong dedication to the hospital and the people of Tiberias. There is a wonderful film depicting historic Tiberias as well. The evening is capped with a visit to the once-hospital-storeroom now converted to a distinctive basalt wine cellar with thousands of bottles of wine from boutique wineries

throughout the Galilee and a "knights' table" that seats up to 20 diners for private functions.

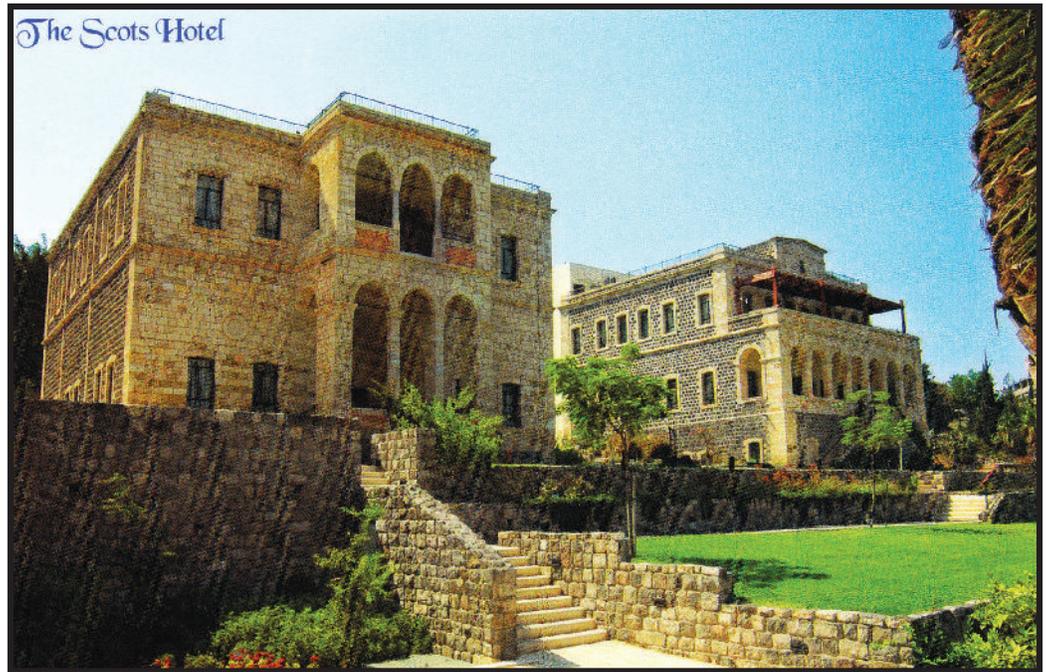


Everyone thinks the Scots Hotel is "amazing" but questions how practical it is with such expensive room rates. The wine cellar was a big hit, and a few planners suggest arranging a special dinner there rather than staying overnight. Everyone

Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

also appreciated seeing the museum's film and collection of historic photographs.

There is a shared opinion that the rooms at the Sheraton Moriah Hotel are "fine." They are "clean and nice." One planner comments: "People know what to expect [of a Sheraton], and they get here and it is what they expect." At the hotel, the debriefing focuses largely on whether the planners would include a Dead Sea day in the itinerary and how the itinerary could be rearranged.



Postcard, courtesy of the Scots Hotel.

Rob is wrestling with whether to include the Dead Sea, questioning how many of his travelers "would put on a bathing suit and run into sea?" In his opinion the 2 1/2-hour bus drive between the Dead Sea and Tiberias "is murder." Others disagree saying their trips routinely take 2 1/2-hour drives and sometimes much longer (e.g. 7-9 hours), so this is not necessarily a problem, particularly if the bus is large and air-conditioned. Amir says that not many groups stay overnight at the Dead Sea: "Many groups drive from Jerusalem to Masada, which takes about 1 1/2 hours. This makes life easier because travelers don't have to pack and unpack. If you want to use the spa, however, a night at the Dead Sea makes sense. The other consideration is that people like to hike up Masada, especially before sunrise in the summer, and to do this it makes sense to stay over." Amir says a regular tour of Israel would include a day for the Dead Sea with four key attractions: Qumran, Masada, Ein Gedi's botanical garden, and the Dead Sea itself along with the Ein Bokek health and spa resort. He says there's also the option to drive north as this group did or south to the Negev Desert.

Michelle likes the idea of "a little down time" at the Dead Sea: "There's so much to do in Jerusalem even if you do it in more days than we did that you feel like you're always going, going, going. What intrigues me about spending a night at the Dead Sea is its down-time." Allie questions if it could be done as an optional excursion, which leads Jennifer to suggest giving travelers the option of the Dead Sea versus Bethlehem.



Everyone gathered around the knights' table, Scots Hotel Wine Cellar.

Chloe says that if she were going to do a Dead Sea overnight, she'd have her travelers stay at Kibbutz Ein Gedi. "It's the most experiential, calming place we've been so far," she says. "If you're looking for spa and relaxation, it's the most authentic and the most legitimate historical experience in this region." (Note that group did not have a chance to see the spa at Kib-

butz Ein Gedi and could not evaluate its quality.) Chloe adds that if a group does an overnight at Kibbutz Ein Gedi and the spa is not great, treatments can be sought at one of the nearby hotels. Amir agrees and says many of the Dead Sea hotels schedule groups for 3 hours after their visit to Masada, and they can then have lunch at that hotel, swim in the Dead Sea, and use its spa.

Rachel wouldn't overnight at the Dead Sea. She'd do Masada and an appropriate spa experience. "I don't think there's a suitable place to stay yet at the Dead Sea, except for the Kibbutz Ein Gedi," she says. "There's an aura of peacefulness there [at the kibbutz]." Rob also proposes a day trip to Massada early and then to Kibbutz Ein Gedi before driving to Tiberias.



Kibbutz Ginosar's Yigal Allon Centre. Photo by Michelle Bell

Moving on to a brief discussion of how best to plan Tiberias, Amir says it can be used as a base for 3 days, especially if there is some kind of religious agenda to the tours. "I know the nature of your tours isn't religion, but you don't come to Israel and not include religion...it's not possible," he says. "A lot of people who come on your tours will want to see religious sites." Michelle agrees and says she has many passengers who would come from the Bible belt and would need to see the religious sites. Amir adds that you can do the religious sites in Tiberias in a day, and that Golan Heights is always a big highlight too.

Saturday, June 6, 2009 – Sea of Galilee and Lower Galilee

Buffet breakfast at the Sheraton Moriah Hotel and departure from the hotel. The group is reminded to wear modest dress (no shorts or sleeveless tops) for the religious sites to be visited.

The group drives to **Kibbutz Ginosar** to view the **Yigal Allon Centre** museum's remains of a 1st century



Remains of the 2,000-year-old "Jesus Boat." Photo by Chloe Wicks

wooden sailing vessel from Jesus's time found in the Sea of Galilee. An excellent film explains how the skeletal remains of the 2,000-year-old fishing vessel were discovered by local fishermen in 1986, when there was a severe drop in the lake's water level. The hard-packed mud preserved the boat, and then archaeologists and preservationists painstakingly removed it from the water for restoration. A special preservative solution was made to soak the boat for more than 9 years before it was ready to be displayed. The museum serves as an educational center: films about Israel's



Study on location, Capernaum; Capernaum’s Franciscan church built above the ruins of a church marking what is believed to have been St. Peter’s home. Photos (left) by Sherry Schwarz, (right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

early settling are available, as are varying art and cultural exhibits each month. *Most in the group thinks the short visit is worthwhile. Although there is “not much left of the boat,” Liz says, “learning about the process of preservation is exciting.” Rob adds, “What it showed me is how much Israelis cherish archaeology—the investment of time and resources restoring at best what is vaguely suggestive of a boat. If you are pressed for time, I’d say it could be skipped.” Time does not permit for a tour of Kibbutz Ginosar’s grounds, but most think the kibbutz looks interesting and Michal confirms it is a “good” kibbutz at which to stay overnight.*

It is then on to the Sea of Galilee’s many historical and religious sites. The first stop is **Capernaum**, an ancient Jewish fishing village where Jesus began his Ministry. In 1894, the Franciscans purchased the site and began restoring the ancient synagogue and church. There is a modern church cleverly constructed with a glass floor in its center to reveal the ruins of a church that was believed to have marked the site of St. Peter’s home, where Jesus stayed. (As Amir notes, many of Israel’s churches mark holy sites. As the group has learned throughout its visits, Israel does an impressive job of restoring sites so that all of the excavated structures from different time periods are visible.) Amir guides everyone around Capernaum, emphasizing what would have been the simplicity of the houses, pointing out the olive press, and explaining the symbols carved on the synagogue, among much else. Capernaum is where Jesus was said to have preached at the synagogue, healed the sick, and recruited his first disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John, who were local fishermen, and Matthew the tax collector. Amir uses a courtyard with clustered benches, shaded by olive trees, to give a “study on location” lecture, Amir’s favorite method of teaching a group about a particular historical/religious place. His voice has only to compete with wailing, hungry cats, but everyone listens intently appreciating his substantive talk, which provides important background knowledge for the rest of the day.



Scenes from Capernaum: Olive press remnant; Synagogue carvings; Synagogue prayer hall. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Church of the Beatitudes. Photos (left) by Chloe Wicks (right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

There is a lake-side promenade between Capernaum and **Tabgha** (the group’s second stop), which Amir says takes about an hour to walk, but this group has limited time and drives straight to Tabgha—the traditional location of the miracle of the Loaves and the Fishes, and the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. An early Byzantine church was discovered in 1932 and rebuilt in 1982 as the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes. Mosaics were also discovered, including a view of marshes and water birds, and a basket with loaves of bread and two fishes. Tabgha’s Arabic translation means “seven springs” and, as Amir says, it is much like an oases in its serenity and beauty.

The final stop is at the **Mount of Beatitudes**, the traditional site of the Sermon on the Mount near Korazim, with its flower gardens and the black-domed Church of the Beatitudes constructed in 1937 with funding from the Italian government on the site of previous churches. The eight Beatitudes of Jesus are commemorated in stained glass around the dome of this octagonal-shaped Roman Catholic church. The views of the Sea of Galilee and the surrounding landscape are stunning.

*As has been a pervasive comment throughout the “**EDUCATIONAL**” when visiting historical/religious sites, everyone would like more time. Everyone agrees that Amir’s academic lecture at Capernaum was a great way to start the tour, providing valuable context for the day. One planner comments: “It was powerful to see Capernaum and the ruins of the church [that was believed to have been St. Peter’s home where Jesus stayed] beneath the new church. It again shows the cleverness of the architecture in preserving the old church ruins.” Abby says she particularly enjoyed learning about the ancient Jewish fishing village in Capernaum, with its simple architecture reflecting the lifestyle of its people. Another mentions the beauty of the Church of Beatitudes.*

One person asks whether to include all three sites, and the response from most is that all three are necessary for this component. “It gives a lot of context for people who would be curious about the Bible and seeing that



Tabgha. Photo by Sherry Schwarz

all [these events] took place in such a small area,” says one planner. A few others add that it would be a shame to come all this way and miss the other religious/historical sites. Chloe would be interested in adding the lake-side promenade walk from Capernaum and Tabgha. Building on this, Amir says there is a docking place in Capernaum making it possible to travel there by boat from Tiberias. This option, which would take under an hour, intrigues several planners and leads Chloe to mention that she would inquire about using a pilgrim’s boat.

Rachel would include only The Mount of Beatitudes and spend more time there if looking at a shorter itinerary. If she had a longer itinerary, she’d keep the rest of the sites. Kristina says, “with all there is do to in Israel, I’m thinking of offering the Sea of Galilee as more of an extension for my organization, which isn’t religious.”



Golan Heights. Photo by Chloe Wicks

The day’s tour then continues around the Sea of Galilee toward the mountains of the upper Galilee and **Golan Heights** on the way to “**Peace Observation Point**” for a panoramic view overlooking the Sea. Along the way Amir points out the mountain town of Zefat (Safed), in the distance. It’s an area known for its artist colony and Jewish mysticism, specifically Kabbalah. Although no longer on the itinerary, many were looking forward to a visit there, as listed on the original itinerary. A little further along the drive, Amir points out the snow covered peak of Mt. Hermon, Israel’s highest mountain. On the lower slopes is Israel’s only ski resort. Conversation ranges from Israeli politics to water issues to Syria and Israel’s fluctuating control of the Golan Heights, with its excellent topsoil for agriculture, and the significance of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee for water, farming, and fishing. “In the Middle East, the most permanent thing is the temporary,” says Amir.

The Golan Heights and upper Galilee area are popular for hiking and outdoor recreation. Amir recommends operators make arrangements for such opportunities if this is of interest. Unfortunately, the group does not have a chance to stop at the Peace Observation Point or to walk around the Golan Heights, but everyone takes in the views of the dramatic landscape surround the 3-country joint border between Israel, Jordan, and Syria, as the road winds down toward **Hamat Gader Park**, a hot springs resort at the bottom of a deep valley split by the Jordanian border. Amir says the lack of hostility along the border in this area enables Israelis and Jordanians to live in peace.

At 14:00, the group arrives at Hamat Gader Park for a light lunch and tour of the tranquil spa village, where thermo-mineral pools have been used since ancient times. The resort includes a separate kid-friendly cold pool with slides and fountains, saunas, ethnic restaurants, a crocodile farm, and partially reconstructed Roman ruins, including bathing areas. *Overall, there is only a brief discussion of Hamat Gader. Most feel that with inevitably “packed” itineraries (in a relatively short amount of time), they would not include the spa experience, and if they did it would be at the Dead Sea. Trearty says Hamat Gader specifically would not work for her travelers, as it is “promoted as a couples experience (e.g. no single beds).” An alternative spa experience can be had at the Carmel Forest (not far from the Ein Hod Artists’ Village to which the group later travels) or at Mitzpe*

Hayamimamim in Safed (Tsfat). Almost everyone agrees again that they probably will not include a spa on an Israel itinerary, because there is so much else to see and do in the country.

The group also ponders the Golan Heights drive. Rob mentions that it takes a lot of time, but then reflects: “if you are really going to talk about Israel today and the Golan Heights as a bargaining chip in the peace process, as well as what Israelis have done as part of the situation today in making agriculture flourish, it is probably worth the drive—and you can see the proximity of Jordan and Syria. So I’d probably keep it and come around Galilee, but I would not stop at the spa.”



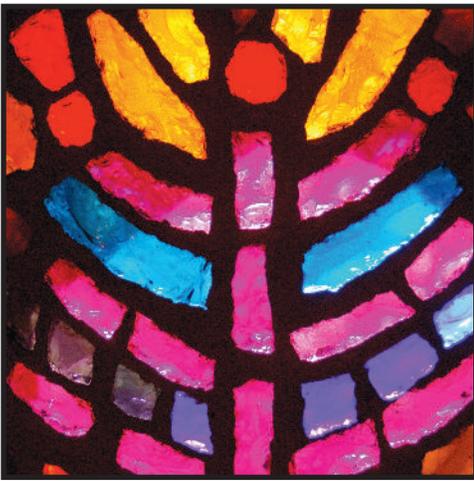
Entering Hamat Gader Park. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Rachel would definitely keep Golan Heights on the itinerary, but she says she would have preferred to get out of the bus to walk around, and everyone agrees. Amir says you can visit an Israeli bunker and see the military infrastructure up on Golan Heights (Mount Bental). He recommends dedicating a half day to the Golan Heights. He says there is a Golan Heights winery worth visiting, although he adds Tishbi Winery in Binyamina is by far the best. (There are more than 300 boutique wineries in Israel.) Groups interested in stopping in the Golan Heights can also visit the town of Katzrin, planned and built as the Golan Heights’ center in the 1970s.

As the day’s timing is off, the group does not arrive in Nazareth until after the 16:30 scheduled visit, and there is only limited time to tour the Basilica of the Annunciation, a Roman Catholic church that is one of the Christian world’s most holy shrines and the largest church in the Middle East. The church is believed to stand on the site of Mary’s home, where the Angel Gabriel appeared to her and announced the virgin birth. Most are captivated by the church’s modern, “stunning” stained glass, and many comment on the international “mother and child” theme mosaics sent as gifts from countries around the world. In the lower church is a sunken enclosure preserving the “Grotto of the Annunciation,” the traditional site of Mary’s house. After leaving the church, beneath the courtyard are excavations of ancient Nazareth, including an ancient Jewish ritual immersion bath called a “mikveh.” There is just enough time to stop nearby at St. Joseph’s Church, which occupies the site that is thought to be Joseph’s carpentry shop.



A colorful welcome lunch at Hamat Gader; One of the spa’s thermo-mineral pools. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

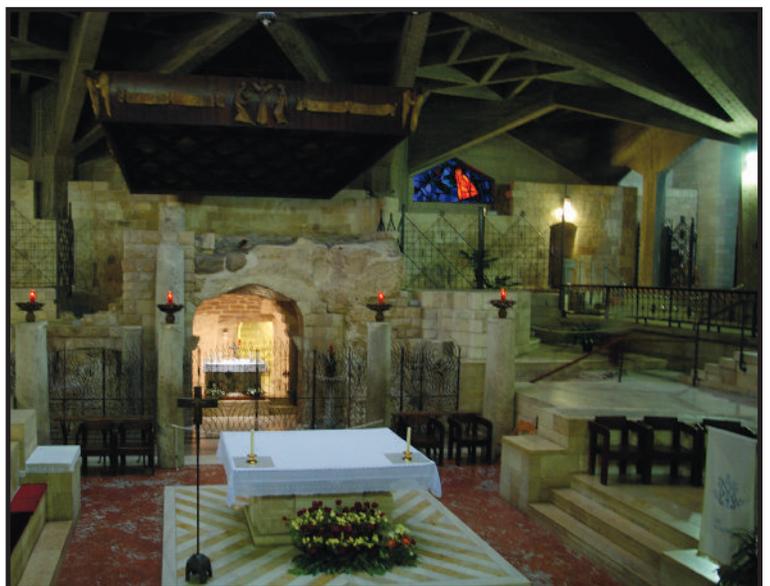
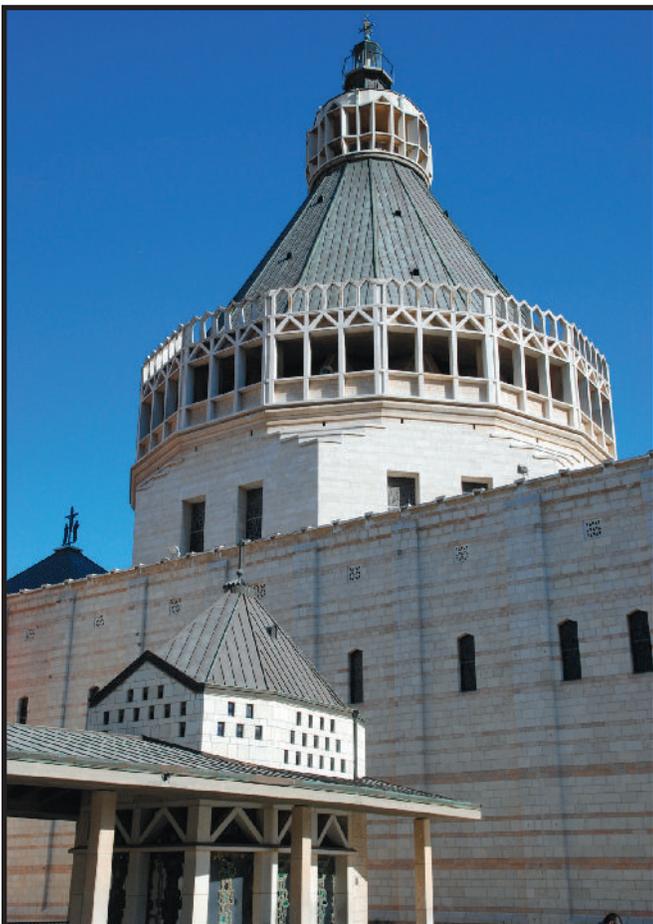


Examples of the Basilica of the Annunciation's modern artwork. Photos by Kristina Nemeth

The Basilica of the Annunciation is one planner's favorite church thus far. "I liked the mother-child artwork donated from Catholic communities around the world," she says. Another agrees and says the church is "simple yet powerful" and likes how all the multi-national Madonnas are beautiful but each rendered differently.

Tareq Shihada, General Manager of Nazareth Cultural & Tourism Association, meets the group for an after-hours tour of Nazareth, Israel's largest Arab town. Though the group had driven through the modern part of the city, with its hillsides packed with houses and a commercial district with the "trappings of a modern city," all were looking forward to visiting the Old City and the market, which were unfortunately closed due to the late hour. Nazareth is working hard to promote itself as more than just a destination for seeing the Basilica, explains

Mr. Shihada, as church bells sound against the darkening sky. It is also trying to preserve its Old City and market the region's culture. It recently finished a study with the Antiquities Department of UNESCO to be considered as a World Heritage Center. Mr. Shihada says, "It's a living city, and one of the most beautiful in the Middle East." Today, Jesus's boyhood home is predominantly a Muslim city of some 70,000 inhabitants (over two-thirds of the population are Muslim and a third are Christians).



Basilica of the Annunciation; Pictured inside the church, the "grotto of the Annunciation." Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

house wares and dry goods are sold) as shopkeepers leave the old city for more convenient facilities. The Association is working to develop incentives to retain the old market's shopkeepers. "Tourism here is seen as one important way to help support the Old City and its market," says Mr. Shihada. Eventually the Association would like to see galleries and coffee shops in the market, as well as a training center for men and women to learn preservation skills.

To-date many of Nazareth's historic houses and mansions, as well as dozens of churches belonging to numerous different denominations, have been preserved as part of the "massive urban redesigning" project. Visitors are said to enjoy wandering the Old City's winding alleys taking in the wafting aromas of women cooking Arab dishes or sitting on their balconies. Several stops are made on this tour, including at a delightful third-generation cafe that serves walnut tea with cinnamon, and at an NGO called "Al Mehbaj," which works with young Arab youth. It sponsors summer camps, as well as music and arts events with the assistance of international volunteers. This organization is also working to renovate neglected houses and buildings in the Old City.

The final visits of the day are into the Fauzi Azar Inn and the House of Culture & Art, a gallery established in memory of Tawfik Moammar. During this visit the group tours a provocative exhibit called "Something Inside the White," featuring the work of Jewish and Arab artists. The Fauzi Azar Inn is a beautifully restored 200-year-old Arab mansion with tiled floors and arched windows facing its courtyard. Its ceilings are roofed with heavy beams and adorned with picturesque, colorful frescoes. It is said to be emblematic of some 17 other Nazareth mansions being restored in the Old City.



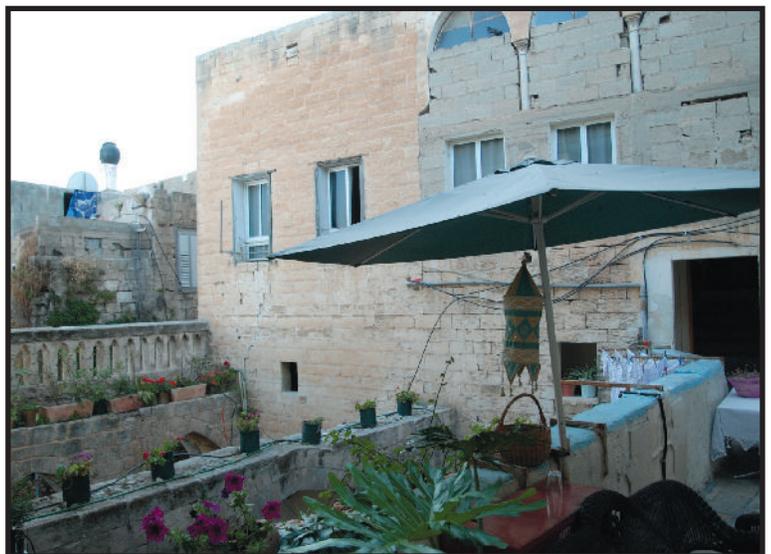
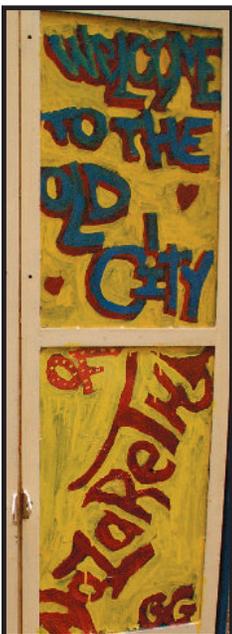
Nazareth's Old City. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

The Nazareth Cultural & Tourism Association and **Nazarene Tours** (the supplier of the hired bus for the “**EDUCATIONAL**”) host the evening’s dinner at **Diana Restaurant** in the city center. It is one of the oldest Middle Eastern restaurants in Israel and the most crowded local restaurant the group has yet visited, for good reason. The food is fresh and authentic with a *meze* selection of hummus and pita, roasted vegetables, falafel with tahini, a variety of eggplant salads, labane, Arabic salad, and chicken and lamb kebabs served with onions, tomatoes, and potatoes. *Most of the planners liked Diana Restaurant and can see bringing their passengers here. They also recommend it for study abroad students. They liked that it is “frequented by local people and lots of families.” One planner says, “Dinner was great” and “it was a local experience.”*

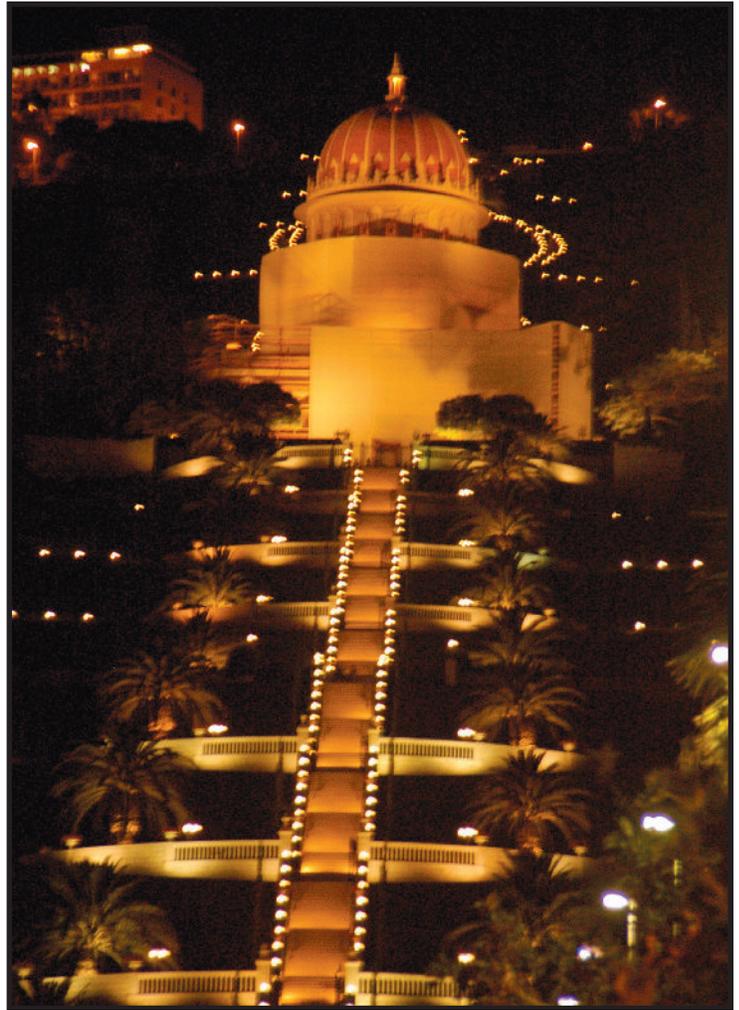


*Wessam Abo Salem and his grandfather prepare walnut tea.
Photo by Elizabeth Bigwood*

When debriefing on the afternoon and evening, everyone agrees that Nazareth is a city worth including on an Israel itinerary. Most comment that it would have been nice to arrive in Nazareth earlier both for exploring the religious/historic sites and to visit the Old City and Arab market. They emphasize that it’s critical for tour groups to arrive when the market is open. Liz liked being invited into the coffee shop and drinking walnut tea: “I thought this was fantastic, and I enjoyed the whole story of the grandfather having started it and the new, young generation keeping it going.” She also thinks the restoration and preservation projects that Nazareth is working on are important. Kristina says she “likes the mix of contemporary churches, modern art, and the Old City, and that it was interesting to see Al Mehbaj. It was one of the first places we saw majority Arabs, and to me it therefore has a different feel.” She adds that it “seems like a city struggling for the type of accommodations that our groups would need [at least at this point].” Others agree that from this visit there does not seem to be suitable accommodations, except for perhaps Fauzi Azar Inn, which can only house a small group. Thus, while everyone values Mr. Shihada’s offer to assist in arranging cultural events, no one can yet see their passengers staying in Nazareth over night—though it is a “must” for a daytime visit.



Nazareth’s old city; An arched doorway typical of the city’s restored Arab houses; The Fauzi Azar Inn’s balcony herb garden. Photos (left) by Kristina Nemeth, (center and right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



(Top photos): Dinner at Diana Restaurant hosted by the Nazareth Cultural & Tourism Association (Tareq Shihada pictured center) and Nazarene Tours (tour operator Bsoul Abed pictured left, Nazarene Express driver pictured right). Photos by Sherry Schwarz; (Right) The Baha'i temple at night. Photo by Kristina Nemeth

Following dinner at Diana Restaurant, the group departs for a 1-hour bus ride from Nazareth to **Haifa**, Israel's third largest city with a commercial port. Upon arriving in Haifa, all are dazzled by the initial site of the Baha'i Gardens and its 18 terraces of cascading light against the night sky. The German Colony's many restaurants are hopping, as the bus drives through the lively night-life scene on its way up Mt. Carmel for an overnight at the **Dan Carmel Hotel**. "Driving into Haifa and seeing the luminous city and the Baha'i temple at night was a 'wow,'" says Rob.

Sunday, June 7, 2009 – Western Galilee and Carmel Region

Buffet breakfast at the Dan Carmel Hotel.

At 9:00 the group makes the approximate 25 km-drive from Haifa to **Akko, an ancient seaport declared by UNESCO as a world heritage site**. The day begins with a brief meeting with Ms. Erika Gal, from the Old Acre Development Company, and a video on the fascinating 5,000-plus year history of one of the most important cities (and ports) of ancient times. The majority of places of interest are enclosed within the walls of Old Akko, "where its castles and fortifications, churches and mosques, temples, and other buildings recite the story of its many rulers, warriors, builders, and glorifiers," according to the Old Akko Development Company. "The prominent sites of Akko include ancient Hellenistic, Roman remnants, the Crusade and Ottoman quarters: the El Jazzar mosque, the Order of St. John buildings, the underground Crusader city, Khan El-Omdan, the Turkish baths, the Bahai temple, and more."

Ms. Shelley-Anne Peleg, Director of the International Conservation Center, then leads the group on a whirlwind, fascinating, and informative tour of the impressively preserved stone city of Akko. Beginning in the market, she winds through narrow alleys ending with the massive excavations that the International Conservation Center and other groups, including many volunteers, have helped uncover and preserve.



Today Old Akko, a mixed city of Arab-Muslims and Jews, is being positioned as an international tourism destination—even though it is also very much a residential city of homes for families and a market for day-to-day goods not souvenirs. While period hotels and a top museum are in the works, presently accommodations are few and visitors come mostly for the day.

Akko is the “only fully preserved crusader city in the world,” says Ms. Peleg, who adds that Akko has been called “the Pompeii of the Middle East because of its intact remains.” The difficult part she notes is having the money needed for proper preservation. The “**EDUCATIONAL**” group is fortunate to have access to some excavations that have yet to be opened for the public and which will be ready in a few years. “These can be opened for special groups,” says Ms. Peleg. Special groups can contact her, but she says the regular tours are excellent too. Akko is considered a “two-layer city,” with the lower level revealing the Crusader city and the upper-level an 18th century Ottoman period “living city.” Ms. Peleg explained the unique challenges of meet-



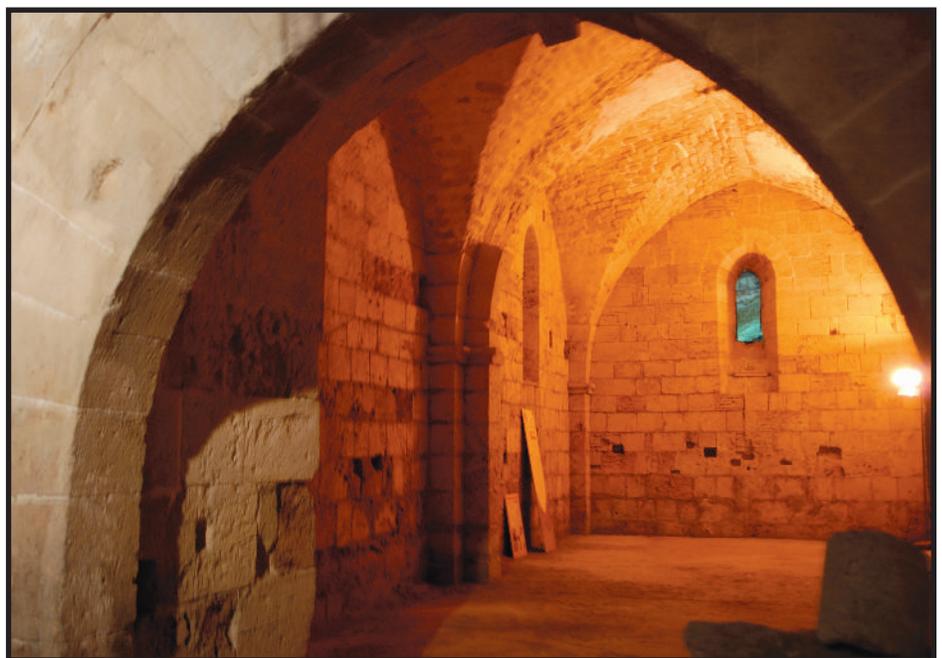
Archaeologist Shelley-Anne Peleg leads a tour of the fascinating, historic sites enclosed within Old Akko’s walls. Along the way she explains many of the excavations on which she worked. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

ing both the “modern needs” of the people in the living city, while also looking after the Crusader-level antiquities. Great care had to be taken for both layers, and interesting challenges were overcome when figuring out how to install modern infrastructure such as electricity. One of many highlights for the group was seeing the Knights’ Hall, a series of vaulted halls that are 8 meters below the street level. Bucket by bucket archaeologists and volunteers dug out the site, taking more than two years to fully expose it. The exit from the subterranean level leads into a souvenir shop and through a Turkish Bazaar that has been renovated and is prepared to sell traditional crafts. Ms. Peleg explains how Akko is now being used by the Israeli Antiquities Authority as a “lab for learning.”

The group passes a restaurant called “Doniana,” which many think would make for a “nice” place to enjoy a fish lunch overlooking the Mediterranean; though others comment it is expensive and alternatives could be researched as well. Ms. Peleg then takes the group to an Ottoman building that will be renovated and used as the new headquarters for the International Conservation Center. In January 2010 the building will open for the first stage of renovation work. The center focuses on historic conservation and preservation with support from an Italian agency, and it will be opened to historic preservation students and those in B.A. and master’s degree training for such programs. All of the center’s programs engage the local public, as well, in order to garner their participation and endorsement; for example, educational classes have been offered on traditional crafts and on the historic significance of Akko. The new



Akko’s souq (market). Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Exploring Akko’s subterranean Crusader city. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Scenes from Akko. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, Kristina Nemeth, and Chloe Wicks

center will include an exhibition space demonstrating how the city has been preserved, and it will make resources such as books and computers available for local people, as there is no public library in Akko. Ms. Peleg says the center is “ready to collaborate with any university in the U.S.” Currently, the center, in conjunction with the Israel Antiquities Authority, runs a five-month internship program for students studying historical and archeological conservation.

Everyone finds Akko to be a “highlight,” emphasizing they “love it!” The group thinks Shelley-Anne Peleg is “phenomenal...absolutely amazing; her passion, her knowledge.” Rob says it was a great tour: “There’s a good illustration of an educator [Shelley] who loves her product and is eager to share it with everyone.” Abby like seeing the three civilizations all in one, the restoration they’ve done, and how they have made Akko a modern, living city as well. She thinks her university’s travelers would appreciate having time to walk around Akko. Michelle notes, however, that it’s important to prepare travelers that the tunnels are narrow in places, they’ll be hunched over in parts, and sometimes they’ll be walking on uneven, and even slippery, ground. Such notes especially need to be shared with older travelers. Some were excited about the possibility of inviting International Conservation Center students who are working on the restoration of Akko to speak with their groups. Treaty says she could definitely see recommending a student to go to Akko to work on a restoration project: “The project could actually be finished (and you could see the life of it).” Michelle and Treaty both mention having a lecture at the International Conservation Center when it is complete and then having lunch across the street at Doniana. Chloe also would want to do an event at this restaurant. While Ms. Peleg and Amir hold dif-



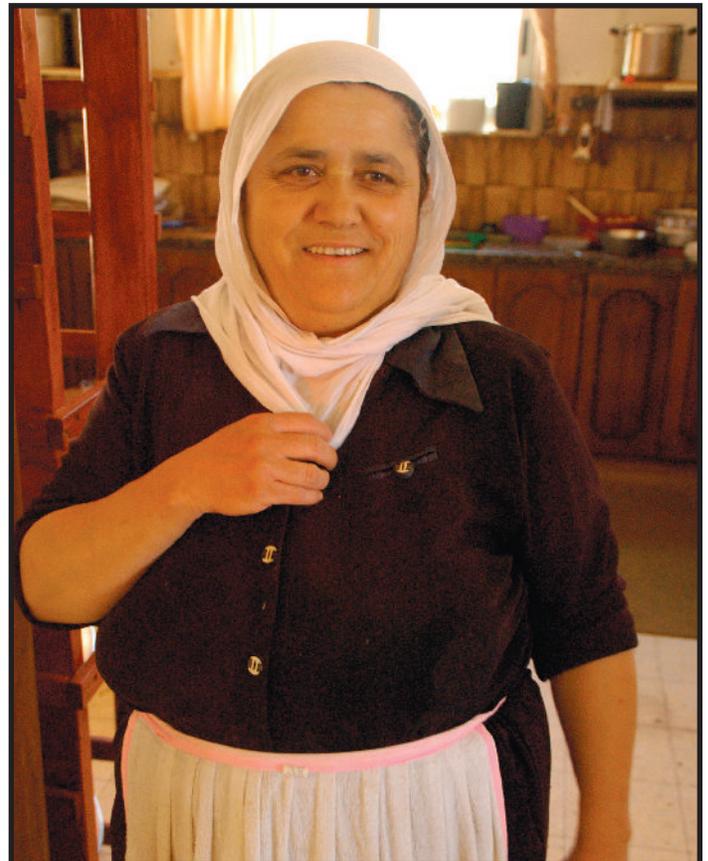
Knights’ Hall, Akko. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Shelley talks with the group outside the International Conservation Center’s future headquarters; Doniana restaurant.
Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

ferent views on the quality of the restaurant’s food and it’s pricing, the group concludes that the “view of the Mediterranean is beautiful and there aren’t that many opportunities to be right on the Mediterranean.”

Departing Akko, the group proceeds via the **Carmel National Park** (one of Israel’s largest parks) to the **Druze villages of Daliyat El Carmel** for a discussion of Druze culture and a traditional lunch. Everyone enters the modest Druze home that doubles as a cultural center for visiting groups. The Druze here earn a living by sharing their culture and ethnic food. Everyone is asked to sit in small groups in the living room. A lovely elder Druze woman serves each group numerous authentic dishes that she has prepared and arranged on large metal trays. As everyone savors the traditional Middle Eastern food, the group listens to a presentation about the Druze, learning they are a distinct social and religious group who speak Arabic and practice a secret religion considered to be an offshoot of Islam. There are approximately 2 million Druze believers around the world. They hold a non-Islamic belief in reincarnation. Within their society, there is a select group of Druze made up of men and women who have passed strict tests and are considered to have led lifestyles of exemplary honesty and modesty. The men of this group can be identified by their white turbans, and only these “wise” ones are permitted to read the Druze holy books and take part in religious ceremonies. The rest of the community, “the ignorant,” hope that in their next incarnation they may become “wise”—and no one can convert to the Druze religion. Although the Druze only represent a small population in pockets of Israel, they are integrated into Israeli society, particularly because they are willing to serve in the Israeli Army. The Druze have no land themselves and believe that wherever they are born they are local citizens of that land. In this village, there is also a “colorful Druze market,” which the group does not have a chance to visit. *Unfortunately, at the conclusion of this short stay, most feel they did not really get to “meet the people or learn about the religion” in any substantive*



Druze chef. Photo by Kristina Nemeth



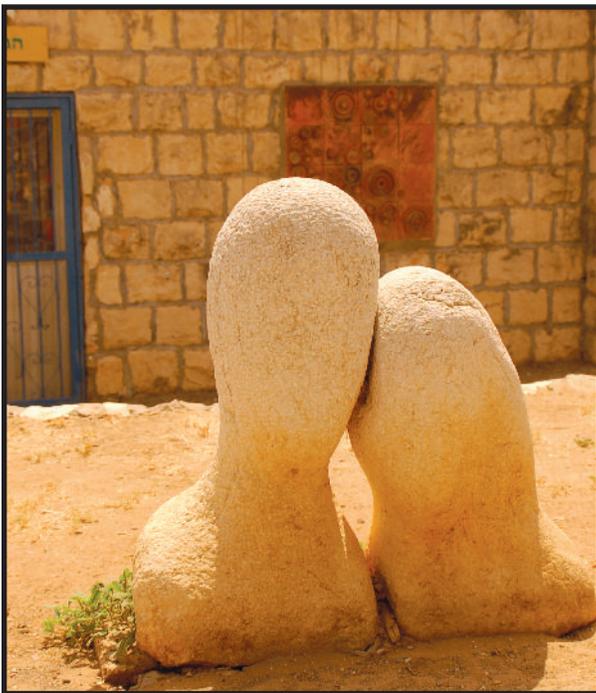
A lecture on Druze religion; Lunch at the Druze cultural center. Photos (left) by Kristina Nemeth, (right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

way. “It wasn’t robust enough,” comments one person. Most felt the visit was not worth it and thought spending more time in Akko and possibly having lunch along the Mediterranean would make more sense. Michelle says that she could have left out the visit to the Druze Village, as this group experienced it, but if there had been a chance to go to the market, interact with more people, and experience Druze dress and customs, she would consider including it.

A short drive from the Druze villages of Daliyat El Carmel is the **Ein Hod Artists’ Village**, where the group arrives around 13:30 to meet Ms. Naomi Huss, manager of the Ein Hod Gallery. The group hoped to meet some of the village’s artists but appointments must be made ahead of time. Ms. Huss provides background on the Ein-Hod Artists’ Village, founded in 1953 by the Dada artist Marcel Janco and a group of like-minded artists. Approximately 150 artists and their families now live at Ein-Hod, where they “work and create art in every cultural medium and field of endeavor.”

Guided village tours can be coordinated with the artists for specific groups and visits can be made to the galleries and to meet artists in their studios. There is an Art & Wear Gallery selling jewelry, Judaica, wearable art, prints, paintings, and sculptures, a museum for mechanical musical boxes with an impressive collection of musical instruments (some over 100 years old), and hands-on workshops in various fields of art from silk screen printing on fabric to painting, pottery, ceramic, sculpting, photography, theater, and more. As the majority of studios are closed during the **EDUCATIONAL** group’s visit, everyone is free to wander at leisure. Most peruse the art in the main gallery, purchase gifts, and walk among the clusters of creative houses/studios interspersed with sculptures and freestanding artwork. A number of planners find their way to Ein Hod’s eclectic cafe.

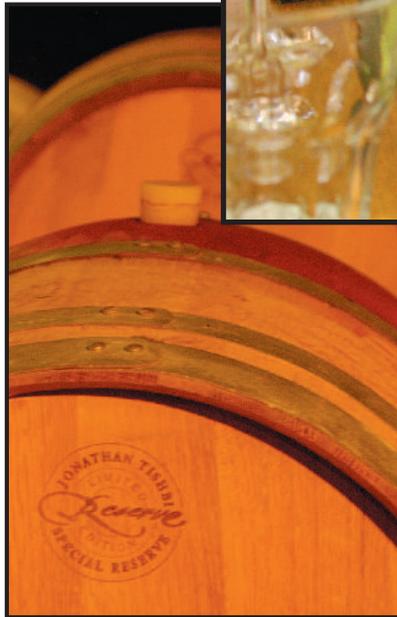
Everyone enjoys the gallery’s wonderful and diverse artwork and several people purchase beautiful gifts. All, however, concur with Liz that tours must schedule their visit ahead of time, arranging meetings with artists in their studios and possibly a workshop(s), which someone else notes could be optional. Kristina says that Ein Hod is a good place to wander: “This is a place where you can make group travelers feel they can have a spontaneous experience. They can meet a different artist or go to a different studio, and they can feel they had an experience that was theirs and then they can share their stories.”



Ein Hod Artists' Village. Photos by Elizabeth Bigwood, J. Mara DelliPriscoli, Kristina Nemeth, and Chloe Wicks

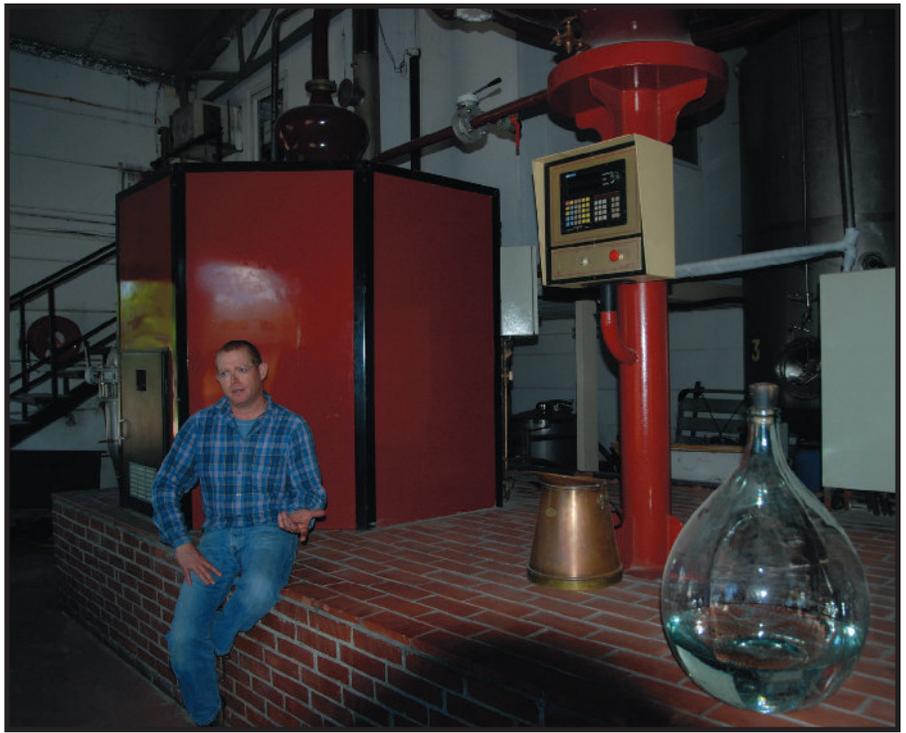
The Tishbi Estate Winery is another welcomed visit. Located in Binyamina, Tishbi Winery is the first family owned and run winery established in Israel. It is one of the 10 largest wineries in the country and produces about one million bottles of kosher wine a year, nearly a third of which are exported. There are approximately 15 wineries in the Haifa region, and more than 300 in Israel. Wine maker Golan Tishbi meets the group for a tour of his family’s winery and shares interesting facts about land ownership laws in Israel and the joys of growing grapes in Israel, which has an “almost perfect climate for grape growing, with no major storms or pests.”

Most importantly to the group, Golan shares his family’s personal story and connection to the land. The Tishbi family’s “romance” with grapes and wine began in 1882 when the present generation’s great-grandfather, Michael Chamiletzki, made his home in nearby Shefeya and was commissioned by Baron Edmond de Rothschild to plant the first modern wine grape vineyards in Israel. In 1902, the famous poet Chaim Nachman Bialik visited and gave him a new Hebrew family name: “TISHBI,” an acronym for “A Resident of Shefeya in Israel.” After more than a century of grape growing tradition, Jonathan Tishbi founded the Tishbi Estate in 1984, with vineyards located in different climate zones throughout Israel. To this day, Jonathan and Golan work as a father-son team supervising the growing, harvesting, and bottling processes, as well as tasting and evaluating each vineyard lot. Golan shares his passion about growing grapes and says, “To have a winery or be a farmer is a way of life.” Before concluding the tour, Golan takes everyone to the winery’s brandy distillery, which will soon become a wine tasting room and restaurant. The Tishbi Winery is the only commercial producer of brandy in the Middle East to use an original Cognac alembic distillery and was awarded a gold medal for the best brandy worldwide.



Tishbi Winery. Photos by Kristina Nemeth

The highlight of the tour is a sampling of the wines with fresh cheeses from the Yaakob and Meiri dairy farms and fresh bread baked in the Tishbis' bread oven, which Golan proudly shows the group. Golan seats everyone to a lovely, open-air courtyard with tables and benches set beneath the shade of a grape arbor overlooking the Tishbi vineyards. "Serving food beside wine is a daily practice that has taken place at the Tishbi Winery for years and is an integral part of my family's lifestyle," says Oshra Tishbi, who has created many of the Tishbi's fine foods, including extra virgin olive oil, honey, and superb wine jellies. Five wines were tasted: the Sauvignon Blank (2008), Chardonnay (2008), Pinot Noir (2007), Cabernet Sauvignon (2005), and Jonathan Tishbi Special Reserve Cabernet/Merlot Sole Boker (2004). Before reluctantly leaving, everyone lingers longer than patient Amir would like as they purchase gifts of the outstanding wines and fine foods they had tasted.



Golan Tishbi pictured at the Cognac distillery. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

The resounding commentary is that everyone "loves" the Tishbi Winery experience. It was important to all that Golan shared his perspective about the land and his family. There was some discussion about whether or not to have a tour of the winery, and the opinion was mixed. Kristina says she wouldn't do a tour of the wine-making process, as she'll be bringing travelers from California; she would instead ask Golan to talk about the grape varieties, the land, and the varying wine-growing regions of Israel, providing more of an educational lesson about the process in terms of the climate and the wine regions of Israel. Liz agrees somewhat and says perhaps a "mini-tour" would be appropriate. Allie's concluding comment is a reminder to give visitors enough time to make purchases at the visitor's center.



Caesarea National Park. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Given the time crunch, the group has to cut short its visit to Caesarea National Park, which is located on the Mediterranean coast. Yael Zhuri, manager of Caesarea Harbor, briefly introduces the group to the archaeological site with a 10-minute film relaying the 2,000-year history of Caesarea from Herod's period through the Roman, Byzantine, Arab, and Crusader periods to the first days of Zionism in Israel as well as the settlement activity of Baron Rothschild. The display demonstrates the visual changes that the city has undergone

throughout history, from the construction of the harbor to the Roman Theater to the other sites. In lieu of having the opportunity to walk around the archaeological sites, the film provides enough of an overview (though in no way a replacement for seeing the sites themselves) for the majority of planners to feel a visit to Caesarea would be worthwhile. On the way out, the group passes the impressive excavation of the Temple Dais, as well as several galleries, cafes, and restaurants that are part of the Caesarea Harbor National Park.

While everyone says “much more time” would be need for Caesarea, they concur that the video is excellent and the site seemes “amazing.” Amir recommends easily two hours for Caesarea and says there is a nice promenade walk revealing some mansions from Byzantine times and that the “Tower of Time” is worth a visit, as it offers two “virtual” windows into one part of Caesarea at two different times in history. He also recommends eating at Helena Restaurant (good food, high end). Liz says, “if you didn’t have a Mediterranean experience anywhere else [such as in Akko], it might be nice [to have lunch in Caesarea] because you have water and history here.” Michelle suggests having lunch at Tishbi and dinner at Caesarea.

The subject of golf comes up, and Chloe says golf is important to many of her travelers. Amir confirms there is golf course near Caesarea and says reservations would need to be made in advance. In closing, Amir qualifies that very few tours would do Akko and Caesarea in the same day, as this group has done, because “too much archaeology can be overwhelming; [the sites] become just stones.” He recommends not doing more than one archaeology site a day, and in general not doing more than three site visits per day.

After returning to Haifa and having the day’s de-briefing session, at 20:00 it was on to a presentation of Haifa at the office of Mr. Moshe Zurich Tzur, General Manager of the **Haifa Tourist Board**. *He introduces everyone to Haifa through two videos prior to a discussion. While everyone says the first video was “great,” the general consensus is that the second one needs to be updated. It is suggested, however, that videos not be used for such meetings, as it is more productive to have a conversation maximizing the opportunity to be together in person.*

Mr. Tzur introduces the group to Haifa’s new tourism campaign: “One City, So Many Possibilities!” and its particular relevance for the Educational Travel Market. As the “biggest northern city in Israel,” Haifa is close to about 80% of the ancient attractions of Israel,” says Mr. Tzur. “We’re trying to position it as the center for all the key regions from Caesarea to Jerusalem to Akko to Tiberias and Nazareth. We recommend Haifa as “hub,” especially for visiting the northern part of Israel because all of the key attractions are within proximity of the



Haifa Tourist Board panel discussion on co-existence; Moshe Zurich Tzur, Haifa Tourist Board. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Agricultural fields near Haifa; View of Haifa's port. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

city. By staying in Haifa you can cover the northern half of Israel. The city gives you all the facilities you need, and then you can take tours from here. We suggest staying in Haifa to enjoy the city, hotels, diversity of restaurants, and nightlife, etc., but leave each day for other destinations, using Haifa as a base.”

Mr. Tzur says there are special programs and incentives for small groups and FITs, such as [at the time of this meeting] having a complimentary guided car/bus tour around Haifa when a group stays there for 3 days. He suggests any tour operators or travel planners interested in these offers contact him. He also says that groups that want assistance with marketing and/or which are interested in planning a specialized tour (gastronomy, Haifa markets, arts and crafts workshops, architecture, reconstruction and renovation, etc.) or professionalized tour (e.g. visiting hospitals or K-12 schools) should contact the Haifa Tourist Board. The Board is also available to assist in choosing the best sites to explore. Its staff is happy to assist with research and providing an informed perspective on what sites to visit.

Another selling-point for Haifa is its diversity of inhabitants, totaling some 280,000. As a “city of co-existence,” Haifa has six different cultures and religions living together. “I believe in Haifa we are living together, Jewish and Arab, Christian, Muslim,” says Mr. Tzur. “We believe this is the way people should live. We are human beings. Even after the war in July 2006 we all suffered the same, Jewish and Arab. We believe we have the same future.”

In addition to its attractions, culture, and art, Haifa also has a unique festival called “Holiday of Holidays” when different religions come together in December, and it is an academic center, as well as a city for international computer software companies such as Microsoft, IBM, Google, and Yahoo.

Before leaving for dinner, Mr. Tzur emphasizes that the Haifa Tourist Board is open seven days a week and is ready to be of assistance. *Everyone appreciates Mr. Tzur's presentation and knowing how dedicated the Haifa Tourist Board is to attracting and assisting the U.S. Educational Travel Market.*

The Haifa Tourist Board and **Dan Hotels Israel** host the group for dinner at **HaSderra Restaurant** in the German Colony, an area established in 1869 by the Templar Society, founded eight years earlier in Germany with the aim of helping Palestine ready itself for the second coming of Christ. According to The German Colony pamphlet, “the Templars invested much effort in giving their homes and streets a modern, spacious feel, with well-tended gardens, the planting of trees for fruit and decoration, high fences both of stone and of wood and trees planted in such a way as to shade sidewalks.” Today the renovated German Colony is one of Haifa's prime shopping and dining area and is particularly lively at night. *Everyone thinks its atmosphere is “great.”*



Ben Gurion Boulevard runs the entire length of the German Colony leading toward the Baha'i Gardens; Locals enjoy an outdoor cafe in the Colony. Photos (left) by Jennifer Bohac, (right) by Chloe Wicks

HaSderra is an elegant restaurant in a beautifully restored home with beamed ceilings, whitewashed walls, and dark, polished wooden floors and furnishings. *Everyone says, the dinner is “delicious” and “different from the Middle Eastern dinners we’ve been having.” It is “Avant-garde with carpaccio and pâté,” says one. A few try a local fish they had not yet sampled called “sea bream.” Another notes that the acoustics at HaSderra are much better than they’ve been in some previous restaurants and emphasizes how important it is for “our travelers to be in places where they can hear each other.”*

During dinner Mr. Tzur shares more information about Haifa, as well as his stories of serving in the Israeli army. Mr. Adi Maor, General Manager for Dan Hotels - Haifa Area, presents the Dan Carmel, Dan Panorama, and Dan Gardens. Dan Hotels have been in business in Israel for more than 60 years, and it’s Israel’s largest luxury hotel chain, with 13 facilities throughout the country. In 2011 Dan Hotels will open a hotel on the shore of the Dead Sea as well. Mr. Maor shares some interesting facts about the Dan Hotels, such as that 30% of the Dan Carmel’s staff is Arab and the hotel manager is the only Arab hotel manager in Israel. He underscores what Mr. Tzur said earlier that Haifa is a prototype for how different cultures and religions can co-exist without fighting. “It is a small example of how we can solve these problems,” he says.

Everyone shares taxis for the short drive back to the hotel.

Monday, June 8, 2009 – Haifa

Buffet breakfast at the Dan Carmel Hotel.

Ms. Zivit Sari, meets the group for a day-tour of Haifa. She takes everyone to the **Luis Promenade** for panoramic views of the city and bay. Along the way, the group passes the mayor, who stops to say “hello.” He says that he has the “utmost interest in opening up branches of U.S. universities in Haifa, where Americans would do a few years of school in the U.S. and then a year in Israel focusing perhaps on Middle East studies.” Before parting, he shares Haifa’s famous saying that “Haifa is the most beautiful city in Israel, and Jerusalem the most beautiful city in the world.”

From this vantage point overlooking Haifa, it is easy to see why scholars think Haifa’s name may come from the Hebrew words “*hof yafe*,” mean-

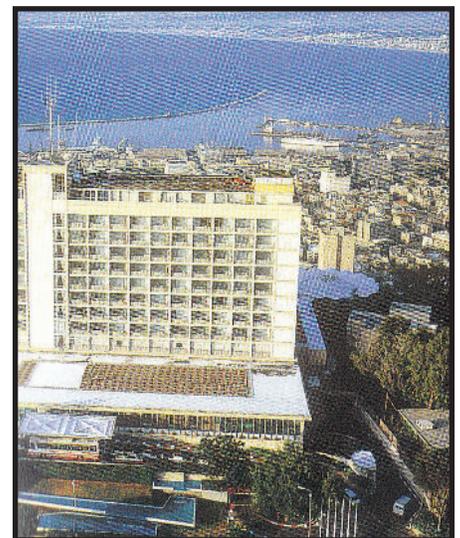
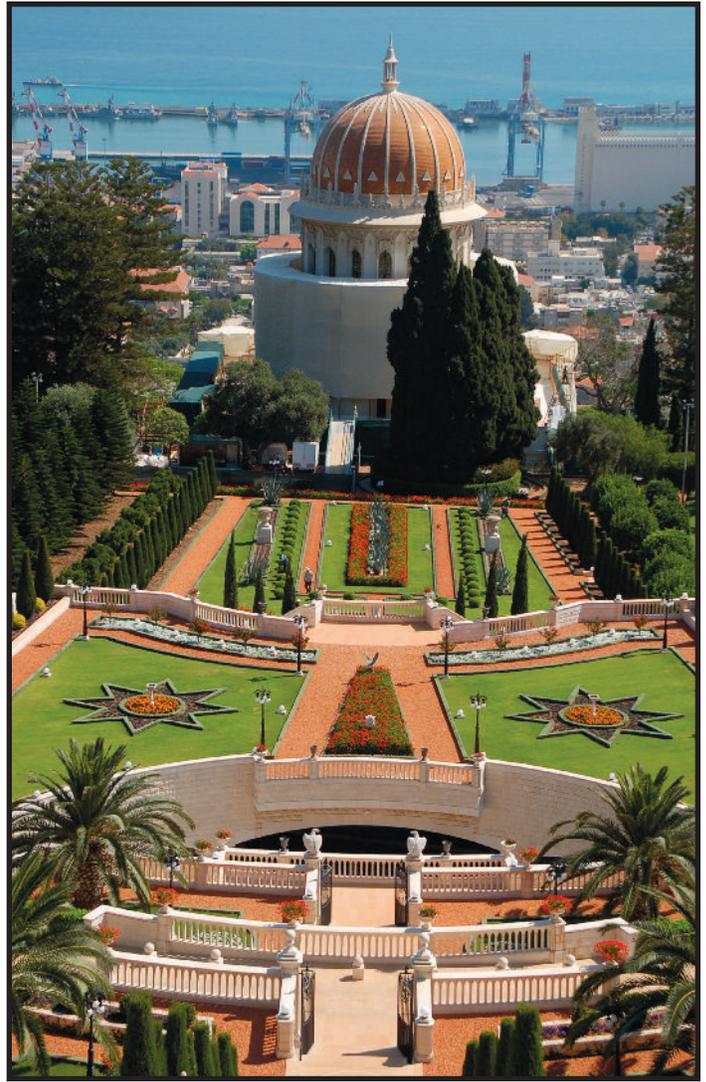


Photo courtesy of Dan Carmel Hotel.

ing “beautiful coast.” Aside from its beauty as a city of tolerance, the land boasts the forest of Mt. Carmel and picturesque landscapes, as well as city streets. Traditionally an industrial city centered around its large port (which the British build in 1921), Haifa’s demographics have been changing with the development of its hi-tech industry and its focus on developing more arts and culture.

It also boasts what many consider to be “one of the world’s most beautiful gardens”: the Baha’i Gardens with its 18 terraces. This is where the group heads next to walk all “700 steps” down to the Shrine of the Bab. Zivit notes that older travelers or those who do not want to walk can also drive to the Shrine of the Bab.

Along the way, as walkers pass immaculately maintained gardens and cypress trees, Zivit stops the group for short lessons on the Baha’i faith, one of the world’s newest religions. Established in the middle of the 19th century and originating from Persia, its central belief is in equality and unity, and it believes many different prophets have appeared throughout history. The Baha’i say there are approximately six million followers in more than 75 countries, and tradition maintains that Baha’i must make a pilgrimage to Haifa at least once in their lives to pay homage to their religion’s first leader. It is considered sacrilegious for followers to live in Israel, so volunteers from around the world help maintain the Baha’i gardens. The origins of the faith connect back to Ali-Muhammad, a native of Iran. In 1844 Ali-Muhammad declared that he was the “Promised One,” manifestation of the God and “the Bab” (meaning “gate” through which prophecies would be told. A very charismatic figure, Ali-Muhammad gained followers (called Babis), but was later arrested for heretical teaches and executed in Iran. One of the Bab’s prophecies was that



Baha’i Shrine and gardens. Photo by Kristina Nemeth



Baha’i garden detail. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

there would come “one whom God would make manifest.” In 1866, a Babi proclaimed he was “the one” and assumed the title of “Baha’ullah, saying he had received “divine inspiration” while imprisoned in Tehran. Baha’ullah was expelled to many countries, eventually landing in the penal colony of Akko for 25 years. From there he visited Mt. Carmel four times and told his son Mt. Carmel would be the final resting place for the remains of the Bab, Baha’ullah’s predecessor who died in 1850. It was in his cell in Akko that Baha’ullah decreed the tenets of the new Baha’i faith. One tenet is that no one can be born a Baha’i; rather, at the age of 15 a person chooses whether or not to become a Baha’i. The faith also promotes gender equality, unity among mankind, world peace, and the need for harmony between religion and science.

At the Shrine of the Bab, considered one of the world's two most sacred sites for the Baha'i, everyone takes off their shoes and enters the golden-domed shrine built with influences from both the Orient and Europe, symbolizing a blend of East and West. Inside, oriental rugs cover the passageway leading to the threshold of the room in which the remains of Baha'ullah are laid to rest.

The group later learns that special programs are available at the Shrine of the Bab and there is a film presentation this group did not see. Most feel this could be a good option if their travelers do not want to walk all 700 steps. While this group doesn't think the walk was too challenging, everyone agrees that walking on the stone paths could be difficult for older travelers and they would prefer to give travelers the option to either walk or take the bus, then the group could reunite around the film. "Those who would like to walk would see magnificent gardens," says Rob. One person suggests having an expert speak at the Shrine of the Bab rather than having a city guide such as Zivit. The group thinks it would be terrific if the Baha'i International Community Deputy Secretary-General Jalal Hatami (whom the group would meet later in the day at the Haifa Tourism Board co-existence panel discussion) could speak, as they appreciate his perspective.



Stella Maris Carmelite Monastery. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Al Istiqlal Mosque, Haifa. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

A very brief bus tour of Haifa focuses on aspects of the "mixed city" as a place of co-existence, with examples of the Carmelites, Kababir (Ahmedians), and Wadi Nisnas (Moslems). A stop is made at the Stella Maris Carmelite Monastery to learn about the Catholic order of Carmelites who originated in the late 12th century when a group of Crusaders chose to lead a hermetic life on the western slopes of Mt. Carmel (noting that "carmel" means "vineyard of God"). The present monastery and church are built over what the Carmelites believe was a cave where the prophet Elijah lived. The church's beautiful painted ceiling portrays various Biblical scenes. *Several in the group feel the Carmelite Monastery, like the Baha'i Gardens, is a "must." By contrast, a visit to the Castra Mall is not as well received. The Castra Mall in itself has a unique facade with murals of Biblical scenes surrounding it. It functions as a center for the arts, and it houses galleries, a small archeological museum, and a doll museum (the maker of the dolls and museum founder survived the Holocaust by making dolls for the children of Nazis). Most agree with Treaty's statement that the Castra Mall is "fighting for an identity: it's trying to be an arts colony, but it doesn't*



The Castra Mall with its mosaic of Biblical scenes; A crystal artisan at work in Castra Mall. Photos by Sherry Schwarz

have a strong art presence.” All agree that it was not near the quality of Ein Hod Artists’ Village. Driving from the Castra Mall toward the beach for lunch, Zivit points out the high-tech area (Haifa is planning to build a biotech center near there as well, and there will be an underground tunnel from the High Tech Center to Akko, alleviating traffic and pollution in the city). She speaks of the technology museum, a larger port-side grain silo, and a military base. A few planners are interested in researching more about visiting the high-tech center (the Haifa Tourism Board says meetings can be arranged ahead of time), as well as the military base.

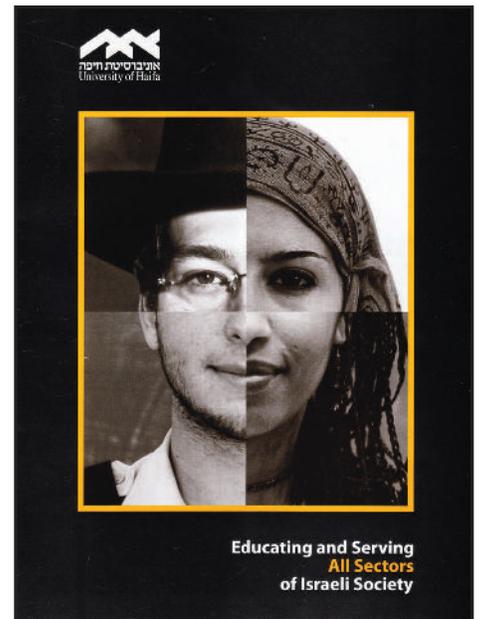
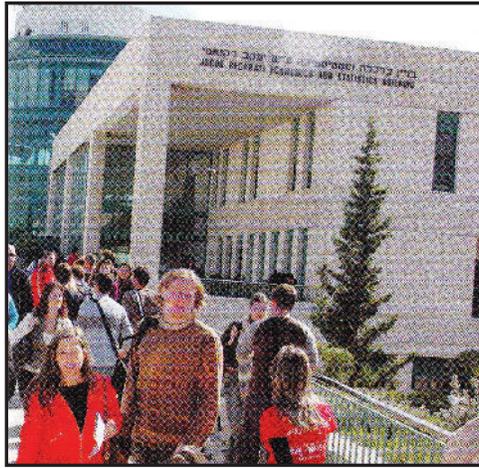
The Haifa Tourist Board hosts the group for lunch at a beach-side cafe, of which there are several popular ones to choose. Everyone thinks the outdoor lunch is “wonderful.” As Rob says, “it provided an opportunity to touch the Mediterranean” —literally, as most of the planners take off their shoes to walk along the beach.

At 14:00 it is on to a meeting with several **University of Haifa** representatives to discuss the role the University can play in developing customized special-interest, academic tours to Israel. The meeting also focuses on various aspects of tourism in Israel, including overcoming perceived safety concerns among American travelers. An extensive, informative presentation and conversation ensues. The unabridged meeting notes are in Section 3 on page 102.

The University of Haifa, established in 1963 and granted independence in 1972, has a mission to educate and serve all sectors of Israeli society. It prides itself in being the “most pluralistic” institution of higher learning in Israel. It is also the largest comprehensive research university in northern Israel. Located atop Mt. Carmel, “it provides a unique backdrop for novel interdisciplinary programs, cooperative endeavors with academic institutions around the world and a diverse student body of more than 17,000 [students].” The University of Haifa has more than 50 departments and more than 60 research centers and chairs and six faculties: humanities, social sciences, law, education, social welfare and health sciences, and sciences and sciences education. It also has a school of marine sciences and a Jewish-Arab Center, an interdisciplinary research institute within the university that is renowned for its work in promoting Jewish-Arab cooperation. There’s an Ethiopian Student Assistance Program and a unique “battlefield to classroom” project for officers of Israel’s Defense Forces. Many other unique programs and initiatives exist at the University of Haifa as well. Notably for the Educational Travel Market, it now runs the professional training program for certifying Israeli tour guides.

Mr. Amos Gaver, Vice President for External Relations at the University of Haifa, explains that the university is able and willing to assist tour planners and operators in arranging tailor-made trips, especially around the

academic subjects and research fields in which it has faculty and other resources. Mr. Gaver says that the University can integrate its faculty into programs and meetings can be arranged with students of all ethnic backgrounds, religions, and nationalities. He adds that the University has the largest number of Arab students, because it is in the Galilee region. “Haifa is where you can really meet coexistence for all religions, he says. “You can have a ‘true’ discussion here. We are not just for co-existence. It is one face. It isn’t the only face and it’s not primary face...it’s just part of it.” Mr. Gaver’s colleagues Shirley Gerzon, Executive Director of International Relations and the Division for External Relations and Resources Development, and Daphna Tzur, the Visits Coordinator, note that the University has a “wonderful visitor’s department that can help arrange most programs.”



Clockwise: University of Haifa photo and brochure cover courtesy of the University. Professor Yoel Mansfeld photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, Professor Efraim Lev photo by Elizabeth Bigwood.

Professor Yoel Mansfeld, Head of the Center for Tourism, Pilgrimage, and Recreation Research, specializes in sustainable tourism, ecotourism and tourism & security. He presents several fascinating tourism models, proposes a “Balanced Perspective Political Itinerary,” and shares the research he has done on the perception of safety in traveling to Israel. *His talk is transcribed in the unabridged notes section.*

Dr. Mansfeld then hands over the discussion to Professor Efraim Lev, Head of Special B.A. Programs at the University of Haifa, and a former coordinator for the Israeli Tourism Guide course for 10 years. He provides an overview of the guide training program, which is a professional 2-year course, requiring 500 hours, 60 tours. “It’s one of the best, says Dr. Lev. “I haven’t been there for 10 years, but studies cover pre-history to the 21st century in a range of different subjects. When they go on field trips, they get best guides and teachers from academia; therefore they are well trained and can cover a lot of topics, and yet each one also concentrates on one subject.”

Dr. Lev concludes the afternoon meeting with a fabulous slideshow of Israel from his academic travels illustrating how Israel can be explored on a tour through multiple academic lenses. He shares some interesting ecological facts about Israel’s estimated 2,700 species of plants. “Israel is very unique from a flora and fauna point of view,” says Dr. Lev. “Being in between Asia, Africa, and Europe we are affected by different climates.”

Israel’s archaeology is also “unique and varied,” because Israel is located “between two ancient civilization powers: Egypt on the Nile and Mesopotamia to the north. Whenever these civilizations wanted to fight or have diplomatic relations, commerce, etc. it was on this land of Israel.” Similarly, explains Dr. Lev, “The Sea of Galilee is interesting from both a hydrology point of view and from a religious point of view.”

In closing several people ask questions about the movement toward local food and “agritourism.” Responding to this, Dr. Lev mentions that tourists can help pick olives during the harvest and press their own olive oil and/or make wine during the grape harvest.



View of Haifa from Haifa University. Photo by Sherry Schwarz

Following a chance to enjoy panoramic views from the University of Haifa’s tower, it is time to depart. Unfortunately, there is not time to visit with Dr. Y. Kananov at the Hecht Museum to hear about underwater archaeology and the discovery of a Phoenician ship and thus this part of the afternoon is cancelled.

Everyone found the University of Haifa meeting to be stimulating, and several planners were excited about the idea of incorporating University of Haifa faculty on a tour program. Rachel was curious as to which other Israeli universities would be willing to do same type of programming. Kristina suggests connecting with Hebrew University. Rob feels that a strong recommendation for the University of Haifa is that “Haifa is deeply invested in understanding tourism, and this is where they train the guides for all of Israel.” However, notes Rachel, “[these guides] may not have the expertise needed in certain subject areas.” Trearty says the model of utilizing University of Haifa professors is a “good model that can be elaborated on without a doubt.” Liz appreciates that the University is very open and welcoming and “would commit fully to participating with our institutions. At this point she feels she would use the University of Haifa here and Hebrew University in Jerusalem. It was suggested that the technical university in Haifa would be great for MIT. Liz and Allie say that going to the top of the University of Haifa for a panoramic view from the tower with Professor Lev was a highlight.



Haifa co-existence discussion panelists. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

At 17:30 the group gathers at the Haifa Tourist Board office with Jewish, Christian, Baha’i, Muslim & Achmedian (a pacifist sect of Islam that does not believe in jihad, religious war) representatives for a **panel discussion on coexistence**. All of the panelists — Caroline Abboyd Hamaty, owner of Al Diyar Restaurant, Muad Oudeh, Secretary General of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Jalal Hatami, Deputy Secretary-General of the Baha’i International Community, Anan Joubran, of the Arab Jewish Center, and Maher

Mahamid, Director of the Clove Library and Cultural Center—are professionals dedicated to their faiths but also very tolerant of other faiths. They share their personal family stories and how their personal and/or professional lives intertwine with their faiths. The conversations then continued during dinner at Al Diyar Restaurant.



Dinner at Al Diyar with the co-existence panelists. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Generally, everyone thinks the co-existence panel was “outstanding.” “The conversation and content was great,” says Trearty. “It was fantastic to have dinner with the panelists. Kristina felt that “what was missing from our itinerary all along was somewhat included in this discussion.” Rachel notes that “We didn’t get into a conversation on conflict and nationalism. The focus was more about the fact that here everyone is living side-by-side.” Liz agrees, saying it was “good to have panelists who are living everyday lives and who are without a specific position.” Chloe counters, though, that the panelists did have positions (e.g. one was on the Board of Holiday of Holidays and had a unification position, etc.). Everyone suggests that it is important for Educational Travel groups to have some opportunity for a co-existence dialogue such as this. Recommendations for improving such meetings include: planning and planting questions ahead of time, having a short biography of each panelist, and asking them each to wear name badges.

The question is asked whether everyone would have liked to see the panelists’ organizations such as the Arab Jewish Center. Some feel time may be too short for this and others would have appreciated the opportunity. Kristina mentions the idea of visiting their homes and having discussions there. Rachel and Liz then note that you would not be able to use the same hosts again and again, because you would want the perspective and conversation to be fresh. Rob suggests dividing groups into 5 or 6 and sending them to different homes (with English-speaking hosts). They could have conversations and then come back together at dinner to talk about their experiences. Mr. Tzur says logistically this arrangement may be challenging, but Rob says that it has never failed to work for Washington & Lee (going into people’s homes for discussions). Rob has done this in Scotland, Japan, etc. “It’s an eye-opening experience,” he says. Mara suggests that part of the day could also be devoted to doing a driving tour of the different ethnic/religious neighborhoods in order to set the day up for the discussion rather than just the ineffectual sightseeing the group had done in the morning.

Mr. Tzur reminds everyone that even those in the same religion will have different perspectives based on where they are coming from. “This evening our goal was to show you why Haifa [as a city of co-existence] is different and [how and why] it works. A lot can be arranged, but the question is what do you want to achieve [from these discussions/meetings]?” Everyone agrees they would not want a “screaming match”—that hatred and conflict can be found in the U.S. media’s portrayal of Israel...what was revealing today was the honest conversation that “Yes, we have these issues and are in conflict, but in this place, in our city, our town, we choose to live together,” says Liz. “We’re coming to this country to hear, to listen.”

Everyone says the food at Al Diyar Restaurant was good. There were typical Israeli salads and Middle Eastern appetizers, as well as chicken kabobs, falafel, fish, steak, and other varieties of seafood. The hostess/proprietor Caroline Abboyd Hamaty was “darling,” says one planner. Everyone agrees but felt badly about how much food was not eaten with the generous portions. While Michal assures the group that Israelis do not get offended if you do not eat all of your food, this is a common sentiment that has been shared by the group throughout the



Scenes from the German Colony: The Colony Hotel Haifa; One of the many outdoor cafes in the German Colony; Artistic touches add charm to an outdoor garden. Photos (left and center) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, (right) by Sherry Schwarz

trip, as no one wants to waste food. They say their passengers will eat even less than this group has during its trip. Kristina comments that she has had past travelers complain about too much food.

As part of the debriefing, the group discusses the Dan Carmel Hotel. No one had much time to see the hotel, but from everyone's limited time there they said "it was a very nice, full-service hotel." One notes that it is the "best" here [in Haifa]. All comment on the hotel's "magnificent" and "unmatched" views and its great customer service. The group also says the lounge is "phenomenal."

A quick unscheduled site inspection was also made earlier in the day to The Colony Hotel Haifa, one of a number of boutique hotels in the Germany Colony. There are mixed views. Most thought it was "charming," "distinctive," and "tastefully decorated," although another notes it could be "noisy." The tile work shows pride in place, said one; another, thinks the roof top patio would be great for a reception. Chloe particularly likes the location in the German Colony, noting it could allow travelers access for "independent exploration." They can walk from the hotel to a restaurant for their own dinner one evening (which is more feasible than when staying at Dan Carmel atop Mount Carmel). Amir says there is a shopping area on Mount Carmel, but it may not be as nice as the German Colony. Mr. Tzur adds that there are "many boutique hotels" being renovated in Haifa.

The question is then asked if using Haifa as a "hub," which hotel would be preferred, especially if thinking of a meeting space (which The Colony Hotel lacks). Treaty says that she would then question The Colony Hotel about its laundry and room service. Another notes that if you are gone for long days you may want more space when you return [Dan Carmel affords more space than The Colony Hotel]. "If we were there for a night or two The Colony Hotel would be okay; otherwise The Dan Carmel" says another, noting it has more "infrastructure." Liz adds that the Dan Carmel's swimming pool would make a difference if Haifa were a hub. Kristina says that where Haifa is situated in the itinerary would make a difference as to which hotel she would choose. "The [German Colony] is a nice place to give people free time to wander," she says. "It would be nice for travelers to be able to walk downtown."



Stone houses with red shingled roofs are characteristic of the German Colony's architecture. Photo by Chloe Wicks



The skyline of Tel Aviv; The beach across from the Dan Tel Aviv Hotel. Photos by Sherry Schwarz and Chloe Wicks

The night-time drive from Haifa to Tel Aviv (87 km) is bitter sweet, for although the group is looking forward to seeing a new destination, Amir will be departing from the group in Tel Aviv due to another guiding commitment. As Amir says in his farewell remarks, this “job” turned into much more than just a professional relationship, as he befriended everyone and introduced the group to his country. Upon arriving at the **Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv**, for an overnight everyone shares parting hugs and photographs with Amir.

Tuesday, June 9, 2009 – Modern Tel Aviv

Following a buffet breakfast at the Dan Tel Aviv, the group meets its new tour guide Bena Mantel, who provides a rough overview of the day’s itinerary, which is designed to introduce the group to Tel Aviv—Israel’s commercial, financial, cultural, and entertainment center.

The group walks to Tel Aviv’s first skyscraper, **the Shalom Tower**, built on the site of the city’s first building, Gymnasium Herzlia, in 1909, when Tel Aviv was officially established. At the Shalom Tower, Bena shows the group a mosaic, with more than 1 million pieces, depicting the story of Tel Aviv’s growth and a model of the modern city. He uses the site visit as a chance to explain Tel Aviv’s history, the problems that resulted from a lack of urban planning during its growth phase in its 1960s and ‘70s when it overflowed into neighboring cities, and its current commitment to the preservation of its historic buildings (now that Tel Aviv is filled to capacity).

While everyone appreciates viewing the mosaic and model, the majority question whether a visit to the Shalom Tower is worth the time, particularly because it is very noisy (it’s also a shopping arcade) and thus hard to hear what was actually said about the establishment of Tel Aviv and the development of its modern city. One planner suggests having this “introduction” on a bus or in a better location for passengers to hear the guide. Rob would have preferred a tour of the city by sea and an opportunity to see more of the beach-front area. Chloe agrees and suggests it could be interest-



*Bena Mantel explains the development of Tel Aviv.
Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli*

ing to welcome travelers to Tel Aviv through the beach-front, then perhaps work their way inward into the city, following the same pattern in which the city itself expanded.

The next visit is to **Independence Hall**, a museum located in the building where Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. Prior to this, the building had been the home of Meir Dizengoff, one of the founders of Tel Aviv. An excellent film on the founding of Israel, from Theodore Herzl's writing of *The Jewish State* inspiring young Zionist Jews to begin migrating to Palestine through the Balfour Declaration and on to the U.N.'s recognition of Israel's independence, provide a foundation for the rest of the Independence Hall experience. The docent reminds everyone that "where we are sitting watching this film today was all sand only 100 years ago." She speaks of the intense fundraising and recruitment of inhabitants that took place to "pioneer" the land of Palestine—a place of "sand, dunes, poverty, and illness"; and she teaches the group the significance of Tel Aviv's name, literally meaning "hill" of "spring," a name chosen in 1910 from the Hebrew title of Herzl's book *Altneuland*, meaning "Old New Land." When the U.N. declared Israel a State in 1948, the ceremony had to take place in Tel Aviv, because Jerusalem was under siege. Today, Israelis consider Independence Hall the most important modern historical place in their country.



Independence Hall. Photo by Treaty Bartley

At Independence Hall, everyone gathers in the very room where Ben-Gurion declared Israel a state—a historic radio recording of his voice resounding in the room. A group of Birthright students (Jewish young adults ages 18 to 26 from the U.S. and Canada) happen to be visiting Independence Hall at the same time as this group; and following Ben-Gurion's declaration, the room erupts into the Israeli national anthem.



Birthright participants at Independence Hall. Photo by Elizabeth Bigwood

In closing her remarks the docent speaks personally about some of the struggles still facing Israel. "The wall and roadblocks are bad, but I want to be able to go to the mall with my daughter and buy her shoes and come out alive," she says. "But it doesn't mean we don't dream that one day we will tear down walls."

Everyone agrees that Independence Hall is "very important" to visit, however, a number of planners agree that it needs to be framed with a particular point-person meeting the group for an introduction, especially if there will be other groups there at the same time. "The docent made assumptions that everyone here was Jewish. She should qualify who the group is before making a



Photographs from the Shalom Tower's collection of images documenting Israel's founding and early years. Courtesy of

presentation,” says one of the planners. Rachel thinks that hearing the original recording of Ben-Gurion was neat, but she notes that she might skip the introductory film, as it is redundant of previous films the group watched at the Spielberg Archive. Allie, however, feels strongly that “the film tied a lot together” for her. Overall, the consensus is that it was a “highlight” to be in the room where Ben-Gurion spoke and declared independence for Israel. They all conclude that if someone were to take a day trip to Tel Aviv, Independence Hall would be a “must-see.”

Leaving Independence Hall, Bena continues the walking tour through **Tel Aviv’s “White City,”** in the area of **Rothschild Boulevard**, declared by UNESCO as a World Heritage site due to its “outstanding architectural ensemble of the Modern Movement.” There are more than 5,000 Modernist-style buildings constructed in the 1920s and 1930s when European trained architects, inspired by the Bauhaus school, immigrated to Tel Aviv. This style of architecture has become one of Tel Aviv’s most visible characteristic. The Bauhaus architecture is symbolic of socialist ideals, with the low-rise buildings’ flat roofs designed as communal area for all residents, elegant curves, square balconies, and porthole windows. A Tel Aviv brochure states: “Once, they symbolized all that was modern about Tel Aviv. They were clean, sparkling, and new. And then they aged rather rapidly — helped along by neglect and the salty winds of the Mediterranean.” As noted, their aesthetic and historical value was recognized by UNESCO and now many Tel Avivans are renovating and preserving them. One example is

the boutique **Hotel Montefiore**, where the group stops for a site visit. It was opened about a year ago and has been authentically restored with 12 guest rooms, a restaurant, and a library (which can be used as a meeting room). Although it is a “wonderful” hotel with a “wonderful” restaurant, for many of the planners it would be “too small” for their groups. Rob perhaps sums up everyone’s evaluation by saying, “it’s a gorgeous impracticality.” Abby says she would recommend it to passengers extending their trip or alumni planning a trip on their own. Similarly, Allie says it would be fine for a small, special-ized trip. Michal adds that Tel Aviv is



Rothschild Boulevard. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

“developing more boutique hotels, with many being renovated presently.”

The group eats a casual lunch at Sweet Sins Restaurant, hosted by the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Tourism Association, and then moves on to the Carmel open-air market and the Nachlat Binyamin Pedestrian Mall with its arts and crafts bazaar. *Everyone enjoys the market, but no one would say it is essential. “It’s not a stopper of a market,” comments Treaty. Most would recommend it only if there is free time. If it were recommend, Michal suggests adding a street called “Sheinken St.,” where there are cafes and restaurants with outdoor sidewalk dining. One positive aspect of this market is that many found Nachlat Binyamin had a lot of nice gifts such as paintings, artwork, and creative jewelry. Several planners make purchases, including Michelle who says, “It was the only place in 9 days, where I found the type of landscape painting I was looking for.” Overall, the group thinks it would be best to make a visit to this market optional. Kristina offers a tip that she photocopies a street map for certain trips and labels particular areas so that passengers can go off on their own.*



An example of Tel Aviv’s famous Bauhaus-style buildings; Central Tel Aviv. Photos (top) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli,



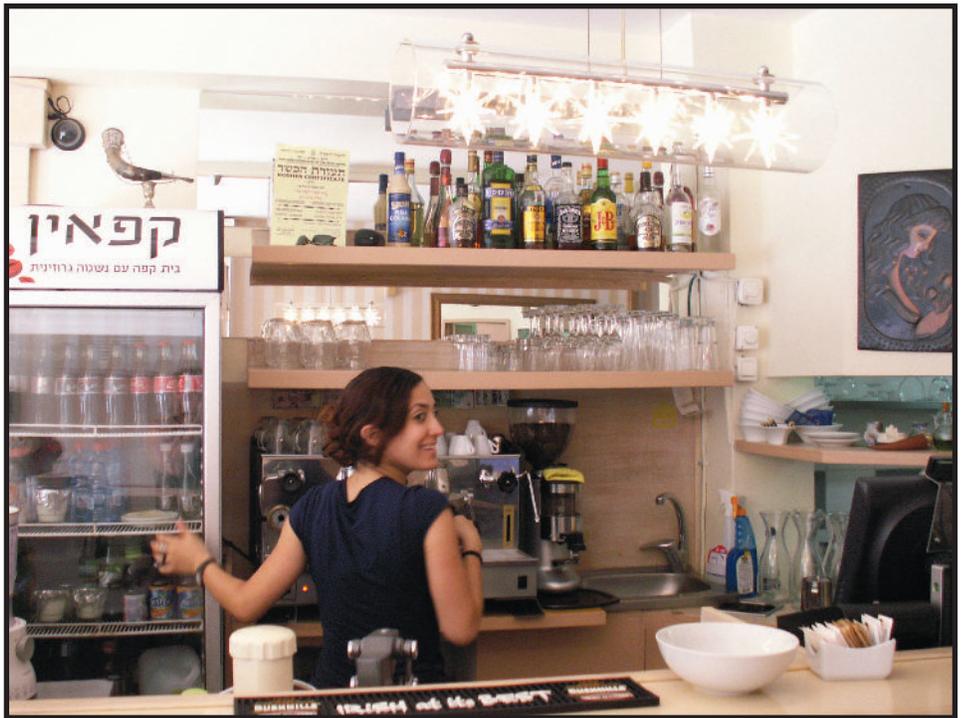
On the bus trip to visit the Peres Center for Peace at 16:00, there is a discussion about the value and comfort of walking as much as this group did today. Many did not find the architectural walk of Rothschild Boulevard worthwhile, though the group acknowledges it may be worn out at this point. Most of the planners, however, are thinking of 75-year-old passengers who may prefer to be on an air conditioned bus, with the added value that they can hear what the guide is telling them about the city. Michal mention, in response to this, that traffic is a problem in Tel Aviv, especially at rush hour with some 2 million people driving. This congestion is experienced on the way to the Peres Center for Peace, when the group decides to get dropped a few blocks ahead of the Centre in order to walk to its meeting



Carmel market and Nachlat Binyamin Pedestrian Mall arts and crafts bazaar. Photos by Chloe Wicks

there on time, while the bus sits in stand-still traffic.

The Peres Center for Peace was founded in 1996 by Nobel Peace Laureate and former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, “with the aim of furthering his vision in which people of the Middle East work together to build peace through socio-economic cooperation and development and people-to-people interaction.” Mr. Barak Greenapple, Projects Manager, and Ms. Michal Rubin, International Relations Coordinator, meet the group and introduce the Peres Center through a short, well-done video that explains the Peres Center’s activities, which focus on creating programs around common Arab and Israeli economic and social interests, with particular emphasis on Palestinian-Israeli relations. The diverse peacebuilding projects are developed to address these interests through partnerships with regional and international players. The areas of activity include: agriculture, community development, civil society dialogue and cooperation, peace education and culture, economics and business development, medicine and healthcare, and sports. More than 50,000 Palestinian and Israeli youth have participated in Peres Center initiatives.



Tel Aviv is known for its “cafe culture.” Photo by Chloe Wicks

The group learns that the Peres Center is in the process of constructing a new “Peres Peace House” on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, in the ancient city of Jaffa, which is home to Arabs and Jews alike. Symbolically, it will be considered more “neutral” ground. It is being designed by world renowned architect Massimiliano Fuksas to “reflect the hopes and aspirations of the diverse populations of the region.” It is expected to be “an architectural gem...serving as a symbol of inventiveness, innovation, and change,” according to the Peres Center for Peace.

Overall, the group feels very engaged and inspired by the Peres Center for Peace. “Ms. Rubin provided an excellent presentation,” comments one planner. “She was clear and concise; she knew what she was talking



Meeting at the Peres Center for Peace with Michal Rubin. Photos (left) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, (right) by Treaty Bartley

about.” Chloe says, “it was really wonderful to hear that every question we had was addressed. They are really addressing a complete package,” referring to the fact that all the details are thought of, such as involving children’s parents so that what they learn through the Peres Center is reinforced at home, and involving the community...building stakeholders, etc. Another comments, “In this environment it’s a wonderful thing; I think our travelers would really respond well to it.” The only problem with which the planners struggle is how best to expose their travelers to the Center and how to incorporate it into their programming in a substantive way. All feel, as Allie says, that it could be valuable just to “expose” their travelers to the Peres Center for Peace, but they would like “more substance.” There are no volunteer options available for alumni groups and not many projects to participate in, as they are designed primarily for Palestinian-Israeli interaction. Trearty says, for example, that she couldn’t grasp the concept of alumni going to see a “Twinned Peace Sport Schools” soccer game...it’d be hit or miss. She adds, “You could perhaps bring in a project manager to frame a discussion.” All agree that the new Peres Peace House in Jaffa seems like it will be “incredible” and feel a visit there would “enrich” a Tel Aviv itinerary.

Abby notes that “what we didn’t get was who Shimon Peres was and what he did in the Israeli government. He’s such a major character in politics. There’s a lot of modern confliction about Peres, and it would be good to bring this up. Maybe it could be an added component on the day of visiting the Knesset and Israeli Supreme Court visit. If you are visiting the Peres Center, you should have some context ahead of time.” A few suggest using time on the bus to have a quick lecture ahead of time. Everyone is disappointed not to meet Shimon Peres, as was stated on the original itinerary. They think the idea of meeting him was “very exciting” and would be for their passengers too.

The group meets Ms. Ety Gargir, General Manager of the **Tel Aviv-Jaffa Tourism Association**, at the **White Pergola restaurant** at 20:000 in the old Tel Aviv Port, which has been turned into an area of entertainment and restaurants, including “Bayit BeNamel” center for art & fashion, as noted on the itinerary. Given the group’s dinner this evening, its scheduled visit to the old Tel Aviv Port the next day is cancelled. The interior of White Pergola is inviting with its modern, spacious, fresh feel and bold blue and white design; however, everyone is eager to dine al fresco on the old fishermen’s wharf taking in the view of the Mediterranean Sea and its ambience. Ms. Gargir introduces the group to the restaurant’s owners explaining she chose the White Pergola not only for its “wonderful” food and view, but also because of what it stands for. It is co-owned by an Israeli and an Arab. “I wanted to show you co-existence does exist in the world,” says Ms. Gargir. “They are business partners and best friends. They are living together and doing business together.”

The dinner begins with a large assortment of meze, including Israeli salad, carrot salad and matboucha (cooked red pepper and tomato salad), labane with cucumber, olive and pepper salads, and fresh pita and humus. Many order grilled fish or shellfish dishes for the main course, and a sampling of desserts tops off the meal.



White Pergola restaurant dessert selection; Ety Gargir and the White Pergola’s co-owner. Photos by Elizabeth Bigwood

The Mediterranean and European dishes are “excellent,” say the majority of the group. The only complaint is the “spotty service,” though a few note the restaurant seems exceptionally crowded and thought the waiters might be “overwhelmed.” Speaking of the owners’ personal story, one planner comments that seeing such relationships between Arabs and Jews is a “very nice theme carried through the trip.”

Following the dinner, Ms. Gargir shares her thoughts on Tel Aviv, “a city that never sleeps. Tel Aviv is the center of culture in Israel.” A joint municipality since the early 1950s, Jaffa and Tel Aviv are, respectively, the oldest and newest cities in the Middle East. Jaffa

was a notable port city for some 4,000 years, while Tel Aviv just celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2009 with outdoor festivals, art shows, sporting events, historic exhibitions, and numerous community projects. Ms. Gargir says tourism has been strong in Tel Aviv, perhaps in part because of the centennial celebrations, but also because it’s a “cutting edge city” attracting young people. It has “chic lounges, fashionable restaurants, edgy theater performances,” and a “thriving cultural life and nightlife.” A book that Ms. Gargir gave everyone called “City Guide Tel Aviv” (Crossfields Publishing) further describes Tel Aviv as “a Mediterranean city with a Levantine flavor and a European twist. It has a liberal, laid-back atmosphere, a beach-oriented summer culture... Tel Aviv’s residents have an ongoing romance with their city, and first-time visitors are quickly seduced as well—once they see past the urban grit.” The city hosts one of the largest annual gay pride parades in the world, commonly attracting more than 100,000 participants and spectators. Its cafe culture (especially outdoor cafes) is said to be an integral part of the city’s character and its restaurants have attracted the attention of prominent international critics. There are dozens of art galleries, a critically acclaimed opera company, a world-renowned symphony orchestra, and a dozen theaters. Tel Aviv has one of the highest numbers of theater attendees in the world, per capita. Ms. Gargir emphasizes that the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Tourism Association is interested in helping travel planners and tour operators put together specific programs. “Don’t hesitate to call me,” she says. Tel Aviv and Jaffa are working diligently to promote their municipality and attract travelers. Forthcoming will be a complimentary “city pass” for every tourist visiting Tel Aviv-Jaffa.

Most were too tired after the dinner to accompany Bena to a few “**local entertainment nightlife spots**” and instead returned directly to the Dan Tel Aviv. Those who went to the bars/night clubs say the experience was fun, and they would offer it as an option for their travelers. It would be a “don’t-miss” for a young alumni group.



The White Pergola at old Tel Aviv Port, which has been turned into an area of entertainment and restaurants. Photo by Chloe Wicks

Wednesday, June 10, 2009 – Tel Aviv-Jaffa

Buffet breakfast at **Dan Hotel Tel Aviv**.

The day begins with a short bus drive from Tel Aviv's city center to **Old Jaffa** to learn about the city's rich history. While Tel Aviv was still an undeveloped landscape of sand dunes, Jaffa was a thriving port of the Mediterranean Sea with a history of some 4,000 years. Jaffa is referenced in the Bible three times, and it has been home to many peoples from the ancient Israelites to the Egyptians and the Crusaders to the Brits, Turks, Muslims, and Jews, as evidenced by the varied ruins that have been uncovered there. Today, Jaffa is called "the jewel of Tel Aviv." It is a mixed city of Arabs and Jews, with the population shifting constantly. "If you want to see co-existence," says Bena, "come to Jaffa." Bena explains that there are mixed Arab-Jewish neighborhoods with blurred borders, whereas Akko has more distinct borders. Once considered one of Israel's more dangerous cities, Jaffa is now considered "safe 24/7." As the group walks toward Jaffa's new city, constructed largely during the Ottoman period, Bena points out a 1906 clock tower built on Yefet Street and Mahmudiya Mosque. From here, the group is given free time to wander the sprawling flea market with its dusty antiques, colorful scenes of shopkeepers laying out Persian rugs, housewares, and stall upon stall of clothing for which to be bargained.

At 11:00 it is on to visit the **Ilana Goor Museum**, home of the renowned Israeli artist-sculptor, located in the first Jewish *khan* (hostel or guesthouse) built in the 18th century. It was originally a hostel for Jewish pilgrims arriving at the Jaffa port on their way to Jerusalem. Renovating the khan into her private home, Ms. Goor preserved the building's authenticity and opened the museum in 1995. Its massive rock walls and arches contrast the old with the new, as does the artwork throughout the three floors of the Illana Goor Museum. "The museum is a reflection of Israel, because Israel is a juxtaposition between old and new," explains the outstanding curator, who goes on to describe Ms. Goor as a self-taught artist and non-conformist. A candelabra may be set next



Images of Jaffa. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli



Photos from the Ilana Goor Museum by J. Mara DelliPriscoli; Curator photo (bottom left) by Elizabeth Bigwood

to an Ikea lamp, a new kinetic piece is contrasted with an ancient camel sculpture, an old plough is fashioned into an artful bench. Eclectic modern art, agricultural tools, and ethnic and folk art exist throughout in the form of sculptures, furniture, paintings, photographs and artifacts—some of which Ms. Goor created, and many other pieces representing countless styles, eras, and artists from both Israeli and around the world. . “Each room illustrates the carefully-thought-out positioning of art juxtaposing traditional and industrial works,” says the curator, and many of the rooms are symbolic such as the “chamber,” where a 200-year-old monastery table is surrounded by pieces representing the cycle of life and death. There is a working kitchen with a mixture of old and new “functional” art, and a balcony with magnificent views of the Mediterranean. *Many are so taken with the “fabulous” views and facilities that they ask about renting the Ilana Goor Museum for a private reception (this is possible for approximately 200 people, with catering included). The general consensus is that “not everyone may be interested in the art, but even if you don’t like the art, the building is amazing.” Treaty says, “There’s something here for everyone. It’s fascinating, and it’s a beautiful building.” Chloe appreciates the “phenomenal mixture of old and new” and says this is a fitting and interesting way to tie in Tel Aviv. Allie says she would rather give people the option to visit the museum or relax at the hotel, and a few noted that walking around the museum may be difficult for some due to the uneven floors and steep stairs (but it was noted than an elevator is available if the stairs are too challenging).*

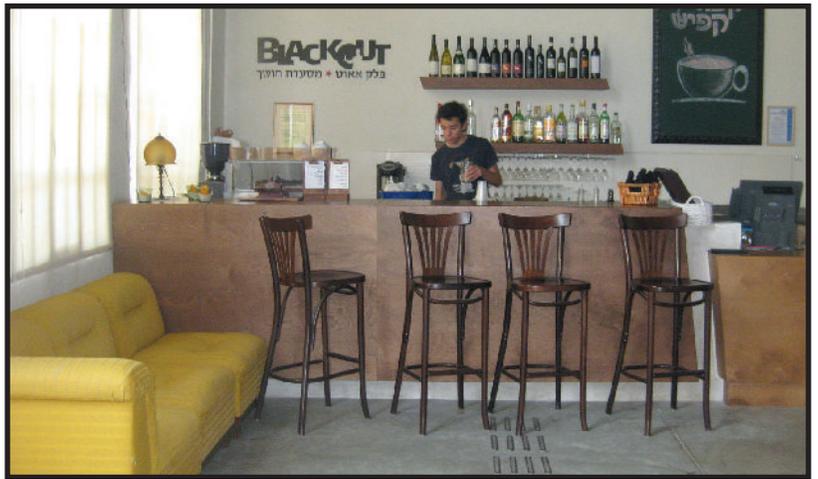


Images from Old Jaffa and “gallery alley.” Photos by Chloe Wicks. Sign-post photo by Kristina Nemeth

The visit to the Ilana Goor Museum leads organically into a walk through the winding lanes of Old Jaffa’s well preserved coastal stone enclave of art galleries and cafes. Tel Avivans view Old Jaffa as a welcomed getaway from the “city,” as does this group, which finds “gallery alley” to be particularly “neat.” Unfortunately, by the time St. Peter’s Monastery is reached around 13:00 it is closed, but the group takes in views of Tel Aviv’s skyline.

Overall, everyone agrees with Kristina’s sentiment that Old Jaffa is “really charming,” and it “historically seems to be a fascinating place like Akko.” She feels that a guide who has been with a group throughout the entire trip would be able to tie Jaffa into what already has been learned and seen up to this point in Israel.

At Ms. Gargir’s suggestion, a previously unscheduled visit is made to NaLagaat Center (also “Nalaga’at”), which was established by the “Nalaga’at” non-profit organization in December 2007 with the purpose of offering a theater stage for deaf-blind, deaf, and blind people. Since opening to the public, the center has become a place where people who can hear and see and people with hearing and/or vision impairments can meet and communicate. About 70 people are employed to run the theater, a restaurant, and a cafe. At the “BlackOut” Restaurant, patrons dine in total darkness and dishes are served by blind waiters. The recently designed coffee shop, Café Kapish, offers a variety of dishes, fine coffee, and an “out of the ordinary communication experience” with deaf and hearing-impaired waiters who engage patrons using sign language. As the venues at Nalaga’at are closed during the group’s visit, no one is able to experience them first-hand, but the group is told that visitors to the cafe are surprised by “how easy communicating without words can be” and what a “life-changing” experience the Black-Out Restaurant proves for those who have dinner there. Everyone thinks Nalaga’at is interesting and very worthwhile, however, the majority of planners struggle with where it would “fit into the trip,” as Abby articulates. Rob says, “It would be a do-not-miss if I were pointing a traveler to what to do upon returning a second time to Israel. If you are looking for extraordinary things Israelis do, it would be worth including...and there seemed to be something that shows Israeli sensitivity toward human needs and aspirations in every city.” Kristina says, “It’s a good optional evening event.” Rob agrees, saying: “People would be blown away; and, if it were well explained beforehand, people would be talking about it on flight home



Snapshots from Nalaga'at. Photos by Elizabeth Bigwood

and for weeks after.” Rachel says, “If you create a program that emphasizes cultural experiences, it would work under this umbrella. The theater is extraordinary and for the age-group of our travelers, this experience would have meaning (they are facing hearing loss, loss of sight...and it would be comforting). For young alums it could be interesting; perhaps there are volunteer opportunities that could be created.” Chloe says, with limited time, she would have “a hard time choosing between a public performance offered by the Peres Center vs. Nalaga’at. Both were very meaningful. After seeing the BlackOut Restaurant I would be interested in having this dinner experience [as an alternative to White Pergola]. It’d be nice to have this option.”

The group then rearranges its afternoon plans in order to make a site visit to the **Alexander Suites Hotel**, which is located on Tel Aviv’s beach promenade, next to the city’s Old-Port district. In 2007 it underwent massive renovation to create about 52 spacious suites. “While it tastefully decorated in a modernist-style, clean, and highly professional” no one thinks it is particularly suitable for their groups. There are also concerns about what seems to be a more “isolated” location with an empty lot next door, although the group is told there are development plans for the area. Some do not feel visiting the Alexander Suites Hotel is a good use of their time, and another comments that she would rather have seen the Carleton Hotel, which her travelers will be staying at on a forthcoming Israel tour.

The final stop of the day is for a stroll through the lanes of **Neve Tzedek**, Tel Aviv’s oldest neighbourhood (1887), which has been restored with museums, galleries, and coffee houses including the Susan Delal Center for Dance & Theater. With the group’s limited time there is no “formal” tour of the area and its attractions, nor of the Nahum Gutmann Museum, which was listed on the itinerary; instead, everyone is given an hour to have lunch and explore at leisure. Although the renovated Neve Tzedek area is mainly an upscale neighborhood that may be called “yuppy,” it does not feel pretentious and is populated with chic clothing, jewelry, and art boutiques. The “elegantly” renovated



Old Jaffa port. Photo by Chloe Wicks



Tel Aviv's trendy Neve Tzedek neighborhood. Photos (left) by Chloe Wicks, (right) by Kristina Nemeth

late-19th century homes give Neve Tzedek a charming appearance, and everyone finds the neighborhood to be “visitor friendly” and “a great area for wandering.” Several people follow Bena’s suggestion and eat lunch at “Suzanna” restaurant (Shabazi Street), which they say the food is “quite good.” While there, Liz meets a Smith College alumna with her grandchildren. Michelle says she would rather have spent more time walking in Neve Tzedek than in Tel Aviv. This leads to a discussion about flipping the itineraries for June 9th and 10th. Most agree that transitioning from the “old” (Haifa and all previous site visits) to the “new” (Tel Aviv) is too overwhelming. They’d rather re-arrange their itineraries to transition into Tel Aviv through Jaffa on the first day. They also like the idea of visiting Jaffa by boat. Liz would call it “Jaffa by Sea.”

After returning to the Dan Tel Aviv, the group gathers for its final debriefing and a meeting with Timor Benichou, a freelance tour escort who works as a tour host for AHI Travel Corp. Many in the group had asked to meet with her for her perspective on bringing U.S. travelers to Israel. The complete notes from this meeting are available on page106.

Everyone likes the Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv and feels it is “one level up from the other hotels in which we’ve stayed.” Many comment on the unobstructed view from their rooms toward the Mediterranean and the hotel’s central location. For those who took an early morning swim in the sea, it was a plus to have a beach directly across the street from the hotel. However, others find this location to be a drawback, as the rooms are “a bit noisy” because of the proximity to the beach and street (though, admittedly this group stayed in rooms on the ground floor). “I like the view, amenities, and cleanliness,” says Michelle. All agree and add that the customer service is excellent, the beds comfortable, and the breakfast room and lounge impressive.

A general discussion ensues about touring Tel Aviv. As noted earlier, there are some questions about driving versus walking, due mainly to the hustle-and-bustle, noise, and heat. Some question whether Tel Aviv needs to be included at all, to which Michal responds: “for a tour that isn’t a pilgrim tour and has the purpose of ‘knowing’ Israel today, you must include Tel Aviv, even if only for one day, because it is so different than anywhere else in Israel. It is a major part of Israel because it’s most influential in terms of its culture. It will give you the full picture [of Israel today]. From an educational standpoint it is an important piece of the puzzle.”

Several speak to the value of possibly using Tel Aviv as a site for exploring Israeli immigration and the process of becoming an Israeli citizen. An additional topic arises on looking at the immigrant populations in Israel such as the Ethiopian Jews and the Sudanese. From the lively discussion, it is clear that everyone is quite interested in the topic of immigration, how Israeli citizenship works, and the concept of “The Right to Return.” The group

decides that having a topical discussion like this very early in the trip is important, because it will frame why Israel is fighting so hard for its nation.

Departing the hotel on time, the group arrives for a 19:30 dinner at **Cordelia**, in Jaffa, one of Israel's top restaurants. Named for the youngest, loyal daughter of Shakespeare's King Lear, Cordelia is an elegant, sophisticated restaurant "designed like a palace" with a "supremely romantic, soothing atmosphere." Inspired by classic French restaurants, crystal chandeliers hang from the high ceilings and candlelights provide a warm glow that reflects from the restaurant's mirrors in this Crusader-era building. Mosaic tile floors, shelves



Farewell dinner at Cordelia restaurant, with Chef Nir Zook pictured in the center. Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

of stacked wine bottles, antique paintings, and an eclectic collection of objects from around the world add to the visual feast. It sets the perfect mood for the group's reflective final evening in Israel. Celebrity Chef Nir Zook greets the group, charming everyone with his approachability and smile even before anyone had tasted his gourmet "fusion cuisine." *Eretz Magazine* writes, "Chef Zook serves French cuisine with a Middle Eastern touch that incorporates the many culinary styles he was exposed to while growing up in Kfar Varburg, on Israel's southern coast." As one beautiful presentation after another appears, all comment on the "gourmet flavors," and "exquisite, unusual pairing of foods." While the menu changes regularly with the seasonal and local ingredients available, the group is certain the experience at Cordelia will not disappoint, and many speak of the possibility of arranging a cooking class with Chef Zook. This unforgettable seven-course dinner makes for a special final meal in Israel.

The 21:30 departure for Ben Gurion International Airport (approximately 20 km from Tel Aviv) gives the group enough time to make it through the baggage check, where almost everyone's luggage is examined. Most take

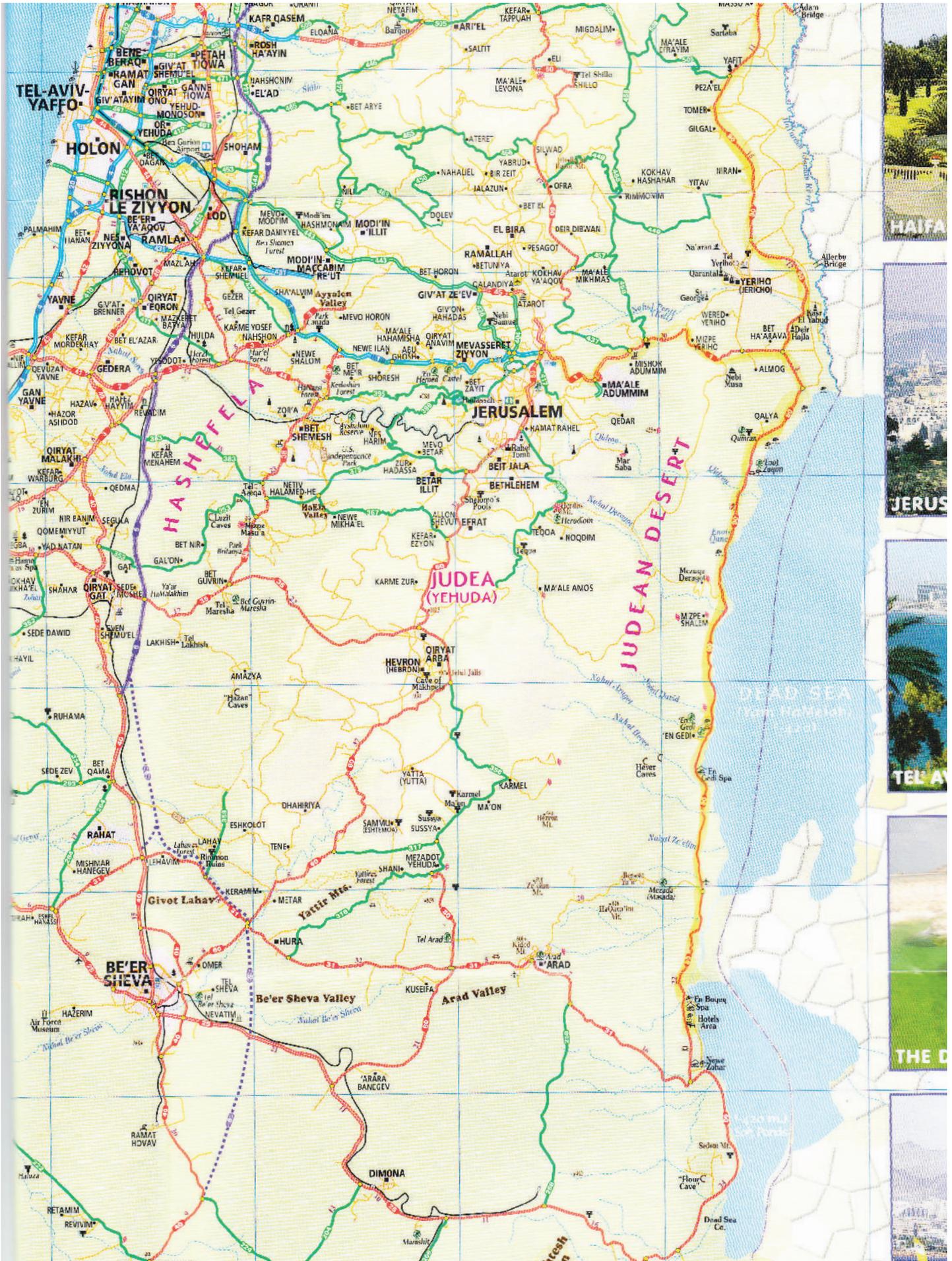


advantage of the "VAT refund," which is for tourists who purchased goods in Israel. Israeli law allows for a special arrangement whereby tourists who do not have Israeli citizenship or an Israeli passport may receive a refund on the VAT (17% value-added tax) they have paid for certain purchases made at shops approved by the Israel Tax Authority and the Ministry of Tourism. A sticker noting the shop's participation should be placed on the door or window of the shop—and a customer then receives a special VAT invoice (also called a "Refund Invoice"). Other specific conditions apply, but many in the group did receive some type of refund. Both flights departed on time, with the Delta Airlines flight leaving at 23:35 and the Continental Airlines flight leaving at 23:55. *Shalom!*

Map of Israel



Pictured on this page and the next is the map of Israel that professional tour guide Amir Orly used to trace the “Educational” trip route for the travel planners. The yellow line represents the travel route. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the Dead Sea region appear on the next page.



III. ANCILLARY NOTES, INDIVIDUAL IMPRESSIONS & PROPOSED ITINERARIES



Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Ancillary Notes & Collective Commentaries

General Take-Away Impressions of Israel and Topics Not Included Previously:

- Any visit to Israel is bound to be kaleidoscopic.

- I knew Israel was a huge technology center, but the thing that is surprising to me is that Israel is an incredibly sophisticated destination in terms of food and wine too; it's more than frosting on the cake because Israel already has history, religion, culture. It has contemporary attractions (e.g. modern art, glass, sculptures) along with ancient sites.

- Figuring out how best to pace the trip in Israel will be one difficulty. As Amir notes, "The biggest challenge in Israel is not what to do but what not to do."

- When you are in the Holy land there are many paths to the holy.

- Visiting the "Holy Land," I think many passengers will be interested in learning about all forms of religion / spiritualism and how they are practiced."

- I'm hoping to find a way to bridge the historical/religious sites with contemporary culture and issues. The question our program always asks is why is this place important now and what does it mean to people today?

- I would imagine that our alumni who have not traveled to Israel will be most interested in the sites in Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. Since many of the tour operators outside the affinity/educational travel market offer these we would need to give our alumni a reason to travel with us over anyone else.

- Rob suggests promoting visits to Israel as "Israel Beyond the Headlines." He says, "Our exposure to Israel is mainly through newspapers, and we have to address the issues we confront. What Americans discover here and what we've discovered is a dynamic nation developing itself with intellectual resources. Americans would profit from discovering the dynamism of [Israel]—not just the wine regions, but also the exciting political realities today. How do we deepen the exposure? How do we create an opportunity for meaningful dialogue about what's going on today? How do we have an opportunity to hear from opposing points of view? There are different political philosophies in and among realities today. You won't come to a conclusion, but you'll be engaged. And the issues are profound. They are profound and engageable."

- Many feel it is important for an Israel program to have a "balanced perspective."

- Treaty put together a Harvard program to Israel two years ago, which included a Harvard professor who was strong in the area of peace talks and who worked on the itinerary. "It was great because of his perspective. He had Israelis and Palestinians come to the hotel where the passengers were staying in Jerusalem," she says. "When we went to different institutions, we had both sides represented. We had Palestinian and Israelis together. You can do so much here [in Israel], but you still need the pieces of the history and tourism to balance it. You can only add the pieces if you have someone really invested in the itinerary. You need tourism to pull it together. It was because of our professor and his relationships that the trip worked so well."

- Kristina says that for certain institutions like Harvard that are working with professors all the time and when there are tour leaders you can do this, but for organizations without built-in contacts it would be useful if the Ministry of Tourism can suggest organizations that focus on this kind of dialogue. (e.g. Kristina organized a

trip to Belfast and worked with the tourism board to bring in a Protestant representative. They had a wonderful dialogue because the organizations and towns there were open to speaking with the group.) “If you don’t have a professor to accompany the trip, if the tourism board knows of NGOs working on particular issues you can arrange for tourists to go to a panel discussion,” says Kristina.

- Trearty adds “even those institutions with built-in contacts would benefit because often in-country hosts knows more than we do.”

- Allie says, “It would be good to make a note about the terrain and climbing, looking at [Jerusalem, for example]. From the perspective of an 80-year-old who may have waited his whole life to come here, it would be helpful for us to set realistic expectations ahead of time.”

- This trip did not focus on the high-tech industry at all, but the group learned that high-tech is Israel’s biggest export today. Most felt this could be an interesting program component, particularly if meetings were arranged with the CEOs and entrepreneurs at these companies, mainly in Tel Aviv and Haifa.

- Most of the planners were remiss not to experience Shabbat in an Israeli home. While Michal clarified that “visiting Shabbat would be nice in religious homes only and we didn’t include it because most citizens of Israel are just regular people who have regular Shabbat,” members of the group comment that this is exactly what will be important to their passengers. Trearty asks how many people have been to a Shabbat dinner (with very few raising their hands) to make the point that being in a home for a special dinner like this is important not just for the religious aspect but to experience the ceremony, family, and food. Amir explains this may be hard to organize except for in a hotel, but the group agrees it would only want to do such a dinner in a home, and they say they regularly organize experiences like this in other countries and would attempt to create them in Israel.

Miscellaneous Recommendations, Reminders, and Points for Consideration:

- Several of the female planners mention that they wished they had packed more dresses and skirts.

- One of the biggest differences in Israel is that the work-week starts on Sunday and ends on Thursday. This is because Friday is Shabbat (Sabbath) eve.

- According to Israeli law non-Israeli travel programs/operators need to hire a guide and then they can add on a faculty member, if they wish. Israel has a very unique and rigorous guide-training program. As Amir explains, “being a tour guide is a high-profile job in Israel” that requires specific academic and professional training.

- In addition to a guide, a tour manager is definitely needed in Israel.

- Having a good map of Israel is important for the many inevitable geographic questions that will arise.



Israel Defence Force women pose for a photo. National service is compulsory; for most Israelis the army is a rite of passage . Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Safety and Security Notes:

- The fact that we are here is an answer about how we feel regarding security and safety.

- We were in Jerusalem for an 11 a.m. emergency drill when the sirens went off and nothing happened. It went smoothly.

- When you are in Israel you get the sense of “preparedness,” which you cannot know until you come here. We can now convey this.

- There’s a definite comfort level. We don’t feel uncomfortable here. We’d walk down the street on our own.

- When someone asked if a security guard could be secured for a particular trip (as is the standard practice in Egypt), the response was: “You can ask and then they will be supplied.”

No one felt this was necessary from their experience, though.



Chloe poses for a photo with members of the Israeli Defense Forces in Jaffa. Photo by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

While still in Jerusalem the question is asked: what has made you most comfortable here?

The responses follow.

- Chloe: “Seeing diversity. In India it’s really crowded and people are on top of each other and you have space invasion. Here it is very calm, and this sense of calm in Jerusalem is really wonderful. I thought there would be much more hustle and bustle.

- Jennifer: “It’s not Istanbul.”

- Allie: “The hospitality”

- Kristina: “The things that cause me fear like drugs and homeless people in San Francisco don’t cause me fear here. You don’t see that.”

- Liz: “Most people, if they choose to come to Israel, are committing to the idea of coming knowing dangers exist. I do think people will expect something about safety and security in their pre-departure information.”

- Rob: “I say, ‘don’t worry, you’ll be safe, you’re not flying through NYC... In all seriousness, I think that we are here now and can report on our experience; and our own inspection should offer abundant reassurance barring another CNN reported disaster or even a flu breakout. If people are terrified of coming to Israel, I wouldn’t want them to come to Israel.’”

The question is asked: “Did you find security cumbersome when going through buildings like the Supreme Court?”

- None of it has been cumbersome, and all of it is routine. The airport was welcoming.

- It can be intimidating to see machine guns the first time, and then you are used to it.

- Everyone has been so friendly that this is reassuring and erases any fear.
- Coming here and offering a program will say that we support Israel.
- The State Department still has a travel warning, and we need to address this.

Notes on Insurance and Liability in Israel and Palestinian Territories:

During one debriefing the group questions whether anyone really knows the procedure in Israel in the event of a worst-case scenario? The consensus is that no one really knows all that much about insurance, U.S.-Israeli policies, and evacuation procedures. The group thinks this will be important to learn more about after the trip.

Several ideas arise:

- Call major insurance carriers to see if there is any difference in price and policy for traveling to Israel.
- Given the issue of “perception of safety,” it may be worthwhile to come up with a way to address the steps and timeline should an incident happen so that we planners can share this with our Israel travelers if they call up and ask what would happen in the event of..., though a few note that it may be hard to know unless you know exactly what the situation is. Still, all agree a “preparedness plan” would be prudent.
- The “preparedness plan” should include: What are our policies and Israel’s? What would be the global response? We know what the State Department would do and what the Embassy would do, but what does the government of Israel do?
- Another mentions the value of checking with study abroad offices to find out the policies as they relate to U.S. students studying abroad in Israel.

Recommended Reading from Planners on the EDUCATIONAL:

- Discovery Channel’s *Insight Guide Israel* (Paperback) by Brian Bell (Editor), Simon Griver (Editor), Hilary Genin (Editor)
- The Middle East and South Asia* by Malcom B. Russell (The World Today Series, Stryker-Post Publications, Harpers Ferry, WV)
- Lonely Planet’s *Israel and the Palestinian Territories*
- The Lemon Tree* by Sandy Tolán (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007)



*A snapshot from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem synagogue; A little boy peers from a doorway in Old Akko.
Photos (left) by Elizabeth Bigwood, (right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli*

Suggested Special-Interest Israel Topics & Itinerary Themes

Special-interest subjects around which educational travel itineraries can be built:

Peace Process	Roots of religious empires
Religious	Politics & Government
Israeli-Palestinian relationship	Arts
Comparative Religions	Jewish history
Conflict/Resolution/Peace	Food, Wine and Art (Can go back to the ancient traditions in all of these area... and bring it into the present with the slow food movement, artist communities, etc.)
Biblical tour focusing on Christianity	Music
Historical/History	Archaeology
Cultural	
Art and Architecture	

Suggested Itinerary Themes and Titles:

Israel's Innovators - *or some title that would look at all the areas where Israel is a global leader.*

Israel: A View from the Inside

Integrating the Holy Land: Coexistence in Israel Today and Tomorrow

Israeli Art - National Identity through the Eyes of Artists and Architects

The Cultural Diversity of Israel

Understanding Contemporary Spirituality in Israel

Father Abraham: Following the Abrahamic Tradition in the World's Three Great Religions

Israeli Sustainability - Water & Agriculture and the development of the Kibbutz

A History of the Holy Land: From the Romans to the Israelis

Israel's Development - Film & Music of the Zionists and Contemporary Culture

Israel: Dissecting the Modern State

Making the Desert Bloom: How Israeli Innovations Have Brought Change and Promise to the Middle East

Based on their experience, the Israel Educational participants were asked how an experiential, hands-on component could be added to an educational travel Israel itinerary. The following are their comments and recommendations:

Based on this trip, I find this hard to answer. I would need to research volunteer opportunities that would be most useful. Visiting an archaeological dig is wonderful, I'm not sure how much fun the digging in the dirt is for people. Again, would need to research this more fully.

The coexistence panels we participated in and the meet-the-people opportunities are a great help. Home visits are also very useful.

Cooking classes in Middle Eastern Cuisine; Panel discussions on coexistence.

Ein Hod's Artists Village would be the place where I would offer a hands-on art lesson. Especially if I were programming a special-interest trip on art.

Working with the antiquities department was wonderful, and the City of David is a perfect location. I would most likely do research to see if my university has any archeologists working in the area.

Jaffa and Akko had archaeological volunteer opportunities. I'd consider a dig associated with the key archaeological institutions working in these cities.

The archeological dig at the City of David was fascinating, but it would have to be optional because not everyone could do it. A cooking lesson is a great idea, and I wonder if someone like Caroline from Al Diyar would be interested in such a thing. Alternatively, perhaps a hands-on experience in Ein Gedi could be multi-faceted: tending the beautiful gardens, working at the zoo (which we didn't see), and/or having a class that would include selecting the food for the lunch or evening meal, a cooking lesson, and perhaps even assisting with the cooking for the fellow passengers or the members of the kibbutz. The dark dinner at Nalaga'at would be fantastic.



Student volunteers excavate an archaeological site in the City of David. Photos (left) by Chloe Wicks, (right) by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

University of Haifa Unabridged Meeting Notes on Tourism in Israel

The “**EDUCATIONAL**” met with several representatives at the University of Haifa on June 8, 2009, to discuss the role the University of Haifa can play in developing customized special-interest, academic tours to Israel. The meeting also focused on various aspects of tourism in Israel, including overcoming perceived safety concerns among American travelers.

The University of Haifa, established in 1963 and granted independence in 1972, has a mission to educate and serve all sectors of Israeli society. It prides itself in being the "most pluralistic" institution of higher learning in Israel. It is also the largest comprehensive research university in northern Israel. Located atop Mt. Carmel, "it provides a unique backdrop for novel interdisciplinary programs, cooperative endeavors with academic institutions around the world and a diverse student body of more than 17,000 [students]." The University of Haifa has more than 50 departments and more than 60 research centers and chairs and six faculties: humanities, social sciences, law, education, social welfare and health sciences, and sciences and sciences education. It also has a school of marine sciences and a Jewish-Arab Center, an interdisciplinary research institute within the university that is renowned for its work in promoting Jewish-Arab cooperation. There's an Ethiopian Student Assistance Program and a unique "battlefield to classroom" project for officers of Israel's Defense Forces. Many other unique programs and initiatives exist at the University of Haifa as well.

Mr. Amos Gaver, Vice President for External Relations at the University of Haifa, explained that there are many possibilities for partnerships between the University and tour groups. For example, he says, "it's possible to arrange trips on research boats to study the sea...trips in woods to learn about the flora and fauna...and programs for art and music. Anything you think that would be fun and interesting for your clients, we are willing to work with you to arrange. We are here to serve you, because we want to make our university more well known in the States. We hope to do this by bringing your people here for custom-made and tailored programs according to what your needs are."

Mr. Gaver explained that the University integrates its faculty into these programs and that meetings also can be arranged with students of all ethnicities, religions, backgrounds, and nationalities.

Kristina asks what the University excels at and Mr. Gaver states, "it is very good in most areas. It excels in archaeology, neurobiology, marine biology, psychology, law, art therapy, music, and the arts." He added that the University also has the largest number of Arab students because it is in the Galilee region. "Haifa is where you can really meet coexistence for all religions, he says. "You can have a 'true' discussion here. We are not just for co-existence. It is one face. It isn't the only face and it's not primary face...it's just part of it." Rob agrees that from his experience so far, "it is a manifestation of the best of co-existence because you are working together and living together." The University of Haifa represents a message that many Americans would like to hear.

Mr. Gaver's colleagues, Shirley Gerzon, Executive Director of International Relations and the Division for External Relations and Resources Development, and Daphna Tzur, the Visits Coordinator, says the University has a "wonderful visitor's department that can help arrange most programs."

Professor Yoel Mansfeld, Head of the Center for Tourism, Pilgrimage, and Recreation Research, specializes in sustainable tourism, ecotourism and tourism & security. He presented to the group Haifa's tourism strategy and emphasized the value of "slow travel" with a one-destination focus of going deeper and experiencing more. Rob agrees, "it is commonly understood among planners that people appreciate seeing the great monuments of a destination but what people remember most vividly are other people and the opportunity to engage people in other communities."

Dr. Mansfeld says, "If you come on a tourism trip you meet service providers rather than meeting Israelis. If you come to one university you have a much better opportunity to know the different fractions of society, you get to know the city better...and have different levels of experiencing it. Hearing a lecture and then experiencing it is much better. (Especially for your alumni who may have visited Israel before.)"

Dr. Mansfeld says, "If you visit the Holy Land you get a religious/political experience and there are a lot of social issues related to these sites too. We can almost integrate everything." His ideal itinerary would be called a "Balanced Perspective Political Itinerary" (an 8-10 day program):

- I would start with the fence. Either south to north or north to south along fence, with 200-300 meters on each side. This way you'd get the whole political story from many perspectives.
- Another alternative is simply go to conflict areas and then go to areas like Haifa where there is coexistence.
- If you decide to concentrate on Galilee, it has many political issues that you can explain and portray like the needs of the Arab population to have land for expansion; the Israeli phobia of losing Galilee because of different birth rates; the historical issue between settling Galilee and north of Israel; and/or what "independence" means to Arabs and Israelis from a social and political point of view.

"It is small yet rich country," says Dr. Mansfeld. "If you want to show different landscapes of Israel...it's very good opportunity to wrap your tour with this kind of presentation. You can do it by traveling north to south to see the entire country with different hot spots along way."

"Remember from a tourism point of view and from understanding needs of travelers who have academic affiliation, the University of Haifa is in a good position to be your local representative in the sense that we are the only university that deals with tourism from 3 different perspectives:

1. Center for tourism pilgrimage recreation and research (which does research planning and development). The development of tourist products, itineraries (especially heritage and cultural perspectives...not just in Israel, but in heritage areas around the world, such as a Sephardic Jews' heritage trail in Spain). We also deal with educational programs. It can become not only a product for alumni but for their families too.
2. Israel School of Tourism is the largest facility in Israel training tour operators, guide, and agents. It used to be governmental and it was privatized about 15 years ago. The University of Haifa bought and owns it; it is 100% operated from Haifa.
3. Master's degree program at the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies trains people in tourism planning and development. Students earn an M.A. in Geography with special reference to tourism planning.

The University of Haifa understands tourism quite well. It's a good channel for you to consult and see if you can use the university to allow you to better understand the different products Israel offers and to what extent programs can be really tailor made.

Rob mentions it could be interesting to use the University of Haifa as a base. "One objective of our programs is to reintroduce the host university to the alumni traveling with us [and thus many of these programs have a faculty from the host university; however] this would be a superb opportunity to know a country and its own intelligentsia. There is a certain point in every trip when we are relying totally on a guide not on our own faculty; and there is a point when a guide becomes oppressive and it would be intriguing to have a faculty."

Liz agrees, acknowledging "You do begin to see a country through the lens of a guide." Dr. Mansfeld says, "In anthropology we say you see and experience your destination through someone else; it is filtering your experience. Filtering vs. facilitating."

There is some discussion about using the accommodations/facility of the University of Haifa, but Dr. Mansfeld explains the facility would be available only in summer, and then the faculty are not available.

Kristina says, "even if you bring faculty from your own school, you could still have a guest lecture. It also makes for a huge learning experience for faculty."

Going back to the discussion of slow tourism, Dr. Mansfeld says, one example is that you can "Stay in Haifa and dedicate your tour to nearby Akko. It is a whole universe in terms of politics, social problems, Middle East conflicts...all those layers of history there and you can engage in excavations. So unique, diverse, and interesting."

Rob agrees that his travelers prefer to stay in one place and unpack only once. He is intrigued by spending a week in Akko, but says it would be difficult to sell as his travelers "would like to visit Israel."

Liz feels there is "pent up demand for Israel at the moment."

A discussion of safety followed and Dr. Mansfeld described a study that the Israel Ministry of Tourism commissioned a few years ago on evaluating the Israeli tourism industry from different perspectives. One of key tasks was to think outside the box of marketing Israel. What kind of strategy should be used to attract more people here? He says an interesting and correct strategy was devised suggesting:

1. Keep promoting the country even in times of turbulence, instability, terrorism.
2. Forget about standard tourist products (pilgrimage, visiting friends & family, selling as triple S destination). Reposition as destination for special-interest groups.

The Ministry until three years ago didn't deal with these niche markets and wasn't seen as profitable because of size. If this policy is fully adopted you'll see here perhaps less visitors coming to Israel but better tourists in terms of spending power, environmental behavior, especially as result of Israel's commitment toward sustainable tourism. I would say you will get a lot of help from local agencies and the Ministry organizing tailor made groups if you go for it. Something substantial is changing in Israel tourism policy.

The Ministry has had a hard time in the U.S. in terms of how to break the first barrier of addressing the security issue, but recommendations include:

-Use a lot of testimonials. The challenge is breaking barriers while people are still at home and need to make the decision about whether to travel. They are reliant on the media. The media looks for scandals, terror activities, etc.

"One of my research areas is between security and tourism," says Dr. Mansfeld. "The problem is that when making decisions on your next trip you are making them thousands of miles away from the destination. You guys are developing your perceived risk mainly through media unfortunately, and media is biased. Once you are onsite you feel much more secure. This is why I would use a lot of testimonials. Israel now understands better what should be done in terms of conveying its security image. They understand this but are still afraid to take responsibility in terms of how they use security information. They still swipe the issue of hostility under the rug and try not to disclose information about what's going on. I am amazed that the information people get about problematic destinations like Israel is from the media or State Department. There's no information system developed by the Ministry of Tourism in which it could try to balance the bias of the two sources and provide tourists with real-time information on security situations, talk about it openly, tell potential tourists exactly what is the situation, what precautions should be taken, and how risky it is really to come here.

"The second issue is an insurance problem. If a travel advisory advises not to come to Israel this is a problem. In some countries the insurance company raises the premium up and it becomes too expensive.

"What New Zealand did to position itself as a capital of extreme tourism in the world: it decided to insure all tourists in case they run into some problem while engaged in extreme activities. I think Israel needs to take on

this responsibility and ensure all American tourists who want to come here are insured.

According to my studies, Americans are the most sensitive ones to security situations.

Dr. Mansfeld then handed over the discussion to Dr. Efraim Lev, Head of Special B.A. Programs at the University of Haifa, and a former coordinator for the Israeli Tourism Guide course for 10 years. He provided an overview of the guide training program, which is a professional 2-year course, requiring 500 hours, 60 tours. "It's one of the best, says Dr. Lev. "I haven't been there for 10 years, but studies cover pre-history to the 21st century in a range of different subjects. When they go on field trips, they get best guides and teachers from academia; therefore they are well trained and can cover a lot of topics, and yet each one also concentrates on one subject. Some also have B.A. or Ph.D.

When Abby asks whether she should ask for a guide who specializes in one subject, Dr. Lev suggests taking one guide for the whole trip and then when stationed in a specific area hiring a specialized guide from the University to focus, for example on an archaeological site that a specific faculty member excavated.

Chloe asks about the possibility of doing research on a marine vessel. Dr. Lev says this is not a problem, as there is a marine sciences center at the University. The vessel is part of the University of Haifa, and "if there is a propensity to pay, there is a willingness to supply." Scuba diving and excavating around the port of Caesarea is also a possibility."

Dr. Lev then showed the group a fabulous slideshow of Israel from his academic travels illustrating how Israel can be explored on a tour through multiple academic lenses. He shared some interesting ecological facts about Israel's estimated 2,700 species of plants. "Israel is very unique from a flora and fauna point of view," says Dr. Lev. "Being in between Asia, Africa, and Europe we are affected by different climates."

Israel's archaeology is also "unique and varied," because Israel is located "between the two ancient civilization powers (Egypt on the Nile and Mesopotamia to the north). Whenever these civilizations wanted to fight or have diplomatic relations, commerce, etc. it was on this land of Israel."

Similarly, explained Dr. Lev, "The Sea of Galilee is interesting from both a hydrology point of view and from a religious point of view."

In closing several people asked questions about some of the local food and wine movements and "agritourism." Responding to this, Dr. Lev mentioned that tourists can help pick olives during the harvest and press their own olive oil and/or make wine during the grape harvest.

An Israeli Tour Host's Perspective on Bringing U.S. Travelers to Israel

On the final day of the **EDUCATIONAL**, June 10, 2009, Timor Benichou, a freelance tour escort (tour host), came to the debriefing to speak with the group about her job and perspective on bringing U.S. travelers to Israel. She has served as a tour host for AHI Travel Corp.

The planners asked her a series of questions:

How many travelers do you recommend? Is 50 okay? Timor says 50 travelers is too many for touring. It presents challenges and people don't get to know each other. She recommends 30 people. With 30 people, you can really do everything.

What type of feedback have you received from the trips you has escorted? Timor recommended we read Nadine Holmes' blog about the Ohio State University Alumni Association's tour to Israel with AHI. It is available at http://www.ohiostatealumni.org/tours/israel_blog.php.

Timor says she has received really good feedback from small groups. We go to Druze families' homes, do lectures, and go to a kibbutz. For a lot of them it is quite surprising...not what they expect about Israel at all. It's not a religious trip.

How do you handle the Bethlehem issue? Timor says she is not taking any part of it, because of the U.S. Embassy warning. A lot of people come here to go to Bethlehem, so all of the hotels' reception desks know someone who can take travelers...but there is no security, no way to know what is going on. She says that 2-3 hours is enough for travelers to go and come back. Most of them are going anyway, so it's better that they arrange it with a professional, even though they are then asked to go to a store and buy souvenirs. Generally in Israel she says the tours do not provide shopping time.

What is your responsibility as a tour escort? I stay with the group 24/7, and then sometimes we work with one guide and sometimes with different guides. I do all coordination; if there are changes, I decide. Guide is here just to guide, and everything surrounding it I do. I also do PR with the people and answer their questions, etc.

How do you decide what to do? On a long trip, we see most of the Christian sites; on shorter trips we touch on only a few of them. The length of trip determines what we do. We always do Jerusalem, Tiberias, cruise on Sea of Galilee; we don't generally do Tel Aviv (if we do, we do the Bauhaus architecture). With AHI we also visit nonprofit organizations and families. Timor's advice on the length of a trip is 10 days minimum, including arrival and departure.

What kind of issues come up for first-time travelers? Timor says that what is really amazing is that for most of the people it is an extremely emotional trip, whether religious or non-religious. No matter where we go, one or two people cry. It's a small country, so 10 days you see it all, but when there's more time I prefer to spend more time in Jerusalem.

What are the primary religious denominations of your travelers? Timor says most of her groups are a mix of Jews and Christians, and this has gone well. She says generally the travelers she works with are not religious.

Do your travelers seem to feel safe? Timor says her travelers feel relaxed about security and that there is no need for a security guard. They are completely relaxed about it and no one is worried.

Do you have repeat travelers? I'm in contact with a lot of past travelers who do come again on their own. A lot of them come again because for them the trip was too short, especially in Jerusalem, so they want to come again. Some come with expectations of what they want to see the first time and so they return to see these sites the second time. The main problem she finds is that people don't see everything they want to see!

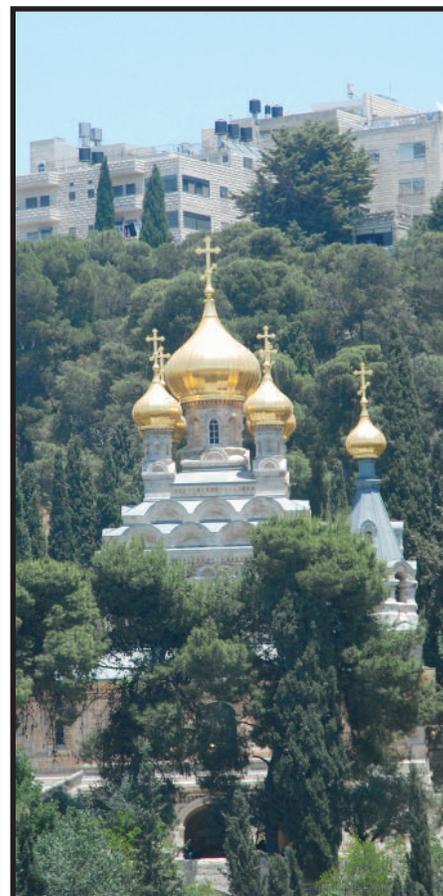
In which city do you prefer to start? Timor says it is generally best to start with Jerusalem and finish with Tel Aviv; for this she suggests pre-arrival extension rather than post-trip extension.

What is the primary age of your travelers? Timor's primary travelers are 60 to 65.

What do you do in the case of medical emergencies? Timor says she and other hosts know the medical centers in Israel. You pay in advance and it's a fixed fee at a hospital where there are English-speaking staff. The traveler needs to present his passport and pays something like 800NIS and then gets reimbursed in the States. As hosts, we know certain hospitals that are and doctors who are more helpful than others. The worst is if there's a medical emergency in the Dead Sea region.

Do you find your travelers can keep up in terms of walking and terrain? Timor says the Old City of Jerusalem is the difficult for them, because there is so much walking—but generally most of the sites are easy access. She prepares them that the Old City will be strenuous, and they generally keep up. Someone in a wheelchair can't do the Old City.

What time of year do you recommend visiting Israel? Timor says September/October is the best time to visit, as it is not too hot nor too cold. She wouldn't advise August!



Scenes from Jerusalem Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

IV. INDIVIDUAL IMPRESSIONS & PROPOSED ITINERARIES



Photo by Chloe Wicks

*Submitted by Treaty Bartley
Harvard Alumni Association*

Overwhelmingly, Israel is more than one could ever anticipate. A trip of a lifetime and personal goal, I embarked on this journey to gain insight into one of the most complex destinations and have the confidence to promote a trip to the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA). With first hand experience and the ability to dispel any rumors of Israel not being a safe destination to travel, it is a welcomed travel destination to our repertoire.



There was never a moment of fear, anxiety or being uncomfortable, quite the contrary—one of safety.

I still reflect in AWE of the amazing Democratic State of Israel. A spider web of political issues between the Israelis and Palestinians, it is not a topic even after endless discussions that one can wrap their brain around. To understand both sides, you would need to be there, because, as an outsider, it seems the solution should be simple—who doesn't want to live in peace and compromise; but at what cost? Like an onion, for every layer you peel back, there is another more complex one underneath with 1000s of years of history.

What resonated with me was that EVERY Jew around the world was welcome and had a home in Israel. The common bond of serving in the Israeli Army and defending what they believe in is apparent and continues to strengthen the love of Israel with its people.

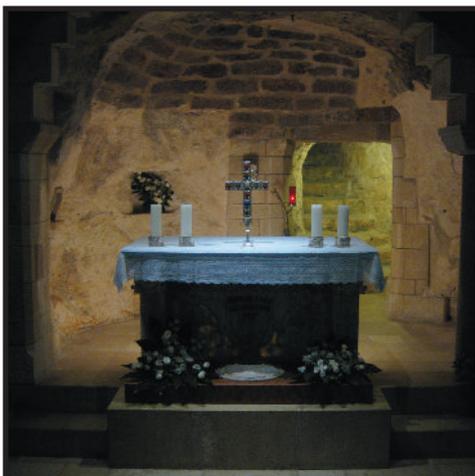
Even though ours was not a religious pilgrimage, one could not venture to Israel without visiting the sites. It is a nation and cornerstone for all faiths: the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Western Wall, the Rock, Bahai Shrine and Gardens. I was personally touched as I reflected at each stop in the footsteps of Jesus: from His beginning and the beginning of my faith to the end of His life. The emotions overwhelmed me at times and the privilege to have the experience second to none.

The size of New Jersey, Israel lends itself for exploration: top to bottom and side to side. A destination for ALL, it encompasses a taste to quench any travelers' needs. The religious sites, archeological digs, spas, Dead Sea, hiking, wineries, beaches and delicious food—the options are endless.

The people accurately described as a prickly pear. A culture that is initially sharp, quick, becomes inviting and most welcoming.

To see Israel through the eyes of my traveling companions magnified the experience. As we all listened to each other describe our thoughts, it created a greater depth of appreciation.

The debriefs have the necessary information regarding the exact locations, hotels and the value of each. With our affinity groups, having an educated guide that reads the audience is critical. Amir was wonderful!



Top: Tel Aviv. Bottom, from left to right: Grotto of the Annunciation in Nazareth, Mount of Beatitudes, Jerusalem YMCA.

Harvard Alumni Association Proposed Itinerary

- Wednesday** Depart the States
- Thursday** **TEL AVIV / JERUSALEM**
3:15 p.m. Arrive mid-afternoon
Accommodations are at the American Colony Hotel (if the trip is to be about Israel-Palestine Relations)
7:00 p.m. Introductory remarks by Professor are followed by dinner at the hotel (local alums)
7:45 p.m. with invited guest member of the Knesset and currently Dean of Tel Aviv College and - Palestinian Women's Leader (dialogue)
- Friday** **JERUSALEM**
Israeli Democracy Institute (a high level think tank) at their Jerusalem offices for a session including Prof (Harvard contact) of Hebrew University.
Or a visit to Hebrew University for a lecture on-site (Harvard professor)
- Drive to the Mount of Olives for a panoramic view of the historic Old City and holy Temple Mount
 - Continue to Gethsemane; stop and visit and walk into the Old City for lunch.
 - Visit - The Western Wall and the Western Wall Tunnels
 - Conclude the afternoon with a stroll along the Via Dolorosa, visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
 - DINNER – Sabbath Dinner hosted by local Harvard Alums in their homes
- Saturday** **JERUSALEM**
View from the Israeli side of the Wall en route to the border
En route to Bethlehem this morning we meet with a Professor at Bethlehem University for a discussion
- The Church of the Nativity – Manger Square
 - Lunch Falafel as guests shop
- PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Scientific Study of International Affairs)
The evening dinner at “Light Show” or what is available
- Sunday** **JERUSALEM**
Yad Vashem - Holocaust History Museum (Holocaust Art Museum and see the Children's Memorial)
- Open air market and have a leisurely lunch on your own- time to reflect after the visit
 - Visit Knesset where a Harvard grad will meet with the group in Chambers after a tour and bring the group into the court room to discuss proceedings
 - Israel Museum, which features the Dead Sea Scrolls
 - The evening is at leisure
- Monday** **JERUSALEM / TIBERIAS**
Drive to Beit She'an, the largest and best preserved Roman and Byzantine city in northern Israel.
- Arrive this afternoon at the Scots Hotel in Tiberius
 - Sunset cruise smaller boat with cocktails
 - Dinner in the wine cellar at The Scots Hotel

Tuesday

TIBERIAS/HAIFA

- Drive to Ginosar to view the remains of a First Century Wooden Sailing Vessel (if an archeologists available to speak to the group for 15 mins and view the movie)
- Continue to Capernaum
- Church of Beatitudes
- Miracle of the Loaves
- Drive to Golan Heights: Stop and have a security lecture given regarding the borders
- Continue travel to Nazareth
- The Church of the Annunciation
- Wander the Arab Bazaar
- Visit with Arab members of the Knesset over dinner – (private room?)
- Travel to Haifa – over night The Dan Hotel
- For those interested, cocktails in the German Quarter

Wednesday

HAIFA

- Bahai Shrine – walk down (bus option)
 - Continue on to Ancient Seaport of Akko tour
 - Lunch in Akko
 - Travel to Tel Aviv
 - Tour of Old Jaffa
- Dinner by the Sea*

Thursday

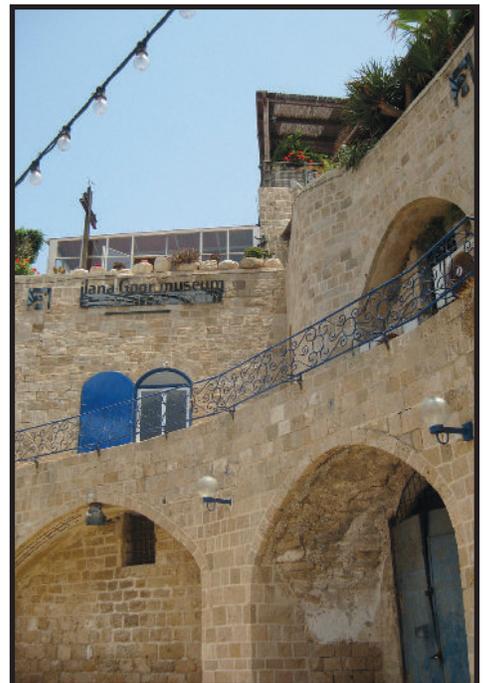
TEL AVIV

- Walk Rothschild Blvd.
 - Visit Independence Hall
 - Wander through Neve Tzedek and enjoy lunch
 - Afternoon at the Peres Center for Peace and meet with Dr Peres (in Jaffa)
- Ilana Goor Museum – cocktails and dinner on the deck with local Harvard Alums
Or the potential to be hosted by local alums in their home

Friday

TEL AVIV

Tel Aviv Museum of Art
Lunch is at leisure, with time to explore the Old Quarter of nearby Jaffa, with its art shops and galleries.
Dinner - depart



*Submitted by Michelle Bell
Arkansas Alumni Association*

I have often felt that the media does a terrible disservice to countries and to potential tourists. That has never been more evident to me than before, during, and after my trip to Israel. Although anxious to have the experience, I was nervous prior to our trip, especially when every person's response to hearing I was going was, "be very careful," or "I hope they have armed guards traveling with you." When I returned, many people questioned my wisdom in going, and asked again if there were guards with us. I wondered before I left if there would be. Now that I have returned, I am glad there were not.

Acclimating to the site of the West Bank Wall, the checkpoints we crossed, and the soldiers carrying machine guns, even while dressed in civilian clothes was unnerving for the first day. By then, however, we had started seeing the country, meeting the people, and I began to realize that this is a very different, very special place, but not an inherently dangerous one.

In all my travels, I have rarely been as moved as I was at the experience of Yad Vashem. Nothing I have ever heard, read, or seen about the Holocaust could have prepared me for either the inhumanity or the humanity shown on the grounds of Yad Vashem. Much of the museum made me feel ashamed of my country and people of the world, in general, and then we learned of the Righteous Among Nations, and I felt hope and pride.

Yad Vashem memorial to Boris Saksier Korczak, who ran a ghetto orphanage. The Nazis said he could go free, but he chose to dress up the children, tell them they were going on a trip, and go with them to the death camp to keep them calm.



The hope I felt was even more evident in Haifa. Learning that five different religions coexist in Haifa, and even collectively quashed demonstrations by outsiders during the 2nd Intifada gave me the feeling that anything is possible. The people everywhere were very friendly, and very willing to talk about their life—both the good and the bad. Their lives are very different from ours, with fewer choices when they are young, but with more ambition, and more confidence.

The historical sites of the area were amazing. Akko, the best-preserved Crusader city, was especially interesting to visit, and I believe it would be possible to spend at least an entire day there and never feel the need to move on. I regretted that we didn't have enough time to see all of Akko or any of Caesarea. So much of the world's ancient history is in this region, and it is remarkable to me that it is simply incorporated into everyone's daily life.

Israel is a land of opposites right on top of one another. There is ancient and modern, conflict and cooperation, fear and bravery, similarity and uniqueness. But most of all, I felt hope and passion.



Akko

Arkansas Alumni Association

The Face, Heart, and Soul of Israel: Beyond the Headlines

Day 1

Depart U.S.

Day 2

Jaffa by Sea

Arrive Tel Aviv

Short walking tour and dinner in Neve Tzedek
Overnight at Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv

Day 3

Breakfast at hotel

Visit Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was announced

Full program at the Peres Centre for Peace (assuming it is complete)

Lunch at a restaurant on the beach

Traveler choice:

Carmel open-air market for shopping, etc.

Ilana Goor Museum

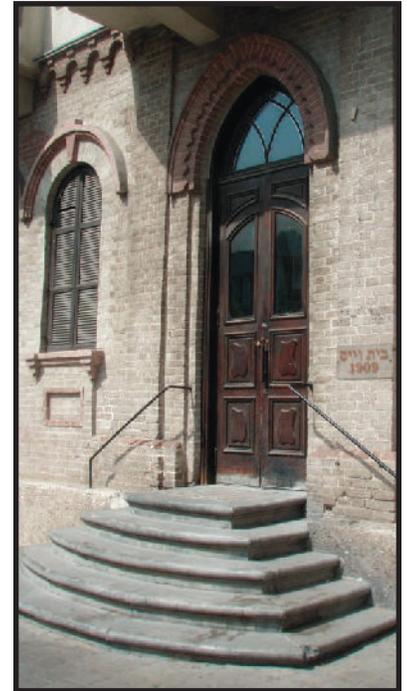
Return to hotel for beach/leisure time

Dinner option:

Dinner and show at Nalaga'at

Dinner at White Pergola

Overnight at Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv



Day 4

Breakfast at hotel

Transfer to Jerusalem

Yad Vashem

Mahane Yehuda fruit & vegetable market, lunch on their own

Hebrew University:

Botanical Gardens

Stephen Spielberg Film Institute

Coming of age in Israel: education & military service

“Sampler” dinner at Hotel Inbal

Overnight at Hotel Inbal

Day 5



Breakfast at hotel

Old Jerusalem:

Mount of Olives

Garden of Gethsemane

Western Wall & Western Wall Tunnels

Lunch at a local restaurant

Via Dolorosa

Stations of the Cross

Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Israel Museum (2nd Temple model & Shrine of the Book)

Dinner at Ticho House

Overnight at Hotel Inbal

Day 6

Breakfast at hotel

Optional excursion: Participate in an archeological dig at the City of David
Bethlehem: Short driving tour, Church of the Nativity, Lunch
Transfer to Kibbutz Ein Gedi and tour the grounds
Optional excursion: En Boqeq Dead Sea spa – floating in the sea and/or spa services
Dinner and overnight at Ein Gedi

Day 7

Breakfast at Ein Gedi
Masada
Lunch en route to Haifa
Introduction to the co-existence of Haifa (possible driving tour of neighborhoods)
Panel discussion with members of the five religions of Haifa
Dinner at Al Diyar with members of co-existence panel
Overnight at Dan Carmel

Day 8

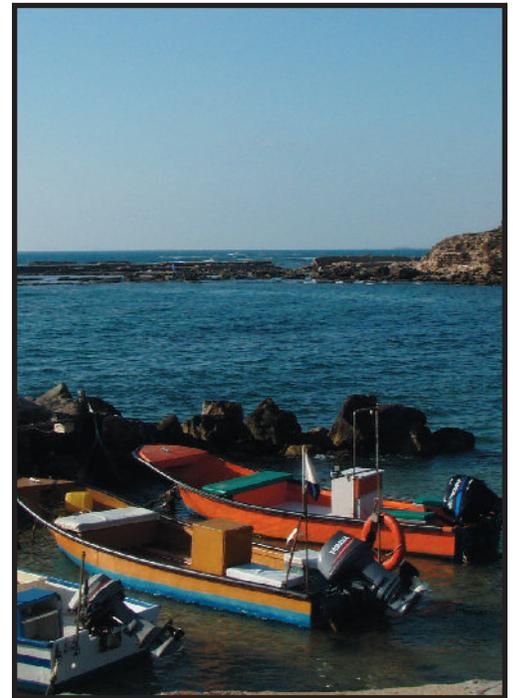
Breakfast at hotel
Baha'i Gardens: Walk down or bus tour
Film and history of Gardens & Baha'i faith
Shrine of the Bab
Tishbi Winery: Lunch w/Golan & discussion of grapes, land, family, etc.
Optional tour of winery
Caesarea
Dinner at Caesarea
Overnight at Dan Carmel

Day 9

Breakfast at hotel
Akko: Tour of ruins
Discussion at International Conservation Center
Interaction with students
Lunch at seaside restaurant with students
Ein Hod Artists' Village
Dinner in Haifa
Overnight at Dan Carmel

Day 10

Breakfast at hotel
Tour of German Colony
Lunch at beach café in Haifa
Late afternoon transfer to Tel Aviv
Dinner in Tel Aviv
Late night flights depart Ben Gurion



**Optional Extension 1:
Sea of Galilee and the Golan Heights**

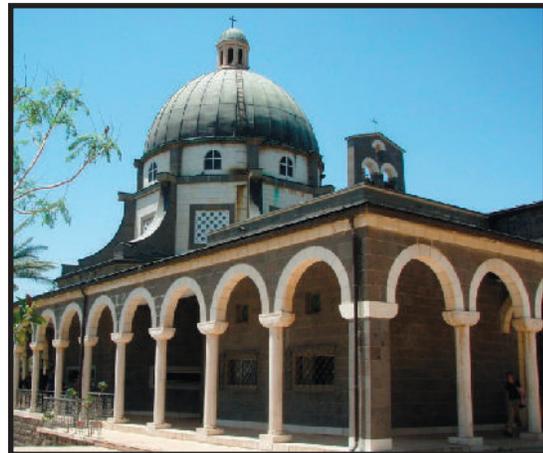
Day 10

Breakfast at hotel
Tour of Germany Colony
Lunch at beach café in Haifa
Stop at Ginosar during transfer to Tiberias
Cocktails, discussion on Sea of Galilee boat tour
Dinner in Tiberias
Overnight in Tiberias



Day 11

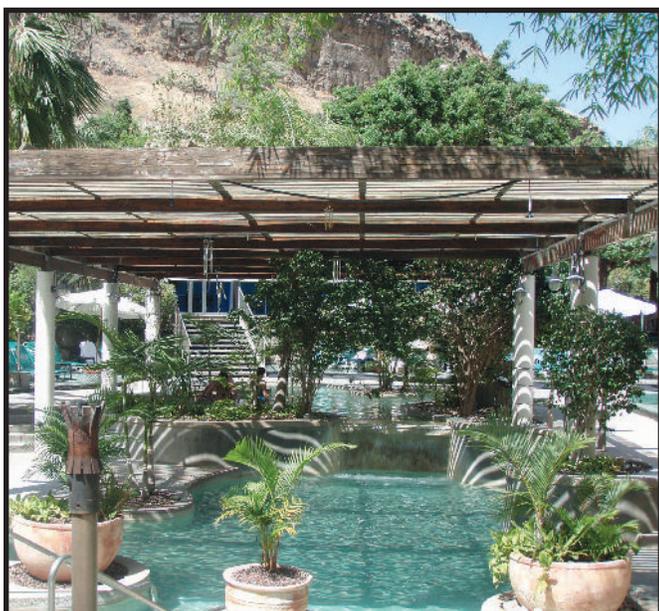
Breakfast at hotel
Sea of Galilee:
 Capernaum
 Tabgha
 Mount of Beatitudes
Ferry to Tiberias
Lunch in Tiberias
Transfer to Nazareth
Nazareth:
 Walking tour
 Church of the Annunciation
 Dinner at Diana Restaurant
Return to Tiberias
Overnight in Tiberias



Day 12

Breakfast at hotel
Golan Heights:
 Driving tour
 Mount Bental – Israeli bunker
 Discussion of military infrastructure
Lunch at Golan Heights winery or in Qazrin
Zefat – Jewish Mysticism Center
Return to Tiberias
Late afternoon transfer to Tel Aviv
Dinner in Tel Aviv with travelers on Optional Extension #2
Late night flights depart Ben Gurion

Optional Extension 2: Hamat Gader Park



Day 10

Breakfast at hotel
Tour of Germany Colony
Lunch at beach café in Haifa
Transfer to Hamat Gader

Day 11

Free time in Hamat Gader
Overnight in Hamat Gader

Day 12

Free time in Hamat Gader
Late afternoon transfer to
Tel Aviv
Dinner with travelers on
Optional Excursion #1
Late night flights depart Ben Gurion

Submitted by Elizabeth Bigwood
Alumnae Association of Smith College

Israel is a destination rich in history, culture. The main challenge when planning a trip for people who have never been to Israel before will be to offer all the sites that alumnae expect to see in addition to showcasing the unexpected places that are not well known. With a country where the political situation is constantly evolving, it will also be necessary to convey confidence around the question of security and flexibility if parts of the itinerary need to be changed. A trip should definitely include plenty of time every day for assimilation of all the information that has been given by guides, guests and lecturers. Time for questions and opportunities for conversation are very important for this destination which means that good pacing of the trip is vital.

For me, planning a trip to Israel demands that a balanced, broad perspective be offered to travelers. There are so many opinions so to find the right staffing in terms of tour directors, guides and faculty is key. This, I think, can be the main complication when planning an itinerary. It is vital to be clear about the theme of the trip in the promotional materials.

On the Israel Educational operated by the Israel Ministry of Tourism, it was clear that our group was being shown as much as was humanly possible in the time we had available. It was fast-paced and highly stimulating with many high points. I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to participate in this program.

Pre-trip Information

If the Ministry of Tourism offers this trip again, I think they would do well to send out the kind of pre-trip information that travel planners expect to receive from tour operators. Also some book recommendations would be useful. (I found Michelle Bell's *Insight Guide* very helpful).

May 31 and June 1

Continental economy class from Newark to Tel Aviv. It was very nice to have access to the lounge at the airport. On the flight, I did not find the service to be very friendly and the food was only fair but overall it was a convenient itinerary.

We received a very friendly welcome from our Israeli guide, Amir Orly. There was very little time to rest before our lunch at "Olive and Fish" but it was a delicious, authentic lunch and the restaurant was very convenient to our hotel. I was very pleasantly surprised by our hotel. Rooms at the Inbal Hotel are light and airy and a good location for the Old City of Jerusalem. The general orientation tour of Jerusalem was interesting. The welcome dinner hosted by Mr. Ilan Brenner of the Inbal Hotel was fantastic. The tasting menu was a great idea. Mr. Brenner was an excellent host. The Sound and Light show was visually very appealing but hard to manage after such a long journey.

June 2

Breakfast choice at hotel excellent. Restaurant space and general layout of the hotel pleasant. I enjoyed the Hebrew University tour. It helped me to get my bearings, and the view was spectacular. The talk in front of the painting of Lord Balfour helped me to understand the history. Our archives visit was informative and interesting, but perhaps a little too long. I don't think we missed anything by not going to the Mount of Olives as



Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem

we could see it from the balcony outside of the synagogue. Walking through the campus gave us an opportunity to get the feel of an Israeli college campus. It would be good to hear an overview of the education system in Israel if visiting a university and how it differs from the U.S. system (especially because of the military service requirement resulting in an older college student population). Garden of Gethsemane was beautiful and an important site to include—also a great vantage point for looking across at the City of David. I enjoyed our quick falafel and hummus lunch in a typical snack bar. The excavation was fun to see but I think it could have been a shorter stop. Walking over the uneven territory might be problematic for some alumnae. Student workers at the site were quite unfriendly but that could have been due to the baking heat. It was interesting to learn about the hostility that has been created by this Israeli backed archaeological dig. The excursion to this site was a good model on which to discuss the affect of “land ownership issues and the political problems“ as all religions left their remains here and it is very close to the Temple Mount. Visiting the Western Wall was a big highlight for me and the tunnels and excavations a “must.” It was very moving to hear the personal story of Amir’s Bar Mitzvah, which took place at the Western Wall.

The walk through the Via Dolorosa was moving and very important but this should be done when the group is not so tired.

The evening cocktail at the King David Hotel offered excellent views, an interesting history of the hotel itself and great wine and food! The dinner afterwards was good but it was difficult to make conversation as a group because of the size of the table.



Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

I think it is an interesting building but I would not want my groups to stay there because in places it looks a little “tired” and the rooms are dark and somewhat dated.



Jerusalem, modern city.

June 3

Yad Vashem visit was riveting and totally devastating but you could not visit Israel without going there. I thought it was extremely well done and the guide was excellent. I learned a great deal that I hadn’t known before. It was hard to transition from the Memorial to the next part of the day but Amir did a good job helping us do that. I was lucky enough to find an excellent place in the market to eat falafel and hummus. It had been recommended by a friend of Kristina Nemeth’s.

The Israel Museum is obviously a must but I did not feel that we were in the right frame of mind to respond to Mr. Adolfo Reutmann’s enthusiasm! I definitely need to go back again. The restrictions on our time in Jerusalem definitely affected this visit.

I think we all looked forward to having an opportunity to meet with Israelis and Palestinians who were committed to living side by side in peace so Neve Shalom was a highlight for me. I believe that most people visiting Israel for the first time will be trying to understand the complexities of the issues, and this is an opportunity to learn how challenging it is even after making a life commitment to live together in harmony. We visited the Supreme Court visit was interesting in terms of the architecture and to learn how everyone

has access to the court. Would be good to have more time with a guide explaining how the government works and to visit Supreme Court and City Hall on the same day.

The dinner at Ticho House would have been more fun if we had been eating outside! It was hard to be lead into a rather claustrophobic room after seeing how beautiful the outdoor setting was.

June 4

City Hall visit was interesting, especially meeting with the local officials. I am not sure I would necessarily include this on an alumnae trip.

Bethlehem was a “must” for me, including the experience of going through the checkpoint and seeing the security wall up close. I would have liked to have spent more time there. It is something that should definitely be offered to our groups but it should be optional. Visiting the Church of the Nativity was special. The store was a good place to buy souvenirs and the lunch was adequate.

Visit to Amir’s home afterwards (which was previously a military base) was hugely interesting and a highlight of the trip. What will stay with me is how we drove back through the checkpoint and then arrived at Amir’s community where you could clearly see the wall and bulldozers preparing the land for new buildings to go up on a new settlement. Being entertained in his home, meeting his wife and his Palestinian housekeeper and hearing Amir say that “he would move if he had to” provided a lot of food for thought.

On arrival at the Meridien Hotel, the mud pack experience was not what I had imagined but I am glad to have done it. The setting was very clinical. Hotel had great views but nothing much more to commend it. It did not offer the same feeling of quality as other Meridien hotels I have visited. Rooms were nondescript.

Dinner at Rancho Retro Restaurant was excellent but rather rushed. I felt embarrassed that Ms. Ofa Gazit was not able to speak to our group before we were all too exhausted to listen! On a future trip to the Dead Sea, I might not stay overnight but just let alumnae experience the “floating” on the water.



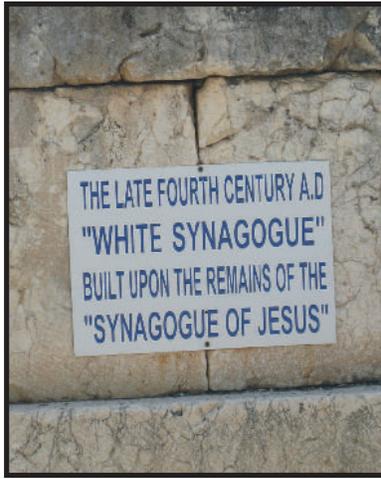
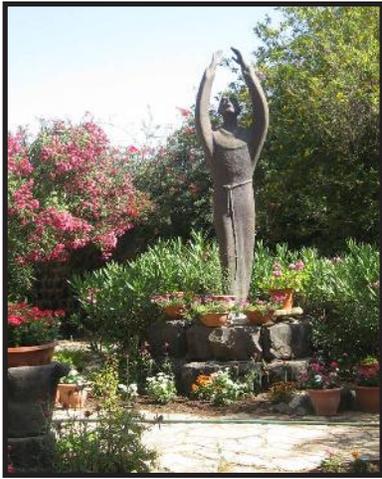
Dead Sea, Meridien Hotel.

June 5

Masada excursion was exceptionally moving and Amir was a terrific speaker threading together the history of Zionism with the current problems. Good to get there as early as possible to avoid the heat.

Ein Gedi was very enjoyable (especially the botanical gardens), and I was pleased to walk around a kibbutz and have the history of the movement explained. I was interested to meet someone who had lived there all his life and raised a family there. This might be a good option for overnighting as it would give alumnae some great down time. This option is far preferable to the Meridien. On the bus ride, it was very useful to have the borders explained and to see a good map (these should be given to everyone on arrival). On arrival at Tiberias, the cruise on the Sea of Galilee was a good activity after so much time on the bus, but I would not want to hear disco music next time! Some commentary would have been more appropriate.

I loved our dinner at the Scots Hotel. I enjoyed the history of the building and thought it was a great location. Wine tasting was great. The Sheraton Hotel was fine.



Scenes from Capernaum.

June 6

Ginosar was interesting but I would not spend too much time there as Capernaum, Tabgha and Mount of Beatitudes deserve a lot of time. Amir's lecture really set the scene at Capernaum. Golan Heights drive should definitely be on any itinerary to give groups the geographical perspective of the proximity of Jordan and Syria.

Hamat Gader was not a hit with me. If we had brought our swimwear it would have been a lot more fun! I would not bring my groups there as the accommodations would not work for an older group.

Nazareth was very worthwhile. The Basilica of the Annunciation and the surrounding area were beautiful. It was a shame we missed the market, but I really enjoyed the experience of going into the coffee shop and drinking walnut tea. This was one of the highlights for me as it is so unusual for women to be allowed in. I enjoyed the art and the social projects taking place in Nazareth and in the homes which had been donated to art organizations. Dinner at Diana's was delicious but for those who are hard of hearing it could be challenging.

June 7

Haifa provided a relaxing stop. Views from the hotel rooms superb.

Akko was another highlight and I would definitely include it on a future itinerary and spend lunch somewhere on the ocean. Shelley-Anne Peleg was outstanding. I would spend more time here than going on to the Druze Village, where I did not feel I learned much. Being close to the Mediterranean was refreshing. Ein Hod Artist's Village would have been better if we could have met with more of the artists. It was a good time to wander at your own pace. Tishbi Winery was a big success and could possibly replace the Druze Village for a lunchtime experience? There was not enough time at Caesarea, but the video was very informative. Presentation by Moshe Tzur—he was extremely keen to attract more tourism to Haifa.

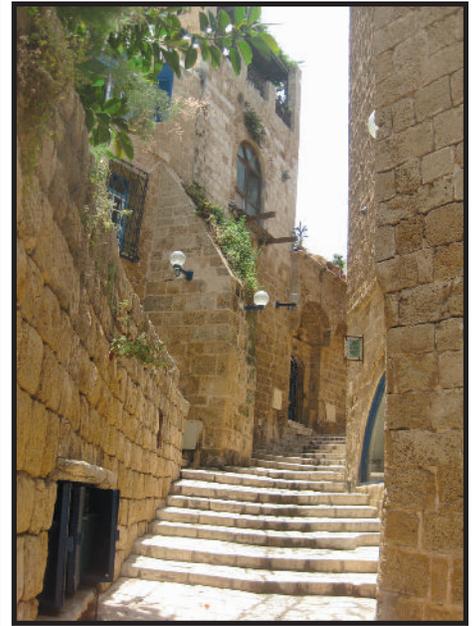
June 8

The Bahai Shrine and gardens are very impressive, but I am not sure that too much time should be invested in touring this site as the Bahai faith is not something many groups have come to Israel to learn about. The Castra building was not very interesting so could be cut out but the lunch on the beach was a good stop. Tour of University of Haifa was interesting in terms of the views but I think we would need to figure out what kind of speaker would be relevant to our groups. The panel on co-existence was another highlight and it was good that we were able to converse at greater length with the participants at dinner afterwards. I think that visiting homes would have been another excellent component. The experience was generally very stimulating for the group. Haifa is a very welcoming city but is not worthy of a long stay.

June 9

Dan Hotel is comfortable and the staff very friendly. The hotel is well located but I think it would be better for groups to be on a higher floor away from the road. For our alumnae I think Tel Aviv is better seen by bus.

Visit to Independence Hall (including seeing all the birthright students) was another important component of our trip. I found the Bahaus architecture interesting but not important enough to spend a lot of time on. The Montefiore Hotel would be good to suggest to people who wanted to extend their stay in Tel Aviv. Lunch at the Sweet Sins restaurant was not very well organized and the heat was a problem. Open air market was enjoyable and good for buying souvenirs to take home. The Peres Center for Peace was engaging and inspirational. The International Relations Coordinator was very well prepared and ready to answer all our questions. I would definitely want to bring a group to the new center, and I think it's important that the Ministry of Tourism makes sure that we are updated on its progress. Dinner at the White Pergola was not a positive experience. The waiters were surly and upset that we changed our minds from wanting to sit inside to sitting outside! The real problem with this day was our guide. We had just said goodbye to Amir and unfortunately our Tel Aviv guide did not present himself very well. Unfortunately, I do not think that he would be appropriate for the generation we would be bringing to Israel. Most of us were too tired to go to the nightspots in Tel Aviv and too concerned about packing for our return to the U.S. Overall, Tel Aviv is not a place that I would focus on too much. It's too noisy and busy and not a good way to end the trip.



Old Jaffa artists' colony.

June 10

The tour of Old Jaffa could have been much more interesting with a different guide. I enjoyed the Ilana Goor Museum very much (it would be great to do a reception there) and the curator was great. It was also enjoyable strolling through the artists' colony and getting a feel for the Arab architecture. Neve Tzedek was a lovely area and we found a great restaurant there. The flea market was not a good experience.



Appetizers at Cordelia's.

If you had enough time in Israel and you were running a trip with a focus on the arts then Nalaga'at would be good to include.

Dinner at Cordelia's was outstanding—an experience I will always remember!!

The flight home was fine—I was so tired I slept nearly the whole way!

In general, I think that this trip showed me that it is only by visiting Israel that you can feel the sense of preparedness and that it is up to us travel planners to convey this to our groups. I do believe, though, that if people do choose to visit Israel, they have already committed themselves to the idea that they are coming to a country where they are aware of the dangers that exist.

Alumnae Association of Smith College Suggested Itinerary

- Day 1** *Depart the U.S.*
- Day 2** **TEL AVIV**
Arrive in Tel Aviv and stay at the Hilton Hotel or the Dan Hotel.
Early check in if possible. Early evening dinner and briefing at hotel.
- Day 3** **TEL AVIV**
Bus tour of city of Tel Aviv to get bearings.
Visit the Eretz Israel Museum on the campus of the Tel Aviv University. Continue on to Jaffa. Visit Al Mahmoudite mosque and Peres Center for Peace followed by Ilana Goor museum, and if possible drinks on terrace.
Welcome dinner at Cordelia's.
- Day 4** **TEL AVIV**
Visit the Shalom Tower. See model of the modern city of Tel Aviv.
Independence Hall, tour of Rothschild Boulevard.
Lunch in the White City area.
Take a short walking tour in the afternoon.
Balance of day at leisure.
- Day 5** **UPPER GALILEE**
Drive to Caesarea.
Visit Ein Hod and have lunch either there or at Tishbi Winery.
Drive to Haifa. Short tour of the Bahai Shrine and the German neighborhood.
Visit Akko.
Drive to Kfar Blum Kibbutz in the Upper Galilee region.
Dinner at the hotel (kibbutz).
- Day 6** **UPPER GALILEE**
Explore the Golan Heights area. Cross the Hatzbani River to Banias. Visit Nimrod's Castle.
Lunch at Mount Ben tal.
Drive to Katzrin, visit Archaeological Museum and Katzrin Park excavation.
Return to Kfar Blum Kibbutz.
- Day 7** **UPPER GALILEE**
Visit Safed
Continue to Mount of Beatitudes, Tabgha and Capernaum.
Head east to Tiberias.
Sea of Galilee boat ride.
Return to Kfar Blum Kibbutz.
- Day 8** **JERUSALEM**
Drive to Jerusalem via Zippori and Nazareth. Do a walking tour of Nazareth and visit the Arab market, some of the current artists' community outreach projects and the Basilica of the Annunciation.
Visit Bet She'An before arrival in Jerusalem.

Check in to David Citadel Hotel or Inbal Hotel.
Dinner at Ticho House (outside if possible).

Day 9

JERUSALEM

Morning tour of the Old City of Jerusalem.
Western Wall and tunnels.
Via Dolorosa.
Visit to the Jerusalem Post for a briefing with the Editor.
Dinner at the American Colony.

Day 10

JERUSALEM

Yad Vashem.
Lunch at Tmol Shilshom.
Afternoon in Bethlehem.
Independent Dinner.
Optional Sound and Light show?

Day 11

JERUSALEM

Drive to Masada.
Opportunity to float in the Dead Sea.
Lunch at a restaurant/resort on the Dead Sea.
Drinks at King David Hotel.
Independent Dinner.

Day 12

JERUSALEM

Round table discussion at Al Quds University?
Dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 13

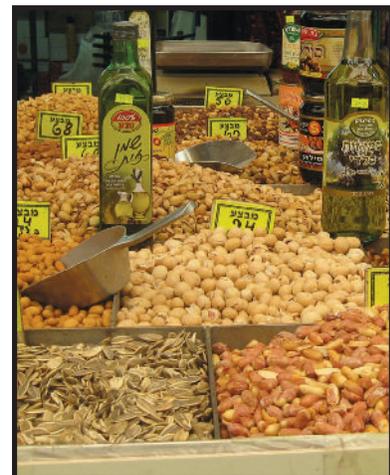
JERUSALEM

Israel Museum, Dead Sea Scrolls.
Afternoon free for final independent sightseeing/shopping.
Farewell Dinner.

Day 14

Return to the U.S.

Unfortunately, this itinerary does not allow for a visit to Neve Shalom, but I hope it could be tweaked to include it.



Snapshots from a fruit and vegetable market in Jerusalem.

*Submitted by Jennifer Bohac
Texas A&M – Association of Former Students*

The trip to Israel was one of the best experiences I have had in travel. The trip was truly an experience not to be missed—it far exceeded my expectations, and I really loved it. Personally and professionally I was very impressed—the people, the food, the lodging, the tours, and the safety. The Israelis could not have been more welcoming and hospitable. We met some of the nicest locals and representatives of tourism—their enthusiasm and help really makes you want to return and recruit travelers to join you. The food and wine were terrific—so many delicious meals. I enjoyed all of our tours—our guides were informative, educational, and spoke very good English. Additionally, most of the sites were not terribly crowded. And Israel is a very safe place—not once did we ever feel uncomfortable or not at ease. It was safe—even crossing over to Bethlehem was not at all a problem and we were fine.

There is a tremendous amount to see and do in Israel. I felt like I could have stayed a month and still have more to experience. The country is so rich in history and culture that trying to get it all in is impossible but I loved trying and doing so much in so little time. The opportunity to see and learn about so much history and to combine with such varied cultures was tremendous. We learned a lot about religion and the various religions that have impacted Israel, but I never felt like a religious tour—you just go in with an open mind and you learn so much.

The country is beautiful—all of the areas we visited were varied, unique, and fascinating. Israel offers so much on so many different levels. Because the country is small you really feel like you have experienced Israel—traveling to all areas but never spending large amounts of time in buses or travel. I think the future of tourism in Israel is very bright. I want to bring groups back to this amazing country and hope to offer Israel in my line up for years to come—including a trip already planned later this year. Israel has so much to offer and the destination fits in our mission of educational travel perfectly as the entire country is a wonderful educational opportunity.

I chronicled my journey on Facebook—posting photos and updates daily. Followers of the Traveling Aggies Facebook page were overwhelmed with the beauty and seeing what we got to experience on our journey. I received so much positive feedback on how impressed people were on Israel and what we got to do and experience. I think sharing our fantastic experience will help others to learn what an amazing country Israel is and they too will love the country and people as I do now.



Bahai Shrine and Gardens.



Panoramic view of Haifa from the University of Haifa tower.

Texas A&M – Association of Former Students Sample Itinerary

Day 1	Tel Aviv to Jerusalem Arrival -Tel Aviv Transfer to Jerusalem and lunch City overview tour and free time Group reception/dinner	Day 6	Tiberias and Haifa Tour Sea of Galilee Region – Mount of Beatitudes, Tabgha, Capernaum Travel to Golan Heights Region Overview and tour of Nazareth and sites Travel to Haifa and dinner
Day 2	Jerusalem (Old City) Tour Hebrew University and Film Archive Stop at Mount of Olives, short tour Tours of Western Wall, Christian Quarter and Jewish Quarter Night spectacular at Tower of David Museum	Day 7	Haifa and Carmel Region Travel to Akko and tour walled city Travel to Caesarea National Park – tour theater and port area Free time Panel on co-existence and dinner with panel
Day 3	Jerusalem (Modern City) Tour of National Memorial and Holocaust Museum Tour of Israel Museum (Shrine of the Book) Free time in markets, shopping, etc. Panel discussion and dinner with locals (from each of the 3 religions)	Day 8	Haifa and Tel Aviv Tour of Bahai Shrine and Gardens Tour and lunch at University of Haifa Travel to Tel Aviv Overview tour and area of Tel Aviv port Free time/overnight in Tel Aviv Farewell reception/group dinner
Day 4	Jerusalem – Bethlehem and Dead Sea Travel to Bethlehem – tour Church of Nativity Travel to Dead Sea region Free time at Dead Sea for spa, relax, etc. Dinner on own	Day 9	Tel Aviv and Travel home Visit Independence Hall and tour through area Tour Old Jaffa Lunch at Neve Tzedek area Day room at hotel Transfer to airport and return home
Day 5	Dead Sea and Tiberias Travel to Masada and tour fortress Travel to Kibbutz – lunch and tour Travel to Tiberias Sunset sail and drinks on Sea of Galilee		

Ten of us were asked to go to Israel as guests of the Israeli Tourism Board to consider Israel as a destination. This was a complex itinerary with the Board trying to show us as much as possible, and they succeeded.

I. TRANSPORTATION

All of us, except two who flew from Atlanta with Delta, met at Newark where we took a direct Continental flight to Tel Aviv. The flight was as satisfactory as any 12-hour flight can be. I'm told the kosher meals were the best, and the flight was full coming and going. We were somewhat surprised that we did not fly El Al, but Continental provided the free fares. And connecting through Newark is easier than some other U.S. hubs.

Once we arrived in Israel we were in a 30-passenger bus with the same driver, except when he was ill for 2 days and when we went to Bethlehem. The driver spoke little English. No water was provided on the bus until several of us expressed concern that this was not standard procedure in the heat.

II. LODGING

The Dan Hotels provided most of our lodging and I'll just give a brief synopsis on each hotel:

Jerusalem: Inbal Hotel – a boutique hotel close to the Old City and within walking distance of the King David. Accommodations were clean, the staff was pleasant, breakfasts and our welcome dinner were just right. The Executive lounge allowed us to keep in touch with our offices and provided nice beverages and snacks. I would recommend having a group stay here. We were at this hotel 3 nights. Morning papers provided.

Le Meridien Hotel, Dead Sea – very large noisy, similar to being on a cruise ship. We only stayed one night and I suggest that it is not necessary to spend a night at the Dead Sea, an afternoon visit should suffice. We did visit a boutique hotel nearby, but it reminded me of a nursing home as the bulk of the clientele were elderly.

Sheraton Moriah Hotel, Tiberius – situated near the Sea of Galilee, with easy access to destination in that region. For high end travelers the Scots Hotel St. Andrews would be more appropriate.

Dan Carmel Hotel, Haifa – hotel with the best location in Haifa, needs some updating but more than adequate, good food, and in the best area of the city. There are some boutique hotels emerging in the German quarter, but they may well be cost prohibitive for groups. We stayed here two nights.

Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv – situated on the beach, would have preferred higher rooms, as the noise was noticeable. Provided morning papers, good executive lounge. Staff was attentive, used to international travelers.

III. PERSONNEL

We had two tour guides, Amir Orly and Benna Mental. Amir, was an Israeli through and through, a "Sabra" and would be ideal for the mid-to older range travelers. He is very knowledgeable, invited us to his home which was very interesting and was well known among the tourism personnel of Israel. Benna Mental, had a hard act to follow. He was around 25, had been born in Israel, at one point his father taught at Harvard, and he would be great with a Young Alumni group, he was representative of the new Israeli and very smart.

The big handi-cap for the program was that there was no tour director. We strongly recommended that in the future if another of these ETC programs was attempted that someone should serve in the Tour Director role.

IV. EDUCATIONAL VALUE

There is no question that this is a destination of interest. We have ample faculty who would make wonderful leaders for a program to Israel. I'm doing to touch on the various places that we visited. It should be noted that the Tourism Board packed far more into every day than we would ever do on one of our programs; however, there are some real nuggets that we were fortunate enough to see.

Day 1 Jerusalem

Upon arrival went straight to lunch at a local restaurant across the street from the hotel, just right. Followed by a bus tour of the Old City and a panoramic view from the Haas promenade. After a welcome dinner in the hotel, we went to a sound and light show at the Tower of David Museum. I did not find it particularly appealing and would have preferred to have had a tour of that location in daylight.

Day 2 Jerusalem

Began the day at Hebrew University – met with their PR people who indicated that university faculty would be happy to participate as experts on any of our travel programs. Also visited the Steven Spielberg Film Archive.. Then to Gethsemane to see church and garden, followed by lunch in the Old City and visit to the Wall and the Tunnels beneath. Walked the Stations of the Cross and saw the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Day 3 Jerusalem

Visited new museum at Yad Vashem as well as the Children’s memorial, very, very moving with an excellent tour. Toured of the Shrine of the Book (Dead Sea Scrolls) with the curator, Adolfo Reutmann. Visit to a Jewish and Arab citizens’ cooperative settlement, Neve Shalom, would only recommend visiting if doing a reconciliation tour. Dinner with the Deputy Head of Tourism.

Day 4 Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Dead Sea

Saw the Supreme Court, architect also did Yad Vashem. Then to City Hall for a meeting with Council Member Hilik Bar, who is responsible for tourism. Saw model of the city. Following lunch went to Bethlehem to the Church of the Nativity. Arrangements made through a store. Our guide was a Palestinian, married to an Israeli and the church was packed with Russians. The Israeli Tourism Board would not assume any liability for us while we were in Bethlehem. Following the tour and lunch we were dropped off at a border crossing and met up with Amir and the bus and after a brief visit to his home we headed through the desert to the Dead Sea. There people had mud baths and floated before dinner at Isrotel Hotel with Ofra Gazit, head of the Tourism Department of the Dead Sea.

Day 5 Dead Sea Region and Galilee

Left the Dead Sea and went to Massada, a spectacular archaeological site and moved on to Kibbutz Ein Gedi for a botanical tour, followed by a lecture on the ecology of the region. The Kibbutz was an old one and it is apparent that the way of life has changed since they were first established. Then we drove to Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee. We immediately went on a brief cruise before dinner at the Scots Hotel St. Andrews which would be ideal for a small group experience.

Day 6 Sea of Galilee and Lower Galilee

Visit to see the remains of a sailing vessel from Jesus’ time and then on to Capernaum, Tabgha and the Mount of the Beatitudes—the site was more commercial than I remembered it, though very beautiful. Drove through the Golan Heights though we never had an opportunity to get off the bus much to my regret. You could clearly see Jordan and Lebanon and places where there had been fighting. We came down from the Heights to a Spa Village which was not somewhere that any of us would have wanted to take our travelers so we did not stay for a very long. Then on to Nazareth and the Basilica of the Annunciation. The Arab market was closed. We had dinner at a local restaurant, “Diana” with Tarek Shihada, the Director of the Nazareth Tourism Association and then drove in the night to Haifa.

Day 7 Akko and the Carmel Region

Went to Akko (Acre) the old port next to Haifa which is now a UNESCO world heritage site. There is a lot of activity there and opportunity for volunteer tourism at the International Conservation Center. Lunch followed at a Druze home and then on to Ein Hod Artists’ Village and toured a few of the studios before going to the Tishbi

family Winery for a wine tasting. Then to Caesarea for a brief glimpse of the Roman Theater, hippodrome and the renovated port area. Dinner was in the German Colony with Moshe Tzur, a former general now head of the Haifa Tourist Board.

Day 8 Haifa

Walking tour of Haifa with a local guide followed by tour of the Bahai Shrine and Gardens. Visit to the University of Haifa and a presentation on tourism. Possible university connections could work here. A panel on the coexistence with Jewish, Christian, Moslem and Achmedian representatives followed. The Palestinians were markedly absent. Dinner followed with the panelists before driving to Tel Aviv.

Day 9 Tel Aviv

Did architectural walking tour and then went to Independence hall where Ben Gurion announced the foundation of Israel. On to open air market followed by a meeting at the Peres Center for Peace which will be relocated to Jaffa shortly. Dinner by the shore with Etty Gargir, the Manager of Tel Aviv-Jaffa Tourism.

Day 10 Old Jaffa and old Tel Aviv

Toured Old Jaffa and went to the Ilana Goor Museum, an Israeli artist-sculptor and collector. Toured the Tel Aviv port before wonderful farewell dinner of fusion cuisine prepared by Nir Zuk at the Corellia Restaurant in Jaffa.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This was an amazing experience and I am still trying to process everything. It was extraordinary to see this country again and realize the opportunities for our travelers who like the destinations that they would not feel comfortable going to on their own. The challenge will be to find a tour provider who will work with us to create a special program. I am grateful for the opportunity and will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Duke Alumni Association Suggested Israeli Itinerary for Young Alumni

You will note the following about this itinerary, which is designed for young alumni (recent graduates to 35-year-olds) for 6 days, 5 nights:

- 1. It is intentionally short, as they cannot take so much time from work.*
- 2. If it needed to be made a little longer, an extra night in Jerusalem could be added.*
- 3. By staying in university housing, costs can be kept down, and there will be time for interaction with their peers, through panels, conversations, lectures etc.*
- 4. The younger of our tour guides, Benna Mental, from Tel Aviv, would be ideal for this program.*

Day 1 Leave the U.S. on an overnight flight.

Day 2 Arrive in Tel Aviv, bus directly to Jerusalem; stay at Hebrew University. Following lunch there, do city tour. In the late afternoon have panel discussion with Israelis students and faculty about university life, the army and the opportunities they expect. In the evening show film from the Steven Spielberg archives.

Day 3 Morning, visit the Western Wall, The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, walk through the Old quarter and have lunch there. Allow some time to explore. In the afternoon Yad Vashem and the Shrine of the Book or visit Bethlehem. That evening leave for Haifa.

Day 4 Haifa University becomes the base for the next 3 nights. In the morning, tour Haifa, afternoon go to Akko do volunteer activity at the International Conservation Center. Evening in the German Quarter.

Day 5 Early morning bus to Masada and walk up to the site. Then to the Dead Sea for lunch and a swim, before driving up to the Mount of the Beatitudes. Dinner in Tiberius before returning to Haifa.

Day 6 Morning visit to Nazareth. Afternoon, Ein Hod and the Tishbi Winery for tasting and light meal. Panel discussion about different religious influences in the country at the University to close out the day.

Day 7 Drive to Tel Aviv, visit Independence Hall and go to Jaffa to see galleries and old city. Allow for beach/bike time in the afternoon. Tour and meeting at the Peres Peace Center. Farewell dinner by the seashore at one of the young clubs. Take overnight flight to the U.S.

Submitted by Robert Fure

Office of Special Programs, Washington and Lee University

It is difficult to summarize in the space of a few paragraphs the many impressions that a visit to Israel inevitably stirs in the mind of an American traveler. While geographically Israel is the size of New Jersey, culturally it is the size of a continent. Even within its small territory, one travels through a variety of climates and populations, from the arid south to the cooler, fertile area of the north; from the sparsely populated desert and Dead Sea region to the teeming complexity of Tel Aviv, Nazareth, and Haifa. And yet what dominates the imagination of the visitor in every region of Israel is the tremendous depth of its history. By its very position on the map, and by its place in the heritage of the world's three great religions, Israel has been for millennia the great intersection of Western and Eastern civilizations. Each civilization that has claimed this land has left as much of itself behind as it has borne away in flight before the next conqueror. Even today, in speaking about the "Occupied Territories," one cannot help but savor the irony of the term. All of Israel is "occupied," haunted by the history of those who have built its roads and temples, imbued by the many convictions and cross purposes of those who have known it and regard it still as "the Promised Land."

This site inspection, hosted by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, was my third tour of Israel. I remain grateful for the opportunity to visit so much of the country and so well. Much of what I saw was either not apparent to me on my last visit, in 1996, or was simply new or in some other way profoundly different. The Israeli Ministry of Tourism put together an exceptionally thorough itinerary, covering virtually all of what I might have hoped to see, and it brought us into contact with a tremendous variety of resources, guides, professors, curators, hoteliers, and tourism professionals. If the Israeli Ministry of Tourism set out to encourage future tourism, it certainly accomplished that objective with our program, the W&L Traveller. Indeed, I plan to return to Israel in November, taking with me my operator to meet our guide, Amir Orly, in a further effort to design an alumni travel program in Israel in March of 2011. That tour will be anticipated by an educational program on the campus of Washington and Lee University, "A History of the Jewish People." Included on the faculty for that pre-tour campus program will be Mr. Orly, who will then serve as our guide for the W&L Traveller tour in the following spring.

These plans clearly reflect the value of the inspection visit, for an introduction that leads to a continuing relationship obviously proves the value of the former. I have generally concluded that the W&L tour will focus pri-

marily on Jerusalem and Haifa, with five nights in Jerusalem, including day trips to Bethlehem and Masada, a night in Tiberius for the Christian sites, and four nights in Haifa, using Haifa as a base for visits to Nazareth, Acco, Haifa itself, and the final day in Tel Aviv/Yaffo. In the interest of time, I've decided to skip an overnight in the Dead Sea region, which was not an especially rewarding visit on our inspection. Also, I would like to avoid, if possible, the long drive to between the Dead Sea and Tiberius. I have not yet decided whether or not to include a visit to a kibbutz, though I'm told that the Tiberius region has one that might provide suitable overnight accommodations. These might not be as commodious and informative as the Kibbutz Ein Gedi, but I am hopeful to have the possibility available. For me, Haifa was the "great discovery" of the trip. The city itself is both interesting and beautiful, the university open to visitors, and the Dan hotel lovely in all respects. As the vaunted "City of Coexistence," it extends the message that I hope our travelers will take away as central to their experience of Israel today. It must be understood that Americans cannot visit Israel without the burden of the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians weighing on them. And any tour that does not address this conflict in some meaningful way cannot earn the respect of its members. One hopes that the discussion of the conflict can be both intellectually invigorating and, if possible, optimistic, although the latter might well be grounded more on faith than fact. Haifa seems to offer this promise of coexistence as well as the opportunity to explore the issues better than any other place in Israel. For this discussion we hope to take up the offer extended to us at the University of Haifa and by the many good people we met in Haifa through its tourist board.

Finally, I want to reaffirm the deep gratitude I feel for this opportunity and to the principals at the Israeli Board of Tourism and the Educational Travel Conference for extending the opportunity to me. I hope that my comments during the many inspection debriefings were helpful as the Board reviews the appeal of various sites and programs in Israel to American university visitors. At the same time I hope that the Board believes that the investment in this enterprise was sound. It is my impression from the many positive comments by my colleagues that the inspection was valuable and inspiring. As I continue to plan for future visits to Israel, I will be happy to engage in further discussions about the appeal of Israel to the educational travel market.

*Submitted by Allie Hill
Emory University Alumni Association*



Jerusalem, Masada, Dead Sea.

Overview of Israel:

Israel is a dynamic country, steeped with culture, history and fantastic cuisine. I was very impressed with all that the country had to offer our alumni travelers. There is so much to do and see that it is hard to fit it all in to a trip of 8-10 days while keeping to a reasonable pace that our clients would appreciate. Before this trip, Israel was a place that I had grown up hearing about in the news but wasn't a place I ever envisioned myself going. After having spent 10 days there, I can't imagine not traveling there at least once in your lifetime.

Air Transportation:

For anyone planning a trip to Israel from the Southeastern United States, I would highly recommend traveling on Delta. They offer a direct flight to Ben Gurion airport that leaves late in the evening at 10:30 PM and arrives in to Israel late in the afternoon around 5:00 PM the next day. Dinner is served on the flight as is a buffet style meal in the galley and then lunch before landing. The aircraft that we flew in was brand new with the individual TV's in the seatbacks and the new business class configuration. The transfer time between the airport and Jerusalem is quick and takes only about 30 minutes or so and provides weary travelers that chance to acclimate. I wouldn't suggest planning much in the itinerary that first evening except dinner at the hotel where the group will be staying.

Hotels:

Our group stayed mostly in the Dan Hotel chain, one of the oldest and most prestigious groups of hotels in Israel. The majority of their hotels are rated as first class with a few second class properties. I would recommend that alumni or affinity groups stay at either the first class Dan properties in Israel, or if the trip is a very high end trip, at the King David or at the David Citadel in Jerusalem. While we didn't see any second class properties of any kind, I think that our travelers would feel most comfortable in the first class properties, regardless of the hotel chain or boutique properties you selected.

Food:

The food throughout our visit was fantastic and provided us with many different options at each meal. Breakfast was always at the hotel where we stayed and offered a wide variety of choices to suit even the pickiest of eater. Lunches in the local markets or restaurants were always very colorful and tasty. It was a fun experience to eat in a place that catered to the local crowd or to grab something quickly in an outdoor market. There was never a language barrier and if the menu wasn't available in English, the owner was always more than happy to explain what each item was. Dinners were also always enjoyable and a feast! The meal would always begin with small appetizer portions of dips, spreads, hummus and pita with little plates covering every surface of the table. Just when you thought you couldn't eat another bite, the server would come around to take your dinner

order which was usually a choice of meat, chicken, sea food and typically served grilled. We never had a bad meal or walked away hungry. One member of our group had a specific food allergy and was always accommodated and could usually find several things to eat during a meal.

Climate:

The best times to visit Israel are typically in the spring and fall, avoiding the summer months of June, July and August. I would strongly suggest that you avoid these particularly hot months, especially with the age group that tends to travel on our trips. Regardless of when you plan a trip, I would highly encourage all travelers to bring layers to not only protect themselves from the strong sun, but also to help them regulate their temperature throughout the day. Surprisingly, the evenings can be a bit cooler, depending on what part of the country you are in. Sun screen and a good sun hat are also necessities for travel in Israel and maybe even an umbrella to shield themselves from the sun if it is especially warm.

Safety:

The question of safety during a trip to Israel is probably one of the biggest hurdles that we all face as affinity group travel planners offering a trip to this part of the world. Our group never experienced any safety concerns or issues at all during the trip. We felt completely at ease, even when traveling along the West Bank and crossing over into Palestine for a visit to Bethlehem. What we are exposed to on the news is so far from the everyday reality of what is going on in Israel and shouldn't keep anyone from traveling to this region.

Terrain:

A trip to Israel is probably best suited for someone who is in relatively good shape and who is comfortable walking 1-2 miles on average, per day. It would be difficult for someone to take this type of trip who wasn't able to walk unassisted. There were times that we were walking on and over uneven surfaces and through tight spaces. I didn't notice many handrails along the way or ramps that would make the sites particularly accessible for people with significant handicaps. Two particular places to point out that could present some challenges for our travelers would be the Western Wall tunnels and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The Western Wall tunnels are often quite narrow and require bending down at point to squeeze through some very small spaces. Anyone that was even mildly claustrophobic would likely feel challenged as would someone who was a bit unsteady on their feet or who wouldn't feel comfortable in very small spaces. In the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, there is a particularly steep set of high stone steps up to Calvary or (Golgotha). Accessing this would be very difficult for even the mildly unsteady or those with balance issues.

Emory University Alumni Association Sample Itinerary

- Day 1** Depart U.S.A for Israel on group flight from Atlanta to Ben Gurion airport.
- Day 2** Arrival at Ben Gurion airport in the late afternoon and transfer to Jerusalem. Opening program and introduction to Jerusalem at the Haas Promenade overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem. Welcome dinner at the hotel followed by brief program introduction.
Overnight: Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem
- Day 3** Start day with lecture in hotel before heading out to the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane. Tour at the History of Jerusalem museum at the Jaffa Gate. Lunch at local restaurant. Visit to the Western Wall and optional tour of Western Wall tunnels. Free time for those not participating in the tunnel tour. Walk along the Via Dolorosa with stop at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. *Overnight: Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem*
- Day 4** Lecture in hotel before heading out to visit to Yad Vashem for a guided tour. Return to the Old City for lunch on own and free time in the markets. Late afternoon visit to the Israel museum to see the Dead Sea Scrolls. *Overnight: Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem.*
- Day 5** Depart Jerusalem after breakfast for the Sea of Galilee. Visit the Mount of Beatitudes, Tabgha and Capernaum. Lunch in Katzrin in the Golan Heights and afternoon tour of Nazareth. Drive to Haifa and check in to Dan Carmel hotel, Haifa. *Dinner at the hotel.*
- Day 6** Walking tour of the Bahai Gardens and lunch in the German Colony. Afternoon visit to Acre. Free time and dinner on own in Haifa.
Overnight at Dan Carmel, Haifa.
- Day 7** Lecture in hotel before departing for artist colony Ein Hod, followed by wine tasting and lunch at Tishbi winery. Afternoon visit to Caesarea. Dinner at restaurant en route to Tel Aviv (preferably with view of Mediterranean). *Overnight at Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv.*
- Day 8** Lecture in hotel before departing for Independence Hall. Tour of Tel Aviv's White City. Lunch own on in Bahaus District. Free time after lunch and optional walking tour of Jaffa. Evening reception and tour at Peres Center of Peace (new facility).
Overnight at Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv.
- Day 9** Lecture in hotel before free time in Tel Aviv. Optional activities include a visit to the Ilana Goor museum. Early dinner at Cordellia restaurant before departing for Ben Gurion international airport.

Optional 3-Day Extension:

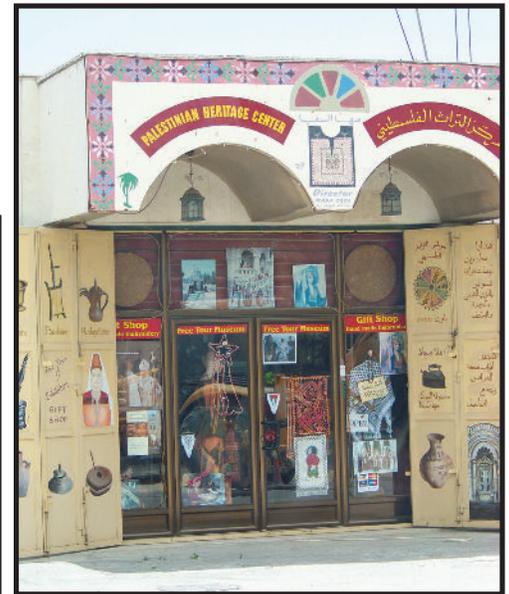
Drive to Masada for an early morning visit. Lunch at hotel in Dead Sea region and time for spa treatments or floating in the Dead Sea. Transfer to and overnight in Amman, Jordan. Full day visit to Petra; tour of Mt. Nebo and Jerash. Depart Amman, Jordan for flights back to U.S.A.

Submitted by Abby Jansen

Northwestern University Alumni Education and Travel

My visit to Israel far exceeded my expectations. Jerusalem, with her unique mix of ancient and modern, was a mosaic of people and history that overwhelmed the senses. The purity of the Mount of Olives and the Garden of the Gethsemane clashed with the Jerusalem limestone walls of the Middle Age city across from it. The old walled city was in stark contrast to the modern city that has been built in just the last fifty years. A visit to the Holocaust Memorial was an emotional journey through hell and hope.

Beyond Jerusalem, the biggest surprise was the proximity of the Israeli and Palestinian sides and seeing first-hand the massive wall dividing Israel from the Palestinian territories. The “wall” is interwoven between towns and instantly one comprehends the difficulty of the two-state solution. This realization places the peace process in a new perspective for any first time traveler to the region. Our visit to Bethlehem, literally on the other side of the infamous “wall,” was an eye opening experience of seeing the prosperity of the Jewish state verse a dilapidated, war torn town of the West Bank. It also offered an opportunity for us to experience a border crossing. Visiting our guide’s home in a West Bank settlement was a wonderful yet humbling experience. I have not



Glimpses to and from Bethlehem.

completely comprehended the reality that his tranquil and beautiful home of 30 years is built upon such contentious ground.

Visiting the Dead Sea was a welcome reprieve from the city, however, the dwindling shorelines and literal evaporation of the sea was eye opening. Our trip to storied Masada, with the subsequent emotional lecture about the events that occurred on this desert mountain top, was a highlight of the tour. Our guide conveyed a message against radicalism, on any side, and it will be a lecture that I will remember throughout my life. Visiting one Kibbutz, an oasis in the desert, is essential for any trip to Israel. A lecture introducing the Kibbutz movement, how the movement has influenced Israel and the Kibbutz’s future is necessary to give context to the experience.

We journeyed to the Tiberius region and visited the historical places of Jesus’ time and life. At Capernaum, our guide offered a wonderful introductory lecture on early Christianity. Without a doubt, if one is planning a religious or perhaps a religious history tour, the tour should spend at least two days in the region and offer more time at each of locations associated with historical Jesus (ie. Capernaum, Mt. Of Beatitudes, etc). Coupled with this day was a trip to the Golan Heights which should not be missed if the tour is focusing on the modern political situation in Israel. Seeing the proximity of Lebanon’s and Syria’s borders to some of Israel’s towns beyond the Golan Heights was revelatory. This bus ride is an opportunity for a lecture about Israel’s relations with their neighbors, particularly Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

Perhaps the biggest surprise of the trip was Haifa and realizing its proximity to historical sites. Packing and unpacking is not fun for any traveler, therefore, any tour could stay in Jerusalem and Haifa and eliminate unnecessary movement. Haifa is considered the “city of co-existence” and ending the tour in Haifa leads to a hopeful goodbye to the country.

More generally, the military presence in Israel was neither disconcerting nor reassuring. It simply was part of everyday life and culture of Israel. I never felt unsafe during my visit. We had the opportunity to meet with tourism officials in every town and all were sincerely interested in working with our constituency. The local tourism boards now have a clearer understanding of our market, so our community has a wonderful opportunity to create enlightened panels and educational programs in conjunction with them and the local universities.

Israel is a modern nation negotiating ancient relationships and histories. For Americans thinking and perhaps struggling with current political Middle Eastern politics and/or for those who simply wish to step back into time and see firsthand the birthplace of three major religions, Israel is a destination that wraps history and current political tensions in one destination. The Middle East may dictate safety and security throughout the world for many generations to come and I believe this sharpens Israel's appeal to our educated clientele. Therefore, Israel should be considered by all travel planners as a "do-not-miss" destination.



Northwestern University Alumni Education and Travel Proposed Itinerary Israel - A country of great historical and modern significance

As a University providing travel to alumni, our obligation is to offer an intellectually stimulating Israel tour that encompasses the ancient past and the dynamic future. An NAA tour must link the history to the present and offer perspectives from Jews, Christians, and Arabs about the current events of the region. Wrapped in this past is the understanding of early Jewish and Christian history tied to the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, the subsequent Roman and Arab eras of power, and the current political situation starting with the Zionist movement and culminating in the 1948 creation of the state of Israel. Additional historical context should be provided to travelers during their visit, particularly by highlighting the following: the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 (War of Independence or the Catastrophe), The 1967 Six Day War, The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, the subsequent Israeli military interventions in Syria and Lebanon, the settlement movement, the “Right of Return” policy, the Oslo Peace Process and the current efforts at maintaining peace. This overview must also talk in depth about what a “Jewish state” means in both a religious and political sense and show the differing opinions among the Jewish population about Israel’s identity.

Moving away from the political, the life of Jesus and the movement from Judaism to Christianity will be another important element of the tour. This history will again cover the Jewish history of the second temple period and talk about Jewish culture and people during this time. The culmination of the Christianity segment must demonstrate how St. Paul and St. Peter were integral in the change from Judaism to Christianity and then how Christianity’s influence in the world was through the Holy Roman Empire rather than in the birthplace of Jesus.

With these objectives I have built the following itinerary. A professor in Middle Eastern history would be best to accompany this trip. The right guide(s) and perhaps two panel discussions including local Israelis, Palestinians, and Christians would also convey diverse perspectives and contribute to a well-rounded program.

Day 1	Departure from Gateway City
Day 2	Arrival Day
14:00 – 16:00	Jerusalem Orientation Tour – drive along West Bank and stop at point overlooking Bethlehem. End about half mile from hotel for a short orientation walk to hotel.
18:30	Welcome Reception.
19:30	Dinner at local restaurant preferably walking distance from hotel.
Day 3	Jerusalem’s Old City
8:30 - Noon	Enter medieval walls of Jerusalem and visit Western wall, take Tunnel tour where guide offers full history of the first and second temple period. Explain network of tunnels and have maps of the complete old town to hand to each participant.
Noon – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 17:00	Via Dolorosa (Stations of the Cross), Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Visit Jewish and Christian quarter of the old town. Offer free time. Offer one pick up from motor coach or option to return hotel on one’s own.
20:00	Dinner at local restaurant.
Day 4	Historical Jesus, Hebrew University, Israel’s Supreme Court
8:30 – 10:30	Visit Mt. Of Olives (overlook and short introduction on to Jesus’ time in this area), Garden of Gethsemane.

11:00 - 13:00	Visit Hebrew University – Ask local professor/administrator to share history of University, demographics of University. See if American students are available to talk about their experiences at the University and ask them to share perspectives on the people and events happening in Israel.
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch (most likely in area close to Supreme Court building)
14:30 – 16:00	Visit Israel’s Supreme Court. If possible find location for short lecture on Israel’s current political structure, movement from a more socialist form of government to democratic form, information about Knesset, mention elected officials that have had a strong influence on country (IE. Ben Gurion, Shimon Peres) and how officials are elected. Include short history of Arab leaders in the Knesset. Then discuss current legal system and how their laws are their own but are also taken from British Mandate law.
19:00	Dinner at local restaurant.
Day 5	Holocaust Memorial - Yad Vashem.
8:30 – Noon	Visit Yad Vashem – Israeli Holocaust Memorial. Guided two-hour tour. Tour of Children’s Memorial and Eternal Flame.
Noon – 1:00	Mahane Yehuda fruit and vegetable market for lunch
Afternoon	Optional free time which could include a visit to the Dead Sea Scrolls Museum, return visit to Old City, Visit Mt. Zion (place where Last Supper supposedly occurred) and/or optional Bethlehem tour.
Evening	Dinner on own.
Day 6	Departure to Masada / Arrive Haifa
7:30	Departure for Masada – two hour drive Offer one hour lecture on Masada on bus. Arrive at 9:30 and take cable car to top.
Noon - 14:00	Depart Masada and travel to Kibbutz Ein Gedi. Tour of Kibbutz and gardens, lunch at Kibbutz.
14:00	Drive to Dead Sea Resort hotel - optional spa treatments
20:00	Dinner at hotel or local hotel restaurant.
Day 7	Depart for Acre and Haifa
8:00 – 11:00	Drive to Acre – Opportunity for lecture about Israel’s Modern History. Must cover wars since 1948 and also introduce Zionist movement. Lecture should talk about the “Right of Return Policy” and Arabs perspective on policy. Lecture should set up tonight’s panel discussion with locals and encourage passengers to think about questions for the panel tonight.
11:00 – 13:00	Orientation tour of Acre.
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch on the Mediterranean.
14:00	Depart for Haifa – check into room.
16:00	Driving Orientation tour of Haifa and/or option for walking tour of Haifa which would include walking Bahai Gardens. Local Guide / TD could split group.
18:00	City of Coexistence – Panel of local residents living together in Haifa. Panel located in restaurant in German Colony. Make sure acoustics are okay for panel.
19:30	Dinner at restaurant with locals.
Day 8	Historical Jesus – Golan Heights
8:00	Depart for the Sea of Galilee – Hour drive gives option for lecture about history of early Christianity and background for places that will be visited.

9:30 – Noon Arrive Sea of Galilee region and visit Capernaum, Mt. of Beatitudes (recommended to bring copy of beatitudes, Tabgha).

Noon – 13:30 Lunch on Sea of Galilee.

13:30 – 17:00 Motor coach tour of Golan Heights – Discuss history of Israel’s relationship with Syria and Lebanon. Visit Israeli bunker and see military infrastructure on Mount Bental. Opportunity to also talk about “military culture” in Israel. Also, if passengers are interested, this is an opportunity to discuss the panel from the night before.

19:30? Dinner at local restaurant perhaps on way back from Golan Heights. (Nazareth stop?)

Day 9

Tel Aviv

8:00 Departure for Tel Aviv

9:30 – Noon Jaffa (include tour of Peres Center for Peace and if possible ask if any volunteers and/or participants are available for a dialogue about the center’s efforts).

12:00 – 14:30 Lunch at Neve Tzedek with time for shopping.

14:30 Visit Independence Hall.

16:00 Motor Coach tour of modern Tel Aviv (most likely short).

20:00 Dinner on Water.

Day 10

Departure Day

Day at Leisure.

Optional tour to Caesarea National Park and/or wine tasting at Tishbi Winery.

18:30 Farewell Dinner: Germany Colony.

Evening P.M. Departure



Mahane Yehuda fruit and vegetable market, Jerusalem.

*Submitted by Kristina Nemeth
Commonwealth Club of California*

Given the long and complicated history of the region, the many religious differences, and the current political struggles, this is not a “vacation destination.” It is a place for the inquisitive and thoughtful traveler, perfect for the educational travel market. I think everyone in our group came away feeling changed on some intellectual or emotional level, much more so than many other destinations.

Personally, Israel is one of the most fascinating places I’ve ever visited. One could focus a tour on a variety of topics and never run out of sites to explore and people to meet - history, culture, religion, peace and conflict issues, and science and technology. You have ancient religious sites, archaeological digs, a vibrant contemporary art scene, interesting markets and neighbourhood quarters, and the country’s culinary delights, including a growing wine industry. Add that to the varied scenery – from the walled cities, to the Negev Desert, the Dead Sea, and the Golan Heights and it’s a near perfect destination.

Some other positive factors are that the country is small, so distances to cities and sites are close. The roads and vehicles are good. There is a variety of good to excellent accommodations. The English spoken at hotels, restaurants and tourist sites, is excellent. What surprised most of us, was that the day to day life felt exceptionally safe. Being out walking at night in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, felt much safer than the U.S.



Commonwealth Club of California Proposed Itinerary Outline

I would have a series of lectures throughout the tour focused on contemporary issues – the obvious peace and conflict issues, - but technology, water conservation, organic farming, and areas where Israel is really one of the countries leading in the world.

Day 1

Jerusalem

Lunch on own, and rest.

Afternoon: General orientation tour of Jerusalem.

Evening: Orientation and Welcome dinner.

Inbal or King David Hotel – 4 nights

Day 2

Jerusalem

Morning:

- Visit the Western Wall and Temple Mount
- Moslem Quarter including part of the Via Dolorosa and Arab market

Afternoon:

- Lunch
- Christian Quarter with the Stations of the Cross and Church of the Holy Sepulchre
- Visit the Jewish Quarter
- Guest speakers from Jerusalem City government on one of the topics mentioned above

Evening: Dinner on own

Day 3

Jerusalem – Modern City

Morning:

- Visit Yad Vashem - National Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust

Afternoon:

- Lunch and free time in Mahane Yehuda fruit & vegetable market
- Israel Museum to see the Shrine of the Book, exhibiting the Dead Sea Scrolls

Evening: Dinner on Own

Day 4

Jerusalem

Morning:

- Hebrew University - Meet with Students
- See film archive, with some sample film clips
- Garden of Gethsemane
- Mount of Olives

Afternoon: Drive to Neve Shalom (“Oasis of Peace”) and/ or Tour Supreme Court Building and learn about Israeli legal system

Evening: Local music performance

Day 5

Jerusalem and Bethlehem to the Dead Sea

Morning: Travel to Bethlehem, birthplace of Jesus and King David to visit Church of Nativity in Manger Square

Light lunch in Bethlehem

Afternoon:

- Travel through the Judean Desert to the Dead Sea region (lowest place on earth)
- Continue to Kibbutz Ein Gedi
- Trip to Dead Sea and Spa, return to Kibbutz

Evening:

- Dinner at Kibbutz Ein Gedi
- Lecture on kibbutz life and desert ecology by a kibbutz member

Kibbutz Ein Gedi – 1 night

Day 6

Dead Sea and Haifa

Morning: Masada - see excavations of the fortress-palace built by King Herod, last stronghold in the Jewish revolt against Romans (in 73 CE)

Afternoon:

- Drive to Haifa
- Tour of Haifa as a mixed city of coexistence including Stella Maris (home of the Carmelite Monastic Order), Kababir (Ahmedians), Wadi Nisnas (Moslems)
- Tour of the Bahai Shrine and Gardens - world center of the Bahai Faith with hanging gardens

Evening: Dinner in the German Quarter

Dan Carmel Hotel or smaller boutique hotel in German Quarter – 3 nights

Day 7

Western Galilee and Carmel Region

Morning: Akko, ancient seaport declared by UNESCO as a world heritage site for a tour of the Old Walled city including Knights' Halls, bazaar and Turkish bath house (hamam) and meet Ms. Erika Gal from the Old Acre Development Company

Afternoon:

- Visit the "Tishbi Winery" in Binyamina, a small family-owned winery for a tour, wine tasting and lunch
- Drive to Ein Hod Artists' Village to meet some of the artists including some who paint wine labels and pictures

Day 8

Western Galilee and Carmel Region

Morning: Drive to Caesarea National Park, remains of former Roman Capital and Crusader city
Tour of Roman theater, hippodrome and, promenade to the renovated port area

Afternoon:

- Lunch at seaside cafe
- Druze village – visit must be well structured, and in the more traditional town
- Panel discussion on co-existence

Evening: Dinner on own

Day 9

Sea of Galilee and Lower Galilee

Morning:

- Travel to the Sea of Galilee Region to visit some of the historical and religious sites:
 - * Mount of Beatitudes - traditional site of Sermon on the Mount near Korazim

- * Tabgha - churches commemorating the Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes
- * Capernaum - ancient Jewish fishing village where Jesus began his Ministry

Afternoon:

- Drive to the Golan Heights for a view overlooking the Sea of Galilee from the Peace Observation Point
- Continue to Tel Aviv

Dan Hotel – 3 nights

Day 10

Tel Aviv

Morning:

- Lecture
- Visit Independence Hall, a museum located in the building where Israel's Declaration of Independence took place
- Tour of Tel Aviv – Bauhaus architecture tour

Afternoon: Lunch on own and free time to stroll through the lanes of Neve Tzedek, Tel Aviv's oldest neighbourhood (1887) which has been restored with museums, galleries and coffee houses including the Susan Delal Center for Dance & Theatre

- Visit the Peres Centre for Peace and project site.

Evening: Dinner and Theater performance

Day 11

Tel Aviv-Jaffa

Morning:

- Tour of Old Jaffa, the ancient seaport with artists' quarter in Old City, fishermen's port and view overlooking Tel-Aviv
- Visit the Ilana Goor Museum, home of the renowned Israeli artist-sculptor located in a renovated khan
- See the Nahum Gutmann Museum, exhibiting paintings from one of Israel's most famous artists

Afternoon: Free time to explore Jaffa on own

Evening: Farewell dinner at one of Tel Aviv top chef restaurants

Day 12

Tel Aviv-Jaffa

Morning:

Depending on flights...

- Carmel open-air market, selling fruits, vegetables
- Walk in Nachlat Binyamin Pedestrian Mall with its colourful Arts and Crafts bazaar
- Free time to walk on the waterfront...

Fly home!

**Submitted by Chloe Wicks
Tulane University**

My preconception of Israel was that it would be a bit frenetic. Being such a small country with a mass of desert I thought the population might be more stacked and the cities busy. The major tourist sites I thought would be overrun with groups making their pilgrimage, which might prohibit an intimate experience. With the political issues I thought there would be palpable tension in daily living. What was surprising was the pervasive sense of calm. Perhaps it is the candid way in which the people we

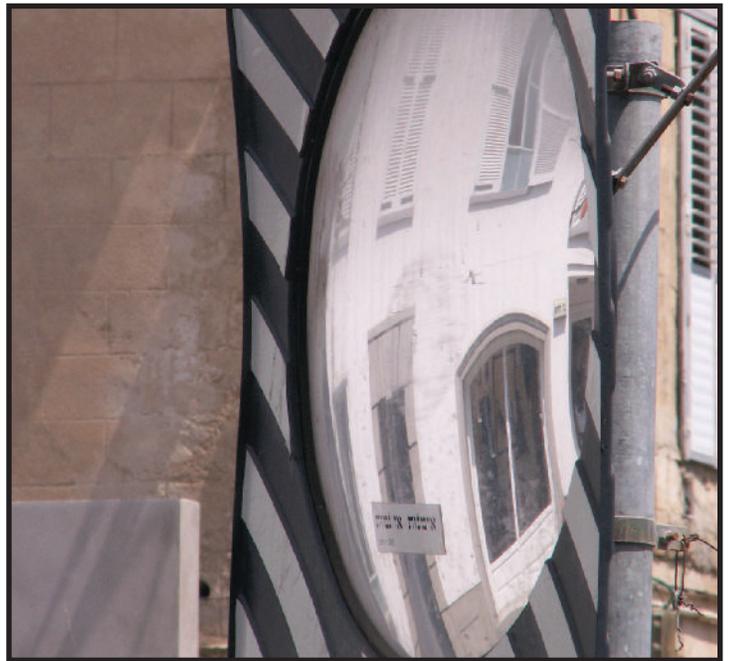


met discussed everything from the establishment of Israel to the best market in Tel Aviv that gave me an unguarded sensibility. The ability for everyone to create a personal space of quiet and have an intimate experience was best displayed by the women praying at the Western Wall, who as our group quietly filed by maintained their focus. The diversity of experiences allowed for all in our group to have those intimate moments where there was personal appeal.

Israel's exploration of the concept of a modern nation amidst ancient civilization is very intriguing. Even the modern architecture pays homage to the ancient stones of Israel. The Supreme Court building as described by *New York Times* Paul Goldberger is "a remarkable and exhilarating balance between the concerns of daily life and the symbolism of the ages." The engineering that takes place for agriculture in this ancient land to sustain a modern society is phenomenal. The markets of fresh fruits and vegetables accessible to its population are enviable. With all of the flowers blooming and attracting butterflies I could not help but to think of Pavel Friedman who died in Auschwitz and who wrote the poem "The Butterfly" from which the book title *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* was taken. It is amazing to see what has been created by a population who has seen so much destruction.



Top: Sea of Galilee region. (Bottom): Ein Gedi, Mount of Beatitudes, Hamat Gader Park.



Clockwise: Nazareth, Tel Aviv, Akko, Tel Aviv.

Israel is a market ready destination. There is ample environment for learning and educational programming. The attractions and excursions are plentiful, diverse and have a broad appeal. Many focuses for travel can be explored from general survey programs to in-depth: religious, archeological, environmental & geographical, political, food & wine, arts & culture programs.

Reliable tour operators are offering this as a destination. There are opportunities for different price points that would be appealing to a wide market. Service and accommodations are up to par with my clientele's needs. The guides with whom I met were knowledgeable, personable and engaging. The destinations are eager to accommodate an educational institute's needs, provide assistance and incentives. The travel time between in-country destinations is relatively short, which allows for more programming and less transfer time.

Interpretations of safety, accessibility and culture broadcasted by sensational media are the major challenge to tourism in Israel. Perceptions of risk will have to be addressed with institutions that consider this destination.

Tulane University Suggested Itinerary

Ten-day survey program, December:

- Day 1 Jerusalem** **Focus: City Orientation**
-Morning arrival in Tel Aviv and transfer to Jerusalem for check in at hotel
-Lunch at a nearby restaurant with optional brief walking tour of neighborhood to get acquainted with the area
-City Orientation Tour by coach
-Welcome Reception & Dinner
Recommended Hotel - Inbal
- Day 2 Jerusalem** **Focus: Old City**
-Breakfast at the hotel
-Walking Tour of the Old City: Visit the Western Wall (including tunnels), Moslem Quarter (including Via Dolorosa & Arab market), Christian Quarter (including Church of the Holy Sepulcher), & Jewish Quarter
-1 hour independent exploration in Old City for shopping/lunch
-City of David Visitors Center
-Mount of Olives, Gethsemane Basilica of Agony, Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Dome of the Ascension
-Dinner at local restaurant or hotel
-Optional: Night Spectacular” at the Tower of David Museum
(Day programming could flip depending on how late the churches are open near Mount of Olives)
Recommended Hotel - Inbal
- Day 3 Jerusalem** **Focus: The Birth of a Nation & Its Vision through Architecture**
-Breakfast at the hotel
-Visit to Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial
-Visit to the Supreme Court with discussion on architecture and how it incorporates the philosophy of shaping of the nation
-Visit to the Shrine of the Book and the Israel Museum with free time for lunch at the café before the tour begins
-Afternoon Hebrew University at Mount Scopus for a visit to the Steven Spielberg Film Archive and film screening
-Evening dinner with students* from Hebrew University (*on exchange from specific U.S. college or students who would be willing to talk about military experience prior to education)
Recommended Hotel - Inbal
- Day 4 Jerusalem** **Focus: Dead Sea**
-Breakfast at the hotel
-Day for Independent Exploration: This would be the day for an independent trip to Bethlehem if the university or travel companies have problems programming to this area.
-Optional Excursion: Dead Sea, Masada & Qumran. Masada & Qumran in earliest part of the day with a break for lunch at the restaurant in Ein Gedi. Afternoon program would include a visit to a spa and opportunity to enter the water, or for those who did not wish to have the spa visit would be able to tour Ein Gedi and hear a talk about the kibbutz and tour the botanical garden.
Recommended Hotel – Inbal
Recommended Spa – Hod Hotel

Day 5 Jerusalem/Haifa (Saturday Holiday of Holidays)

Focus: Coexistence through art & culture

- Breakfast at the hotel
- Depart Hotel in Jerusalem
- By coach travel to Haifa 2 hours
- Check in to hotel in Haifa
- Optional Walk down Baha'i gardens or coach drive to meet at Baha'i temple then a visit to the Stella Maris Church.
- Lecture & Lunch in German Colony with locals to talk about coexistence in Haifa, and the Holiday of Holidays, celebrating Ramadan, Hanukkah, and Christmas.
- Afternoon Independent Exploration at the arts market Holiday of Holidays in Wadi Nisnas
- Evening Dinner on own

Recommended Hotel-Dan Carmel

Day 6 Haifa

Focus: Crusades

- Breakfast at hotel
- Morning Excursion to Akko including the Knights' Halls, bazaar, Turkish bath house, and Templars Tunnel
- Independent Exploration Akko 1 hour shopping/lunch
- Visit to Ein Hod for a guided tour of the artists' village. Optional activity artist workshop, or spend some free time in the community.
- Visit to the Tishbi Winery for a small tour and tasting followed by dinner

Recommended Hotel-Dan Carmel

Day 7 Haifa

Focus: Galilee

- Breakfast at hotel
- Morning Excursion Nazareth & the Sea of Galilee. Visit Nazareth with walking tour of market & the church of the Annunciation.
- Lunch in Tiberias at the Scots Hotel St. Andrews Galilee with short tour
- Take a pilgrim's boat to Capernaum then visit by coach Tabgha, Mount of the Beatitudes and the Golan Heights.
- If time permits stop at Safed for guided tour and lecture on mysticism and Kabbalah and mysticism.
- Dinner in German Colony in Haifa

Recommended Hotel-Dan Carmel

Day 8 Haifa/Tel Aviv

Focus: Roman Conquest

- Breakfast at hotel
- Check out of hotel in Haifa
- Drive to Caesarea for a guided tour
- Lunch at the café at Caesarea and some free time on the shores of the Mediterranean
- Transfer by coach to Tel Aviv
- Check into hotel
- Board a boat for city tour on the Mediterranean Sea along the shore of Tel Aviv
- Dinner at restaurant along marina

Recommended Hotel-Dan Hotel

Day 9 Tel Aviv

Focus: The State of Israel and the White City, Contemporary Culture

- Breakfast at hotel
 - Visit to Independence Hall and short walking tour along Rothschild Boulevard
 - Drive to Neve Tzedek for a walking tour of neighborhood
 - 1 hour independent exploration lunch/shopping in Neve Tzedek
 - Visit to Peres Center for Peace (new location in Jaffa completed September 2009) with a tour of facility and lecture on the programming
 - Performance at the Peres Center
 - Dinner at Cordelia in Jaffa
- Recommended Hotel-Dan Hotel*

Day 10 Tel Aviv /Yaffo

Focus: Antiquity to Modernity

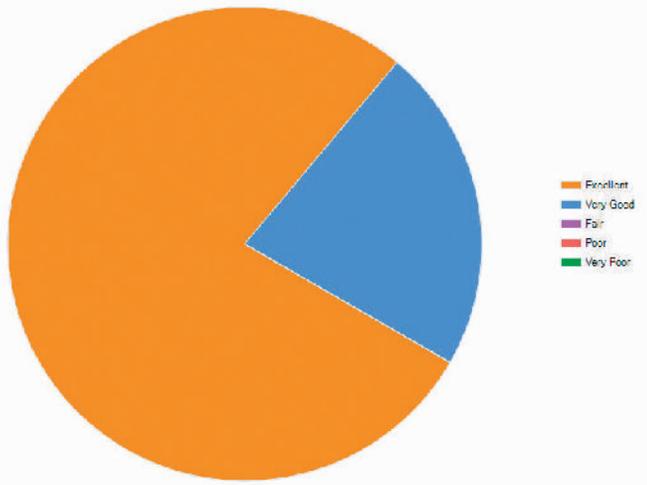
- Breakfast at hotel
- Tour of Old Jaffa to the seaport, artists' quarter, St. Peter's Church
- Visit to Ilana Goor Museum (if possible meet the artist)
- Lunch at the café at Nalaga'at with a tour and lecture about the facility
- If time permits visit to market for last minute shopping
- Return to hotel in early afternoon to prepare for check out and return to the U.S.
- Farewell Dinner at the hotel
- Transfer to airport and return to U.S.



Israel “EDUCATIONAL” Post-Trip Survey

ETC conducted the following post-trip survey in July 2009. All 10 Educational participants responded. The results of their survey responses follow on these pages.

1. As an overall Educational Travel destination how would you rate Israel?



Seven respondents (77.8%) rated Israel as an “Excellent” destination, and 2 respondents (22.2%) rated Israel a “Very Good” destination. One travel planner did not answer the question, stating: “It is difficult to rate. It is a fascinating country, but there are political issues that could make it a sensitive destination.”

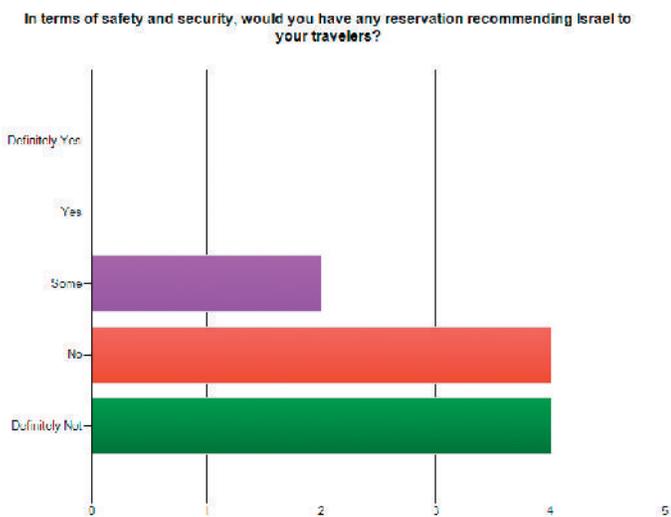
2. How many days do you feel are “mandatory” in terms of itinerary length on any Israel tour you would offer?

- *7 days*
- *8 days at a minimum, 10 would be better*
- *9 days*
- *Depends on kind of tour, in depth “all” Israel tour would be 10 days.*
- *10 days*
- *10*
- *10 days*
- *10-12 days*
- *12 days*
- *13-14 days*

3. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being “did not feel safe” and 5 being “I felt very safe”, please answer the following questions with reference to your experience in Israel.

	1	2	3	4	5	Rating Average	Response Count
Traveling to and from Israel	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)	20.0% (2)	70.0% (7)	4.60	10
Jerusalem	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	40.0% (4)	60.0% (6)	4.60	10
Bethlehem	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)	40.0% (4)	50.0% (5)	4.40	10
Judean Desert/Dead Sea	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	20.0% (2)	80.0% (8)	4.80	10
Galilee/Golan	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	20.0% (2)	80.0% (8)	4.80	10
Nazareth	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	30.0% (3)	70.0% (7)	4.70	10
Haifa	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)	90.0% (9)	4.90	10
Tel Aviv	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)	4.56	9
Crossing borders between Israel and Palestinian territories	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)	30.0% (3)	60.0% (6)	4.50	10
	answered question						10

4. In terms of safety and security, would you have any reservation recommending Israel to your travelers?

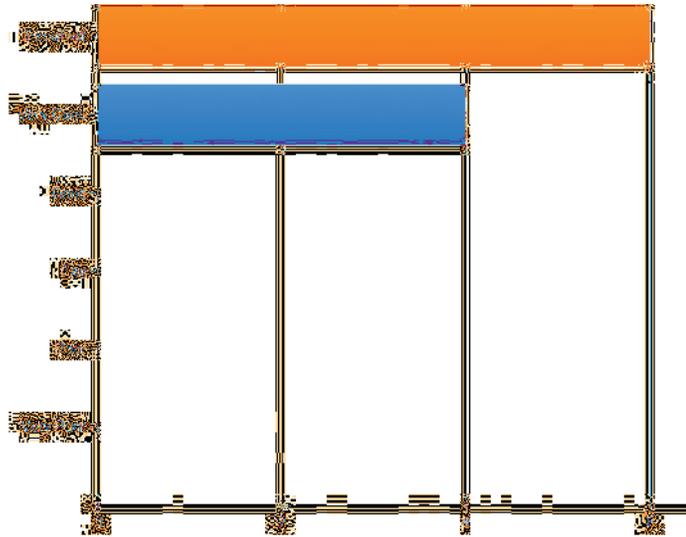


40% of the travel planners “definitely did not” have reservations recommending Israel to their travelers; another 40% “did not” have reservations”; and 20% had “some” reservations.

Travel planners’ specific comments:

- 1. [Travelers] have to be comfortable with the inherent risk of international travel and terrorism. But as far as crime it feels safer than most anywhere I’ve been.*
- 2. If there had recently been unrest [I would have had reservations].*
- 3. We are offering Israel in November 2009 and have almost 20 signed up.*
- 4. I would not recommend spending a lot of time in public markets.*
- 5. However I would address the security issues and what is relevant at the time.*
- 6. I would be more hesitant walking through Miami.*
- 7. It is a country fraught with so much emotion, and it is difficult to know how people will react.*

5. Overall, how would you evaluate the food and cuisine in Israel?



60% of the travel planners responded that the food and cuisine in Israel was “excellent”; 40% responded that it was “very good.”

Travel planners’ specific comments:

The food is fresh, locally grown, and overall very healthy. I was both surprised and impressed by the wine and cheeses at the winery we visited, a real highlight. The produce and seafood was excellent. For those foodies out in California, this is a great destination. There are some staple ingredients however (nuts) that find their way into everything so could be challenging for some. There was no “worst” experience, but the dinner in Jaffa was exceptional!

The tasting dinner at the Inbal Hotel was fabulous. Wine tasting at Tishbi was wonderful. Farewell dinner at Cordelia’s was most memorable. Wines were all top rate.

All of the food and wine was great. Loved the fine dining but also loved the casual meals and getting to try the very local lunches.

I am personally fond of Middle Eastern cuisine. The dinner at Cordelia’s in Jaffa was outstanding.

I particularly enjoyed the food at the Olive and Fish restaurant the first day we arrived in Israel. I thought the many dishes that offered a sampling of the fresh foods available in Israel were delicious and spiced quite uniquely. It was a great way to be introduced to Israeli food. All of the breakfasts were fantastic too, which is quite helpful to have travelers start off the long tour days with a good meal.

For me, of course, the nut allergy was a big deal. Nuts were lurking and I had to be very careful. The food was

wonderful and so fresh! However, ten days of middle eastern food did become a bit tiresome. So any tour should have just a few options for others types of food. I loved the restaurant in Haifa, when we ate with the locals. It seems authentic and family run.

Our first dinner at the Inbal and final one in Tel Aviv were delicious!

I had four favorites:

- Our dinner at the Inbal hotel the first night because it was a wonderful “sampler” if the different foods.
- The lunch at the restaurant on the beach in Haifa (not identified in our itinerary) because the weather, the scenery, and the food were all perfect.
- Dinner at Cordelia’s was nothing short of amazing. The food, the atmosphere, the service, the handsome chef —nothing was short of 5-star there.
- Al Diyar in Haifa was a very different experience, but the atmosphere and energy in the place was fun and friendly, and the food was excellent.

The only thing that was disappointing to me was the excess of food that was always available and was probably thrown out when we were done, even though we never ate everything. I actually don’t remember having a bad meal anywhere, which was surprising. There is usually at least one disappointing meal on a trip like this. My only discomfort was the breakfasts—some hotels had a much better breakfast quality than others (Inbal was the best).

The first dinner at the hotel, the winery, the last dinner.

The following charts provide the travel planners' evaluations of the Israel accommodations in which they stayed. All 10 travel planners provided responses.

Customer Service							
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem	60.0% (6)	40.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Le Meridien Hotel, Dead Sea	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	40.0% (4)	40.0% (4)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
Sheraton Moriah Hotel, Tiberias	20.0% (2)	20.0% (2)	50.0% (5)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Dan Carmel Hotel, Haifa	50.0% (5)	30.0% (3)	20.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv	30.0% (3)	60.0% (6)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Rooms							
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem	30.0% (3)	50.0% (5)	20.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Le Meridien Hotel, Dead Sea	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	60.0% (6)	30.0% (3)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Sheraton Moriah Hotel, Tiberias	0.0% (0)	30.0% (3)	60.0% (6)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Dan Carmel Hotel, Haifa	40.0% (4)	40.0% (4)	20.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv	60.0% (6)	40.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)

**Travel planners' evaluations of the Israel accommodations in which they stayed.
All 10 travel planners provided responses.**

Food									
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A		
Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem	90.0% (9)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)		
Le Meridien Hotel, Dead Sea	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	30.0% (3)	30.0% (3)	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)		
Sheraton Moriah Hotel, Tiberias	10.0% (1)	10.0% (1)	70.0% (7)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)		
Dan Carmel Hotel, Haifa	30.0% (3)	40.0% (4)	20.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)		
Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv	30.0% (3)	30.0% (3)	20.0% (2)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)		
Amenities/Services									
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A		
Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem	20.0% (2)	50.0% (5)	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)		
Le Meridien Hotel, Dead Sea	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	20.0% (2)	70.0% (7)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)		
Sheraton Moriah Hotel, Tiberias	0.0% (0)	20.0% (2)	50.0% (5)	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)		
Dan Carmel Hotel, Haifa	30.0% (3)	50.0% (5)	20.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)		
Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv	50.0% (5)	20.0% (2)	20.0% (2)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)		

**Travel planners' evaluations of the Israel accommodations in which they stayed.
All 10 travel planners provided responses.**

Cleanliness								
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N/A	
Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem	30.0% (3)	60.0% (6)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Le Meridien Hotel, Dead Sea	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)	40.0% (4)	30.0% (3)	20.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Sheraton Moriah Hotel, Tiberias	10.0% (1)	60.0% (6)	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Dan Carmel Hotel, Haifa	50.0% (5)	40.0% (4)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv	50.0% (5)	30.0% (3)	20.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)

Travel planners' specific comments:

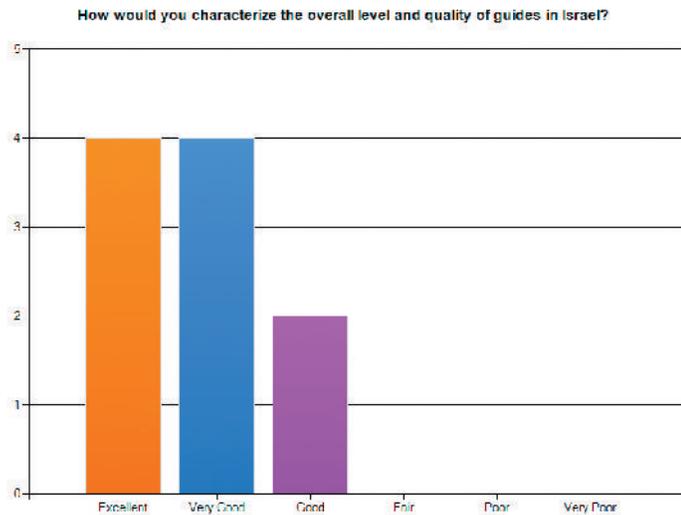
The Inbal had all you could need for a reasonable price. I liked the design of the hotel, around the courtyard (which could be used for cocktails), thought the food was excellent, and the manager really wanted to please our group. I also liked having access to the executive lounge.

Loved the Inbal in Jerusalem the best—they could not have been nicer!

The view at the Dan Carmel is extraordinary and is one of the reasons that we would choose this hotel.

The Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem, had the best customer service out of all of the hotels. I would not recommend Le Meridien for an alumni travel experience. The Dan Hotel in Tel Aviv had a fantastic location and view, as well as superior rooms.

7. How would you characterize the overall level and quality of guides in Israel?



40% of the travel planners responded that the guides in Israel were “excellent”; 40% responded that they were “very good”; and, 20% responded that the guides were “good.”

Travel planners’ specific comments:

We only had the experience of two guides. One much more senior who was outstanding. He had a great understanding of history, religion, and politics and he was able to provide a very complete picture. I liked getting our guides’ personal opinion on things, even if I didn’t always understand or agree. I don’t think a “vanilla” guide would work for me in a destination like this. With the cultural differences, it is also useful to have someone who understands the U.S. media biases, the lack of information that we have about what life is really like in Israel. They also need to have a love of educating people on their country.

Knowledge of history vital. Guides should be prepared to work with older alumnae/i and present themselves in a professional manner. Guides should be able to give a balanced overview as hard as this can be.

Amir Orly was outstanding in every way: deeply conversant with Christian and Jewish history, personable, and very much aware of his audience.

The most important aspect would be the ability to engage our alumni in the experience and to be able to perceive if a certain experience is holding their attention and to know how to enhance it.

I like guides to have an opinion one way or the other. However, they just need to be open and honest about what it is. Education of the guide is very important and impressive. Guides should not assume anything about our travelers. (i.e. Republican / Democrat, etc.) Amir was excellent, our guide in Haifa just OK and TelAviv OK - he did not read the group or have a hold on timing. VERY casual in his delivery.

A great knowledge of the country—its history, challenges, beauty, resources and offerings. The person must be friendly and personable, as well as sensitive to the needs of an older crowd (walking, bathrooms, etc.). Amir was excellent, as was our guide in Akko. Bene was quite good, but young, and needs polishing and a little maturity. The guide in Haifa was a great disappointment, especially with the way she dressed. I was turned off by her immediately and neither her demeanor nor her knowledge ever made me warm up to her. Respectful dress is a must.

Our two guides were very different, and both would cater to a different base.

8. How would you rate the overall physical quality, architectural integrity, and presentation of Israel's historical/educational/archeological sites and museums?

100% answered "excellent" to this question. Seven travel planners offered the following specific comments:

Overall the English and signage is excellent. Better than most any non-English speaking country that I can remember visiting. The population is so well-educated that I was constantly impressed by the vocabulary and eloquence of curators and people on site. Often the language verged on being poetic. I never had a problem understanding anyone.

Ours was great!!

Dead Sea Scrolls, Massada amazing.

The Holocaust Museum [Yad Vashem] is one of the most eloquent museum experiences I have ever had. Masada could use more shelter from the sun. Overall, I found the video introductions to several of the museums badly in need of production updating.

The enthusiasm for all of the curators was commendable. I would not switch the guides for different cities as that is disruptive to the group experience, with the exception of the Bethlehem visit. The guide for Yad Vashem was brilliant and sensitive to impact the visit had on the group. He handled the subject beautifully and it was evident how personally important the story he was telling is. The museum was on of

the best I have seen in the world.

I was very impressed with Israel's infrastructure. Everything was clearly marked. Museums and buildings were beautiful and offered all amenities.

I am immensely concerned that Israel, as a whole, does not seem to be as concerned about conservation and preservation as I would have hoped and expected (the water issues around the country and especially with the Dead Sea, plus the immense amounts of food that seem to be going to waste are prime examples). Their interest in archaeology, however, and their need to excavate every building site is fascinating.

The only place I had problems understanding what we were seeing was in Akko. Our guide was wonderful, but rushed, and the signage did not always "fill in" what she was forced to leave out in interest of time.

I was quite impressed with the curator of the Dead Sea Scrolls. He, too, was pressed for time, but gave us good information in the time we had, and was very personable.

9. How would you recommend the Israel Ministry of Tourism and Israel municipalities improve their outreach and collateral?

Needs to be updated. It seemed like some of the materials were produced about 5-10 years ago and were showing some age.

For U.S. audiences, the idea of adventure (skiing, water sports, a beach vacation) is not a draw to Israel. I wouldn't go there for those things, and I found this messaging distracting in the materials. Focusing the world history (not just religious history), the different communities, archeology, food and wine, and then all the exciting contemporary things, such as high tech, a vibrant art culture, the universities. Many of the materials I looked at were fine, but didn't really do the country justice as far as the huge variety of things that can be done there.

They are working very hard and doing a great job trying to get the word out. It has all be very nice to have and helpful.

Plenty of material was available. I doubt if typical travelers want to bring home that amount of paper.

Making sure our group and our colleagues are on the email newsletter list for the Ministry would be good. Having des-

ination updates from the Ministry would be extremely helpful. I would try and expand this email list as much as possible. Connecting with Alumni travel groups at their local events would be an option. Many universities have annual travel receptions and engaging on a person to person basis with a speaker and destination materials would be helpful. An update on the videos would be recommended. The link for Israel@60Educational Course has helpful information that is relevant to my needs and I recommend making that available to travel planners.

Bigger is not always better. Small concise pieces that target the "top" reasons to travel there. Focusing on history, religion and diversity of cultures is best.

More use of social media, and more interactive promotions. Brochures are pretty, but kind of boring. I think Haifa did the best job demonstrating all the things that could be experienced in and around Haifa, but that is, at times, overwhelming.

[Brochures and materials] need more white space, so you can really appreciate what you are looking at.

The following charts provide the travel planners' evaluations of the sites they visited and their recommendations on which sites and experiences should be included on any educational travel program offered to Israel:

	Must Include	Highly Recommended	Recommended, If Time Allows	Skip
Hebrew University of Jerusalem	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	0.0% (0)
The Western Wall	100.0% (10)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Western Wall Tunnels	50.0% (5)	50.0% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Garden of Gethsemane	70.0% (7)	20.0% (2)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
Muslim Quarter, Via Dolorosa & Arab Market	70.0% (7)	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Christian Quarter, Church of Holy Sepulchre	60.0% (6)	40.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Yad Vashem National Memorial	100.0% (10)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Israel Museum & Shrine of the Book	50.0% (5)	40.0% (4)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
Neve Shalom	10.0% (1)	10.0% (1)	50.0% (5)	30.0% (3)
Supreme Court	10.0% (1)	40.0% (4)	30.0% (3)	20.0% (2)
Jerusalem City Hall	0.0% (0)	20.0% (2)	40.0% (4)	40.0% (4)
Bethlehem	50.0% (5)	50.0% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Dead Sea Experience	0.0% (0)	60.0% (6)	20.0% (2)	20.0% (2)
Masada	60.0% (6)	20.0% (2)	20.0% (2)	0.0% (0)

	Must Include	Highly Recommended	Recommended, if Time Allows	Skip
Kibbutz Ein Gedi	20.0% (2)	40.0% (4)	30.0% (3)	10.0% (1)
Ginosar (1st century wooden sailing vessel from Jesus' time)	0.0% (0)	30.0% (3)	60.0% (6)	10.0% (1)
Sea of Galilee religious sites	40.0% (4)	60.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Golan Heights	40.0% (4)	50.0% (5)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
Hamat Gader Park Spa Village	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (10)
Nazareth	50.0% (5)	20.0% (2)	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)
Akko	70.0% (7)	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Druze Village of Daliyat El Carmel	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)	50.0% (5)	40.0% (4)
Ein Hod Artists' Village	30.0% (3)	20.0% (2)	50.0% (5)	0.0% (0)
Tishbi Winery	20.0% (2)	40.0% (4)	40.0% (4)	0.0% (0)
Caesarea National Park	20.0% (2)	50.0% (5)	30.0% (3)	0.0% (0)
Bahai Shrine and Gardens	30.0% (3)	30.0% (3)	40.0% (4)	0.0% (0)
University of Haifa Visit/Tour	0.0% (0)	30.0% (3)	40.0% (4)	30.0% (3)
Haifa Co-Existence Tour/Panel/Discussion	40.0% (4)	50.0% (5)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
Shalom Tower, Tel Aviv	0.0% (0)	30.0% (3)	50.0% (5)	20.0% (2)
Independence Hall, Tel Aviv	70.0% (7)	20.0% (2)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
Tel Aviv's "White City" (Rothschild Blvd.)	20.0% (2)	40.0% (4)	30.0% (3)	10.0% (1)
Peres Centre for Peace	50.0% (5)	30.0% (3)	10.0% (1)	10.0% (1)

	Must Include	Highly Recommended	Recommended, If Time Allows	Skip
Old Jaffa	70.0% (7)	20.0% (2)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
Ilana Goor Museum	20.0% (2)	40.0% (4)	40.0% (4)	0.0% (0)
Neve Tzedek, Tel Aviv's oldest neighborhood	20.0% (2)	70.0% (7)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)
Nalaga'at Theater	0.0% (0)	40.0% (4)	50.0% (5)	10.0% (1)
Tel Aviv Port	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)

Travel planners' specific comments:

For our purposes, the Dead Sea has very little appeal. It's better kept as a spa retreat for Israelis.

It depends on the focus of the itinerary - all of these options could change.

If doing a government or architectural tour, however, I would NOT skip the Supreme Court or City Hall. I also think Hamat Gader is a great post-trip option, but it is too far removed for an efficient tour itinerary.

V. Supporting Documents

Educational Participants Contact List

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“EDUCATIONAL” Participants’ Bios

Trearty Bartley, Director of Alumni Education, joined Harvard Alumni Association in 2006. Previously, she was Director, Special Events, for Harvard University President Larry Summers, and was responsible for presidential events both domestic and abroad. She was responsible for VP of World Wide Events/Operations at an incubator company in Cambridge prior to joining Harvard. Trearty has trekked to more than 90 countries, her favorite always being the last one visited. Her passions are family and travel. She holds a B.S. degree in economics.



Jerusalem



Mount of Olives, Jerusalem

Michelle Bell is currently Assistant Director at the Arkansas Alumni Association, where she has served University of Arkansas alumni for nine years through two programs: Razorbacks on Tour (educational travel) and Razorback Road Trips (sports-related travel). Following a restructuring of the Association, she also took responsibility for membership and programming for international students and alumni, a previously under-served alumni segment. She has served the Travel Learning Community through her roles as Israeli Educational member, round table moderator, mentor, and JumpStart panel member at various Educational Travel Conferences, and as a sports travel discussion leader for Alumni Professionals of the Southeast Conference. Since becoming the manager of the travel program, she has more than doubled the number of programs offered each year, implemented a host training program, and quadrupled the number of travelers. She has hosted educational tours of up to 30 passengers, and sports trips of 700+ travelers. She is a member of Alumni Professionals in Arkansas, Arkansas Volunteer Coordinators Association, the University of Arkansas International Educators Committee, and the Advancement Coordinator for the University’s United Way Campaign, and Washington County Democrats. A University of

Arkansas graduate with a degree in criminal justice and sociology, Michelle enjoys scuba diving, snorkeling, sailing, reading, good wine, and, of course, traveling.

All participant bio photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli

Elizabeth (Liz) Bigwood is the Alumnae Association of Smith College Assistant Director for Travel, a position she has held for six years. She has worked within the travel industry for over 30 years: previously she worked on a cruise liner as the Program Coordinator; for Thomas Cook Holidays as a resort representative in Greece, Spain, Portugal, and the United States; and for a European language school as its U.S. representative for 15 years recruiting adult professionals and individuals in need of intensive language training in French, Spanish, German, Dutch, and English. Liz was born and raised in the United Kingdom and subsequently lived in France, Spain, Greece, South Africa, and Brazil before arriving in the U.S. 25 years ago. She speaks French and some Spanish and Greek. Her passions include travel, cooking, music, and yoga. She earned the U.S. equivalent of an Associates Degree at the Language Tuition Centre, London, U.K., where she studied French, Spanish, and business.



Tishbi Winery



Akko, Jerusalem

Jennifer Bohac, Ph.D., is Director of Former Student Programs at Texas A&M University, from where she graduated in 1987 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science. She also received a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics in 1988. While working full-time on campus, Jennifer completed her master's degree at A&M in Higher Education Administration in 1994. She received her Ph.D. in the same field in 1998. Her dissertation was titled, "Occupational Progress and Career Planning of Former Football Players in the Newly Created Big 12 Conference." Jennifer worked on campus at Texas A&M for 10 years previously. She was an Academic Counselor in the Ag Economics department from 1990-1994, then accepted a position to develop and direct the Athletic Career Services Program. Recently, Jennifer spent two years at the University of Minnesota as the Director of Student-Athlete Development. She was in charge of 700 student-athletes' community service, career development, leadership programming, and personal development. Jennifer authored a textbook with Prentice Hall publishers in 2000 titled *Career Game Plan for Student-Athletes*. Jennifer has also taught numerous classes at Minnesota and Texas A&M including Life Skills, Succeeding in College,

Career Development, and Leadership Development. Jennifer joined staff of The Association of Former Students in May 2001 as the Director of Travel. In July 2003 she was promoted to the Director of Former Student Programs. In this capacity she oversees Club, Class and Travel Programs for The Association. The Traveling Aggies provide educational travel experiences all over the world. Jennifer is very active in her community and has served in numerous leadership capacities nationally and locally, as well as on boards and committees throughout the community and campus. Jennifer grew up in Houston, Texas, and has a Maltese dog named Shotzy.



Mount of Beatitudes

Rachel Davies is the Director of Alumni Education & Travel for Duke Alumni Association. She has worked in the department for 10 years and has been director since 2005. Previously, she worked in the fields of publishing, banking, and educational program development. Rachel has lived in the United Kingdom and France and speaks French and Welsh. She holds both a B.A. in French and an M.A. in Liberal Studies from Duke University, and is passionate about anything related to the arts.

Rob Fure is Director of Special Programs at Washington and Lee University in Virginia. Rob grew up in Iowa, received his secondary and collegiate education in Illinois and Michigan, and earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in English at the University of California, Berkeley. While teaching American literature and modern poetry at Washington and Lee, Rob taught in the University's Institute for Executives, a humanities program for corporate executives. Inspired by such opportunities for lifelong learning, Rob designed the Office of Special Programs for the creation and management of continuing education programs for adults and pre-college youths. Rob has served on the Educational Travel Advisory Committee and has spoken at the annual Educational Travel Conference almost every year. He has also served as President of the Association of Collegiate Conference and Events Directors' International. Rob is irrepressibly enthusiastic on the subject of educational programming for alumni. In 1982, he established the Washington and Lee Alumni College, which features educational programming for alumni and friends both on campus and abroad.



Nazareth Old City



Cordelia Restaurant, Jaffa

Allie Hill is the Director of the Emory Travel Program at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Her career in the field of alumni relations began at the Georgia Tech Alumni Association and has taken her around the world, including living and working overseas for an American college in Switzerland as an admissions counselor and international recruiter. After relocating back to the United States in 2005, she joined the staff at the Emory Alumni Association. Her love of travel and interest in alumni relations is a perfect fit for her current role as head of the Emory Travel Program. A graduate of Geneva College and Auburn University, she enjoys cooking, reading, volunteering in her community through the Junior Service League, and seeing the world with her Emory Travelers.

Abby Jansen, Associate Director, Alumni Travel, has worked for the Northwestern Alumni Association (NAA) Travel Program for six years. Before joining the NAA, Abby worked at CDWG Incorporated as a Sales Account Manager. She received an M.A. in liberal studies from Northwestern University and received a B.A. in history from Miami University. Abby has traveled to six continents and is trying to educate her ten nieces and nephews about the importance of travel and experiencing new places. The success of this endeavor is still pending! In her free time, Abby volunteers with her local neighborhood organization and is particularly interested in Chicago's historic preservation efforts.



Ticho House Restaurant, Jerusalem



Sea of Galilee Cruise

Kristina Nemeth has been Travel Director for the Commonwealth Club of California since 2008, and has worked in the Educational Travel industry for nine years. She graduated from Northwestern University with a degree in Radio/TV/Film, and then traveled through Europe and took a job teaching English in Lisbon, Portugal. Following a year in Lisbon, she returned to the United States and made San Francisco her home. Using her media background, she worked for six years as a producer of educational CDs and websites. During this time she continued to explore the world—from trekking in the Himalayas of Nepal to feebly attempting salsa in Cuba. In 2000, she embarked on a 4-month solo backpacking trip across Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil and thereafter decided to make travel her career. Kristina took a position as the Educational Program Manager for World Explorer Cruises, an educational cruise company that operated for 25 years in Alaska and Central America. At World Explorer Cruises,

she developed, executed and managed the on-board learning program, which included a comprehensive lecture series, as well as small-group seminars and field trips. In 2004 she was hired as an Assistant Director/Program Coordinator at Stanford Travel/Study. At Stanford Kristina managed 9-10 trips per year from itinerary development, contract negotiation, faculty selection, marketing, sales, and all financial aspects, overseeing trip budget. She also spent 6-8 weeks a year on the road as a tour manager, leading groups all over the world, from Siberia to the South Pacific. She loves photography, live music, camping and hiking. She has visited over 50 countries and truly believes in the kindness of strangers and the transformative power of travel.

Chloe Wicks is an Information Systems Specialist and Senior Program Coordinator at Tulane University, where she has worked for five years. The Tulane Alumni Travel offers an average of 35 trips a year to provide experiential learning in a global environment and connect Tulanians to each other and the university. In her previous profession, Chloe was a glass blower. She has worked in studios around the United States from Seattle to Los Angeles to New York and cites this as a wonderful experience that led her to international studios and connected her with artists from across the globe. She spent many summers of her childhood in Aberystwyth, Wales, because her father ran a summer program with Olympic College at the University of Wales. During those summers her family would often travel to Holland. Chloe is at the beginning stages of learning Mandarin, and she knows basic Spanish and Italian. She is passionate about painting and would spend all of her free time at the canvas, if she could. She loves to try new things just to see if she can do them. Recently she purchased a skateboard, but she won't be giving up her roller skates any time soon. A graduate of Tulane University, Chloe has a B.F.A. with a concentration in Sculpture and Glass Blowing, and a massage certificate from Ashmead Institute.



Ticho House Restaurant, Jerusalem

Israel Ministry of Tourism Representative:



Ilana Goor Museum, Jaffa

Michal Hershkovitz serves as the Deputy Director of the Northeast Region for the Israel Ministry of Tourism in North America. Her legal and corporate experience enables her to promote Israel tourism from 14 states in the Northeast part of the United States. Before serving in her current post, Michal served as a Buyer and later on as a Contracts Manager in the Procurement department of a leading Telecommunication company in Israel. Prior to that Michal worked as an intern in a top tier law firm, and she is certified as an attorney in Israel. She served in the Israeli Defense Force as a profiler of high school inductees, and later on as a trainer of cadets. Michal holds a Bachelor of Law (LLB) and a Bachelor of Arts in Media Communication from Tel Aviv University

and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) with an expertise in Marketing from the Interdisciplinary Center of Herzliya.

ETC Staff:

J. Mara DelliPriscoli, President, Travel Learning Connections, Inc., is the founder and architect of the Educational Travel Conference (formerly Non-profits in Travel Conference). With this conference platform she has facilitated the growth of strategic business partnerships and business-to-business networking of those in the field of alumni, museum, conservation, and affinity group travel. With over 30 years experience in the tourism industry, Mara has directly worked within most sectors of the travel industry including marketing, sales, tour and hotel operations, tour development, transportation, trade, and government research firms. Mara lectures, writes, and works with cultural, community, and conservation tourism development projects in the U.S. and abroad. She consults in the field of educational, community, and special-interest tourism development for a variety of U.S. and international organizations. Mara has a passion for exploration, blue water sailing, ethnic music, folk dance, and equestrian pursuits. Mara holds an M. Ed in Tourism Development from the George Washington University, and a B.A. in European History with minor in Languages from Barnard College, Columbia University.

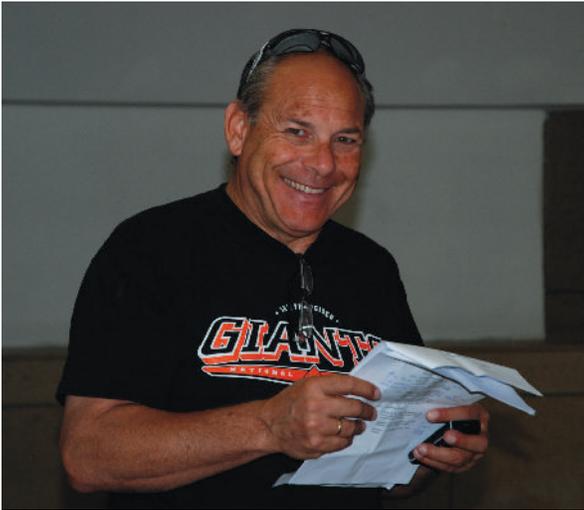


Masada, Dead Sea Region



Masada, Dead Sea Region

Sherry Schwarz joined the ETC team in 2008 as the Content Manager of ETC's community website and as ETC's Editor for community and conference publications. Previously, Sherry owned *Transitions Abroad* magazine and served as its Editor and Publisher for five years. During this time she assisted in organizing sessions for ETC's Responsible Tourism Forum (2006 and 2007) and helped produce the *Transitions Abroad*-ETC "Responsible Travel Handbook." In addition to her role with ETC, Sherry directs the non-profit Abroad View Foundation and publishes *Abroad View*, the global education magazine for students, which she founded in 1998. Sherry graduated from Middlebury College with a B.A. in English literature and concentrations in creative writing and sociology/anthropology. Sherry is a native of Connecticut and now resides in Bennington, Vermont.



Israel Tour Guide:

Amir Orly

Har Gilo

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Israel

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SUMMARY

- Representative of Israeli Government and private organizations as lecturer and promoter of tourism to Israel.
- Guest Lecturer to Christian and Jewish organizations in USA, India, Australia, Fiji and other locations regarding Israel and the Holy Land.
- Guest Lecturer to American Universities on topics such as “Religions of the Holy Land” and “Israel: Land, Culture and Society”.
- Teacher and Organizer of academic programs for U.S. universities.
- Liaison for U.S. university students on study abroad programs in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.
- Lecturer on Jewish roots of Christianity and The History of ancient and modern Israel.
- Academic degrees in Jewish history and Bible
- Licensed tour guide with 25 years of guiding experience.
- Expertise in the nature, environment, history and biblical background of Israel.

- Fluent Hebrew and English.
- Owner/Operator of 11-seater mini-tour bus.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

- Ph.D. candidate, Biblical Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2001 - present
- M.A. in Biblical Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1999
- B.A. in Jewish History and Bible, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989
- Licensed as tour guide by Israel’s Ministry of Tourism, 1983
- Courses in geology, history of biblical Israel, and history of Israel in the Second Temple Period, Open University, 1981
- Licensed as instructor of Israel’s land and environment for the public school system by Israel’s Ministry of Education, 1981
- Trained as official field guide of Israel via Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), 1979
- Additional academic areas of interest: history of Jerusalem; everyday life in biblical times; history of the Arab-Israeli conflict

EXPERIENCE

Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), 1979 - 1995

Currently a guide and instructor for special groups. Conducting seminars on nature, environmental affairs, Jerusalem, Jewish and Christian biblical sites. Instructor for annual international seminar on environmental issues.

Specialized programs provided on:

- Biblical geography and history (Jewish and Christian Testaments)
- The history of Zionism and Israel
- Military conflicts in the region
- University-level programs for academic credit

OTHER POSITIONS HELD WITHIN SPNI:

- *Israel Nature Trail*: Senior guide for English language tours throughout Israel
- *Jerusalem Field School*: Senior guide; trainer of guides; coordinator and instructor of courses for school teachers
- Director of extracurricular programs and Director of nature studies program for elementary schoolchildren in Tel Aviv area
- *Tel Aviv Field School*: Senior guide
- 1986 -present *Ministry of Tourism*: Instructor for tour guide courses

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

<i>Ministry of Environmental Affairs</i>	Special guide for official guests of the ministry
<i>Ministry of Tourism</i>	Special guide for members of the foreign press
<i>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i>	Guide for official guests of the State of Israel, including Dignitaries, Presidents and Heads of State
<i>Dorot Foundation</i>	Exclusive guide in Israel for U.S. students preparing to begin graduate studies
<i>Vilnai Center</i>	Founding member of educational tour programs in Jerusalem

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Co-teacher and manager of academic programs for Emory University, Atlanta, GA: 5 weeks, 8-credit program in Europe "In the footsteps of Sepharadi Jewry"
- Co-teacher and manager of academic programs for Emory University, Atlanta, GA: a 6 week, 12-credit program in "Israel Culture and Society on Location" and "Religions in the Holy Land" (both taught in Israel)
- Teacher and guide of the Concord University, Winnipeg, Canada, 3-credit academic program titled "Biblical History and Geography"
- Guide of the Hamline University, Saint Paul, MN, 3-credit academic program titled "The Arab Israeli Conflict" (taught in Israel)

- Guide of the Hamline University, Saint Paul, MN, 3-credit academic program titled “Apocalyptic Literature in the Bible” (taught in Israel)
- Manager, coordinator, and leader of international ecological seminar for the Israeli Foreign Ministry in collaboration with the SPNI. Provided Lecturer Tours in the United States, India, Fiji, and Papua, New Guinea for the Ministry of Tourism, El Al Airlines, and private tour operators
- Directed SPNI's 20,000-participant convention about Jerusalem
- Co-authored *Touring Jerusalem*, a book published by *Misrad Habitachon*

ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC PROGRAMS INFORMATION

(courses co-taught and organized in the past)

In the Footsteps of Sephardi Jewry

Co-taught with Prof. Benny Harry of Emory University (Atlanta, GA); this five-week summer program involves a study-tour of five countries--Spain, France, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. On-site lectures follow the Jews of Spain before and after the Expulsion in 1492. The eight-credit program was developed in conjunction with Emory University's Program of Jewish Studies.

Religions in the Holy Land and Israel: Land, Society and Culture

These two courses are conducted every summer with Prof. Benjamin Harry of Emory University (Atlanta, GA). With duration of six weeks, they form part of the curriculum of Emory's Department of Religions & Middle Eastern Studies.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

A program developed for Hamline University in St. Paul, MN, taught with Dr. Nurit Zmora, Department of History, and Dr. Erika Alin, Department of Political Science.

Apocalyptic Literature in the Bible

Taught by Dr. Timothy Polk, Chair of the Bible Department at Hamline University, St. Paul, MN.

Biblical History and Geography

Taught in conjunction with Dr. Gordon Matties, Professor of Bible at Concord University, Winnipeg, Canada.

Academic Liaison (Ongoing)

Provide a variety of cultural co-curricular activities for U.S. university students (including Emory University and Pomona College), such as tours throughout Israel, theater, hikes, archaeological digs, government centers.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

- Born in Israel in 1955.
- Grew up on Kibbutz Palmah Tsuba, an agricultural kibbutz near Jerusalem.
- Married, to Hannah with 3 grown up boys.

Participating EDUCATIONAL Institutions' Trip Profiles 2009

Alumnae Association of Smith College

of Programs/Tours In Past Year

	Offered	Operated
Day Trips	0	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	0	0
International Tours	24	20

of Travelers In Past Year

Day Trips	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	0
International Tours	300

Trips Scheduled To

Antarctica, Argentina, Australia, Belize, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Cuba, Egypt, Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Faroe Islands, France, Greece, Guatemala, India, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, New Zealand, Portugal, Rwanda, Slovenia, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Spain, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan

Best Performing Countries

1. Italy
2. Mexico
3. South Africa

% Business Activity Dedicated to

History/Culture 40%
Art/Culture 10%
Active/Adventure (Treks, Hikes, Canoeing, etc) 10%
Nature Based/Environment 20%
Voluntourism 10%
Other 10%

New Destinations

1. Israel
2. Jordan
3. Nicaragua
4. Rwanda
5. Tunisia
6. Uganda
7. Iran (Islamic Republic of)
8. Portugal
9. Turkmenistan
10. Uzbekistan
11. Namibia
12. Botswana
13. Kyrgyzstan

Most Significant Themes

- 1 Adventure
- 2 Anthropology
- 3 Art (Visual)/Fine Arts
- 4 Culture & Ethnic
- 5 Ecology & the Environment
- 6 History & Heritage
- 7 Literary
- 8 Natural History/Natural Phenomena
- 9 Wildlife & Nature

Commonwealth Club Of California

of Programs/Tours In Past Year

	Offered	Operated
Day Trips	0	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	1	1
International Tours	11	11

of Travelers In Past Year

Day Trips	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	0
International Tours	110

Trips Scheduled To

Bahrain, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Jordan, Oman, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom

Best Performing Countries

1. Viet Nam
2. India
3. South Africa

% Business Activity Dedicated to

History/Culture 50%
Art/Culture 20%
Active/Adventure (Treks, Hikes, Canoeing, etc) 0%
Nature Based/Environment 10%
Voluntourism 0%
Other 20%

New Destinations

1. Argentina
2. Chile
3. Morocco
4. Antarctica

Most Significant Themes

- 1 Archaeology
- 2 Art (Visual)/Fine Arts
- 3 Conservation & Preservation
- 4 Culture & Ethnic
- 5 Culinary & Wine
- 6 Ecology & the Environment
- 7 Festivals & Events
- 8 History & Heritage
- 9 Natural History/Natural Phenomena

Duke University

of Programs/Tours In Past Year

	Offered	Operated
Day Trips	NA	NA
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	6	4
International Tours	33	32

of Travelers In Past Year

Day Trips NA
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours 75
International Tours 480

Trips Scheduled To

Antarctica, Austria, Belize, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Morocco, Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Viet Nam

Best Performing Countries

1. China
2. Egypt
3. Japan

New Destinations

1. Cambodia
2. Singapore
3. United States

% Business Activity Dedicated to

History/Culture 30%
Art/Culture 20%
Active/Adventure (Treks, Hikes, Canoeing, etc) 20%
Nature Based/Environment 20%
Other 10%

Most Significant Themes

- 1 Adventure
- 2 Art (Visual)/Fine Arts
- 3 Culture & Ethnic
- 4 Ecology & the Environment
- 5 Festivals & Events
- 6 Health & Fitness
- 7 Maritime/Fishing
- 8 Performing Arts (theater, art, dance)
- 9 Wildlife & Nature

Emory Alumni Association

of Programs/Tours In Past Year

	Offered	Operated
Day Trips	0	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	0	0
International Tours	18	18

of Travelers In Past Year

Day Trips 0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours 0
International Tours 292

Trips Scheduled To

Albania, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bhutan, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia (Slovak Republic), South Africa, Spain, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Zambia

Best Performing Countries

1. Italy
2. Netherlands
3. Egypt

New Destinations

1. Madagascar

% Business Activity Dedicated to

History/Culture 80%
Art/Culture 10%
Active/Adventure (Treks, Hikes, Canoeing, etc) 10%
Nature Based/Environment 0%
Voluntourism 0%

Most Significant Themes

- 1 Adventure
- 2 Art (Visual)/Fine Arts
- 3 Culture & Ethnic
- 4 Culinary & Wine
- 5 History & Heritage
- 6 Natural History/Natural Phenomena

Harvard Alumni Association

of Programs/Tours In Past Year

	Offered	Operated
Day Trips	1	1
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	2	2
International Tours	57	48

Trips Scheduled To

Algeria, Antarctica, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Egypt, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Martinique, Mexico, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, Province of China, Tanzania, United Republic of, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam

Best Performing Countries

1. China
2. Russian Federation
3. Turkey

% Business Activity Dedicated to

History/Culture 40%
Art/Culture 40%
Active/Adventure (Treks, Hikes, Canoeing, etc) 10%
Nature Based/Environment 10%
Voluntourism 0%
Other 0%

Most Significant Themes

- 1 Adventure
- 2 Art (Visual)/Fine Arts
- 3 Culture & Ethnic
- 4 Culinary & Wine
- 5 Festivals & Events
- 6 Sport & Events

of Travelers In Past Year

Day Trips 35
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours 45
International Tours 1000

New Destinations

1. Israel
2. Iran (Islamic Republic of)
3. Myanmar
4. Rwanda
5. Sri Lanka

Northwestern University Alumni Association

of Programs/Tours In Past Year

	Offered	Operated
Day Trips	0	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	1	1
International Tours	45	45

Trips Scheduled To

Antarctica, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bhutan, Botswana, Cambodia, Chile, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Mongolia, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, Viet Nam, Zambia

Best Performing Countries

1. China
2. Ecuador
3. Egypt

% Business Activity Dedicated to

History/Culture 60%
Art/Culture 10%
Active/Adventure (Treks, Hikes, Canoeing, etc) 10%
Nature Based/Environment 20%
Voluntourism 0%

Most Significant Themes

- 1 Culture & Ethnic
- 2 History & Heritage
- 3 Natural History/Natural Phenomena
- 4 Wildlife & Nature

of Travelers In Past Year

Day Trips 0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours 60
International Tours 650

New Destinations

1. Canada

The Association Of Former Students - Texas A&M

of Programs/Tours In Past Year

	Offered	Operated
Day Trips	0	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	45	35
International Tours	40	30

of Travelers In Past Year

Day Trips	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	0
International Tours	1,100

Trips Scheduled To

Antarctica, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania, United Republic of, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States

Best Performing Countries

1. Italy
2. United States
3. United Kingdom

New Destinations

% Business Activity Dedicated to

History/Culture 40%
 Art/Culture 40%
 Active/Adventure (Treks, Hikes, Canoeing, etc) 20%

Most Significant Themes

- 1 Adventure
- 2 Culture & Ethnic
- 3 Culinary & Wine
- 4 Festivals & Events
- 5 History & Heritage
- 6 Natural History/Natural Phenomena
- 7 Professional Study
- 8 Sport & Events
- 9 Wildlife & Nature

University Of Arkansas Alumni Association

of Programs/Tours In Past Year

	Offered	Operated
Day Trips	0	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	1	1
International Tours	16	13

of Travelers In Past Year

Day Trips	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	4
International Tours	125

Trips Scheduled To

Aruba, Austria, Belgium, China, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Italy, Netherlands, Netherlands Antilles, Panama, Peru, Romania, Russian Federation, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Virgin Islands (British)

Best Performing Countries

1. Italy
2. Germany
3. Greece

New Destinations

1. Brazil
2. Jordan
3. Liechtenstein
4. Lithuania
5. Madagascar
6. Morocco
7. Seychelles
8. Viet Nam
9. Chile
10. Costa Rica
11. Cuba
12. Israel
13. Mexico
14. Nepal
15. New Zealand
16. Thailand

% Business Activity Dedicated to

History/Culture 60%
 Art/Culture 30%
 Active/Adventure (Treks, Hikes, Canoeing, etc) 0%
 Nature Based/Environment 10%
 Voluntourism 0%
 Other 0%

Most Significant Themes

- 1 Adventure
- 2 Art (Visual)/Fine Arts
- 3 Culture & Ethnic
- 4 Ecology & the Environment
- 5 History & Heritage
- 6 Natural History/Natural Phenomena
- 7 Performing Arts (theater, art, dance)
- 8 Sport & Events
- 9 Wildlife & Nature

University Of New Orleans

of Programs/Tours In Past Year

	Offered	Operated
Day Trips	0	0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours	0	0
International Tours	9	9

Trips Scheduled To

Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain

Best Performing Countries

1. Austria
2. Mexico
3. Japan

of Travelers In Past Year

Day Trips 0
Multiple Day Domestic (US & Canada) Tours 0
International Tours 400

New Destinations

% Business Activity Dedicated to

History/Culture 30%
Art/Culture 50%
Active/Adventure (Treks, Hikes, Canoeing, etc) 0%
Nature Based/Environment 20%
Voluntourism 0%
Other 0%

Most Significant Themes

- 1 Art (Visual)/Fine Arts
 - 2 Culture & Ethnic
 - 3 History & Heritage
 - 4 Language Study/Schools/Exchange
 - 5 Literary
 - 6 Performing Arts (theater, art, dance)
 - 7 Photography
 - 8 Science & Technology
 - 9 Other
-

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June 1, 2009

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Original Program Itinerary

INNOVATIVE ISRAEL A TAPESTRY OF DIVERSE CULTURES

**Monday
1 June**

Arrival

Arrival at Ben Gurion International Airport (Continental Airlines flight CO 084 at 09:35)

Welcome by a representative of the Ministry of Tourism and meet your tour guide Mr. Amir Orly

Travel through the Judean Hills to Jerusalem - Capital of the State of Israel & check in at the Inbal Hotel

Remainder of the morning at your leisure

13:30 Welcome lunch at the “Olive and Fish” Mediterranean style Restaurant

15:00 General orientation tour of Jerusalem with vehicle including National Government Precinct Jerusalem, around the Old City Walls and have panoramic views of the city from the Haas Promenade

Ms. Allie Hill and Ms. Michelle Bell arrive on Delta flight DL 152 at 17:25, welcome by a Ministry of Tourism representative and transfer to the Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem

18:00 De-briefing session

19:00 Welcome dinner, hosted by the Inbal Hotel management with Mr. Ilan Brenner, Deputy General Manager for Marketing at the hotel

22:00 Attend the “Night Spectacular” at the Tower of David Museum in the ancient Citadel – a Sound & Light Show of the 3,000 years history of Jerusalem

Overnight at the Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem

**Tuesday
2 June**

Jerusalem – Old City

Breakfast at your hotel

9:00 Tour the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Mount Scopus Campus including visit to the Steven Spielberg Film Archive (one of the largest collections of films relating to the Jewish/Israel experience & Jewish life)

11:00 Continue to Mount of Olives overlooking Old City, with ancient Jewish cemetery and several important churches related to the last week of Jesus’ life including the Garden of Gethsemane

12:45: Proceed to the City of David to participate in an excavation accompanied archaeologist Dr. Doron Ben-Ami and from Visitors Centre have view of City of David, the hilltop conquered by King David 3000 years ago

Light lunch of falafel and hummus followed by a walking tour of the Old City, holy city for the three monotheistic religions

- 14:30 Visit the Western Wall (Judaism's most sacred site) and have a tour of the Western Wall Tunnels excavations
Visit the Moslem Quarter including part of the Via Dolorosa and Arab market (shuk)
See the Christian Quarter with the Stations of the Cross and Church of the Holy Sepulchre
Visit the Jewish Quarter including Cardo—main Street in Roman-Byzantine time, and Broad Wall from biblical times
- 18:30 Tour the King David Hotel, have drinks on the terrace followed by dinner hosted by, Dan Hotels Chain: Mr. Benny Olearchik, Assistant General Manager, Mr. Rafi Beerli, Marketing Manager, Ms. Deborah Manzur, Marketing Control & North American Desk, Ministry of Tourism “La Regence”
- 21:30 De-briefing session

Overnight at the Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem

Wednesday

3 June

Jerusalem – Modern City

Breakfast at your hotel

- 9:00 Visit Yad Vashem - National Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust with new Historical Museum and Hall of the Names, Remembrance Hall & Children's' Memorial
- 11:30 Walk through Mount Herzl, Israel's national cemetery with the graves of the leaders of the nation including Herzl and Rabin
- 12:30 Stroll through Mahane Yehuda fruit & vegetable market and have a traditional Jerusalem lunch
- 14:00 Proceed to the Israel Museum to see the Shrine of the Book, exhibiting the famous Dead Sea Scrolls (earliest biblical texts) and Second Temple Model of Jerusalem and meet curator of the Shrine of the Book Mr. Adolfo Reutmann
- 16:00 Drive to Neve Shalom (“Oasis of Peace”) unique cooperative settlement established by Jewish and Arab citizens for a tour of the village, meet two of the members of the community and have a lecture about the history, ideology, successes and problems
- 18:45 De-briefing session
- 20:00 Dinner hosted by Mr. Pini Shani, Deputy Head of Tourism Marketing Administration, Ministry of Tourism at the “Little Jerusalem Restaurant” Ticho House

Overnight at the Inbal Hotel, Jerusalem

Thursday

4 June

Jerusalem and Bethlehem

Breakfast at your hotel

- 8:30 Tour of the Supreme Court Building with its symbolic architecture and head of the judiciary branch of Israel's democracy

- 10:30 Continue to City Hall for a tour including model of Jerusalem used for urban planning, view of the city from balcony and meet Mr. Eli Nachmias, Director, Overseas Marketing and City Council member Mr. Hilik Bar about his ideas for developing “alternative tourism” in Jerusalem
- 12:00 Travel to Bethlehem, birthplace of Jesus and King David to visit Church of Nativity in Manger Square (you will be dropped off & collected from the border crossing)
- Light lunch in Bethlehem
- 14:30 Travel through the Judean Desert to the Dead Sea region (lowest place on earth)
- Drive along Dead Sea shore to Ein Bokek a health and tourism resort on the southern part of Dead Sea with 3,000 hotel rooms and check in at Le Meridian Hotel
- 16:30 Afternoon experience the hotel’s spa facilities offering health and beauty treatments, bathe in the therapeutic pools float in the Dead Sea at the beach, and experience a mud pack (17:00-17:40)
- 19:30 Dinner at the Rancho Retro Restaurant, Isrotel Hotel with Ms. Ofra Gazit, Tourism Department Marketing & Spokesperson for Dead Sea “Tamar” Regional Council
- 21:30 De-briefing session
- Overnight at Le Meridien Hotel, Dead Sea*

**Friday
5 June**

Dead Sea Region

Breakfast at your hotel

- 09:30 Proceed along the Dead Sea shore to Masada and ascend by cable-car to see excavations of the fortress-palace built by King Herod, last stronghold in the Jewish revolt against Romans (in 73 CE)
- 12:00 Continue to Kibbutz Ein Gedi
- Tour of the Kibbutz located in a botanical garden
 - Lunch at Ein Gedi Guest House
 - Lecture on kibbutz life and desert ecology by a kibbutz member
- 15:00 Time permitting, visit Qumran - remains of the ancient Essenes settlement in whose caves the Dead Sea Scrolls (earliest biblical texts) were discovered
- Drive along the Jordan Valley to Tiberias, historical resort town on the Sea of Galilee and one of Israel’s four holy cities and check in at Sheraton Moriah Hotel
- 18:30 De-briefing session
- 19:30 Dinner at the “Toren” Restaurant at the Scots Hotel St. Andrews Galilee, Tiberias including a tour of the hotel
- Experience an evening cruise on the Sea of Galilee with “Lido Sailing”
- Overnight at Sheraton Moriah Hotel, Tiberias*

Saturday
6 June

Sea of Galilee and Lower Galilee

Breakfast at your hotel

Drive to Ginosar to view remains of a First Century wooden sailing vessel from Jesus' time found in the Sea of Galilee

Travel to the Sea of Galilee Region to visit some of the historical and religious sites:

- Mount of Beatitudes - traditional site of Sermon on the Mount near Korazim
- Tabgha - churches commemorating the Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes
- Capernaum - ancient Jewish fishing village where Jesus began his Ministry

Panoramic view of the Sea of Galilee from the "Peace Observation Point

Drive up to the Golan Heights for a view overlooking the Sea of Galilee from the Peace Observation Point

14:00 Proceed to Hamat Gader Park, a health resort since ancient times, today a hot-springs park Roman bath excavations and have opportunity to bathe in the thermo-mineral pools at the Spa Village

16:30 Visit Nazareth - today Israel's largest Arab town and pilgrimage site for a tour including Basilica of the Annunciation, Arab market and other Christian sites and meet some of the residents

18:00 Dinner at the "Diana" Middle Eastern Restaurant, Nazareth with by Mr. Tarek Shihada, General Director of Nazareth Cultural & Tourism Association

Continue to Haifa, Israel's third largest city with commercial port and check in at the Dan Carmel Hotel atop Mount Carmel

20:30 De-briefing session

Overnight at the Dan Carmel Hotel, Haifa

Sunday
7 June

Western Galilee and Carmel Region

Breakfast at your hotel

9:00 Proceed to Akko, ancient seaport declared by UNESCO as a world heritage site for a tour of the Old Walled city including Knights' Halls, bazaar and Turkish bath house (hamam) and meet Ms. Erika Gal from the Old Acre Development Company

12:30 Proceed via the Carmel National Park to the Druze villages of Daliyat El Carmel with colorful market: have explanations of Druze culture, and experience Druze hospitality

13:30 Drive to Ein Hod Artists' Village to meet some of the artists including some who paint wine labels and pictures

14:30 Visit the "Tishbi Winery" in Binyamina, a small family-owned winery for a tour and wine tasting

16:30 Drive to Caesarea National Park, remains of former Roman Capital and Crusader city

- Tour of Roman theater, hippodrome and, promenade to the renovated port area
- See ‘Caesarea Experience’, computerized presentation about the city’s history (13:30)

Return to Haifa

19:00 De-briefing session

20:00 Presentation of Haifa with Mr. Moshe Tzur, Director, Haifa Tourist Board followed by dinner at “HaSderra” Restaurant

Overnight at the Dan Carmel Hotel, Haifa

**Monday
8 June**

Haifa

Breakfast at your hotel

Panoramic views of the city and bay from the Louis Promenade

9:40 Tour of the Bahai Shrine and Gardens - world center of the Bahai Faith with hanging gardens and meet a Bahai World Centre official

10:30 Tour of Haifa as a mixed city of coexistence including Stella Maris (home of the Carmelite Monastic Order), Kababir (Ahmedians), Wadi Nisnas (Moslems)

13:00 Light lunch at one of the beach cafes hosted by the Haifa Tourist Board

14:00 Tour University of Haifa accompanied by the Deputy President Mr. Amos Geber including panoramic view from the tower and Hecht Museum to hear about underwater archaeology and discovery of Phoenician ship with Dr. Y. Kananov

17:30 Proceed to Haifa Tourist Board offices to participate in a panel on coexistence with Jewish, Christian, Moslem & Achmedian representatives

19:30 Dinner at the “Eldiar” Restaurant with all the above representatives

21:00 Drive along the Mediterranean Coast to Tel Aviv - Israel’s commercial, financial, cultural & entertainment centre

22:30 De-briefing session

Overnight at Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv

**Tuesday
9 June**

Tel Aviv-Jaffa

Breakfast at your hotel

Visit the Shalom Tower to see the story of the establishment of Tel Aviv in 1909 and a model of the modern city

Visit Independence Hall, a museum in the building where Israel’s Declaration of Independence took place

Tour of Tel Aviv's "White City", in the area of Rothschild Boulevard, declared by UNESCO a World Heritage Site due to its International Style architecture

13:00 Light Lunch at "Sweet Sins" Restaurant hosted by Tel Aviv-Jaffa Tourism Assoc.

Stroll through the Carmel open-air market, selling fruits, vegetables and clothing accompanied by Mr. Doron Ozer

Walk in Nachlat Binyamin Pedestrian Mall with its colourful Arts and Crafts bazaar

16:00 Visit the Peres Centre for Peace, an independent, non-profit, organization with the aim to work to build peace through socio-economic cooperation and development via mutual understanding, accompanied by Mr. Barak Greenapple, Projects Manager and Ms. Michal Rubin, Foreign Affairs

18:30 De-briefing session

20:00 Dinner at the "White Pergola" Restaurant with Ms. Ety Gargir, General Manager of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Tourism Association

22:00 Tour of Tel Aviv to some of the local entertainment nightlife spots accompanied by your tour guide

Overnight at Dan Hotel, Tel Aviv

**Wednesday
10 June**

Tel Aviv-Jaffa

Breakfast at your hotel

Tour of Old Jaffa, the ancient seaport with artists' quarter in Old City, fishermen's port and view overlooking Tel-Aviv

Visit the Ilana Goor Museum, home of the renowned Israeli artist-sculptor located in a renovated khan

Stroll through the lanes of Neve Tzedek, Tel Aviv's oldest neighbourhood (1887) which has been restored with museums, galleries and coffee houses including the Susan Delal Center for Dance & Theatre

See the Nahum Gutmann Museum, exhibiting paintings from one of Israel's most famous artists

See the area of old Tel Aviv Port, which has been turned into an area of entertainment and restaurants, including "Bayit BeNamal" centre for art & fashion

Remainder of the day at your leisure for last minute shopping and exploring

18:30 De-briefing session

19:30 Dinner at "Cordellia" Restaurant and meet chef Nir Zuk about his fusion cuisine

21:30 Departure for Ben Gurion International Airport for your return flight to the U.S.A (Continental Airlines flight # CO 91 at 23:55 and Delta Airlines flight # DL 153 at 23:35)

* * * * *

Shalom and Bon Voyage

Proposed Program Itinerary



INNOVATIVE ISRAEL: A TAPESTRY OF DIVERSE CULTURES

**Please join us for a unique travel journey through Israel this spring
May 31-June 10, 2009**

Our distinctive educational trip is open to travel planners interested in learning and experiencing what Israel has to offer their members.

Learn about how this small modern yet ancient land is a tapestry of cross cultural exchange, high-tech developments, history, archaeology, creativity, as well as an evolving culinary and wine scene, and cutting edge eco tourism projects. An opportunity will exist to speak with people of diverse backgrounds living side by side.

This trip is sponsored by the Israel Ministry of Tourism and includes: Roundtrip airfare from New York to Tel Aviv, hotel accommodations, breakfast and dinner daily, some lunches, entrance fees, sightseeing, transfers from the airport in Israel and an English-speaking licensed guide.

Please fill out the attached form if you are interested in qualifying for this trip.

Don't miss this opportunity to visit the many extraordinary and varied sites in our sophisticated and dynamic country, while discovering its talented and friendly people in a most astonishing and delightful land on the Mediterranean!



INNOVATIVE ISRAEL: A TAPESTRY OF DIVERSE CULTURES

(Suggested working itinerary)
May 31st – June 10th

Sun, May 31—Depart USA for your flight to Israel

Day 1 - Jerusalem

Arrival at Ben Gurion Airport. Meeting upon arrival and transfer to Jerusalem.

Admire the panorama as you enter the capital city and are welcomed with the Biblical greeting of bread and salt.

Check in to your hotel. Dinner will be hosted by the **Director General of the Ministry of Tourism.**



Day 2 - Jerusalem

After full Israeli buffet breakfast, start out for a tour of the ancient and modern sites of this spiritual, golden city beginning with an extended view from the **Mt. of Olives**. Continue to the **Garden of Gethsemane** where you can see the enormous, still productive, olive trees. Enter the **Old City**, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Descend to the **Western Wall**, one of the most holy places for Jews all over. Afterwards, climb through the **Western Wall tunnels**. Walk the **Via Dolorosa** to the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, traditional site of the crucifixion and resurrection.

Enjoy a **Middle Eastern lunch** of falafel and hummus and afterwards continue to the **Museum on the Seam**, a private museum of co-existence, bringing the universal message of diversity and acceptance of others to the world community. Meet with the curator, **Raphie Etgar**, to hear his concept regarding the exhibitions. Continue to the **Shrine of the Book** where the Dead Sea Scrolls are housed, the most famous and important collection of the Israel Museum.

Return to your hotel to freshen up for **dinner and a cultural performance**.

Day 3 - Jerusalem

Morning visit to **Mahane Yehuda fruit and vegetable market** with Chef Moshe Basson to choose his ingredients for tonight's dinner. Drive to **Neve Shalom**, a cooperative Village meaning Oasis of Peace, established by Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel, the members of this village are engaged in educational work for peace, equality and understanding between two peoples. Meet with a member of the community to hear about their work and philosophy.

Lunch at Anna Ticho House, a charming vegetarian restaurant and art gallery in a beautiful old home, former residence of artist Anna Ticho.

After lunch, continue to **Yad Vashem**, Museum and Memorial to the Holocaust. Continue to the village of **Ein Karem**, birthplace of John the Baptist. Drive to **Beit Hanassi** for an audience with President Shimon Peres and afterwards to see the architectural splendor of the **Supreme Court**. Dinner with a member of the antiquities authority at **Eucalyptus Restaurant**, cooking and eating a Biblical meal with Moshe Basson, the chef.



Day 4 - Jerusalem

Breakfast meeting with Tourism Ministry officials. Visit **Hebrew University** on Mt. Scopus and school of foreign students. Continue to **Confederation House**, site of performances of ethnic music and poetry to meet with the director . Time permitting, drive south to the **Eco Art Village** started by the **Vertigo Dance company** bringing together creative arts and ecology in a unique intentional community. Tour the community and meet the director.

In the afternoon you will have time to explore Jerusalem on your own—why not stroll along **Nahalt Shiva**, shop, or visit the famous **YMCA**—the entire complex was planned by the same architects who designed New York’s Empire State building, visit a museum or just relax and have a coffee at **T’mol Shilshom** (Days of Yore) a funky cafe, restaurant and bookstore in a mid 19th century house—popular spot with intellectuals of the area.

A very special dinner is planned at **Rama’s Kitchen**, an outdoor, mountaintop restaurant in Nataf, about 20 minutes outside of Jerusalem specializing in French/Mediterranean cuisine and hear the chef’s and owner’s story, a former choreographer.

Day 5 – The Dead Sea & Beit Shean

Early morning departure to the **Dead Sea**, the lowest place on earth. After the cable car ascent to **Masada** there is time to enjoy the mud and float in the Dead Sea. Visit **Kibbutz Ein Gedi** with the only botanical garden in the world where people live among the plants.

Hear a **lecture** on how Israel has been successfully overcoming **water scarcity**. Israel—with a 75% water recycling rate, is the world’s number one water recycler and the leader provider of solutions for the global water market.

Drive to **Beit She’an**, and discover the excavations of the late Roman and Byzantine city (2nd-6th century AD) including the restored **Roman Theater**. Enjoy the audio visual show. Continue to **Tiberias** for dinner and overnight on the shores of the **Sea of Galilee**.

Day 6 - Kibbutz & Galilee

Visit **Casa Dona Gracia**, the only hotel museum in the world. Travel back in time to the 16th century where all the furnishings and artifacts are of that period.

Visit a **kibbutz** in the area to hear how this type of life has changed over the years.

Lunch at **Beit Gavriel gallery** at the Sea of Galilee. Enjoy a **boat ride** across the sea and



visit **Capernaum** with its 4th century marble synagogue and **Tabgha**, site of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Continue to the **Golan Heights**. Afternoon tea at a **dude ranch** overlooking the Sea of Galilee and return to Tiberias for dinner and overnight.

Day 7 - Safed & Akko

Early morning lecture about the practice of **Kabalah** and healing with alternative medicine at **Or ha Ganuz** and short visit to **Safed**, the mystical city.

Visit **Ma'a lot Tarshiha**, a city where Arabs and Jews live together. Continue to **Tzippori**. In an adjacent National Park participate in a 45 minute workshop creating a mosaic using ancient methods.

Continue to **Yodfat and Harduf** to hear a lecture on anthroposophy and enjoy a lunch in **In Colina restaurant**. Continue to **Akko**, a crusader city on the Mediterranean for a tour of this UNESCO world heritage site.

Evening in a **Druze village** for a lecture about the fascinating beliefs of this group and their views on re-incarnation including a dinner in a private home. Overnight in **Haifa**.

Day 8 – Haifa

After breakfast, drive to the **Bahai Shrine** and gardens. Visit the **University of Haifa** where they have introduced the only degree program in the world in medical clowning. Meet with **Herzel Ziyoni** at the University's theater dept to hear about this special one year BA program.

After lunch, a multi-faith symposium on coexistence with Haifa youth. On to **Ein Hod**, a beautiful artist colony. Visit the galleries and meet with artists. Continue for a tour of **Caesarea** where you stop before heading to **Tel Aviv for dinner** and overnight.

Day 9 – Tel Aviv

Breakfast with **Yadin Roman**, Publisher of Eretz Magazine and former teacher of Israel's tour guides. Morning orientation drive of Tel Aviv, celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2009. Stroll through the **Carmel Market** and **Nahlat Benjamin** to see the collection of arts and crafts. Walk with an art historian through "**White City**", the name given to Tel Aviv in the 1930's, home to the world's largest concentration of Bauhaus architecture, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Tour the **Rubin Museum** and behind the scenes of the **Israel Opera**.



Afternoon—**Voluntourism opportunity** with Table to Table (Project Leket). Here you will be able to help harvest fields in order to provide produce to needy people around the country.

Dinner at the **Tel Aviv Port** with the **Mayor of Tel Aviv**.

Day 10 – Tel Aviv & Jaffa

Breakfast with **Shamai Mittleman**, known as the “royal prince of Ra’anana with a Ph.D in GL (the Good Life). Hear this charming and interesting person talk about the benefits of enjoying the “good life” and how he and his group of about 300 people arrange the many special outings all over the country.

Visit **ancient Jaffa** and meet artist and collector, **Ilana Goor** at her museum/home. Tour the **Jaffa flea market** and stroll through the restored **Neve Tzedek area**.

Lunch with **Tel Aviv Guide author, Dalit Nemirovsky**.

Eco tourism is one of the up and coming aspects of tourism in Israel. Hear about strategies for green tourism from a member of the **Heschel center** specializing in this topic. Hear about **Kibbutz Reim**, the first community in Israel to rely entirely on solar energy. Visit the **2000 acre garbage dump** in Tel Aviv which was turned into the largest eco-tourism project in Israel. A magnificent park and 24 hour recreational spot. The 230 foot Hiriya Mountain (a waste mound) is the park’s center. The recycling center, which spans 75 acres currently operates the most innovative technologies for recycling waste.

Remainder of day at leisure for last minute shopping and exploring.

Farewell dinner and transfer to Ben Gurion Airport for a late night flight back to NY.

Shalom and hope to see you again soon in Israel

Israel Ministry of Tourism Profile

The Israel Government Tourist Office, whose multi-million dollar advertising campaigns in the United States and Canada are designed to enable Israel to double North American tourism to Israel by 2012, is principally responsible for overseeing all aspects of North American tourism to Israel. In addition to advertising, the tourist office's activities include media relations, marketing, support of airlines and tour operators to Israel, and participation in market conferences. The North American headquarters is located in New York, and oversees the operation of offices in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, as well as in Toronto (Canada) and Sao Paulo (Brazil).

ETC “EDUCATIONAL” Requirements

Definition and Requirements for ETC “EDUCATIONALS”

“EDUCATIONALS” differ from industry FAM trips in purpose, design, and delivery.

“EDUCATIONALS” are designed as two way exchanges, whereby experienced nonprofit travel planners are invited by in-country Tourism Ministries to experience and evaluate programs and provide specific feedback on tourism development options as well as innovative “new” tour product ideas to appeal to the Educational Travel market.

ETC nonprofit institution representatives most qualified to offer insights and professional perspectives are invited by the in-country tourism ministries for the “vetting” and evaluation of proposed itineraries. In the case of Israel, the “EDUCATIONAL” served the specific purpose of soliciting recommendations and feedback on the non-religious focused itineraries within Israel that would appeal to groups of educated travelers within the field of alumni, museum, and nonprofit travel.

“EDUCATIONAL” invitations are issued officially to travel planners by the host Ministry of Tourism. “EDUCATIONALS” are typically scheduled for one week (running from a Saturday to Sunday in order to minimize the number of business days required for travel planners). They are limited to 9-18 travel planners. The destination proposing to host an “EDUCATIONAL” is responsible for proposing the initial program design or itinerary. As such, all itineraries must be custom-designed with special entrée, top guides with specialized knowledge, curators and lecturers with a focus on a “unique, compelling, and relevant” tour product that can be further developed for the Educational Travel market. Exchanges with local communities and specially arranged venues are always features in the program. The purpose of “EDUCATIONALS” is not to provide in-depth familiarization of one specific product offered commercially but rather to stimulate discussion of new products and/or enhancements of current program offerings in a destination which directly responds to market shifts and consumer preferences in travel.

During the “EDUCATIONAL” a representative of the Tourism Board accompanies the travel planners as an in-country tourism resource, as well as to share in-depth professional feedback about the programming and logistics throughout the experience. During the on-site program travel planners are asked to provide daily feedback on new and different product potential and tourism development opportunities in-country for the Educational and Cultural Travel market. Representative(s) from ETC accompany the group to provide facilitation, scribing, and photo documentation of the “EDUCATIONAL.” In addition to communicating directly with the Tourism Board representative, travel planners’ recommendations and conclusions are captured and compiled into a final ETC Educational report for the sponsoring destination as well as for the Educational Travel Community website, which is accessible to all ETC members.

Prerequisite Requirements for Educational Travel Planners:

To be considered for an ETC “EDUCATIONAL” Travel Planner must be:

- 1) A recent Educational Travel Conference attendee;
- 2) A senior-level travel planner in an organization that has completed an ETC organizational profile;
- 3) A professional who has past experience traveling in the host destination or who is considering the development of itineraries in the host destination for its organization.

Additionally, a prospective Educational Travel Planner must:

- 5) Complete an application to participate in the “**EDUCATIONAL**” and provide an outline of their participation objectives;
- 6) Make a firm guarantee as to his or her ability to commit to the required time of travel and itinerary;
- 7) Provide an overview summary on the needs and focus of his or her organization’s travel program.

On Site Requirements Include:

- 8) Participating actively on all programs scheduled;
- 9) Meeting daily to share impressions of the day’s activities, and actively providing commentary and suggestions for program development and tour ideas.

Post Travel Requirements Include:

- 10) Supplying a written impression and itinerary recommendations for the destination;
- 11) Providing 25 top photos from the trip;
- 12) Completing a post-trip evaluation;
- 13) Participating in any follow up Educational Travel Conference’s case-study sessions on product development in the host region;
- 13) Acting as a destination resource for colleagues interested in travel to the host region.

ETC Profile

The Educational Travel Conference was founded in 1987 by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, President of Travel Learning Connections, Inc., as a pioneering effort to provide highly customized educational programming, professional development, and affinity-based networking forums for seasoned alumni, museum, zoo, conservation, and non-profit educational travel planners. It was further developed to offer jumpstart training for newcomers to the field and high-level networking and peer-to-peer discussion for the executives to whom travel planners report. Designed and operated from its inception as an educational resource, ETC has progressively expanded to serve as a valuable and respected educational and networking resource for the travel providers, tour operators, suppliers, and destinations that serve this market.

Both the non-profit and for-profit sectors annually attend the ETC, including 150-plus nonprofit travel planners from across the United States and Canada. Travel supplier delegates to the ETC are an internationalized group representing all regions of the world—North America, Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Oceania. Top-level decision makers and support staff from special-interest group travel of all sizes participate in the Conference. Highlights of the three key groups that attend ETC follow:

Nonprofit Travel Planners

Large and small travel programs are represented from alumni associations; art, museum, and cultural organizations; zoos and conservation groups; science and natural history museums; national and regional nonprofit organizations and affinity groups. Some of the institutions represented include:

Dartmouth College, Exploritas (formerly Elderhostel), American Museum of Natural History, Stanford Alumni Association, Oakland Museum of California, Arizona Alumni Association, Washington & Lee University, Philadelphia Zoo, California Alumni Association—Berkeley, Harvard Alumni Association, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, National Geographic Society, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Smithsonian Institution, The Nature Conservancy, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Philadelphia Zoo, UCLA Alumni Travel, Alumni Association of the University of Michigan

Leading Outbound U.S. Tour Operators, DMOs, and Suppliers

In addition to forging connections between travel planners from like institutions, ETC brings together specialty operators, destinations, and suppliers from all corners of the world, at one time, under one roof. More than 100 special-interest tour operators and over 50 specialty suppliers attend and exhibit during the Conference. Some of the companies represented include:

Academic Arrangements Abroad, Odysseys Unlimited, Lindblad Expeditions, MIR, Nomadic Expeditions, Collette Vacations, Alaska Wildland Tours, Global Adrenaline, Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, Pacific Delight Tours, USI Travel Insurance Services, Egyptair, Organization for Tropical Studies, Micato Safaris, Alumni Holidays, Geographic Expeditions, Emirates, and Starquest/TCS Expeditions

U.S. State and Foreign National Government Tourist Offices

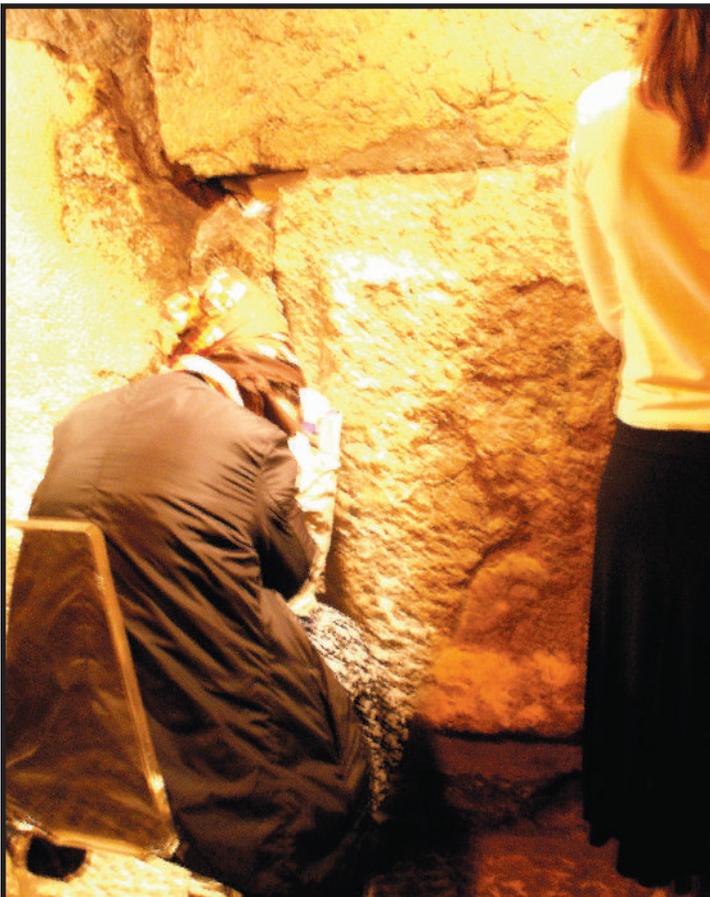
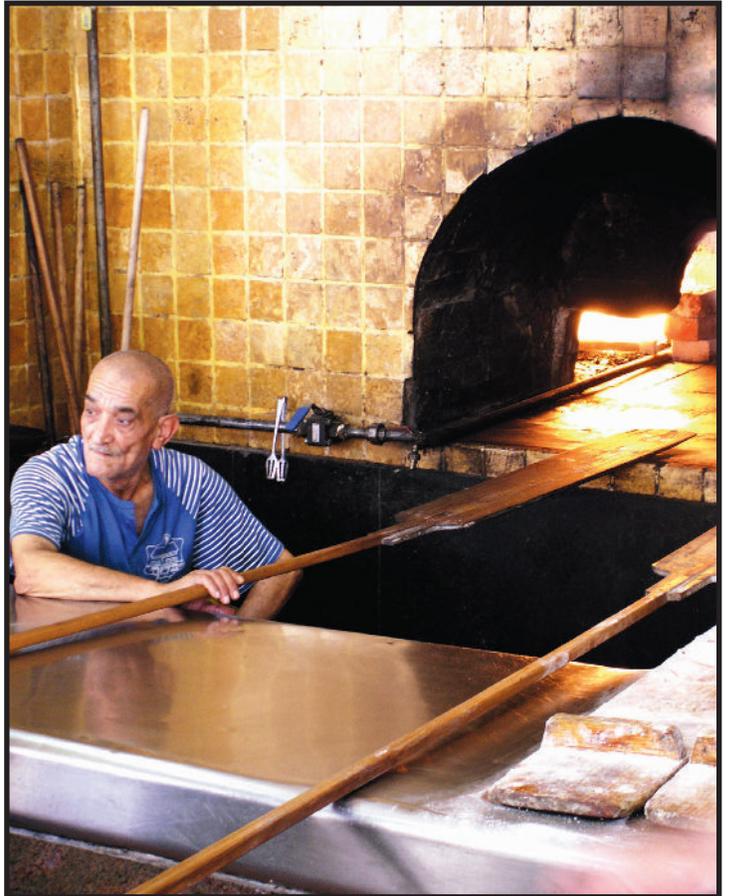
More than 50 domestic and foreign government tourist offices, regional destinations, marketing alliances, and city tourist bureaus worldwide converge at the ETC. Some of the destinations represented include:

PromPeru, Dubai Tourism, Japan National Tourist Office, Papua New Guinea Tourism, Saxony Tourism, Jordan Tourism Board, Canadian Tourism Commission, China National Tourist Office, Greenland Tourism, Visit Britain, Thailand Tourist Authority, Mexico Tourism Board, The Philippines, Innovation Norway, Rhode Island Tourism Division, and Hong Kong Tourism Board

ETC EDUCATIONAL Israel Photo Gallery of People



All photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, except for the man sitting next to a cart (2nd row, left) by Chloe Wicks.



All photos by Chloe Wicks

ETC EDUCATIONAL Israel Photo Gallery of Food



Clockwise, from top left: Photos by Chloe Wicks, Kristina Nemeth, J. Mara DelliPriscoli, Kristina Nemeth, Elizabeth Bigwood, and Chloe Wicks.

ETC EDUCATIONAL Israel Photos of Galleries & Markets



Clockwise, from top left: Photos by Chloe Wicks (2), Elizabeth Bigwood, Chloe Wicks (2), Kristina Nemeth

ETC EDUCATIONAL Israel Photo Gallery of Food

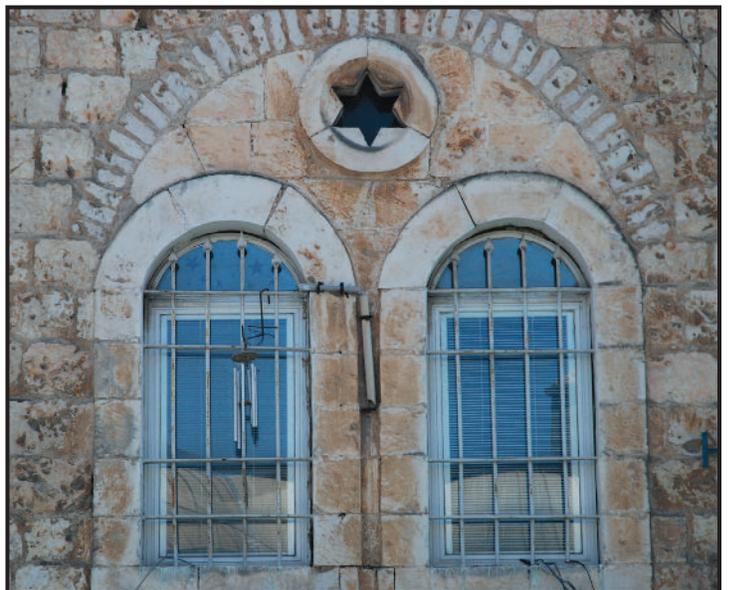
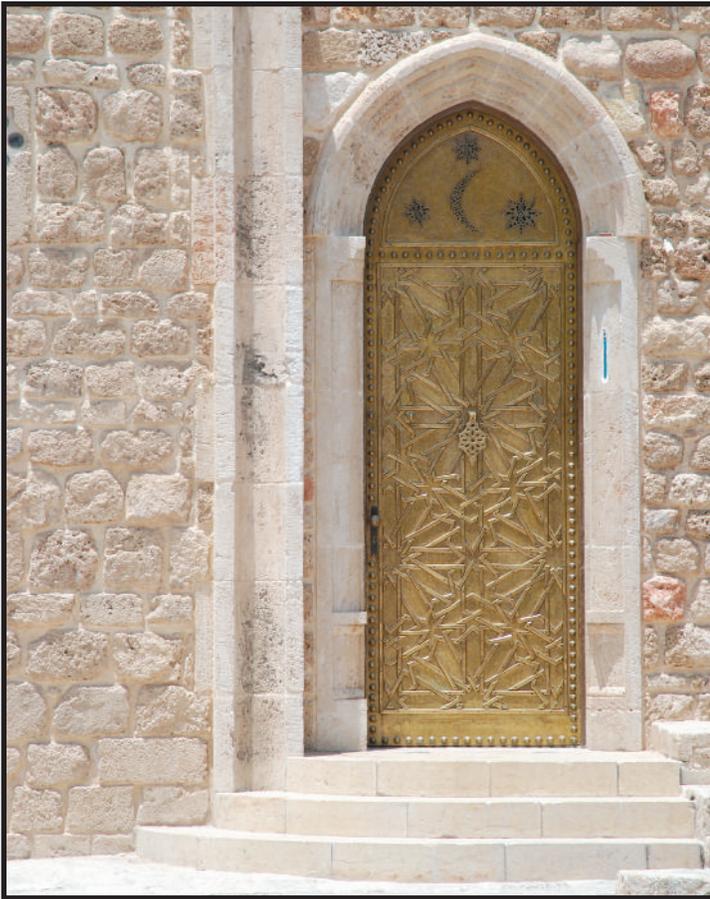


Clockwise, from top left: Photos by Kristina Nemeth, J. Mara DelliPriscoli (2), Elizabeth Bigwood, Kristina Nemeth, Elizabeth Bigwood, and Chloe Wicks.

ETC EDUCATIONAL Israel Photo Gallery of Doors and Windows



All photos by Chloe Wicks



(Clockwise, from top left): Photos by J. Mara DelliPriscoli, Sherry Schwarz, J. Mara DelliPriscoli (2), and Elizabeth Bigwood