

EPISCOPAL  
**holy LAND**  
PILGRIMAGES



**9 DAY LENTEN TRIP: MARCH 8-17, 2024**  
JERUSALEM, BETHLEHEM, GALILEE, MASADA



WITH FR. MICHAEL MILLS AND FR. DAVID HOUK

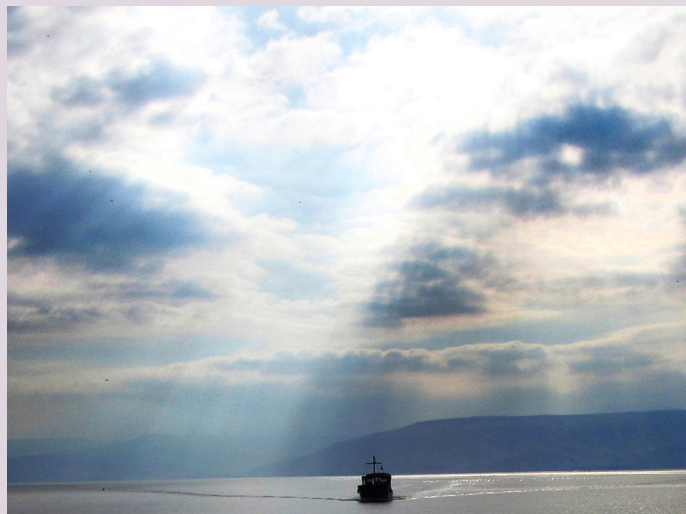
# Nine days in the Holy Land

## A lifetime of memories

A journey to the Holy Land is more than a trip, certainly more than a vacation.

To sail upon the Sea of Galilee is to deepen your understanding of Jesus's ministry. To see the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives and to walk the cobblestone streets of the Old City is to enrich your commemoration of Holy Week year after year. To experience the rugged terrain of the Judean Wilderness, the heat of Jericho, the height of the hill country of Judea, is to forever transform the Bible from a black and white text into a full color, three dimensional reality.

A journey to the Holy Land will bring your faith to life. The Christian tradition is rooted in the idea that God has worked in the world at specific times, in specific ways, and in specific places.



And to see that world, with an open heart and an open mind, is truly to make a *pilgrimage*—a journey of faith that changes you forever.

## Trip Leaders

Fr. Michael Mills is the rector of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Dallas. He holds degrees in English, Divinity, and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Alabama School of Law. He is a member of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, which traces its origin back to the Knights Hospitaller in the Middle Ages. He is excited to return to Jerusalem after leading a trip in 2022.

Fr. David Houk is the rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Dallas. He first traveled to the Holy Land for an undergraduate program in 1990 and then for a couple volunteer positions in Haifa and Bethlehem following graduation. His love for the land of the Bible, his appreciation of Middle Eastern culture, and his working knowledge of Arabic make him a popular tour leader for the pilgrims he leads as well as the locals he encounters on his travels.

Our local guide is Jude Hanna, an Arab Christian from Bethlehem whose Biblical knowledge, teaching gifts, and good humor make him one of the very



best guides in the country. All accommodations, meals, and programs are organized by Sari Hazou, CEO of [Raji Tours and Travel](#), a group with three generations of experience providing quality care and service for travelers to the Holy Land.



## March 8, 2024: Fly

This is our departure date from the US to Tel Aviv. When tickets are available for our travel date, a list of

options will be sent out, and you can book your flight based on your favorite carrier or itinerary.

## March 9: Tel Aviv, Bethlehem



The program begins at Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV), 6:00 pm local time. The airport is just east of the cities of [Tel Aviv](#) and [Jaffa](#). Jaffa, pictured on the left, is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was here that the prophet Jonah jumped on a boat bound for Tarshish but ended up in the belly of a whale. Jaffa is also the site of Peter's rooftop vision in Acts 10 at [the house of Simon the Tanner](#).

From the airport we will head to Bethlehem, just six miles south of Jerusalem, for some well earned rest. We will check in to the beautiful [St. Elias Hotel](#) and be ready to go in the morning.

## March 10: Western Wall, Temple Mount, Southern Steps, City of David, Pool of Siloam



As much as possible, our itinerary will be arranged chronologically. This means our first day of touring will begin with the oldest parts of Jerusalem.

We will start with [The Western Wall](#) of the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism where the devout still pray. On top of the [Temple Mount](#) are two shrines sacred to Muslims: [Al Aqsa Mosque](#), the destination of Muhammad's night journey, and the iconic [Dome of the Rock](#), where the Temple once stood and where Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac in Genesis 22.

Just south of the Temple Mount are the [Southern Steps](#), which in Jesus's day would have led to the Temple precincts. Many believe that the Southern Steps were the site of Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, following the apostles being filled with Holy Spirit, with "tongues of fire" resting on each of them.

Downhill from the Temple Mount is the [City of David](#), the heart of ancient Jerusalem and the most excavated site in the Holy Land. The excavation continues underground as we go back in time to when King David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it his capital (2 Samuel 5).

The more adventurous will proceed through [Hezekiah's Tunnel](#) to the [Pool of Siloam](#) while the less adventurous take an above-ground route. In John 9, Jesus healed a man born blind and told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam.

We are back at the St. Elias in Bethlehem for dinner and overnight.



## March 11: Ein Karem, Shepherds Field, Bethlehem



In the morning, we start at [Ein Karem](#) in the hill country of Judea where we will see two churches. First, the Church of the Visitation, where Mary journeyed to see her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39 f.), also with child. Then, nearby to the Church of the Nativity of St. John,

built on the grotto where John the Baptist was born.

We will then return to the Bethlehem area to remember the birth of Jesus. The [Shepherds Field](#) is the place where the angels appeared to the those "keeping watch over their flocks by night." We will read from Luke 2 and celebrate the Eucharist in one of the caves used by shepherds in generations past for tending sheep.

Then, the main attraction: [the Church of the Nativity](#), built above the grotto where Jesus was born. This massive, ancient basilica was constructed around the year 550 AD and is the oldest continuously used church in the world, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We are back at the St. Elias Hotel for dinner and overnight.



## March 12: Galilee, Samaria, Nazareth, Cana

Today we go north to Galilee. First we will explore ancient [Samaria](#), Israel's capital from 930-722 BCE. Here, the prophets Elijah and Elisha challenged the wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel (1-2 Kings). The Samaritans continued to have a bad name in Jesus's day, but that did not keep him from using a "Good Samaritan" as the hero of his most famous parable (Luke 10). We will also visit [Jacob's Well](#), where Jesus ministered to a Samaritan woman in John 4.

With so much emphasis on the past, it will also be important for us pay attention to the present. We will visit [St. Philip's Episcopal Church](#) in Nablus, meet-



ing Fr. Jamil and Loma Khader and members of the congregation. These are the "living stones" of the Holy Land (1 Peter 2:5), our brothers and sisters in Christ who are living and proclaiming the Gospel today.

After lunch is [Nazareth](#) and the beautiful [Basilica of the Annunciation](#), built over Mary's childhood home.



Nearby is [Cana of Galilee](#), where Jesus turned six stone water jars into wine, his first miracle (John 2).



Tonight we check into the fantastic [Magdala Hotel](#) on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

## March 13: Around the Sea of Galilee

We will start the day aboard a boat on the [Sea of Galilee](#). For many pilgrims, this is a highlight: seeing the sea and the surrounding terrain where Jesus spent so much time preaching, teaching, and healing.

Then [Capernaum](#), the fishing town of brothers Peter and Andrew, James and John. Jesus made Capernaum his home after leaving Nazareth, teaching in the synagogue and ministering at [Peter's house](#).

Nearby is the [Church of Beatitudes](#), commemorating Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, and [Tabgha](#), where Jesus fed the 5,000 with two fish and five barley loaves. It is also at Tabgha that Jesus appeared to seven disciples after his resurrection in John 21.

We are back to the hotel for dinner and overnight, but not before seeing the excavation at [Magdala](#), the hometown of Mary Magdalene.



## March 14: Jordan River, Jericho, Mount of Olives



On the road again, we head back to Jerusalem, first stopping at the Jordan River. We will remember Jesus's baptism and renew our own baptismal vows.

Then we will see [Jericho](#), the world's oldest inhabited city. There is an excavation of the ancient city walls and Jericho is also a good place for a camel ride and a photo op. After another fantastic lunch, we journey west through the [Judean Wilderness](#), where Jesus fasted for 40 days.

Back in Jerusalem, we will take in a beautiful panorama from the [Mount of Olives](#). Then we will walk the Palm Sunday route from the top of the mount to the [Garden of Gethsemane](#), stopping at the [Church of Pater Noster](#) and [Dominus Flevit](#), where Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

Tonight, we check into the paradisiacal [American Colony Hotel](#) for dinner and overnight.



## March 15: Holy Sepulchre, Via Dolorosa

The [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#) is the holiest site for Christians. To beat the crowds, we will start early for the best experience of seeing Golgotha, the rocky hill where Christ was crucified on Good Friday, and the empty tomb where he was raised on Easter Sunday. The church is visited by thousands daily, and starting early will lend to the quietest, prayerful time in the place that changed everything forever. "For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:22).



Then we will visit the beautifully austere [Church of St. Anne](#), built during the Crusader era, and the [Pool of Bethesda](#) where Jesus healed a lame man in John 5. We will then walk the final footsteps of our Lord along the [Via Dolorosa](#), “the Way of Sorrows,” making the Stations of the Cross back to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

After lunch we will visit the [St. John Eye Hospital](#), a ministry of the Order of St. John, and have free time for folks to shop and explore the Old City on their own.



## March 16: the Dead Sea, Ein Gedi, Qumran, Masada

Today, we'll take an unforgettable field trip to sites around [the Dead Sea](#). Our first stop is the amazing [Masada](#), an isolated plateau that was home to Herod's southern palace. Later, Masada was the place where Jewish rebels made their last stand against the Romans in AD 74.

Next, to [Ein Gedi](#) for a scenic stroll through a beautiful nature reserve. Here, in the caves among the craggy hills, young David hid from jealous King Saul in 1 Samuel 24. If we're lucky, we will see some [ibexes](#) and [hyraxes](#) in those hills.

Then to [Qumran](#), where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947, and finally we will go for a float in the Dead Sea.

Tonight is our Farewell dinner, a “Feast in the Middle East” as we give thanks to God for all the learning and meaningful moments we have experienced.



## March 17: Mt. Zion and Return

On our last day, we will see sites on [Mount Zion](#): first, the [Upper Room](#), the site of the Last Supper, and then the nearby [Tomb of David](#). Last, we conclude our tour at [the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu](#), which means “rooster's crow.” The church is built on the House of Caiaphas, where Christ was held upon his arrest and where St. Peter denied Jesus three times.

Then, to the airport for our return to the States.



**Price: \$2,699** (Double occupancy)

**\$3,699** (Single occupancy) **\$2,669** (Triple occupancy)

The tour price includes all transportation, guides, lodging, tips for hotels, admission fees, all breakfasts and dinners and six lunches.

**ADDITIONAL COSTS:** Not included in the price is airfare to and from Tel Aviv. Fr. Houk will provide a number of travel options and travelers book their own flights. Other out of pocket expenses include beverages at meals, free afternoon lunch and activities, and tips for meals, guide, and driver.

To confirm your reservation, send a \$300 deposit via Venmo to @David-Houk-19. Or, send a check to

Fr. David Houk

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The full payment is due on January 1, 2024. For further information, please email Fr. David Houk at [hok@stjohnsepiscopal.org](mailto:hok@stjohnsepiscopal.org).



Cover photo by Mark Millan; used with permission. Other photos taken by St. John's travelers Lauri Bradley, Dick Couch, Fr. David Houk, Heather McNeill, Jay Patterson, Randy Spence, Sylvia Venable, and others.

