

# Ananda Spiritual Travels: 2023 Holy Land Pilgrimage

## ITINERARY

October 22 – November 6, 2023 [Israel]

November 6 – 10, 2023 [Jordan]

<https://www.expandinglight.org/spiritual-travel/israel-pilgrimage/itinerary.php>

Day 1 (October 22, 2023)—Arrival in Jerusalem

You should arrive in Tel Aviv at the Ben Gurion Airport, the international airport of Israel.

**Option 1: Arrive early** - We strongly encourage guests to arrive a few days prior to October 22. Allow yourself some time to adjust to the time difference, climate and culture, prior to the pilgrimage.

- **Enjoy Tel Aviv**, an active modern coastal city with lovely beaches, shopping, and a vegetarian paradise. Any pre-days are at your expense. Then, meet up with our pilgrim group on Oct. 22 at a TBA designated location to ride to Jerusalem together – or,
- **Enjoy the city of Jerusalem** for a few days before the start of the pilgrimage. Select your own accommodation, or you might choose to stay at the Gloria Hotel, just inside the Jaffa Gate of the Old City where our group will convene the evening of Oct. 22. For those who arrive early and go directly to Jerusalem, you will hire your own private taxi for this 1-hour airport-hotel transfer ride.

**Option 2: Arrive the day we begin.**

- **Day of Oct. 22:** We will meet our guests who are in Tel Aviv at a TBA hotel on October 22 at 2:00pm to ride on our comfortable bus to Jerusalem. If you can taxi to this bus pickup location you may ride with our bus to Jerusalem, otherwise you will need to arrange to take a private taxi to Jerusalem to meet at the Gloria Hotel.

Our first evening at the Gloria Hotel – We'll enjoy dinner, and then gather for our first get-together with our two Ananda Spiritual Travel hosts, as well as our Holy Land guide, Joe — whom we've had before on our pilgrimages and whom you'll dearly love. See his bio here.

Day 2 (October 23)—Palestine holy sites of Bethlehem (Nativity Church and Milk Grotto), Shepherd's Fields, Mary and Martha's ancient home, and Lazarus' Tomb

1. We'll begin our pilgrimage at the beginning, with Jesus's birth. After a short 6-mile drive to the politically-restricted area of Palestine, we arrive in the small city of **Bethlehem** Jesus's birthplace at the **Church of the Nativity**. Imagine a place where Mary, Joseph, and many great saints and sages ("wise men from afar") all were here at the holy birthplace of Jesus Christ. The power of Christ is very strong in this little cave-grotto.

2. The **Milk Grotto**, a sweet little nearby church where Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus during the Massacre of the Innocents to hide him during the time when all the male children under age 2 were mercilessly slaughtered under the orders of King Herod.
3. Grotto at the **Shepherds' Fields**, where the angel announced Jesus' birth to the Shepherds on that glorious night. After a traditional Middle Eastern lunch in the delightful Shepherd's Tents Restaurant, we'll continue on to
4. **Mary and Martha's home**, well preserved home of the friends of Jesus from the time of Christ and where Jesus stayed when he visited. Mary and Martha were sisters to Lazarus, who buried Lazarus here in a sepulcher cave, **Lazarus' Tomb**. Three days after his death Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.
5. Leave Palestine and return to our hotel for some dinner and free time. It's been a fabulous first day in the Holy Land!

Day 3 (October 24)—Holy Sepulcher Church, view of Jerusalem at Mount of Olives, Chapel of Ascension, Church of Pater Noster, Dominus Fleuit Church, walk the Palm Sunday Route, Church of All Nations, Garden of Gethsemane, Grotto of Gethsemane

1. We begin with an early-morning meditation at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher Church for those who wish to join. After breakfast we take a bus for a short ride to the top of the **Mount of Olives**, with its panoramic view of **New and Old Jerusalem**.
2. Visit to the **Chapel of the Ascension**, the traditional site of Jesus' final ascent to heaven after the resurrection, and one of Yogananda favorite places he visited in the Holy Land.
3. We'll walk a short distance to visit the **Church of Pater Noster**, where Jesus taught his direct disciples in a small cave to pray (thou shalt pray like this: "Our Father, who art in heaven...").
4. Our next stop is a short walking distance down **Jesus' Palm Sunday route into Jerusalem**, to the **Dominus Fleuit Church** (Latin for The Lord Wept, and the church is shaped like a tear). Here Jesus wept to see the City of Jerusalem just days before his foreseen betrayal. Enjoy a boxed lunch at this small and lovely church with the magnificent view of the holy city as Jesus saw it.
5. We'll continue down the Palm Sunday Route to the **Garden of Gethsemane**. Here we will see the ageless Olive Trees, and we'll enjoy a very special private meditation in the enclosed garden. Here is where Jesus prayed "Lord let this cup pass from me", and where he wept on the night he was betrayed, knowing his upcoming fate.
6. Inside the Garden of Gethsemane, we visit the Church of All Nations that houses the very rock where Jesus wept in the Garden that fateful night.
7. Also, in the Garden of Gethsemane we will visit the small cave church, the **Grotto of Gethsemane**, where the disciples slept that last night before Christ was captured, despite Jesus returning 3 times to ask them to stay awake. Here also is where Judas brought the Roman guards and where he betrayed Jesus with a kiss. A servant of a High Priest who came for the arrest had his right ear cut off by a disciple in this cave, but Jesus touched the man and healed his ear – Jesus' last miracle before his crucifixion.

*Matthew 26: 38-41* **38** Then He said to them, “My soul is consumed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me.” **39** Going a little farther, He fell facedown and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.” **40** Then Jesus returned to the disciples and found them sleeping. “were you not able to keep watch with Me for one hour?” He asked Peter.

After our powerful day on the Mount of Olives ending at the Garden of Gethsemane, we will return by bus to our hotel for relaxation, evening free time and dinner.

#### Day 4 (October 25) Mt. Tabor, Nazareth, Sea of Galilee

1. We'll drive from Jerusalem north to Galilee, the area where Jesus mainly taught for about 3 years and gained most of his disciples. On the way, we'll visit nearby **Mt. Tabor**, the site of Jesus' Transfiguration. During the Transfiguration, Jesus revealed himself as the messiah to his disciples Peter, James and John, and the disciples heard the voice of God saying, “This is my son, in whom I am well pleased.” This dramatic location offers a beautiful overlook of the Galilee region.
2. On to **Nazareth**, birthplace of Mary and the childhood home of Jesus. We'll have lunch at **Nazareth Village**, a very remarkable replication of the time of Christ offering us a biblical-time lunch and authentic dress and customs.
3. A visit to the lovely **Church of the Annunciation** in Nazareth, where the Angel Gabriel visited Mary when she was less than 13 years old. Gabriel told Mary that she would bear a child, and she shall call the child Jesus.
4. Next, we will take our bus a little way more to the shores of the stunningly beautiful Sea of Galilee where we will check in to the lovely Royal Plaza Tiberius Hotel. There we will enjoy a little free time and dinner.

#### Day 5 (October 26) Migdal Synagogue, Cana, Mt. Arbel

1. Today we'll drive to **Midgal** also known as **Magdala**, a town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee at the foot of Mt. Arbel. The site had been covered by a landslide for more than 1900 years and only until very recently was discovered. Here the **Migdal Synagogue**, or Magdala Synagogue, is one of the oldest of the ancient synagogues ever found in Israel. It is believed that Jesus taught here.

Migdal's most famous citizen is Mary of Magdala, or Mary Magdalene. Mary is mentioned in the bible as being one of the women of Galilee who followed Jesus and supported him “out of their own means”. Scholars believe Mary was a woman of independent wealth, and she is considered Jesus's first and foremost female disciple. Mary Magdalene was the first to see Jesus after his resurrection from the Holy Sepulchre tomb. When Mary found that the rock was rolled back, Jesus said to her, “Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father.” Here at Migdal we will appreciate the feminine divine force that was so present in Mary Magdalene and the ancient synagogue where Jesus taught.

2. After Migdal we return to our hotel for lunch and then set out for **Cana**, the location of the wedding where Jesus performed his first miracle – turning water into wine at the request of his mother, Mary, who also attended the wedding.
3. Next, we will drive up to **Mt. Arbel National Park** and Nature Reserve, with magnificent majestic vistas over the plain below and the Sea of Galilee. Mt. Arbel is on the “Jesus Trail”, a walking pilgrimage trail following the common footsteps of Jesus from Nazareth to Capernaum. Jesus was known to commonly travel by foot from town to town in this area. After learning a bit of the history of this biblical site, we return to our Royal Plaza Tiberias hotel on the bank of the Sea of Galilee for dinner and relaxation.

#### Day 6 (October 27) Tzfat and a Shabbat Dinner

Our day will begin a little later today to allow a relaxing time to walk along the Sea of Galilee or swim in the hotel pool.

1. Today we will explore Safed, also known as **Tzfat** throughout the Jewish World, as the "City of Kabbalah", the city where the study of Jewish mysticism evolved. Known for the mystical Jewish artists that live and work here, Tzfat is a uniquely traditional Jewish city in a Muslim area of Israel – a spiritual center of Judaism since 1600. Tzfat is also the highest city in Israel and offers breathtaking views of the Galilee region. Here we will explore a little on our own and purchase our own lunch today
2. After lunch we'll gather together to visit the **gallery of a local artist** and hear him speak about his deeply spiritual art, then we'll tour a **revered synagogue**. Afterwards, we'll have more free time to enjoy the many shops and the wide variety of quality artistry.
3. Later in the day we will go to a Shabbat (Sabbath) dinner made especially for our group with all the traditional Jewish customs of family, reading, and food. Today is a day to immerse in the history, culture, mysticism, spirituality and customs of the Jewish people. The Shabbat dinner is a memorable one.
4. After dinner we return to our Royal Plaza Tiberias Hotel.

#### Day 7 (October 28) Sunrise meditation on the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, Tabgha, Mount of the Beatitudes

1. We'll begin this remarkable day with a memorable **early morning boat ride and sunrise meditation** on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus walked on the water on the Sea of Galilee, and he performed other miracles such as filling the empty fishing nets of the forlorn and doubting disciples.
2. After our sublime Sea of Galilee sunrise meditation, we will return to the hotel for breakfast. Afterwards, we're off to visit the ancient site of **Capernaum**, where Jesus first taught. Here also are the homes of Saint Peter, Andrew, James, John, and the tax collector, Matthew. We'll see the ruins of a stone home where archaeologists concluded that Jesus lived for a time.
3. Next we visit **Tabgha**, site of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, as well as being the site of Jesus' fourth post-resurrection appearance during the 40 days he was seen after being placed in the Holy Sepulcher tomb. Here at Tabgha, the resurrected Jesus asked Peter 3 times, “Do you love me?”

4. We will have lunch at a nearby kibbutz, a fun and unique experience. After lunch, we will visit the beautiful shrine on the **Mount of Beatitudes**, the traditional site marking Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.
5. In the later afternoon we return again to our lovely hotel for free time. You can walk along the Sea of Galilee, sit by the pool, get a massage (your cost), or just relax until the evening dinner. Even though we visit several sites on the bus today, they are all quite close together so the day is easy, relaxed and deeply blessed.

**Day 8 (October 29) St. George Monastery – the Mount of Temptations, Jordan River Baptism Site of Qasr el Yahud, Ein Gedi Kibbutz**

1. Today we leave the Sea of Galilee and our first stop is the cliff-hanging 6th century **St. George Monastery**, where Jesus spent 40 days and 40 nights fasting after he had been baptized by St. John, and it was here during his fasting that he was tempted by Satan. Jesus replied, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by the very breath of God.” We will take a tram up to access the dramatic St. George Monastery, where some of the desert fathers have dwelt high on the cliffs. The Monastery is on the outskirts of Jericho, the documented oldest continuously occupied city in the world, dating from about 9000 BCE.
2. After visiting the Monastery, we will have lunch at a lovely restaurant in Jericho, followed by a visit to **Qasr el Yahud**, the traditional site on the **Jordan River** where John baptized Jesus. Here you will have the option to be baptized by one of our Ananda ministers in the waters of the Jordan River. May the Light of Christ be with you!
3. Next, we will travel to the beautiful and relaxing **Ein Gedi Kibbutz resort**. Here you will enjoy lovely, modern rooms set in the rich botanical gardens. The hotel features beautiful views of the surrounding streams, hills, desert, and lake. The outdoor swimming pool is free and open from April to November, and there are many spa services you can schedule (optional, your expense). The excellent, buffet-style restaurant on site provides wonderful vegetarian fare.

**Day 9 (October 30) Masada, Ein Gedi**

1. Today we visit dramatic and historic **Masada**, the high plateau that was both King Herod's retreat and, later, the focal point of the tragic and deadly last days of the Jewish Revolution against the Romans in the year 66. Those who want some early-morning exercise can elect to hike up from the lowest place on earth at the Dead Sea to the top of Masada, about 1300' elevation gain while walking up the famed Snake Trail, for a stunning and memorable Dead Sea sunrise. This highly recommended hike is a bit challenging, and, if you prefer, you can ride the cable car to the top by taking our bus a little later. We will meet at the top to learn about the courageous history of the Jews at Masada.
2. The afternoon today is free time for you to choose your activity. You can visit the beautiful **desert oasis of Ein Gedi** (which was David's hideout from King Saul) for a lovely oasis hike. Or, you can simply enjoy the powerful stillness of the desert at the Ein Gedi resort, relax in the hotel's wonderful salt-water pool, or perhaps get a relaxing massage (your expense).

**Day 10 (October 31) Qumran, Dead Sea swim, Jerusalem**

1. After a relaxing morning at the Ein Gedi Kibbutz Hotel, we will visit Qumran, the remarkable ancient Essene spiritual community where archaeologists discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. With its desert beauty and solitude, plus its ancient spiritual heritage, Qumran is a very magnetic place for meditation.
2. We'll have lunch at Qumran and then continue to a waterfront beach of the **Dead Sea** (the lowest point on earth at 1411' below sea level). At the lake, we have the opportunity to swim (more like bobbing like a cork, due to the very high mineral content of the water) and pamper your body with the mineral-rich Dead Sea water and mud.
3. After our fun at the Dead Sea, we return to Jerusalem to our same lovely Gloria Hotel just inside the Jaffa Gate of the Old City. The evening will include dinner and have time for wandering the streets of Jerusalem, rest, or returning on your own to the very nearby Holy Sepulcher Church.

Day 11 (November 1) Mount Zion, Dormition Abbey, Room of the Last Supper, Tomb of King David, Church of St Peter in Gallicantu

1. Our day in Jerusalem will begin with a short walk to the Mount Zion area, where we first will visit the **Dormition Abbey**. Here Mary, Mother of Jesus, died, or entered dormition (sleep). Again, we will experience the lovely energy of the powerful divine feminine.
2. Next, we will visit nearby **Coenaculum (also called Cenacle)**, honored as the room of the Last Supper. Scholars report that this particular room was built by Crusaders in about the year 1000, so it is not the actual original room but is believed to have been built on the original site of the Last Supper. The original building was a synagogue in the time of Christ and the Last Supper room would have looked very much like this room and been in this very location. We will spend a little time meditating here to feel the vibrations of Christ's words, "Eat my body and drink my blood," and ponder these mystical teachings.
3. Time at the **Tomb of King David**. In the Bible David slew Goliath, and later became the granddaddy of all of the tribes of Israel. Thus, King David is a cornerstone prophet of the Jewish faith and Jerusalem is called "The City of David."
4. We'll walk to the nearby **Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu**, where Jesus was taken on the old Roman road to Mount Zion and into the courtyard of the High Priest Caiaphas after his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here Jesus was tied to a stone pillar and brutally whipped, then thrown into a deep dungeon to await further trial. The St. Peter in Gallicantu church has this name because Gallicantu is a cock, or rooster. It was here that Peter sat outside the dungeon as Jesus was being whipped at dawn, and, just as Peter denied Jesus three times, the cock crowed – just as Jesus had prophesized the evening before during the last supper. The Byzantine Basilica above the dungeons here is remarkably beautiful and believed to be on the site of the High Priest Caiaphas palace.
5. After our full morning, you'll have a free afternoon to go find lunch at nearby nice restaurants in the New City of Jerusalem, or find lunch and spend time in the **Old City of Jerusalem**. You can return to the hotel and relax at any time, you can re-visit any sites that you would enjoy seeing again, or you can walk in the old-world tiny-street marketplaces in the streets of the Old City. We can also direct you to further interesting sites nearby in the city if you care to explore further on your own.

Day 12 (November 2) The Cardo, Temple Mount, Dome of the Rock, Western Wall Tunnels, Western Wall

1. Today we begin by walking to the Cardo, an ancient colonnaded shopping area discovered in the Jewish Quarter. Our delightful tour guide will share about the Cardo's remarkable history as we stroll through the Cardo together. In the ancient mosaic map found at Madaba in Jordan (we will see that map in person on the Jordan Pilgrimage Extension), the ancient city of Jerusalem is depicted in great detail, including city walls and supportive pillars, the exit gates from the city, many churches, and the **Cardo**.
2. We visit the **Temple Mount**, where, in the time of Christ, the main synagogue of the Jewish faith stood, having been completed by King David's son Solomon in 957 BC. This magnificent and huge synagogue, cornerstone of the Jewish faith and housing the Arc of the Covenant, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC. The magnificent holy temple was rebuilt in 515 BC. This is the temple that stood in the time of Christ, later to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE to assert their control over the Jews and the region. Jesus's family in the bible came to this temple when he was about 12, and when Mary and Joseph began their journey back to Nazareth Jesus stayed behind without telling his parents. Scolded by his mother, Jesus' answer is written in Luke 2:49, "Why were you looking for me, did you not know I had to be in My Father's house?" Later this temple is where Jesus threw out the money changers and was again tempted by Satan to jump from the high walls to prove that God would save him (Jesus replied, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.")
3. Today the Temple Mount has the magnificent Muslim **Dome of the Rock** built upon it, and we will have a chance to see the outside of this stunning building, one of the holiest to the Muslim faith.
4. We next will take a tour of the **Western Wall Tunnels** behind the Western Wall, followed by a visit to the **Western Wall (also called the Wailing Wall)** by non-Jews), the holiest site today for the Jewish Faith.
5. After this delightful morning, you will find lunch on your own and have the afternoon free to explore the old city of Jerusalem, return to favorite attractions or return to the hotel to rest.

Day 13 (November 3) Tomb of the Virgin Mary, Church of Mary Magdalene, Ein Karem: St. John of the Baptist Church, Church of the Visitation, Monastery of St. John in the Wilderness

1. Today we have a remarkable opportunity to feel the power of the Divine Feminine. Our first stop will be the **Tomb of the Virgin Mary**, where Mary was laid in a sepulcher cave right next to the Garden of Gethsemane. We have the opportunity to meditate in the empty tomb where Mary was laid. Three days after her burial, the tomb was opened to find Mary no longer there.
2. Visit to the beautiful **Church of Mary Magdalene**, which sits on the **Mount of Olives** and is a beautiful vision in the skyline with 5 golden onion dome tops. Here is kept some of the bones of Mary Magdalene. This church belongs to and is managed by the Russian Orthodox nuns. We'll spend time in the lovely little church honoring Mary Magdalene and, if we are allowed, we'll visit the private nun cloister gardens where there

are two additional treasures: first, the real remains of the **Roman road** on which Jesus came down the Mount of Olives on a donkey for Palm Sunday, and second, where Mary, Mother of Jesus, appeared in person to Saint Thomas after her passing and gave him the sash from her robe.

3. Our bus will then take us to visit three holy places of **St. John the Baptist** in the picturesque village of **Ein Karem**. We'll each find our own lunch in the village, and then we'll meet at the lovely **Church of John the Baptist**, where John was born.
4. Meditation and reflection in the **Church of the Visitation**, site of Mary's visit to Elizabeth when both saints were pregnant. Elizabeth reported the baby John leapt in her womb when the pregnant Mary greeted her at this location. The divine feminine vibration is very strong at this Church. Here also is where Elizabeth hid the baby John during the Massacre of the Innocents. The Magnificat – The Canticle of Mary – is written in over 50 languages on the wall of the courtyard, "I will be remembered and glorified in all nations of the world, and in all ages of history."
5. Next, a visit to the remote and moving Monastery of **St. John in the Wilderness**, where Elizabeth took John into the nearby local hills and asked God to receive her child. Also called St. John of the Desert, it is believed John lived in a cave here in isolation for some time.
6. We return from Ein Karem to Jerusalem for evening free time and dinner.

#### Day 14 (November 4) St. Anne's Church, Mary's birthplace, Roman Baths of Bethesda, Via Dolorosa, Holy Sepulcher Church

1. Today we'll go to **St. Anne's Church**, built around 1135 by the Crusaders and dedicated to St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary. The Church has remarkable acoustics and many groups come here to sing. If we have a song to offer we can do that, or we can enjoy the offerings of other groups. Below this church is the **Grotto of the Birth of the Virgin Mary** is believed to have been born. The Church and Grotto are both very powerful in the divine feminine vibration.
2. Upon leaving this Basilica we are at the ancient **Roman Baths of Bethesda**, where Jesus healed a lame man. Here the lame, blind, and paralyzed tried to enter the moving waters, as it was believed that to do so might result in a healing. The bible reports there was a lame man there who had been infirm 38 years and who had asked Jesus for help. Jesus asked him if he wanted to be healed, and upon hearing that he did, Jesus said, "take up your bed and walk. Sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you." The man was healed.
3. **The Via Dolorosa**, the Path of Tears or the **Stations of the Cross**, begins near the St. Anne Church. We will walk to the **Holy Sepulcher Church** by visiting each of the Stations of the Cross, as is the custom to honor the journey that Jesus made once he was condemned to die. Each station of the cross is marked along the journey through the old city. Upon arriving at the **Holy Sepulcher Church**, the final Stations of the Cross are deeply felt, and we will have the opportunity to meditate at the Church in several locations: the cross where Jesus died, the slab of stone where Jesus was anointed after death, the place where Mary wept and watched her son on the cross, and the holy sepulcher burial cave. All are uniquely and astoundingly powerful, and all are located within this very large church.



4. Lunch is on your own. You can walk back to our hotel in less than 10 minutes, or you can enjoy lunch in the marketplace or the nearby modern mall. The afternoon is free time for shopping or returning to places you would like to visit again.

#### Day 15 (November 5) Israel Museum

1. Today we'll go to the **Israel Museum**, where we'll enjoy an overview of Biblical Jerusalem – including a huge scale model of the Old City in Jesus' time. Also at the Museum is an opportunity to see the **Shrine of the Book**, where the **Dead Sea scrolls** that were found at Qumran are kept. The Israel Museum has a lovely gift shop that we can visit.
2. We return to the Jaffa Gate near our hotel for lunch on your own and free time. You may visit places of your interest or do some shopping. There are many more interesting and powerful places of Jesus' life within walking distance in Jerusalem that we do not visit as a group, and we are happy to direct you to these if you wish to pursue them on your own. We will have a final group get-together this evening.

#### Day 16 (November 6) Free time & Departure, or your continuation on the Jordan Pilgrimage Extension

Depending on whether you are going on the Jordan Pilgrimage Extension or not, you have a couple of choices.

1. For those not continuing on the Jordan Extension, you may decide to stay in Jerusalem and continue exploring the many remarkable sites on your own. Or you may decide to catch a taxi to the Ben Gurion Airport (the Tel Aviv airport) for your flight leaving Israel. The choice is yours. It has been our joy to have you with us!
2. For those continuing on the Jordan Pilgrimage Extension, our pilgrimage will depart in the mid-morning. See below for the continuing itinerary.

#### Jordan Pilgrimage Extension

##### Day 1 (November 6) Allenby Border Crossing, Petra Hotel

3. We begin in the mid-morning for the **Allenby Border Crossing** between Israel and Jordan. We will help you understand what is required for crossing. All border crossing taxes and fees are at your expense (at this writing, less than about \$50). After the border crossing, we will meet our expert Jordanian tour guide. We will stop for lunch on our bus drive to Petra, where we will check-in to the **Petra Moon Hotel** for some relaxation, pool time, and dinner.

##### Day 2 (November 7) Petra

4. Today we have the whole day to enjoy **the ancient Rose City of Petra**, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, thought to date back to the 4th Century BC. The

city of Petra was established as a trading post by the Nabateans, an Arab Bedouin tribe indigenous to this region. Petra was first mentioned in recorded history in 312 BC when the Greeks invaded. While no actual evidence exists that Jesus visited Petra, it would be likely that he did during “his lost years,” as the Petra trading hub was well known in the region.

Our tour guide will walk us into the heart of the ancient city, sharing the history of this amazing place. We provide lunch for our group in the heart of Petra. Afterwards, the afternoon is free for you to choose your direction. There are many temples and fascinating things to see in Petra on the many walking trails. One may also ride a donkey or a camel (your expense), or shop at the many vender stalls. You will return to our hotel this afternoon or evening on your own, at your own pace. Dinner is served at the hotel.

### Day 3 (November 8) Petra Museum, Wadi Rum

5. This morning is free to either return on your own to the city of Petra to explore more trails, or to visit the exceptional **Petra Museum** at the entry of the park. The museum entry is free, and has many exhibits on the history of Petra, the Nabatean way of life, and has on display many smaller items found in Petra.

We provide lunch at our hotel and leave afterwards for **Wadi Rum**, the desert landscape with red sand and strange-shaped rock formations such that it has been nicknamed *Valley of the Moon*. It is a magnificently beautiful desert, both vast and interesting. Wadi Rum is famous as a movie set, where Lawrence of Arabia, Dune, Star Wars, The Martian, and others have been filmed on location.

6. We will arrive at Wadi Rum in the later afternoon in time to take a 4WD truck into the desert to experience its remarkable beauty at sunset. To add to the effect, often the camel trains wander by, offering photo opportunities and the opportunity for a short camel ride (your cost). After the magnificent sunset ride on the beautiful Wadi Rum desert we will return to our bus and back to Petra Moon Hotel for a later evening dinner.

### Day 4 (November 9) Makawer Fortress of Machaerus, Mount Nebo, Madaba St. George Church

7. Today we drive, having lunch on the way, to the **Makawer Fortress of Machaerus**, the palace of King Herod Antipas, where St. John the Baptist was held in the dungeon and beheaded as a birthday gift to Herod’s daughter. The fortress is an archeological ruin now, but the power and holiness of St. John still lives.
8. Next, we drive to **Mount Nebo**, where the Prophet and Saint Moses led the Israelites to after 40 years in the desert. Moses died on Mount Nebo and is believed to be buried there.
9. In the city of Madaba we check into our **Madaba Aitch Boutique Hotel**. From there we can walk 5 minutes to the 19th century St. George Greek Orthodox

Church (time permitting). This church was built over an even more ancient Byzantine church which has for the floor an ancient mosaic map of Palestine (today's Jordan, Palestine, and Israel) – the oldest in existence. The mosaic map gives us a lot of information about Jerusalem in the time of Christ.

**Day 5 (November 10)**

10. We say goodbye and thank you for joining us. You are advised to fly out by using the Amman, Jordan, airport, rather than taking a land-crossing back to Israel. Shuttles to the airport are easily available to arrange from our hotel (your expense), or you can transfer yourself to the capital city of Ammon for further explorations.