

**The Friendship Tour:
Austin Seminary & CAA go to**

ISRAEL

**Led by Rabbi Neil Blumofe (Agudas Achim) &
Dr. David Jensen (Academic Dean, Austin Seminary)**

January 2-13, 2023

(As of 7/8/2022)

Traveling together in Israel is an opportunity to connect – with the people and history of Israel, with the land itself, and with each other. As a community, we will bond through our shared experiences and enhance our understanding of history as we delve in-depth into Israel’s millennia-old religious and cultural legacy.



Day 1: Monday, January 2, 2023: BEGIN OUR JOURNEY

- We depart the United States on our overnight flight to Israel.
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Day 2: Tuesday, January 3, 2023: WELCOME TO ISRAEL!

- Shalom and Bruchim Habaim—welcome to Israel! We arrive at Ben Gurion Airport and are met by an Ayelet Tours representative.
- We ascend to **Jerusalem**, stopping at the **Haas Promenade** for a special Shehecheyanu, a prayer of thanksgiving, overlooking the City of Gold.
- We check into our hotel and have time to relax and freshen up.
- This evening, we join together for our **welcome dinner** at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Jerusalem

Day 3: Wednesday, January 4, 2023: WE REMEMBER

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Our day begins at **Yad Vashem**, Israel's memorial to the Holocaust, where we are joined by **Dr. Rachel Korazim**, a renowned educator and Holocaust expert, who will help us examine and explore the radically different ways in which secular Zionist and ultra-Orthodox leaders understood the causes and meaning of the Holocaust.
- Nearby, we visit **Mt. Herzl**, Israel's military cemetery, where we pay our respects to some of Israel's most beloved leaders, including Theodore Herzl, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres as well as gravesites of those of all faiths who lost their lives fighting for Israel's freedom.
- Next, we explore the quaint alleyways of Jerusalem's **Ein Kerem** neighborhood, including a visit with a **local artist** in his/her studio.
- Our final stop today is at the bustling **Machane Yehuda market**, where the stalls are piled high with fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, olives, colorful spices and tasty treats. Peruse the market at your own pace before we join together for **dinner** at one of the restaurants.
- **Optional:** Stay in the market after closing to see the **artistic graffiti** painted on the stall shutters.



Overnight in Jerusalem



Day 4: Thursday, January 5, 2023: HEBRON

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we visit the city of **Hebron**, home of Abraham, and the location of the covenant of circumcision. Here, we walk in the footsteps of Sarah and visit the **Cave of Machpelah**, where our ancestors are buried. We'll also visit the **Tomb of the Patriarchs, Tel Rumeida and Beit Hadassah** on a tour of the **West Bank** with a member of the community (security permitting).
- We continue to **Gush Etzion** for a dialogue with **Ali Abu Awwad** and **Rabbi Shaul Yudelman**, or other leaders of **Shorashim/Roots**. This program fosters a grassroots movement of understanding, non-violence and partnership between Israelis and Palestinians.
- We return to Jerusalem for **dinner** together at our hotel.

Overnight in Jerusalem

Day 5: Friday, January 6, 2023: THE CITY OF GOLD

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we visit **Emek Tzurim**, where we participate in the dig that is sifting the Temple Mount rubble. New and important finds are made here every day.
- We enjoy the viewpoint atop the **Mount of Olives** before descending via the **Way of Sorrows** to the **Garden of Gethsemane**, where Jesus spent his last night in prayer.
- We enter the **Old City** via the **Jaffa Gate** and stroll through colorful and exotic vendors of the **Arab shuk**. We continue into the **Jewish quarter**, filled with synagogues, shops and history, where we stop at the **Cardo Market** and pass by the ancient **Broad Wall**.
- We return to our hotel to refresh and prepare for our evening.
- As the sun sets, we join together for **Shabbat** at the **Kotel (Western Wall)** with the people of Jerusalem.
- Tonight, we experience "**Shabbat of a Lifetime**," **home hospitality** with an Orthodox family in Jerusalem to enjoy a **traditional Shabbat dinner** (or Shabbat dinner at our hotel).



Overnight in Jerusalem



Day 6: Saturday, January 7, 2023: SHABBAT SHALOM!

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, choose to participate in “**shul-hopping**”, including visits to some of the city’s most interesting synagogues to take part in a variety of unique Shabbat services.
- We return to the Old City. Our path takes us into the **Christian quarter** to the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, where Jesus was crucified, and through the bustling alleys of **Via Dolorosa** and into the **Muslim quarter** and the colorful **Arab shuk**.

OR

- We drive to the top of **Mt. Zion**, where we stop to see **King David’s tomb** and the **Upper Room**, the site of the Last Supper, as well as the **Dormition Abbey**.
- The afternoon is at leisure. Those interested may visit (on own) the famed **Israel Museum**, the country’s premiere cultural institution, featuring ancient archaeology, modern Israeli art and everything in between. This is also the site of the **Shrine of the Book**, housing the famous Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as a large-scale **replica of King Herod’s Jerusalem**.
- We meet for **dinner** at our hotel this evening.
- **Optional:** For those who enjoy an evening out, join us at Machane Yehuda’s **Beer Bazaar** for a pint or two and cheers to a new week ahead (cost on own).

Overnight in Jerusalem

Day 7: Sunday, January 8, 2023: BETHLEHEM

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we attend **Sunday mass** at the Ethiopian or Russian Orthodox church.
- We continue to **Bethlehem**. While here, we visit the **Church of the Nativity**, as well as **Shepherd’s field** and the **Bethlehem Star Olive Wood Factory**, where items have been handcrafted by professionals since 1971.
- We return to Jerusalem, where the remainder of the afternoon is at leisure.
- We enjoy **dinner** together at our hotel this evening.



Overnight in Jerusalem



Day 8: Monday, January 9, 2023: FUN IN THE DEAD SEA BASIN

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We depart early this morning and travel south to the **Dead Sea basin**. Upon arrival, we ascend the imposing mountain of **Masada** by cable car to view the remains of King Herod's fortress, including the synagogue, walls and bathhouse, as we learn about the Jewish Zealots' fateful last stand against the Roman forces.
- We descend the mountain and head to the beach for **lunch** and an unsinkable swim in the luxuriating, salty and mineral-rich waters of the **Dead Sea**, where we can cover ourselves in silky, healing mud and float at the lowest place on Earth.
- We begin our drive north, stopping at **Qasr al Yahud**, a baptismal site on the bank of the Jordan River.
- We pass by **Jericho** on our way to the **Galilee**, where we reach our kibbutz, check in and freshen up, then join together for **dinner** this evening.



Overnight in the Galilee

Day 9: Tuesday, January 10, 2023: WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHRIST

- Breakfast at our kibbutz.
- We begin our day with a **boat ride** on the shimmering **Sea of Galilee** on a boat inspired by the fishing vessels used here 2,000 years ago.
- Back on land, our first stop is at the **Mt. of Beatitudes**, where Jesus gave his Sermon on the Mount.
- We continue to **Capernaum**, where Jesus taught his disciples during the days of the Second Temple and see the ancient synagogue, church and home of Saint Peter, with time for personal worship.
- We continue to **Tabgha** to visit the **Church of Multiplication**, where the mosaic floor depicts the miracle of a basket with loaves and two fishes, a symbolic reference to the miracle where Jesus was able to feed the multitudes.
- Next, we visit **Caesarea Philippi**, where the Banias spring, source of the Jordan River, is located. Here Saint Peter made his confession of Jesus as the Messiah and the "Son of the living God". While here, we also see the excavations of an ancient Roman settlement.
- After a full day of exploring, we return to our kibbutz for a relaxing evening and **dinner** together.

Overnight in the Galilee



Day 10: Wednesday, January 11, 2023: MYSTICAL ISRAEL/THE ROAD TO TEL AVIV

- Breakfast and check out of our kibbutz.
- Today, we travel to the mystical city of **Safed**, the center of Kabbalah study and practice, where we visit the Ha'ari and Caro synagogues and have time to shop in the artist's quarter.
- We travel to **Nazareth** to take in the view from an overlook above the **Church of the Annunciation**, which some believe marks the site of Mary's childhood home.
- We head to the Mediterranean coast and travel south to **Caesarea**, the former Roman capital of the area, where we view the ancient inscription of Pontius Pilate and the surrounding ancient ruins, including the Roman theater and the aqueduct.
- We arrive in **Tel Aviv** and check into our hotel.
- This evening, we enjoy **dinner** together at our hotel.

Overnight in Tel Aviv

Day 11: Thursday, January 12, 2023: GETTING TO KNOW TEL AVIV

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We begin our day at the newly renovated **Independence Hall**, where David Ben Gurion declared Israel a state in 1948.
- Next, we tour the **Israeli Innovation Center** at the **Peres Center for Peace and Innovation**, founded by the late President Shimon Peres. The center is a non-political, non-governmental organization focused on building a more prosperous Israel and a more peaceful Middle East, through innovation, technology and cutting-edge coexistence programs.
- This afternoon, we visit the ancient port of **Old Jaffa**, where a Jewish and Arab guide lead us side by side through the streets of this ancient city on a **co-existence tour**. We trace the dual historical narratives as we explore the possibility of creating a common future and shared society.
- **ENGAGING ENCOUNTER:** We meet with peace activists and educators **Ilhab and Ora Balha** of **The Orchard of Abraham's Children**, a foundation working toward coexistence and bridging the gap between different cultures in Israel.
- This evening, a **chef accompanies us to the Carmel Market** for a sensual immersion into the vibrant colors, smells and flavors that make up this bustling marketplace. We wander through the pyramids of spices, brightly colored exotic vegetables, platters of nuts and olives and delicious halva creations. After our introduction to the fundamentals of Israeli cuisine, we prepare a delicious **farewell dinner** together with our purchases.



Overnight in Tel Aviv



Day 12: Friday, January 13, 2023: WELCOME HOME!

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to the airport for our flights back to the United States, arriving later today.

THE MEMORIES LAST FOREVER!

**Itinerary subject to change*

