

JOI

FAMILY ISRAEL TRIP

Summer 2026

Tuesday, June 23

Arrival, Tel Aviv & North

Welcome Home! Ben Gurion Airport (10:30 AM)

Those arriving today will gather at Ben Gurion Airport by 10:30 AM. Once everyone is assembled, we'll board our bus and depart. For those already in Israel, arrangements can be made to meet the group directly at our first stop.

Hostage Square, Tel Aviv (11:30 AM)

Our first stop will be Hostage Square, located in front of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art on Shaul HaMelech Boulevard. This public plaza became a gathering place for families of hostages taken during the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack. The square features various art installations that provide an important context for understanding recent events in Israeli society.

Depart for Lunch in Netanya (12:30 PM)

From Tel Aviv, we'll drive north along the coast to Netanya (about 30 minutes). We'll head to Kikar Haatzmaut (Independence Square), Netanya's central plaza along the Mediterranean, where everyone will have free time to get lunch on their own. The area offers numerous dining options including cafes, snack bars, and restaurants with various price points and cuisines.

Caesarea National Park (1:30 PM)

After lunch, we'll continue north to Caesarea National Park, one of Israel's most impressive archaeological sites. This beautifully restored ancient harbor built by King Herod features a Roman theater, hippodrome, and palace ruins. The site offers a fascinating glimpse into Roman-era Israel.

Tiberias

Following our visit to Caesarea, we'll complete our journey north to Tiberias, which will take about an hour. We'll check into our hotel and have time to freshen up before dinner.

Dinner at Decks (8:00 PM)

For dinner, we have reservations at Decks Restaurant, which is known for its grilled meats served on hot skillets over charcoal braziers, and its picturesque location on the Sea of Galilee. Set on the water, this beautiful restaurant is considered one of the best places to eat in Tiberias. After dinner, we'll return to the hotel for the night.

Wednesday, June 24

Galilee, Safed, Rafting & Journey to Jerusalem

Morning – Sea of Galilee

Free time to enjoy the hotel facilities, swim in the Sea of Galilee, or relax by the hotel pool before checking out.

Departure to Safed – Free time for lunch and shopping (11:00 AM)

We'll check out of our hotel at 11:00 AM and head to Safed. Perched high in the mountains of Upper Galilee at 900 meters above sea level, Safed is one of Israel's four holy cities where you'll fall in love with the spiritual feeling while strolling the ancient alleyways. As the birthplace of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), Safed captivates visitors with its mystical atmosphere and rich history dating back centuries.

Upon arrival in Safed, we'll explore the Artists Quarter, where streets are lined with galleries featuring paintings, silverwork, jewelry, glasswork, and artistic Judaica. This area provides ample opportunity for shopping and having lunch at one of the local restaurants.

Tour of Safed (1:30 PM)

We'll visit key sites in the historic Jewish Quarter, including the Ari Ashkenazi Synagogue and the Abuhav Synagogue and participate in a glass blowing demo from a Denver native artist who now lives in the ancient city of Safed.

Departure to Rob Roy (3:00 PM)

After exploring Safed, we'll depart for a relaxing experience on the calm waters of the Jordan River at the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. The canoe ride is approximately 3 km long and takes around 1.5 hours

Departure to Jerusalem (5:00 PM)

As the day winds down and we leave the peaceful waters of the Jordan River behind, we'll embark on the journey south to Jerusalem, the beating heart of Israel. As our bus winds through the beautiful landscapes of the Galilee and into the Judean Hills, you'll notice the terrain gradually changing from lush greenery to the characteristic limestone of Jerusalem. This sacred city has captivated pilgrims, conquerors, and travelers for thousands of years, and soon we'll be walking the same ancient stones where history was made. Upon arrival, the golden glow of Jerusalem stone in the evening light will welcome us to our home for the next few days, where we'll delve into the rich tapestry of religion, cultures, and traditions that make Jerusalem the most extraordinary city in the world.

Upon arrival we will check into our apartments and then enjoy a free evening.

Thursday, June 25

The Old City of Jerusalem

Morning – Choose Your Start

(Option 1)

Meet downstairs in the lobby at 9:30 AM for a leisurely walk to the Old City. We'll stroll through the beautiful Mamilla pedestrian mall where you can grab coffee and pastries at one of the many cafes. This upscale outdoor shopping area connects modern Jerusalem to the Old City and provides a perfect introduction to Jerusalem's blend of ancient and contemporary.

(Option 2)

Meet at the front gates of Aish at 10:30 AM where we will be treated to a private tour of the Aish World Center by Rabbi Dov Ber Cohen. The tour will include access to the breathtaking Aish Rooftop Observation Deck, offering one of the most spectacular panoramic views of the Temple Mount, Western Wall, and the Old City.

The Western Wall

We'll have a meaningful prayer experience in the Hall of Notes led by Rabbi Menachem Lehrfield, followed by a moving visit to the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site.

Lunch & Free Time (12:30 PM)

Explore the Jewish Quarter at your own pace. This area offers numerous kosher restaurants and unique shopping opportunities for Judaica, art, jewelry, and souvenirs. The quarter's charming alleyways and plazas provide a perfect setting to immerse yourself in Jerusalem's special atmosphere.

Walking Tour of The Old City of Jerusalem (2:00 PM)

After lunch, we'll meet in the Rova Square (Jewish Quarter Plaza) to begin our walking tour of ancient Jerusalem. Our guide will lead us along the surrounding walls and through historical sites including the Roman Cardo, the main street of Byzantine Jerusalem now excavated and partially restored. We'll also explore portions of the Four Quarters (Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Armenian) that make up the Old City, each with its own distinct character and heritage.

Evening - Volunteer Opportunity & Dinner at Aish

In the evening, we'll have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful volunteer experience. Afterward, we'll enjoy a special dinner at Aish, where we can reflect on our day's experiences and the profound connections we've made with this extraordinary city in this remarkable setting overlooking the Western Wall.

Friday, June 26

Masada, Dead Sea & Shabbat in Jerusalem

Journey to Masada (9:00 AM)

Meet in the hotel lobby at 9:00 AM as we begin our excursion to Masada, one of Israel's most iconic and historically significant sites. Located in the Judean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea, this ancient fortress-palace built by King Herod offers both dramatic natural beauty and a compelling historical narrative of Jewish resistance against Roman forces. The approximately 1 hour and 20 minute journey from Jerusalem will take us through the stark, mesmerizing landscapes of the Judean Desert.

Masada Exploration

Upon arrival, we'll ascend to the top of the plateau either by cable car or, for the adventurous, via the Snake Path hiking trail. Once on top, we'll explore the remarkably preserved ruins including Herod's palaces, the synagogue, ritual baths, storerooms, and the ingenious water system that allowed desert survival. Our guide will share the powerful story of the Jewish rebels who made their last stand here against the Roman legions in 73 CE, a tale that has become a symbol of Jewish courage and determination.

Dead Sea Experience

After Masada, we'll continue to the shores of the Dead Sea, the lowest point on Earth at 430 meters (1,412 feet) below sea level. Here you'll have the unique opportunity to float effortlessly in the mineral-rich waters with their legendary therapeutic properties. You can also enjoy the experience of applying the famous Dead Sea mud, known for its skin-nourishing benefits. The beach facilities provide showers to freshen up before our return journey.

Return to Jerusalem & Free Time (4:30 PM)

We'll arrive back in Jerusalem with time to rest and prepare for the special experience of Shabbat in the Holy City. Those who wish can join an optional excursion to Machane Yehuda Market (the "Shuk"), where you can witness the lively pre-Shabbat rush as locals purchase fresh challah, flowers, and provisions for the Sabbath meals.

Shabbat Shalom (6:00 PM)

We'll meet in the lobby at 6:00 PM to walk to Aish for a meaningful pre-Shabbat experience including candle lighting and music at Aish. The atmosphere in Jerusalem noticeably transforms as the city slows down and a special tranquility descends.

We'll then head down to the Western Wall (Kotel) for Friday night services. The joyous singing, dancing, and prayers at Judaism's holiest site create an unforgettable spiritual experience.

Our day culminates with a traditional Shabbat dinner at Aish, overlooking the Western Wall Plaza. This shared meal provides a perfect opportunity to reflect on our experiences and the profound significance of welcoming Shabbat in Jerusalem.

Saturday, June 27

Shabbat in Jerusalem

Morning – Day of Rest (Flexible)

Embrace the tranquility of Shabbat in Jerusalem with a much-needed day of rest. Sleep late or take advantage of the special Shabbat atmosphere to visit some of the city's magnificent synagogues that are all within walking distance. Options include the Western Wall for morning prayers, the Great Synagogue with its impressive architecture and beautiful services, or the Italian Synagogue (Conegliano Veneto) with its unique history and ornate interior.

Afternoon – Authentic Shabbat Lunch

Experience the warmth of Jewish hospitality with an authentic Shabbat lunch hosted by local English-speaking families. This special opportunity allows you to participate in traditional Shabbat rituals and enjoy home-cooked kosher cuisine while engaging in meaningful conversation with Jerusalem residents.

As most of the city observes the Sabbath rest with shops and public transportation closed, take this opportunity to stroll through the quiet streets of Jerusalem, where the usual urban bustle gives way to a peaceful ambiance found nowhere else in the world. Join Rabbi Lehrfield for a walking tour of the Yemin Moshe neighborhood, or simply return to the apartments for a Shabbat afternoon nap.

Evening – Third Shabbat Meal (Optional)

For those interested, join us in the lobby to walk together to the Rabinowitz home (Rabbi Lehrfield's grandmother) for Shalosh Seudos, the traditional third Shabbat meal. This light repast of snacks is accompanied by soulful singing, Torah insights, and the special atmosphere that marks the closing hours of Shabbat.

Havdalah Ceremony

Bid farewell to Shabbat with the beautiful Havdalah ceremony at the Rabinowitz home, marking the transition from the sacred time of Shabbat back to the ordinary week.

Saturday Night – Jerusalem Comes Alive

After Shabbat ends, Jerusalem quickly transforms as restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues reopen. Consider attending the "Night Spectacular," an impressive sound and light show projected onto the ancient walls of the Tower of David, bringing Jerusalem's history to life through stunning visual storytelling.

For dinner, you have many appealing options: explore the upscale Mamilla Promenade with its variety of restaurants and stunning views of the Old City walls; experience the energy of Ben Yehuda Street, a lively pedestrian mall filled with shops, street performers, and casual eateries; visit the First Station (Tachana Rishona), a beautifully restored Ottoman-era railway station now housing restaurants and cultural venues; or return to the Machane Yehuda Market (the Shuk), which transforms on Saturday night into a vibrant scene of bars, music, and culinary delights. All of these areas are within walking distance of our apartments and are open late.

Sunday, June 28

A day of remembrance and resilience

Mount Herzl – Israel's National Cemetery (9:00 AM)

We'll depart from the lobby at 9:00 AM to walk to the lightrail station which will take us to Mount Herzl, the final resting place of some of Israel's greatest leaders and heroes.

Our guide will help bring to life the stories of these individuals whose contributions shaped the modern State of Israel.

Yad Vashem – The World Holocaust Remembrance Center

Located on the western slope of Mount Herzl, Yad Vashem offers a deeply moving and educational experience, honoring the memory of six million Jews and countless communities lost.

We'll explore the Holocaust History Museum, the Hall of Names, and the Children's Memorial, as we confront the horrors of the past and reflect on the resilience of the Jewish people.

Lunch & Visit to Shalva – The National Center for Disability Inclusion

After this heavy morning we will depart for Shalva an extraordinary non profit that provides transformative care and inclusion for individuals with disabilities and their families. There, we will eat lunch at the Shalva cafe and tour the facility to gain insight into their groundbreaking approach, which integrates education, therapy, recreation, and vocational training all under one roof.

Volunteer at Yad Elizer

We will then depart for Yad Elizer where we will help pack food for those in need.

Dinner at Pitmaster (8:00 PM)

We'll end our day with an unforgettable dinner experience at **Pitmaster**, located in Cinema City. Known for its theatrical and mouth-watering meat presentations, Pitmaster offers a unique dining experience where the chefs take center stage—literally. Get ready for a fun, flavorful, and fire-filled evening!

Monday, June 29

Bearing witness to tragedy, resilience, and the unbreakable spirit of the Jewish People.

Depart for Shlomit (9:00 AM)

We'll check out of our apartments and begin our final day with a two-hour drive (time to go back to sleep) south to **Shlomit**, a young and growing community near the Egyptian border. This modern pioneering village represents both Israel's future and its fortitude. Upon arrival, we'll meet with local residents to hear firsthand accounts of their experiences on and after October 7, when so many lives were forever changed. Their courage and commitment to rebuilding embody the strength of the Jewish people in the face of unimaginable loss.

We'll enjoy lunch together in the community as we absorb the stories we've heard and express our solidarity and support.

Sites of Heroism and Heartbreak

In the afternoon, we'll visit some of the sites most deeply impacted by the events of October 7.

We'll stand at the site of the Nova music festival and pay tribute to the lives lost. From there, we'll continue to Nahal Oz and Sderot, towns that have long borne the brunt of life on the border and whose residents have demonstrated unimaginable bravery and resilience.

At each stop, we'll hear powerful stories of heroism, community strength, and Jewish unity in the face of the attacks on October 7.

Drive to Tel Aviv & Final Banquet (6:00 PM)

We'll head north to Tel Aviv for a special closing banquet, bringing our journey full circle.

As we gather one last time, we'll celebrate the friendships, growth, and unforgettable experiences shared during our time in Israel. This closing dinner is more than a farewell—it's a charge to carry the spirit of our journey forward, with hearts full of memory, meaning, and mission.