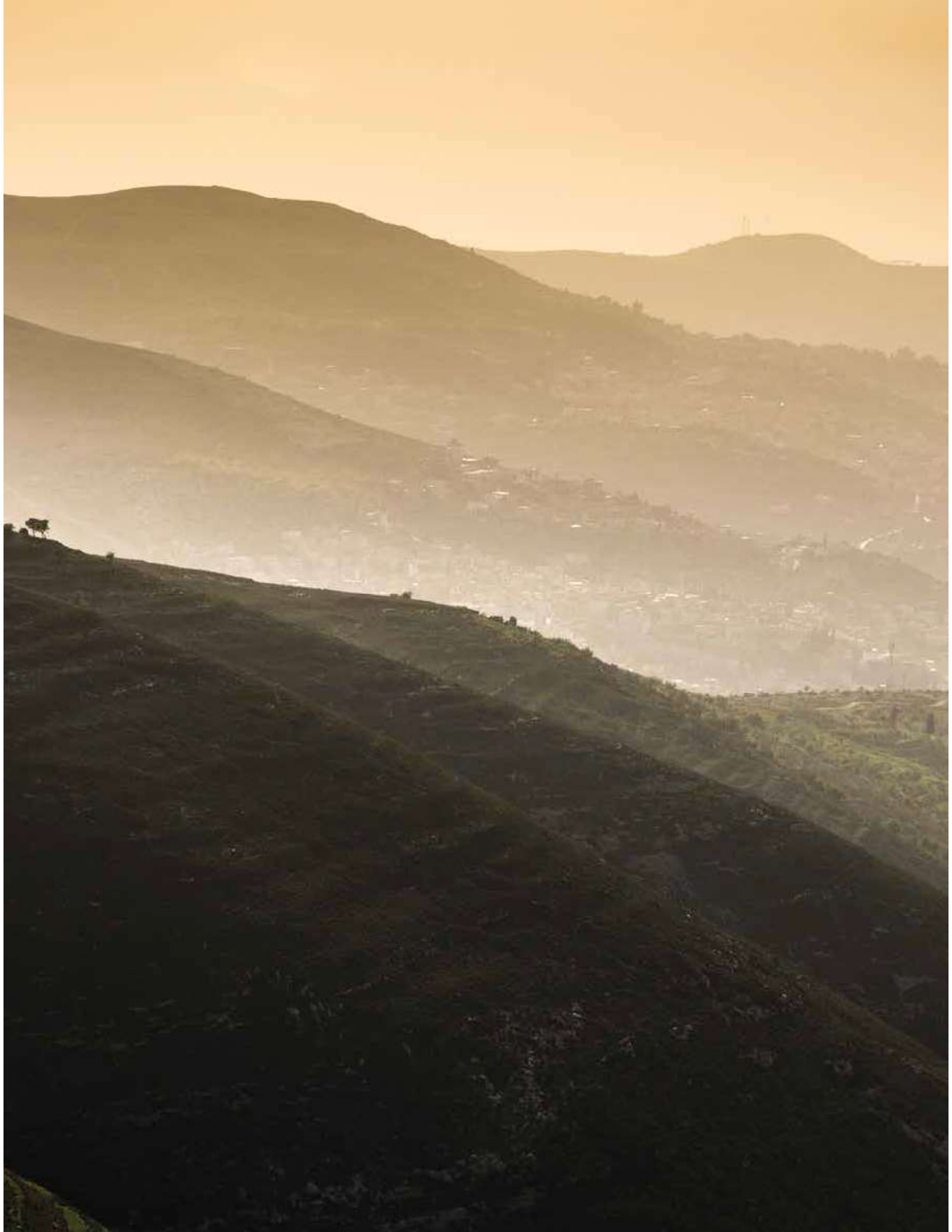
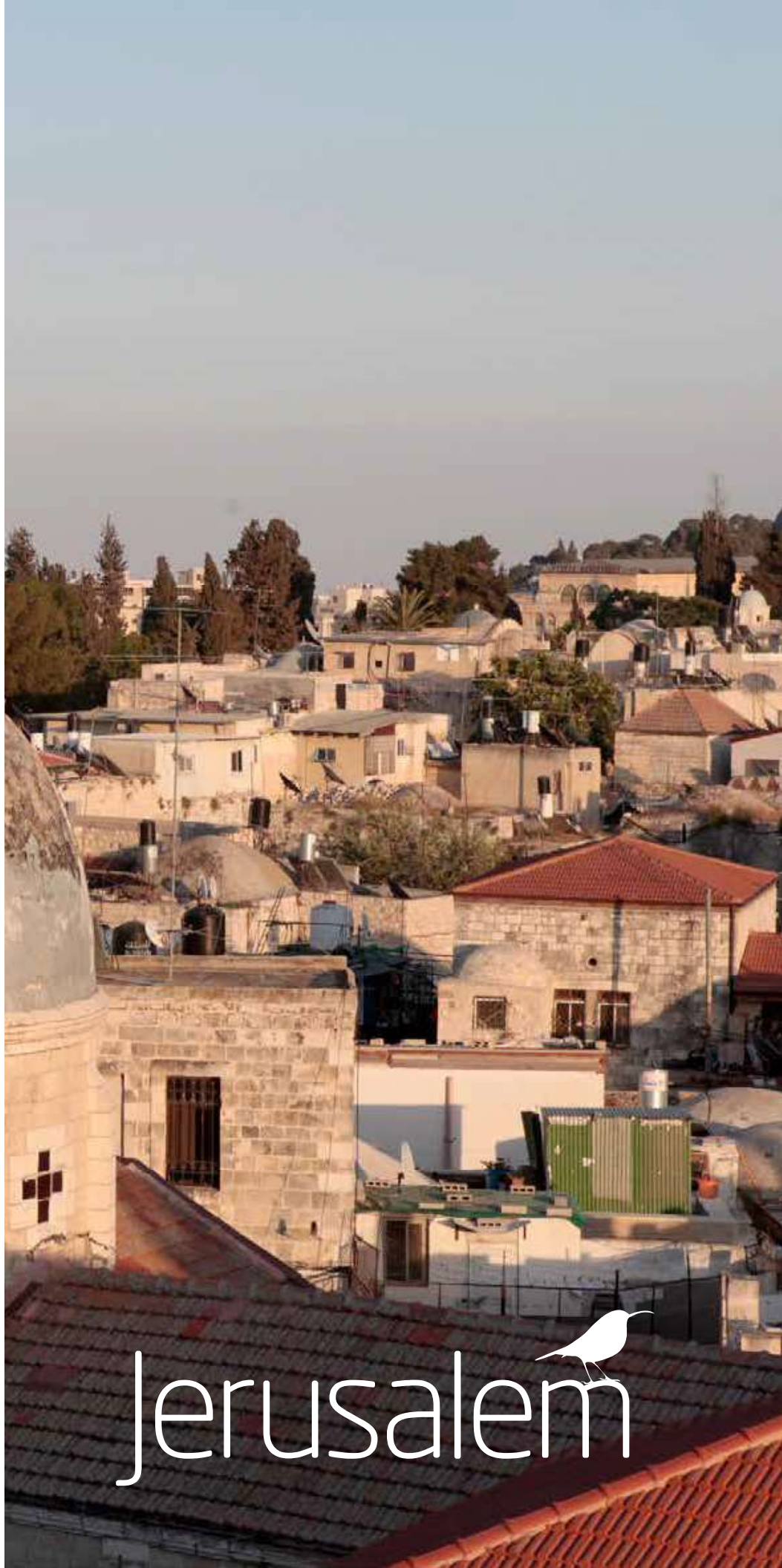


Destinations



Old City, Jerusalem





The Cradle of World's History

Appears in itineraries: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [6](#), [7](#)

The Old City

In Jerusalem's twisting alleyways, featuring more than 200 shrines, synagogues, sanctuaries and world-renowned monuments, you are literally breathing history.

Jerusalem invites you with its infinite mélange of history, culture, language, and foreign influences—a unique spot of sensory and spiritual experiences. Its wonders go far beyond religion, offering infinite possibilities for an unforgettable time and creating long-lasting travel memories.

Walk through the four Old City quarters—Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Armenian—for an exceptional tour d'horizon from culinary delights like Palestinian goat-cheese Knafeh to freshly baked Jewish challah bread to the scents of incense burned in churches to the spicy aromas of the market streets. Jerusalem touches upon all senses!

Discover the Church of the Holy Sepulcher—commemorating the place of Christ's crucifixion, burial and resurrection—the Haram al-Sharif with the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock—Islam's third holiest site—or the Western Wall, part of the massive substructure of the Temple Mount, built by Herod the Great—Judaism's most venerated prayer site.

You might also explore Jerusalem from far below and high above: pass through the Western Wall Tunnels and the city's ancient cisterns, today traversing the Muslim Quarter and walk on the very Roman pavement, now few meters below Jerusalem's surface, Jesus may have walked on. Or climb up on the medieval Old City's ramparts, once built by Suleiman the Magnificent to fortify the city, now offering unparalleled views over Jerusalem's maze of streets and alleys.

Jerusalem



Jerusalem

In the Vicinity of the Old City

Certainly, a visit to the Holy City would not be complete without extending your travels beyond the Old City walls.

Starting in the east, the Mt. of Olives with its religious monuments and panoramic views awaits you: In Jesus' times a vast olive tree orchard, the mountain slope is today home to a mainly Arab community and visited by an endless stream of pilgrims tracing biblical events.

The Chapel of Ascension, originally a church, today an Islamic shrine, goes back to the 4th century and hosts a stone, believed to be the one, from which Jesus ascended to heaven. A few meters downhill,

the Pater Noster Church remembers Jesus' first teachings of Christianity's best-known prayer, the Lord's Prayer, while the Dominus Flevit Church and the Church of Nations in the Garden of Gethsemane are remembering to Jesus' last days in Jerusalem.

But even if you are not on a spiritual pilgrimage, you should not miss the magnificent panorama of the Old City of Jerusalem from the observation point and maybe the Tomb of the Minor Prophets, an ancient burial site dating back to the 1st century BCE will catch your attention.

Later on, the underground tunnels from Roman times will take you up to the southern city wall. Continue onwards to Mt. Zion with the

Mount of Olives, Jerusalem



Last Supper Room, the Tomb of David and the Dormition Abbey, the location where Mary is said to have lived after Jesus' death.

West of Mt. Zion, cross the Jerusalem-Hebron Road and traverse into West Jerusalem, where a visit of the First Station and the German Colony, the Dutch Colony with its artist quarters, and a stroll along modern Jaffa Street are highly recommended. If you have an interest in archaeology, history, or art, do not miss the Israel Museum, the Bible Lands Museum, and the Holocaust Memorial Yad Vashem.

Continue your exploration in East Jerusalem, just north of the Old City. A few meters from the famous, and newly renovated Damascus Gate, descend into Jerusalem's ancient stone quarries at Zedeki-

ah's Cave or pay a visit to the Garden Tomb, a competing tradition for the crucifixion and burial of Jesus.

A walk along the busy Salah ed-Din and Sultan Suleiman Streets will lead you to the Rockefeller Museum, exhibiting artifacts unearthed in the 1920s and 1930s in Mandate Palestine.

After a day full of exploration and discovery, enjoy some signature dishes of Arab-Palestinian cuisine in the restaurants and cafés on East Jerusalemite Zahra or Nablus Street and start planning your next day in the Holy Land.





From the Mediterranean to the Jordan Valley



Church of Nativity, Bethlehem



Jericho – The Oldest City in the World

Appears in: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

A ride in the longest cable car below sea-level takes you up to the Mt. of Temptation in minutes. From here, where Jesus is said to have been tempted for 40 days and nights, the lowest city on earth lies to your feet. Enjoy the stunning panorama of the spring-water-fed oasis with its dates and orange orchards, the Dead Sea, the Baptismal site and the highlands of Jordan on the horizon.

A visit to Jericho allows you to travel through time. Start your journey with traces of the Neolithic Revolution at Tel es-Sultan, through the biblical era of Joshua's conquest and Jesus' preaching to Zacchaeus, to the magnificent, mosaic-paved Omayyad Palace Qasr Hisham before strolling through Jericho's contemporary center.

In addition to its cultural heritage, Jericho is both a favorite winter resort for its pleasant climate and an ideal spot for small-scale farming of citrus fruits, bananas, and dates.

You are invited to explore this fascinating blend of history, spirituality and nature on foot, by bike, camel-back or horse-drawn carriage. Do not miss a hike in close-by Wadi el-Quelt, the ancient route between Jericho and Jerusalem!

Nablus – Discover Authentic Local Craftsmanship

Appears in: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

Nestled between the foothills of Mt. Ebal and Mt. Garizim on an ancient trade route, Palestine's second largest city is famous for its sweets, traditional olive oil products, and its busy markets.

Also known as "Little Damascus", the rich history of Nablus' Old City can be felt in its seven quarters, representing a distinctive example of traditional Palestinian urban architecture and featuring 12 mosques, 2 churches, a Samaritan synagogue as well as a traditional Turkish Hammam, the perfect spot for a wellness time-out.

Explore Nablus' many layers of history at Tel el-Balata, a former hub of an extensive trade network, Jacob's Well, the Samaritan community on Mt. Garizim and in its old city. Nature lovers should head to Wadi Bidan, a picturesque valley rich in mountain springs, for an enchanting hike.

From the Mediterranean to the Jordan Valley



Old City, Hebron

Sebastia – A Quiet Getaway into Archeology and Nature

Appears in: 2, 5, 6

Once a regional capital in the Late Iron Age, Sebastia is a hidden gem, peacefully sitting on the scenic slopes of the Nablus Hills.

Sebastia's majestic Hellenistic fortification towers overlook imposing steps leading up to a former Temple of Zeus, and invite visitors to unravel thousands of years of history – among them, the city's past, when it was called Samaria, the tomb of John the Baptist, and the 12th century CE Crusader's church, now a mosque.

Indulge yourself with authentic Palestinian hospitality and lodge comfortably in one of the boutique guesthouses. Enjoy your morning tea on a sun-drenched terrace and let the magnificent views of the surrounding rich olive groves and lush farmlands tempt you to various outdoor activities including hikes and donkey rides.

Sebastia's rich history and ample nature present an archeological and spiritual highlight in Palestine and a perfect off-the-beaten-track destination.

Jenin – The Fruit and Vegetable Basket of the North

Appears in: 2, 5, 6, 7

Located at the foot of the northern Palestinian mountain range, not far from the fertile Jezreel Valley, Jenin is the most northern Palestinian city in the West Bank and famous for its incomparable fresh and tasty fruits and vegetables.

In addition to a visit of Jenin's city center, numerous sites in its vicinity await exploration: Arraba – a tiny village famous for its Ottoman Palaces of the Abd al-Hadi family; Tel Dothan, a so-far barely excavated ancient settlement, where Joseph was supposedly sold to Egypt by his brothers; or Bal'ama tunnel, an ancient water system comparable to Hezekiah's tunnel in Jerusalem.

Yet, by far the most important site in Jenin's vicinity is the picturesque village of Burqin, famous not only for its handmade olive oil soap, but also for hosting one of the oldest churches in the world: the Greek Orthodox St George's Church, biblically known as the Church of the Ten Lepers.

Since Jenin and its vicinity have been fairly untouched by tourism, it is ideal for a thorough experience of an authentic oriental Palestine.

Hebron – A City Steeped in History

Appears in: 3, 5, 6, 7

Palestine's southern urban center transcends history back to the times of the early patriarchs. According to the biblical tradition, Abraham once bought the Cave of Machpela which is venerated as the last resting place of himself, his wife Sarah and his offspring generations.

Since the earliest times, Hebron has been steeped in history – a contested space, where religion and faith, culture and heritage are inextricably linked with conflicts and broad diversity of human encounters.

Embark on a guided tour and unravel the roots of Judaism, Christianity and Islam at the mosque and synagogue atop the Cave of Machpela, wander through the old town's market, observe traditional handicrafts in Hebron's leather and glassblowing studios, or indulge yourself with an authentic Hebronite signature dish – camel meat stew!

Offering a diverse blend of history, art, culture and political narratives, Hebron is the ideal place to learn about Palestinian heritage and what life in Palestine is like today.

Bethlehem, Beit Sahour & Beit Jala The Birthplace of Christianity

Appears in: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Tracing Christianity back to its roots, you will undoubtedly arrive to Bethlehem for a visit of one of the oldest churches in the world: The Nativity Church, a UNESCO World Heritage, commemorated as the birthplace of Christ. Join pilgrims from all over the world and descend to the Nativity Grotto, the Altar of the Innocent Children and the cave St. Jerome lived in for a good portion of his life.

Back above ground continue following the cobbled streets, lined with traditional handicraft stores, offering Bethlehem's signature olive-wood carvings to the Milk Grotto and listen to its legendary story. Continue your walk traversing the Manger Square to the elegant Mosque of Omar and head on to the old market or one of Bethlehem's museums.

Today, Bethlehem is far from the romantic imagination of a small village, some shepherds in the fields, and a manger.

On the contrary, the city hums with activity and invites you to discover local art, watch dancing and theatrical performances, or talk politics. If you are linguistically talented or simply interested, take a course in Aramaic, the language of Jesus!

A few kilometers' distance from Bethlehem, the city of Beit Sahour awaits you for a visit of the Shepherds' Fields and in close-by Beit Jala, St. Nicolas Church remembers the world-wide known saint lodging here for many years.

Beyond this, Bethlehem also makes an ideal base for roundtrips in southern and central Palestine. Within day-trips reach, explore Battir, Hebron, Jericho, or the rocky desert extending to the Dead Sea. In Bethlehem's vicinity, make sure not to miss the enchanting Solomon's Pools, the Hortus Conclusus in Irtas village or the Monastery of Mar Saba, miraculously built in a steep cliff of the Kidron Valley.

Whether you visit as a pilgrim or without religious ambition, Bethlehem and its surroundings are an experiential highlight worth the experience.

Ramallah and al-Bireh Palestine's Vibrant Capital of Culture and Nightlife

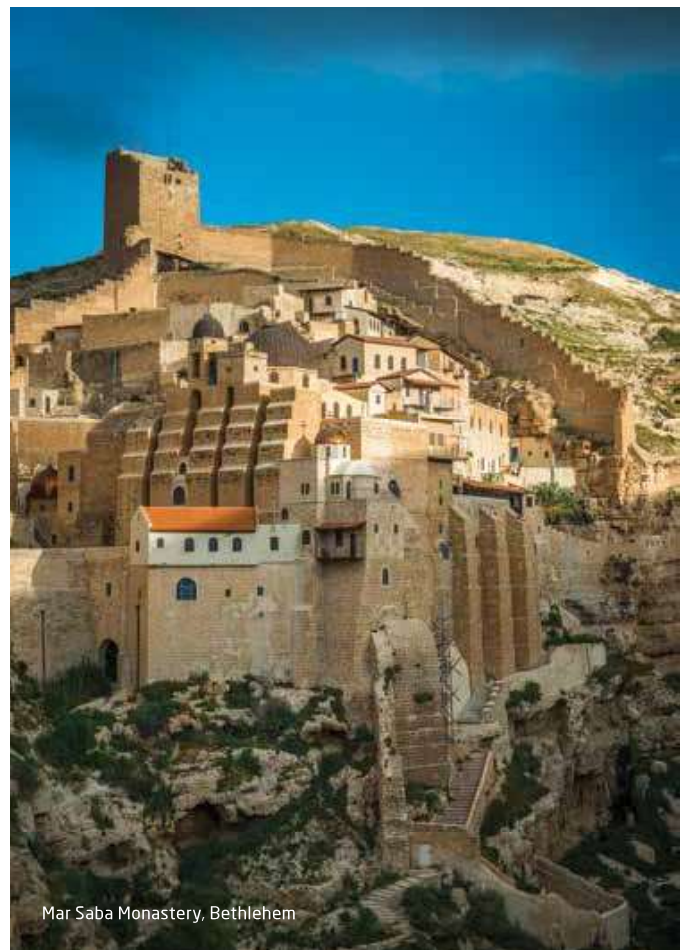
Appears in: 6, 7

Set in the middle of rural towns and villages, just 15km north of Jerusalem, Ramallah and its twin city al-Bireh are a vital hotspot teeming with a thriving art scene and bustling nightlife. Stroll along streets lined with tiny shops and cafés around al-Manara Square and its iconic four lions, discover the bustling al-Muntazah neighborhood with its trendy bars, and drift through the market with its fruits, vegetables, and freshly made falafel.

Ramallah is at the very heart of Palestine's political and cultural life: it is home to the main governmental buildings, the mausoleum of former Palestinian president Yasser Arafat, and the Mahmoud Darwish Museum, the famous Palestinian poet.

The cities host countless art and folklore events, festivals, and cultural activities like the annual Contemporary Dance Festival.

Known for its mild climate, Ramallah's offer of accommodation, restaurants, cultural activities, and other touristic services are infinite. Being the country's declared cultural hotspot, Ramallah lets every traveler discover a truly colorful Palestine.



Mar Saba Monastery, Bethlehem



From the Mediterranean to the Jordan Valley

Taybeh & Birzeit Meet the Local Beer Industry

Appears in: 6, 7

If you are after a glass of cold amber proudly brewed in Palestine, Taybeh and Birzeit, just a few kilometers from Ramallah, are your places to go. Taybeh is home to the only Palestinian brewery producing its beer after the German purity law. While Birzeit hosts the Shepherds Brewery with varying kinds of beer for every taste.

Famous for its own Oktoberfest (Taybeh) and its annual maftoul (couscous) festival (Birzeit), both cities are also rich in history and culture: The Palestinian Museum in Birzeit awaits you with changing exhibitions on culture, society, and contemporary Palestinian art and close-by St. George Church invites for a moment of tranquility, before or after taking a tour to the breweries, each offering tastings of their products.

Situated on a remote, picturesque hillside, Taybeh and Birzeit are a great get-away from bustling Ramallah while allowing for an experience rich in taste and history.

Bethany – The Miracle of Lazarus’ Resurrection

Appears in: 1, 7

On the eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives lies the Palestinian city of Bethany (al-Eizariya in Arabic). Two key events in Jesus’ life are commemorated in this small town: the revivification of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, and the anointing of Jesus by Mary.

En route between Jerusalem, Bethlehem or Jericho, a visit to Lazarus’ tomb and the Mary & Martha Church will soon be even more worthwhile when a new and significantly longer visitors’ path will open in 2018.

Jaffa & Tel Aviv – A Cool Seaside Getaway of Culture, Cuisine and Coastal Fun

Appears in: 3, 6

Set along a 13 km long stretch of serene beaches, Jaffa and Tel Aviv uniquely combine Mediterranean flair with ancient history and modern urban lifestyle.

Indulge yourself in innovative cuisine down at Jaffa’s seashore grab a well-shaken cocktail among locals working in one of the hip cafés along the beach, or simply enjoy a relaxed day’s walk along the promenade.

Passionate admirers of culture and history will enjoy a stroll through the Bauhaus-style “White City” (UNESCO World Heritage) or traveling back in time in Jaffa’s historic seaport, its remnants from Pharaonic times and its biblical spots like the Church of St. Peter.

Be sure, not to miss Jaffa’s antiquities and flea market and Tel Aviv’s Carmel Market, both full of aromas, scents and tempting shopping opportunities.

Tel Aviv is famous for the Middle East’s biggest Pride Week, its especially diverse vegan kitchen, and its exhilarating nightlife from dusk till dawn. More artistically interested visitors will enjoy the various artisan boutiques and the spectacular Museum of Modern Art.



The Mediterranean Coastline – A Blend of Archeological Gems and Seaside Wonders

Appears in: 3, 4, 7

Once a main traveling route between the Fertile Crescent and North Africa, the Mediterranean coastline from southern Lebanon to the Sinai Peninsula is as rich in history as in natural variety.

In the very north, nature lovers should not miss the spectacular grottos of Rosh HaNikra with their cavernous tunnels formed by natural erosion, mesmerizing colors and shapes. One of the steepest cable cars in the world, takes you down to the lower base station with a gradient of 60°!

Only a short drive south of Rosh HaNikra, the old city of Akko (Acre), situated on a little semi-peninsula, marvels with its winding cobbled alleys, its skyline of copper-green roofs and numerous minarets and church towers. UNESCO-listed since 2001, Akko's history reaches back to the 3rd millennium BCE! As early as the Bronze Age, Akko's natural seaport made it an important trade city. Further down in history, the Crusaders founded a kingdom here and built a monumental fortress, open for a visit today.

The city's checkered history, including an unsuccessful 61-day-siege by Napoleon, and its picturesque old harbor, make Akko a splendid getaway for admirers of history and nature alike.

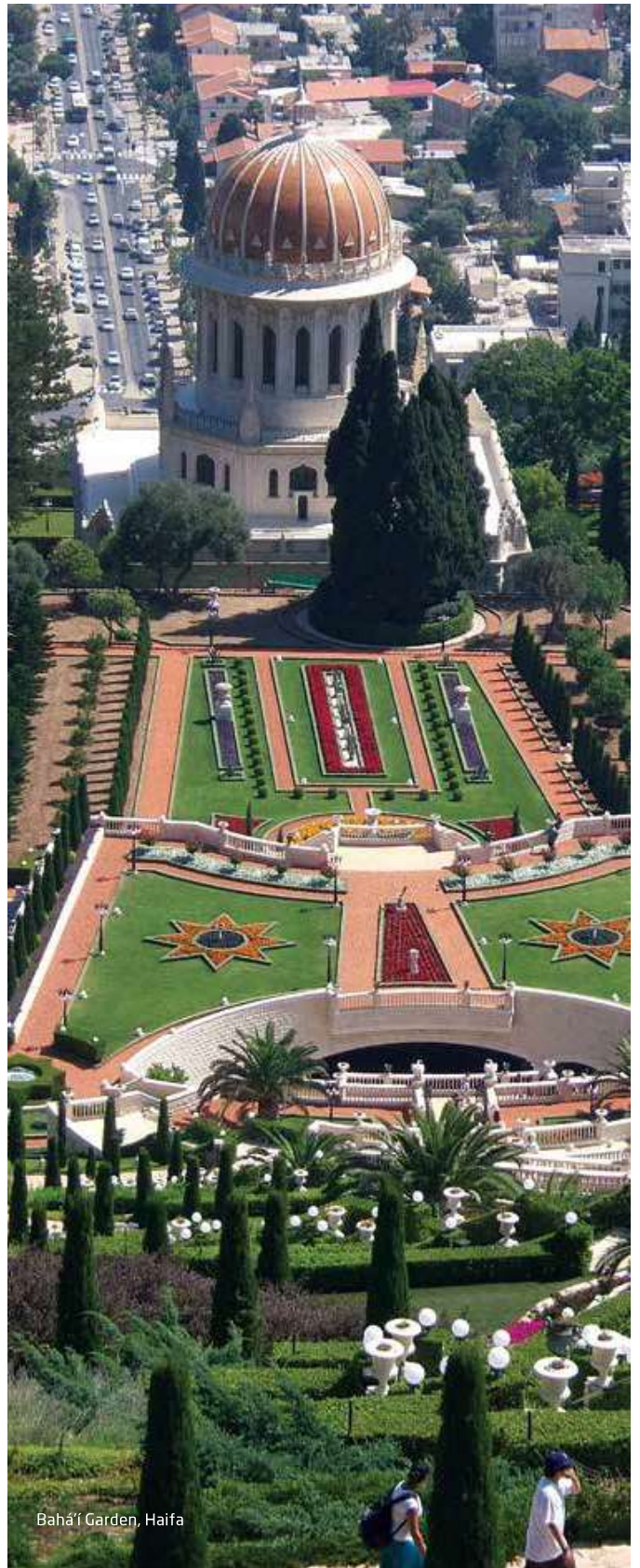
Just at the other end of the vast bay, Haifa and its steep Carmel Mountain Range invite you to discover its many architectural and natural wonders. Enthusiastically named the "San Francisco of Israel", you can enjoy far-reaching views from the famous Bahá'í gardens or follow the Bauhaus-style streets of the German Colony all the way to the harbor. Haifa is especially famous for its Jewish-Arab coexistence and a peaceful example of Christians, Muslims, and Jews living and working side by side.

Pilgrims and admirers of magnificent views should also pay a visit to the Stela Maris Monastery, high above Haifa in the Carmel Mountain Range, commemorating prophet Elijah's lodging in this beautiful spot of nature.

Further south, the ancient Roman port city of Caesarea boasts its remarkably preserved remains that have stood thousands of years, dating back to the era of King Herod. Wander through the ruins of the seaside hippodrome, the Roman temples, and the Crusaders' castle or take a dip into the indigo-blue Mediterranean at the ancient aqueduct.

Towards Tel Aviv and Jaffa, the coastal cities of Netanya and Herzliya are prime destinations for sun-seekers and watersport enthusiasts. Whether you are an individual vacationer, traveling with your family, or on a group tour, spending a day or more at the sandy beaches with their Mediterranean turquoise waters is a refreshing experience not to be missed!

South of Jaffa, the modern cities of Ashdod and Ashkelon are worth considering for a brief visit. In Ashdod, the unique Philistine Museum lets you explore the history and impact of the 12th century "sea people" once settling in the area. In Ashkelon history dates back to the 8th millennium BCE, when an ancient seaport was already located here. Tel Ashkelon, the mudbrick city gate with its tunnel-like barrel vault, is the oldest such vault ever found.



Bahá'í Garden, Haifa

From the Mediterranean to the Jordan Valley

The Galilee and the Golan Heights Walking on Biblical Paths in a Varied Landscape

Appears in: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6

A must-see for Christian pilgrims, the biblical landscapes around Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee invite you also for exciting hikes, a relaxed lakeshore getaway and explorations into history dating back to the 3rd millennium BCE.

In Nazareth, Israel's largest Arab city, a modern city center with busy markets joins with its biblical reference as Jesus' childhood home. The Well of Mary, the Basilica of Annunciation, the 12th century "synagogue-church" and close-by Mt. Precipice each commemorate another event in Jesus' early years.

Just a short drive (or longer hike) away, Mt. Tabor with the Church of Transfiguration provides a panoramic view of the Jezreel Valley and Lower Galilee. A few kilometers to the north, several churches remember Jesus' "First Miracle", the Marriage at Cana, while the ancient city of Sepphoris (Zippori) amazes pilgrims and others alike with its stunning mosaics.

From Nazareth, a few days' hike along the "Jesus and Gospel Trail" leads the way to the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus spent most of his public ministry. The lakeshore, 200m below sea level, is lined with New Testament places: Capernaum – the "Town of Jesus", the Mt. of Beatitudes, the Church of Multiplication in Tabgha, Migdal - Mary Magdalene's likely hometown, and close-by ancient cities like Bethsaida and Chorazin.

Away from the sea, in Upper Galilee and the Golan Heights, numerous archaeological sites and nature reserves invite nature lovers and culturally interested travelers alike. Within easy reach by car are ancient Tel Dan, the ancient Decapolis city of Caesarea Philippi at the Banias Stream or the monumental medieval Nimrod Fortress; longer, sometimes strenuous hikes are well rewarded with panoramic views and ancient findings at Gamla, Hippos Susita or the mystic Bronze Age site of Rujm el-Hiri.

If your appetite for sports goes beyond hiking, inquire with your tour operator for some exciting mountain-biking, paragliding from the steep mountain ranges, or river rafting and kayaking.

The historical depth of over five millennia of history, combined with a well-developed touristic infrastructure make the Galilee and Golan an equally intriguing pilgrimage and leisure destination.



Dead Sea



The Dead Sea – The Lowest Place on Earth

Appears in: 1, 3, 4, 6

Almost 430 meters below Sea Level, the Jordan Valley around the Dead Sea is not only famous for its spa facilities and health benefits, but is also rich in historical and natural sites.

At the sea's northern end, close to Jericho, lie the ancient settlement of Qumran and the caves, where the Dead Sea Scrolls – the world's oldest biblical manuscripts – were found. Further south, the lush nature reserve of Ein Gedi awaits you for an easy stroll to the waterfalls or a full-day ambitious mountain hike. Few kilometers onward, the solitary mountain fortress Masada is strategically located on an isolated rock plateau – reachable via the steep snake path or by cable car.

The Dead Sea can easily be reached from Jericho, Bethlehem and Jerusalem or from Amman. A variety of accommodations from guest-houses to luxurious spa hotels are awaiting your visit on either side.

If you are traveling on the Jordanian site, make sure not to miss the unique hot springs of Hammamat Ma'in and the Masada-like, yet barely preserved Mukawer (Machaerus) fortress. Tradition holds, that John the Baptist was imprisoned here once by Herod Antipas.

The Negev – Life in the Desert

Appears in: 4

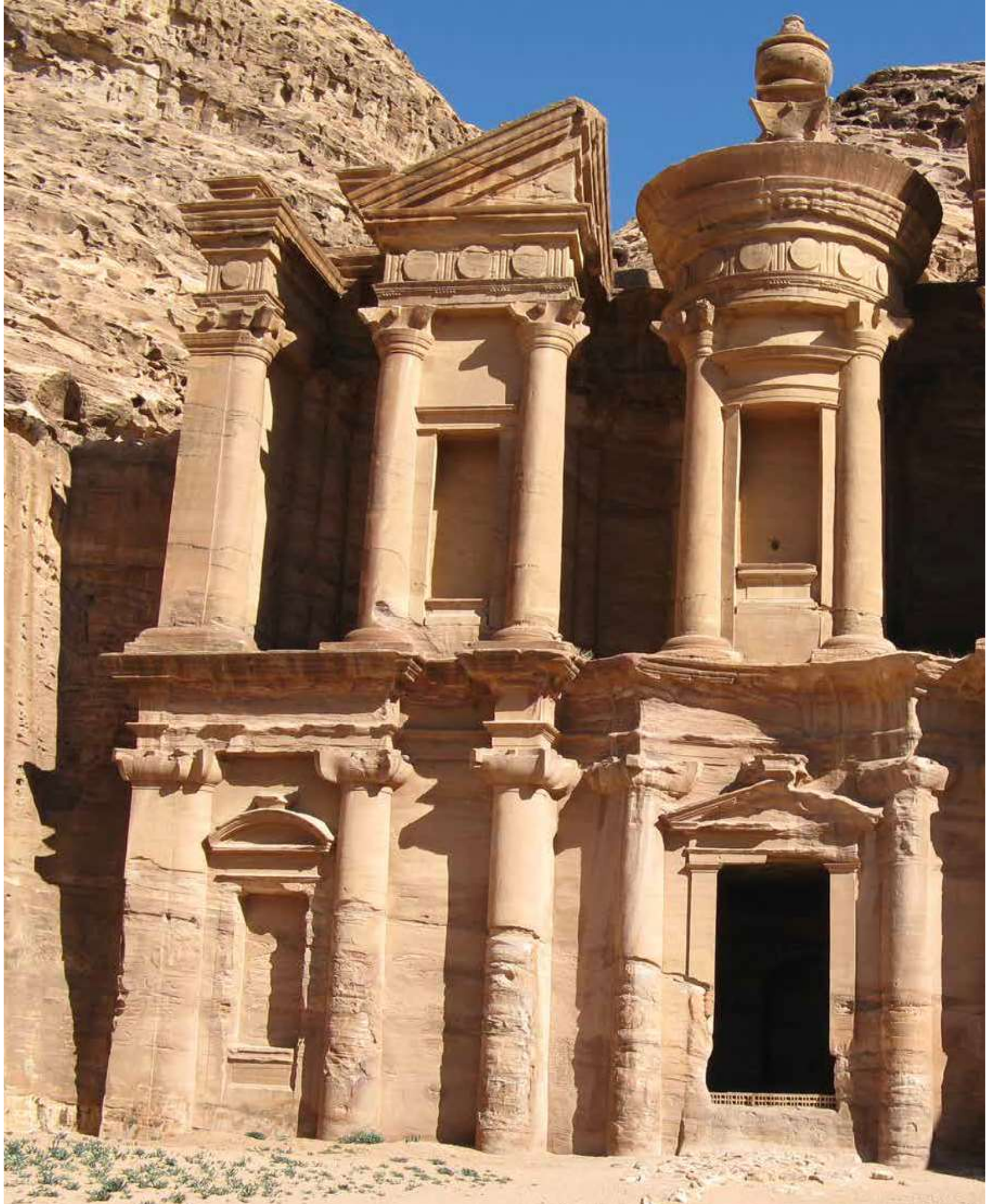
While covering the majority of Israel's landmass, the Negev hosts less than 10% of the country's population. Stretching from Be'er Sheva all the way down to Eilat, it is the ideal place to experience authentic Bedouin lifestyle, visit archaeological sites or to take part in one of many outdoor activities.

Whether you are an adventure-seeking outdoor enthusiast or an archaeology-driven admirer of history, a trip to the Negev will be a rewarding experience. For example, visit the ancient Nabatean towns Shivta, Mamshit, Haluza, and Avdat along the ancient Incense Route or join an off-road tour into the Makthesh, a globally unique, breathtaking crater-like landscape created by water erosion.

If you are traveling in biblical footsteps, consider a two-day trip to the rock plateau of Har Karkom. The harsh rocks landscape has been proposed to be the very Sinai Mountain Moses once received the Tablets of Stone from. More than 40,000 rock engravings are proof of extensive religious activity in the area.

All the way to the south, at the border to Egypt and Jordan, the coastal resort-city of Eilat is a year-round getaway on the shores of the Red Sea. Like neighboring Aqaba, Eilat is famous for its diving and snorkeling opportunities in an incredibly colorful and diverse marine life.

Beyond watersports, the Araba (the southern extension of the Jordan Valley) bi-annually receives millions of visitors right from the sky, when migrating birds take a rest not far from Eilat and Aqaba – a world-class bird watching opportunity.



Ad-Deir, Petra



East of the Jordan Valley

Amman – Where Ancient Ruins Stand next to Modern Malls

Appears in: 4

Ideally located in the hills between the vast desert and the fertile Jordan Valley, Jordan's capital is a multi-cultural city of contrasts. One step will lead you to modern shopping malls, while another takes you to traditional souqs (markets) and ancient ruins, like the majestic Amman Citadel featuring Roman, Byzantine and early Islamic remains together with a stunning view of the city.

With no destination more than a 4-hour-drive away, Amman serves as an ideal base and starting point for exploring the Jordanian kingdom. In addition, great museums like the Folklore Museum or the National Gallery of Fine Arts combined with Amman's lively nightlife of theatrical and traditional Arabic entertainments make the city a true cultural hotspot.

Petra, Wadi Rum & Karak – The Ancient Sceneries of Hollywood Movies

Appears in: 4

Petra, the ancient capital of the Arab Nabateans has enthralled travelers ever since their modern discovery in the 19th century. Named one of the "New7Wonders" of the world, Petra's elaborate architecture was carved into the pink-colored cliffs about 2,000 years ago, including numerous tombs, temples, and undoubtedly sacrificial and cultic installations. In 363 CE, an earthquake destroyed large parts of the city and damaged its sophisticated water system; a few centuries later, the city was abandoned and its ruins remained a curiosity to ancient travelers for a long time.

Today, a visit of the Rose City still leaves you curious what its monumental structures like the Lion Triclinium, ad-Deir, or the Snake Monument may have meant for its builders. Petra is a must-stop on any Holy Land trip, no matter if you travel for leisure, are seeking adventures or having spiritual ambitions. If you are an ambitious hiker, you should also not miss the steep ascent to the tomb of prophet Aaron, Mose's older brother, on Jabal Haroun (Mt. Aaron).

About two hours south of Petra, the virtually untouched beauty of the desert of Wadi Rum and its mazes of chiseled canyons are



East of the Jordan Valley

The Oval Forum and Cardo Maximus, Jerash



awaiting your discovery. Whether on foot, camelback or in a 4x4 car, a visit to Wadi Rum will indulge you right into scenes of “Lawrence of Arabia”, “The Martian” or “Rogue One: A Star Wars Story”, all featuring fascinating landscape.

On your way south, you may also consider stopping at one of the best-preserved Crusader castles in the Middle East, the castle of Kerak. Built in the 1140s and captured by Saladin’s army in 1189 CE, the massive structure sits 900 meters above sea level in a commanding position offering a splendid view.

Madaba, Mt. Nebo and Bethany Beyond the Jordan – Holy Sites and Handmade History

Appears in: 4

Only about an hour away from King Hussein Border Crossing or Amman, the tiny city of Madaba marks a perfect starting point to explore the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Rightfully called the “City of Mosaics”, Madaba’s signature artwork is the 6th century mosaic map on the floor of the St. George’s Church depicting the Holy Land as it was known to pilgrims as early as the 4th century! No matter if you are about to complete your journey in Madaba or are just about getting your trip started, you will easily recognize numerous places you will visit or may have already seen.

Just a few minutes to the northwest, biblical Mt. Nebo raises high above the Jordan Valley offering a splendid panorama of the Dead Sea, Jericho and Jerusalem in the distance. The church on its summit dates back to the 4th century and marks the site, from which Moses was granted a last view of the Promised Land before his death.

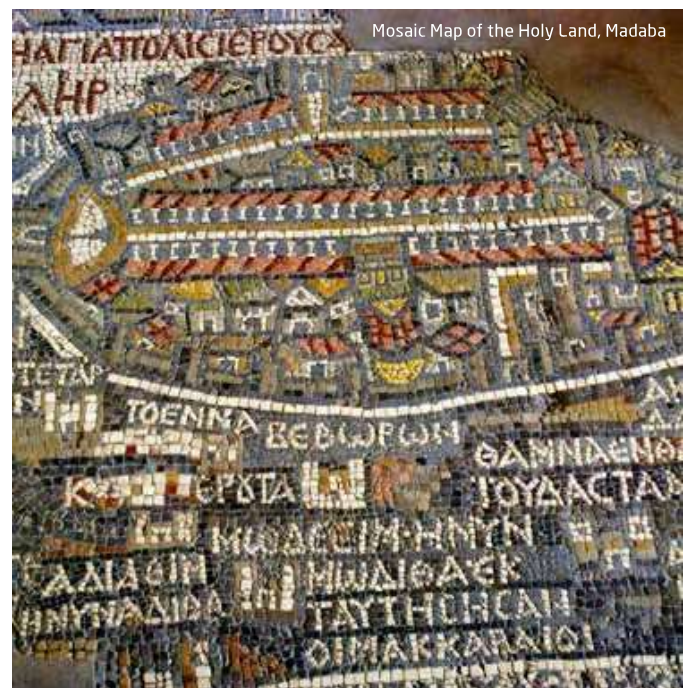
From Nebo’s summit, a steep road takes you down more than 1200m to Bethany Beyond the Jordan, believed to be the place where Jesus was baptized by John. And a few kilometers to the south, Jordan’s Dead Sea spas await you with relaxation and a dip in the salty water, before you may continue to the natural hot-springs of Hammamat Ma’in and Mukawer (Machaerus), the barely preserved 700 meters high hilltop stronghold of Herod the Great and his son Antipas.

Umm Qays, Pella, Ajlun & Jerash – Blends of Nature and Ancient Architecture

In the country’s northwest corner, Jordan features fertile and ever-changing green landscapes laced with the remains of multiple era’s striking architecture.

If you are a pilgrim or simply interested in the country’s biblical sites, visiting Umm Qays in northern Jordan is a must-see. Named Gadara in ancient Greek, the ancient city once was a center of Greek culture in the region located in a commanding position on a ridge. Whether Jesus’ exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac truly happened here, remains unknown, but the view of the Sea of Galilee, the Golan and even Mt. Hermon (Jabal el-Sheikh) is much worth the visit!

Further southwest lies Pella, a gem for any archeology and history lover. Thanks to the surrounding fertile valleys and rich water sources, Pella shows evidence of 8 millennia of settlement from



the Neolithic era to medieval Islamic times. Once one of the ten Decapolis cities, Pella today still features a remarkable ensemble of Hellenistic architecture.

Southeast of Pella, Ajloun Forest Reserve is a magnificent nature reserve among lush hills covered by multi-colored wildflowers and forests of pine, pistachio, and carob trees. In its south, you will find the impressive Islamic Ajloun Castle dating back to the 12th century as well as the close-by Tel Mar Elias, often identified with Tishbe, the hometown of Prophet Elijah.

Finally, the impressive Hadrian's Gate in the center of the ancient city of Jerash (Gerasa in ancient Greek) marks today's entrance to a journey through time in one of the world's best-preserved Roman towns. If you have an appetite for ancient architecture, wandering along the colonnaded streets, perfectly designed theatres, vast squares, and lofty temples of Jerash is a must-do.

Aqaba – Word-Class Diving on the Southern Edge of Jordan

Appears in: 3, 4

After spending some days in Petra and Wadi Rum, Aqaba awaits with its indigo-colored waters in front of the red cliffs of the surrounding mountains. The diverse marine life of the Red Sea allures you to spend days snorkeling, scuba-diving, fishing, and sailing, while Aqaba itself invites you to lean back in one of the many beach resorts between Tala Bay and the city center, and to enjoy the holiday atmosphere.

With its international airport and regular direct connections to Amman, destinations in Egypt and Europe, Aqaba is not only a great stop in passing from Jordan to Israel, but can also be your trip's port of entry or final destination.

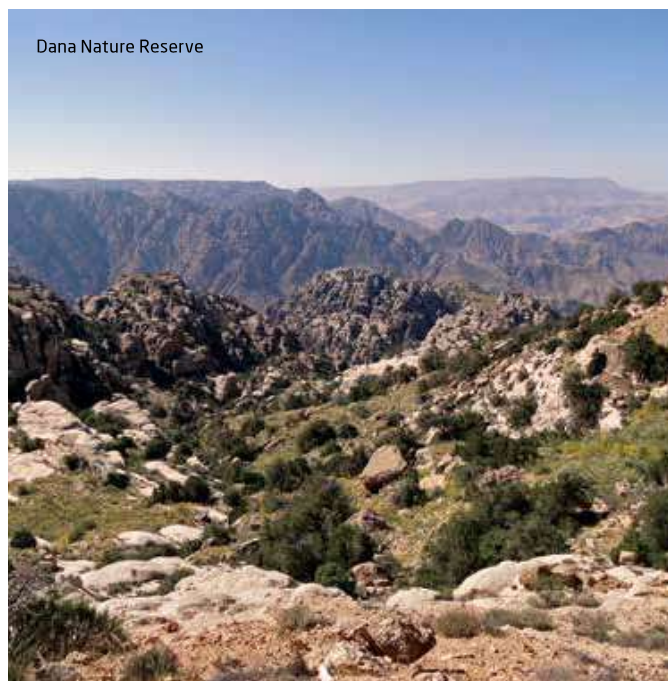
Jordan's Nature Reserves and Desert Castles – A Walk on the Wild Side

Nature Reserves

Whether you are a passionate nature lover or simply traveling for leisure, visiting at least one of Jordan's nature reserve should be on your list!

In the northwest, not far from Jerash, Dibeen Forest Reserve extends over 8.5 square kilometers with pine and oak trees, scattered over the steep hillsides of the Jordan valley. Some of the largest Aleppo Pines grow in Dibeen, which is one of the last remaining natural pine-oak forest in the Middle East. In addition, the reserve is home to 17 endangered species, including the Persian Squirrel.

The Azraq Wetland Reserve in the country's east is a major stopover for a variety of birds on their annual migration routes. Located in the center of Jordan's eastern desert, it features natural attractions like the vast marshland, several pools, and a large mudflat. A little further south, the Shaumari Wildlife Reserve represents a similar small oasis and was created for endangered animals on 22



square kilometers. Today home to a number of the rarest species in the Middle East, you may see, among other animals, Arabian oryx, Somali ostriches, and gazelles.

The Wadi Mujib Nature Reserve in Jordan's west is rightfully called the "Grand Canyon of Jordan" – starting at more than 900m above sea level in the mountains and descending for more than 1,300m to the shore of the Dead Sea, 400m below sea level. Most likely identical with the River Arnon in the Old Testament, Wadi Mujib invites you for short and longer hikes, introducing you to the incredible biodiversity including numerous migratory birds, but also the striped hyena, the Syrian wolf, or the Nubian ibex.

In south-central Jordan, Dana Biosphere Reserve is the largest reserve of the country, home to some 700 plant species, more than 200 species of birds, and almost 40 species of mammals. If you are into observation of nature, Dana is your place to be!

Desert Castles

Located in Jordan's east, the Umayyad Desert Castles beautifully portray Islamic life and art along the long-haul desert trading routes in the 7th and 8th century CE. Although their impressive structures suggest the term castle, they actually fulfilled a variety of purposes from outposts to trade centers and caravanse-rais. For some, their exact purpose is still disputed.

A must-see for admirers of Islamic art and architecture, you will not regret a visit even if you are traveling for other purposes. Highly recommended is Qusayr' Amra, about 1 hour east of Amman, for its well-preserved frescoes and mosaics (a UNESCO World Heritage Site). Other impressive sites ones include Qasr al-Azraq, built from black basalt, a former headquarters of Lawrence of Arabia, as well as Qasr al-Hallabat, Qasr at-Tuba, and Qasr al-Kharranah.

