

*From the  
beginning to the  
end, you'll  
enrich your  
faith and  
experience the  
best!*

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## Touching the Past

Throughout the centuries, people have longed to experience the lands of the Bible, enriching their faith and gaining knowledge of the history and culture in which Jesus lived. Somehow, touching the past arouses the faith within us.

The vision of Alpha 2 Omega Travel is to offer something much more than your average tour to Israel and other biblical destinations. We seek to add a personal touch, and be certain that each and every person traveling will feel as if they were part of the family. As part of our daily work routines, we pray for our tour groups, from the beginning to the end of the tour process. We ask God that each person would be richly blessed, with an experience beyond anything they could possibly imagine, and that their daily walk with God would be strengthened. We seek to be a ministry, not simply a business.

We now move into a new season of travel with that same vision, asking that the Lord would richly bless all of those who travel, and that their lives will be profoundly touched by His presence. We continue to offer tours which are Christ centered, with devotions, prayer, and opportunities for Bible study and fellowship. Many tour groups meet and visit with Christian families, which broadens their cultural perspective with regard to Christians around the world.

As a company, we want you to have the best experience possible while traveling with us. That is why we visit every hotel in which our groups will be booked, making a determination if the facilities will be acceptable. We also visit local restaurants to select menus and arrange fair pricing, in order to help reduce costs to our groups. Pricing is negotiated with suppliers, and we continue negotiating to help you receive fair prices. It is expensive to travel, and we want to make sure that you receive the best, without overpaying and hidden costs. We want you to have a worry-free adventure as you learn more about the Bible, and grow in your knowledge of Him.

God has richly blessed those of us at Alpha 2 Omega Travel. We are blessed by serving tour groups each year, and blessed by getting to meet so many wonderful people, and making lasting friendships. We cherish the memories, and the time spent with each group, getting to know each person, and sharing experiences that will only be once in a life time.

As part of our newsletter, we always include a message from one of our tour hosts. In this issue, you will hear from Pr. Chris Tweitmann. He recently hosted a tour to Israel, and will soon be traveling to Israel and Jordan. You'll also hear from several of our tour participants.

If you have never traveled with us, take a look at our website: [alpha2omegatravel.org](http://alpha2omegatravel.org) to see our newest itineraries. We have dates available for groups, as well as existing tours which individuals may join. We look forward to serving you in the future.

In His Peace,

*Linda Miller, M.A., owner and tour operator*

## Message from our tour host

It has been almost a month now since the 15 pilgrims, including me, returned from our pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I think I can speak for all of my companions when I write we are still unpacking the experience. While we have posted and shared pictures and continue to swap stories of our favorite moments from our time together, the full impact of what we encountered and shared continues to reverberate through our daily lives. Once you've traveled to the Holy Land, you just can't read your Bible let alone look at our Father's world the same way you did before.

Our pilgrimage was centered in Jerusalem and Galilee, with two separate day trips to Bethlehem and into the Judean desert. Led by our engaging and knowledgeable guide, a warm and deeply reflective Palestinian Arab Christian, named Jarir, we absorbed all the history and tradition in and behind each sacred site. Whether we found ourselves combing through ancient ruins, huddled together in a church or sailing on waters Jesus once walked upon, we savored the lingering presence of both the Holy Spirit and those fellow pilgrims who came before us to these treasured sites.

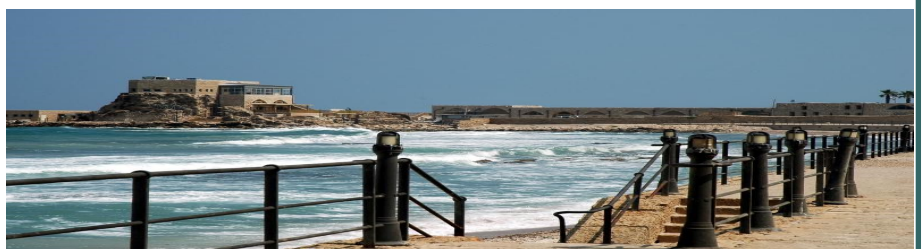
We often talk of God-moments in our lives; these were God-days. Our cup was indeed overflowing at the tables the Lord prepared for us. And we continue to drink from those experiences. To kiss the place of Christ's birth. To reaffirm one's baptism in the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized by John. To hear you are blessed on the mount where Jesus gave his greatest sermon. To pray in the garden where He prayed before offering His life for ours. To follow His footsteps to the Cross and beyond an empty tomb to the promise of eternal life.

Sometimes people ask me: *"Since Christianity is a religion of faith – something spiritual, what's so special about physically journeying to the Holy Land?"* My answer goes something like this. Our faith in Christ is not based on abstract beliefs or doctrines. Our faith – our identities are rooted in historical events, tangible places – the reality of the Incarnation – of a God who is literally with us as well as for us. Making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land only reinforces the truth of my convictions. When I read my Bible or hear God's Word, I cannot close my eyes without picturing the places where our God in Christ chose to reveal Himself, to be fully present among His people.

Despite being home to three different, yet related faiths as well as countless ethnic and cultural variations within those traditions, I witness and am humbled by the peaceful and generous manner in which the majority of the people live together. Even though each group interacts with their faith in their own way, there is deep respect for the beliefs and traditions of others. This is evidenced by the incredible hospitality and sincere affection extended to all persons – even if you are visitor from the West!

Therefore for me, personally, it's not so much the places we visit where I most experience the Lord's love and grace. It is my interactions among the people living in this land. Every time I am privileged to visit the Holy Land – a part of the world ironically associated with so much unrest and tension – I walk away feeling more hopeful about our future.

Pr. Chris Tweitmann, Grace Lutheran Church, Huntington Beach



## Messages from our tour participants

Thank you for your hospitality and your willingness to welcome tourists into your home. It is not a right for others to come into the Holy Land and explore the sacred sites, but a privilege that you have granted to people around the world. Your eagerness and efforts to preserve the culture and sacred practices around you is only a testament of your kind hearts.

I understand that some members of the Western World (specifically media outlets) have done a disservice to Israel by spreading misconceptions or blatant false statements about your country, and I apologize for that. These hateful thoughts and messages often stem from simple ignorance. The idea that travelling to Israel is “unsafe” is simply a general statement. And after spending 12 days in Israel, I can personally attest that the statement does not apply to all. Yes, there might be some who have not felt safe in your country and I recognize tragedies have occurred in recent history, but as for my experience, there was not a moment where there was threat to my safety during the time I was in your hands. From the men at Jerusalem’s Old City gates to walking the city streets at night, a feeling of overwhelming hospitality occurred at all times. One man in particular welcomed my group of 16 people into his restaurant with no notice. I could tell he was caught off guard, but with the help of his wife, an appetizing meal was served. Some members of my group even claimed it was the best food we had eaten during the trip. He would later share that he works relentlessly to support his kids. His kind words and life story was a reminder that the people of Israel are extremely loving.

Thank you for pouring your hearts into these sites and the culture. Before my trip, the immediate draw for me was the culture. The idea that different religions can live in close proximity with little conflict only shows your maturity. There are millions of unwarranted arguments over religion on the internet, conducted by immature people who have no understanding toward others. Your actions are only a testament to yourselves. It is ultimately your personal choice to preserve sites and their value. Your willingness allows others to visualize history and its stories. We're grateful for your passion as it is evident your love for the land is abundant. Some of you dedicate your lives to studying and researching these places and the ability to physically walk on these places is a reality because of you. Some may argue the accuracy or legitimacy of religion or whether or not these stories occurred, but nonetheless, thank you, for dedicating your lives for the education of others.

The Holy Land carries years of history and it is the location of birthright trips for some. For many others around the world, it is where religion becomes a reality. Some live their whole lives in Israel, enduring generations of conflict and face the repercussions daily while others only have the opportunity to visit and are given a glimpse into your lives. You may argue that it can be harsh living in Israel because of the past, but I can say as a visitor that I was warmly welcomed and treated with tender hearts. I walked away from my 10 nights in Israel, even more awe of than ever. I am forever grateful of how you treated me and appreciate your love of the land around you. Thank you.

*Grant Lee, Huntington Beach*



## Messages from our tour participants continued

Planning this trip to Israel had some difficulties for me. First, I didn't have the funds and my parents didn't want me to go to the Middle East with all the tension. They flat out told me no! But the Lord put the trip on my heart and after the first payment being due and meeting in December of 2016, I signed up not knowing what was going to happen and the Lord came through. My passport came on time right before it was time to buy our plane tickets and the trip from fundraising and other avenues was all paid for. I knew during those early months of 2017 that I was meant to go on this trip. I didn't know why I was going, but I knew the Lord wanted me to go.

I didn't grow up in the church and in some moments in my life I didn't think God existed because I thought, how could I go through these horrible moments and this is your plan, Lord. So yes, I rejected him completely, but he had a way and came to me in many different ways. It was in my trials and tests where I remembered the two years I did go to a Lutheran private school, and everything clicked one day when I was asked if I believed in God, in the Bible, and how another group didn't use the Bible and I said, "no the only book to use is the Bible and God exists." From that moment, the Lord led me to Grace Lutheran Church in Huntington Beach and within a month of being there I was baptized. At that moment, I knew who God was and who Jesus was, but my relationship with him was just beginning. I went to church and did what I needed to do and read the Bible, but that wasn't enough. He wanted to be everything to me and he wanted to change me from the inside out. I went to Cursillo and then the Israel trip came up, and I went.

I hate flying and it was my first international trip without my family. I know I wasn't alone on this pilgrimage, but doing something like this without my family was huge. I totally had to put everything in the Lord's hands and that was hard for me. Doubt came in, but I pushed it aside and told myself you're going on this pilgrimage for a reason and the Lord wants to reveal something to you. Through this trip I have finally learned to put my whole trust in the Lord and to stop trying to fix everything myself. He is in control. Also, he is the author of our story and it was hard before to let him control my life. But now going through everything I've been through I now know that the Lord did not leave me and he was there every step of the way guiding me and now I know about love, forgiveness, and trust. Also, from my experiences I'm able to help children pull through their own adversity and teach them that forgiveness and love is key, but also having a relationship with the Lord is what will get you through life's obstacles. He also knows what we need and when we need it, don't doubt him. If he brings you to it, he will bring you through it; have faith and trust him, because he knows what he's doing. Now I'm more confident, at rest and peace, and I'm excited to work hard to learn with the Lord as he directs my steps. I hope my testimony helps you in your decision to follow the Lord to the Holy Land.

Thank you to Linda, Pastor Chris, Lisa, Emad, Jarir, and everyone who went on this pilgrimage with me. It is an experience and memory I'll have for a lifetime.

*Brittany Jolivette, Grace Lutheran Church, Huntington Beach*





First off, let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for an absolutely life changing adventure. I didn't know what to expect and I was praying for Jesus to reveal His reasons for me being on the trip. I knew I wanted to walk where Jesus walked, but being there was completely surreal. While there are many places where archeology and history can likely assume Jesus was, the one place that proved to be the most memorable to me was at the Church of the Primacy of Peter. Most of the other sites we went to were ornately decorated, but this church was simple and quiet. I was able to stand on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and imagine the whole scene playing out. By chance, there was a boat about a hundred yards away, and I could just picture Peter jumping out of it and running to where Jesus was standing. While I've always been told there's nothing I can do that will keep me from being loved and forgiven, seeing the spot where Jesus redeemed Peter grounded that reality. Thank you again for putting together an itinerary that will not only change the way I read the Bible, but one that profoundly strengthened my faith and relationship with Jesus. I am forever grateful.

*Jean Nosco, Grace Lutheran Church, Huntington Beach*

Our pilgrimage to the Holy Land was more than just a trip. From the Shepherd's Field in Bethlehem to the view of the city walls of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, walking in the land of the Fathers of our Faith and the very places where Jesus himself spent his earthly years has changed the way that I read the Bible. As we walked, I thought of the scriptures born in these places. Now that I am home, the memories add understanding and context to my study. It was incredible to visit the place of Jesus' birth, walk on the steps of the temple where he taught as young man and follow his steps through the Old City on the Via Dolorosa to the place of Crucifixion and to be reminded that the grave is empty. To see the Church of St Peter Gallicantu marking the place where Peter denied Christ and later to see the Church of the Primacy of Peter where Peter was redeemed. Visiting these places make the words jump of the pages when reading scripture.

Easily one of the best parts of this trip was our incredible guide! Jarir is extremely knowledgeable and kindhearted. He took a group of 16 young Americans and connected with them as he taught and led us from the Old City of Jerusalem to Judean Wilderness to Galilee. He taught more than just the history, he brought the past to life with his reflections and depth. We have been home now for nearly a month and the reflections from his teaching are still discussed nearly every day.

Spending time in the Old City of Jerusalem was a special joy to me. We walked the streets with our guide during the day and in the evenings ventured out into the city. Our time there served to change the way I think about the relationship between the sacred and the ordinary. I was struck by the images of people living their lives in the shadows and courtyards of Holy Places. Seeing local men and women shop and commute to work and children play while the pilgrims from three major religions come to visit and worship brings a unique sacredness to the place.

Thinking back on the trip, one of the things that will sit with me were the depictions of the Madonna and Child in the Church of the Annunciation. Sent from nations throughout the world, they are rich representations of each nation's culture and people demonstrating both the diversity and similarities we share in our faith.

The pilgrimage to Israel is an experience that will continue to shape my faith long after stepping off of the plane back home. I loved the culture and the history of the places that we visited, looking at ruins, religious artifacts, and mosaic floors built by people who share the same faith, but lived hundreds of years ago, gives a weight to the belief that I hold. Looking at my faith through the lens of history offered me a shift in perspective. Seeing the marks left on the land by people who came before me, it became clear my faith is not a personal choice that I made to believe in or accept, but rather a joining of a greater community of faith that is not bound by nationality, culture, or race. I feel like I could truly see our God's loving, sacrificial, and relentless pursuit for the hearts of his people.

*Lisa Bari, Grace Lutheran Church, Huntington Beach*

## Messages from our tour participants continued

I visited Israel with Linda from Alpha and Omega Travel Agency this past summer. I have done a fair amount of traveling and was, at first, honestly turned off by the idea of a travel agent. Traveling with Alpha and Omega meant that I was able to be extremely present. She has made this trip so many times she knew exactly how to avoid many possible altercations and made sure to keep our group moving so that we could see as many of Israel's gems as possible!

Linda has spent so much time studying Israel's culture and history. She was eager to share her knowledge and experiences with my team, which is notable because we're a bunch of obnoxious young adults. This is more than just a job to Linda, it is her life passion. It is inspiring to learn from someone who has invested so much in the land.

I can not thank Linda enough for her loving spirit and hard work. I truly hope that I have the opportunity to travel with her again, and I hope you do too!

*Molly Svoboda, St. Louis, MO*

## Tables at the time of Jesus

One of the earliest understandings of the word "table" was a leather mat, which was placed on the floor. In Jesus' time, tables were of several shapes. In the Greek New Testament, one type of table was mentioned in Matthew 15:27, *trapeza*, which meant it had four sides. Many times the word *triclinium* was used to mean that diners were reclining at a three-sided table, comparable to the height of a modern coffee table, with low couches. This was common in the Roman world. Tables were made of stone or wood, and contained two parts; base and eating surface. After the meal, the entire eating surface piece would be taken outside and shaken to remove crumbs.



## Safety

Safety in a foreign country is of great concern to most people. Many people are not comfortable traveling to a place with which they are unfamiliar, and may perhaps have heard that it is unsafe. It is sometimes easier to avoid visiting a country you have always wanted to visit.

Your safety is our concern. Tour operators will always have the most current information on the safety in each country, and any reports that are issued. Security issues in Israel and other countries are many times overly exaggerated. It is, moreover, in all probability, safer than where you live.

Rest assured that millions of people travel to Israel and the Middle East every year, without any safety or security issues.

ALPHA 2 OMEGA  
TRAVEL

P.O. Box 402128  
Hesperia, CA 92340

Phone: 760-985-3540  
linda@alpha2omegatravel.com

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May 29-June 7, June 5-14, June 12-21, June 19-28, June 26-July 5, July 3-12  
August 28-September 6, October 2-11, October 9-18, October 16-25  
October 23-November 1, October 30-November 8, November 6-15

**Host a tour—Reduced—Israel, January and February 2019**

January 8-17, January 15-24, January 22-31, January 29-February 7, February 5-14, February 12-21

Complete package starting at \$2999.00 per person  
Land only package starting at \$1999.00 per person

**Host a tour - Custom Pricing 2019**

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