

ALPHA 2 OMEGA
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*From the
beginning to the
end, you'll
enrich your
faith and
experience the
best!*

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A2Ω Travel Tribune

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*Alpha 2 Omega Travel wishes you a blessed and joyous
Easter Season!
Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!
Alleluia!*

A message from our tour host....



As the Gospel of Mark recalls the Resurrection of Jesus, the mysterious young man at the tomb tells the women: “But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you....” (Mark 16.7). This is the promise of Easter....that the risen Lord is always there ahead of us! And perhaps this is the best way to approach our visit to the Holy Land! I’m sure your itinerary will include stops at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, the synagogue in Capernaum, and probably an excursion to the Dead Sea and Herod’s fortress of Masada. Wonderful. These sites are definitely a must see and your trip to the Holy Land wouldn’t be complete without the opportunity to walk in these amazing places. There really is no better Christian Education experience than traveling in the Holy Land with your Bible by your side and experiencing the land itself as what many refer to as a ‘fifth Gospel.’ And I have no doubt that you will encounter Jesus in these places.

But I want to call your attention to those ‘living stones’ that won’t be on your itinerary. These are the people who call this wonderful place home. I encourage you to see them as a part of your pilgrimage experience and to approach them with love and respect. We are, after all, guests in their land. The shop keeper in the old city who is selling spices that you can take home and add to your rice or an ancient oil lamp that connects you to the history of the places you visit. What is his/her name? How long have they lived there? Or the little boy who precociously is trying to get you to buy a wooden camel or scarf; even if you aren’t going to buy anything, perhaps a playful smile might be better than acting aloof. Would you like to take a picture of someone? Ask for their permission. And if they are there trying to make a living, an offer to give a small sum in exchange is often a common courtesy. If you have the opportunity, try to learn about the different worshipping communities, cultures, their customs, and beliefs. Take the time to see the vibrancy of not only the past stories, but the current narratives as well. Watch the local children run and play—how similar are they to your own kids? Perhaps, it is especially in the people where we see the spirit of the Risen Christ most clearly.



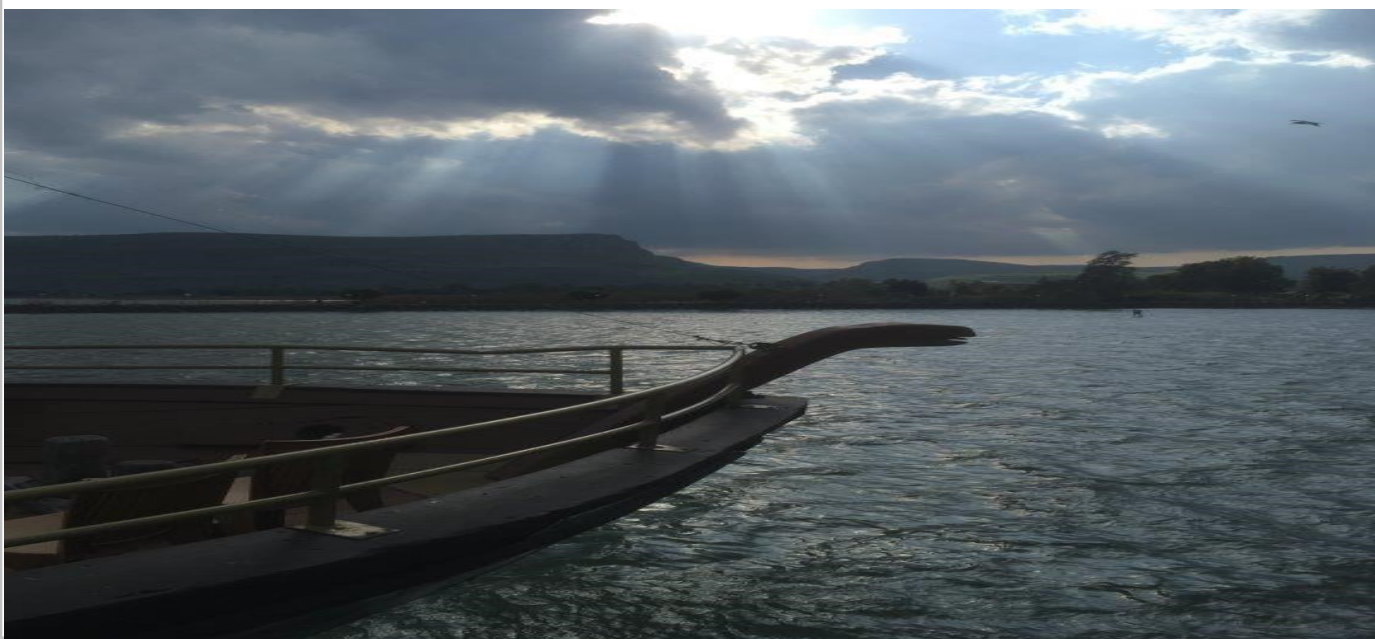
So, you’re going to the Holy Land! Great! Remember to be watchful for the risen Lord who goes before you; and who might just be found in the people along the way!

Pastor Jeff Frohner, Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, San Clemente, CA
Alpha 2 Omega Travel, February 2020

Messages from our tour participants....

I wanted to thank you for a great trip, filled with fantastic memories. You could not have provided us with anything better than what we received. You thought of everything. Our bus driver was on point! He would maneuver that bus in and out of places that were incredible. Our guide was VERY knowledgeable and definitely knew how to handle any and every situation that we encountered. He was very accommodating even walking me through town at night to find the pharmacy. It was interesting to me that the things I thought would be the most memorable and important didn't turn out that way. Everyday Pr. Jeff would ask what our favorite thing was and it was everything. We could not pick out one thing. One of my favorite places was the Shepard's Field Church. I had never even heard of it before we were there. I loved having communion on the Sea of Galilee in the boat. It was a great experience. I always felt safe. Thank you again,
M'Liz Kelly, San Clemente, CA

It was a pleasure travelling with you and your team. The guide's knowledge of the area was amazing and the driver's driving was also amazing. I can't imagine driving anything in those little towns, let alone a bus. I enjoyed all the sights we went to especially Masada, Herodium, Mount Gerizim, Ceasarea, and of course, the Temple Mount. To be honest though, a lot of it is still a big blur until I start organizing my pictures with the itinerary. But I have to say, I enjoyed being out in the country the most, seeing the plush rolling hills on our way north to Tiberius. I loved Jericho and both places along the Jordon river. I have great scenic pictures from the various mountain tops, but my favorite photo is one that Roberta took on the Sea of Galilee. I think the only way to visit the Holy Land is the way you organized it. We could have never seen all these places in such a short time by ourselves. We didn't have to worry about where to eat, drive etc., and everything was taken care of. I also enjoyed the camaraderie of our fellow parishioners, some who I've never met before. It was a treat to sit and talk to all of them during breakfast and dinner. We met a lot of new friends as a result of this trip. Thank you,
Bob Ipema, San Clemente, CA



A message from our tour participant....



I think I've started and deleted this post about five or six separate times over the past couple of days. This trip was momentous and beyond words. There were places that made my jaw drop and I was completely speechless. And trust me, getting a 25 year old girl to shut up is no small feat. Our flights were painful, as expected. We arrived at Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv exhausted, dehydrated, and stiff. Despite my body telling me to slow down, my mind was buzzing with anticipation, filling with dreams of ancient parables, the smells of cardamom and thyme, the taste of dates and hummus. We walked through a part of the airport where it says, "Welcome to Israel," the pathway lined with limestone blocks as long as I am tall. It started to dawn on me where I was, and I fought the urge to spin around and dance through passport control (It was past midnight local time). It did not matter just how tired I was or how groggy my body was, I was absolutely thrilled. None of us slept too much that night.

I woke up the next morning and took a shower. While brushing my hair, I looked out onto the beautiful patio that was below the room that Lois and I were sharing. The sun was out, the birds were chirping, and flying in beautiful pairs. I silently smiled to myself, my mind soaring through Jerusalem with the birds, until my stomach brought me back to reality. I grabbed my jacket and purse, dashed down the stairs to breakfast. The hotel we stayed at in Jerusalem was Kosher, which meant dairy at breakfast, but not at dinner, and Shabbat on Friday evenings. I grabbed coffee, cereal, and an orange and sat with the group.

That first day we went to Mt. Scopus for a view of the city from above, next to the Mount of Olives. I was in absolute awe as our tour guide, Shadi, began explaining both the political and biblical history of what we saw. At one point, I took my ear bud out and just stared into the distance at this city that had shaped humanity. This seemingly small city with traditions, rituals, and structures so old and renowned that it could bring someone to their knees even two thousand years later. I won't bore you with a day by day playback – everything is old, everything is breathtaking, everything is so wild I couldn't possibly process all of it within a two-week span. We went into Bethlehem during our trip, which has been divided by a concrete wall built by the Israeli government. It is considered a Palestinian town. Tourists, especially Americans, can go in and out of the city through the check points as they please. Without being too political, I think that walls are sad, no matter the reason, no matter the place, and no matter the time period. They are a sign of division, whether good or bad. With that said, this specific wall has become a place for political graffiti, the boring concrete covered in colors, drawings, and words in multiple languages. This small town where my Savior was born is still so important. As we went between Israeli and Palestinian territories, one of the places we saw was Herodian, King Herod the Great's grave site. Given his political and religious division during his reign, his tomb was sacked not long after he was buried. Even still, the effort and splendor of his reign still resonates. The grandeur, size, and architectural details are so cool. The view from the top is not bad either. Walking down the small mountain on which it was built, we saw a cat that followed us around, a shepherd with his flock, and working dogs. The historic parallel was wild – this great tomb that was completed in 4 BCE, when Herod died, and this young Palestinian shepherd dutifully watching his flock of sheep as they grazed the new pasture, fresh from the winter rains existing in this place, combining two worlds, one so distant and one ever so present.

In Bethlehem we dined at a Palestinian restaurant, with the homemade bread, hummus, tzatziki, cucumber and tomato salad, among other sides and dishes. We watched young dancers and later joined them; holding hands, clapping, and dancing with complete strangers in a joyful moment despite language barriers. One of the dancers and I clasped hands and spun around laughing even though she does not speak a lot of English and I do not speak Arabic, but in that moment it did not matter. We were just young girls laughing and dancing as if we had been friends for years; we hugged after her performance and we had understood each other without the need for words. During our trip we were celebrating two February birthdays and the restaurant brought out a cake and sang “Happy Birthday” much to the embarrassment and delight of the two people.

One of the places I was looking forward to the most was Masada, considered to be one of the most heroic standings of the ancient Hebrews. Masada is on a kind of plateaued mountain, sort of like a mesa in New Mexico. The Romans had surrounded the mountain fortress in the middle of the desert and the Jews had to make a choice: commit suicide or become slaves. Given the persecution of the Jews today, I believe that they made a brave and valiant choice to die rather than become slaves to the Romans. The archaeological site is crazy as it is mostly untouched and they are still working on excavations. They have an older Rabbi there transcribing a Torah there. If you ask, he will write your name in Hebrew with a heart, including your spouse if you are married. I felt it was quite symbolic, the ancient Jews had taken their last stand and they probably thought that their legacy would be taken to their grave. However, their story is told with grace while a teacher within the Jewish religion silently writes their holy book and greets tourists from all over the world with a gentle smile.

Traveling through the desert, we had to stop at one of the gas stations, buy snacks, and ride a camel. They are tall and wobbly in comparison to a horse, but stable and gentle at the same time. It was quite a view, overlooking the Judean desert, the Dead Sea, and rows of date palms near Jericho – a terrain that probably had not changed very much. Naturally we went floating in the Dead Sea. As someone who grew up by the ocean and sand, it was strange. It was mud and slime instead of sand, and the salt level is so high, you cannot stay in longer than twenty minutes. We floated nonetheless, and mom and I celebrated with a beer from the lowest [in elevation] bar in the world.

The other two places I was looking forward to the most were close together and in the same morning: Temple Mount/Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall. The Temple Mount/Dome of the Rock is the place where Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe that God saved Isaac from being sacrificed by Abraham, his father. The Muslims built Dome of the Rock in 691 CE. Not 1691 CE, 6-9-1.

Architecturally and historically speaking the structure itself is stunning. It is symmetrical, with calligraphy from the Qur'an, beautiful blues, yellows, and greens, all topped with a dome covered in gold. The blues from the tiles nearly rivaled the blue tone of the sky itself. It has become a symbol for both Islam and the city of Jerusalem. The Western Wall (or the Wailing Wall) is not far from The Temple Mount. It the original part of the second Jewish temple that Herod had built, the first one built by King Solomon had been destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar II after his siege of Jerusalem. The second temple was THE temple for the Jews. It was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, but this wall and some of the main steps remain. This wall has become a place of quiet prayer and reflection for millions of people. Some place written prayers within the mortar and grout between the massive stones, some simply pray through spoken word. I approached it twice, the first time just my hands were against the cold stone as I tried to pray, but I could not seem to get my mind fully around what I was seeing. I felt like I had failed both God and myself. Wasn't I supposed to feel something? Shouldn't I feel different? I saw an opening and I quietly told my mom I was going to go back. I stood “toe to toe” with the original wall where millions of people and prayers had come forth. (continued on

A message from our tour participant....



I took a deep breath, rolled up my sleeves, and placed my bare hands and forehead against the wall and closed my eyes. The stones have been worn smooth and soft from other people doing the same as I was. Next to me a young Jewish woman was singing a prayer in Hebrew just loud enough that someone next to her could hear. I finished my own prayer and as I listened to her, I felt the weight of something ancient within me, a connection to a people who had faced oppression and torment over thousands of years, a part of me understood this pain, I could feel it in my bones. The torture, banishment, and imprisonment of early Christians, of Christ Himself, hung heavy around me as I began to quietly sob, tears streaming down my cheeks, my hands unwilling to leave the stone to wipe them away. The young woman and I locked eyes when she had finished singing and we both nodded, a mutual understanding of centuries full of tradition, full of pain and human greed, but also full of love and kindness all coming together within that single wall. If walls could talk, this one could fill a library.

Our home base was Jerusalem for most of the trip, going through the desert, below sea level, into Jericho, seeing the Judean wilderness, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Mount of Olives and His Palm Sunday journey. I even took a selfie with a camel in the oldest city on the planet. I saw the country of Jordan from across the Jordan River. Like I said, it was wild.

We continued north to Tiberias, near Capernaum along the Sea of Galilee. Exploring Capernaum was enlightening because it was considered Jesus' hometown, where he would have hung out with his friends, where he would have prayed, been human. Just like at Herodian, we saw cats everywhere and Capernaum was no exception. My father coined the term "Capernacat."™ It was humbling to see the Sea of Galilee, the Golan Heights, and to be in this place where Jesus had walked all at once. We began the conclusion of our trip in the same way you conclude a Lutheran church service, with Communion. We were on a boat on the Sea of Galilee, the sun peeking through the clouds in such a way that you just knew in your heart God was there. Pastor Jeff was preparing the table with Shadi, our tour guide, who is a Palestinian Christian from Nazareth. He had remained with us during our entire tour, giving us insight into life in Israel. We broke the bread and shared the wine. After, I watched the water from the bow looking upon the terrain that had not changed much since Christ had calmed the storm. This whole trip was life changing and there is so much more I wish I could share, but this post would soon become an entire book; maybe someday. I would gladly go back to Israel, I could have stayed longer and explored.

If you ever get the opportunity to go, seize it. I can say without hesitation it is the most remarkable place I have ever been to in my lifetime. The combination of old and new is an exceptional reminder that history must never be forgotten, but in doing so, we as humanity, must also remember to live.

KC Kelly, Denton TX

Travel Tips

Money Concerns

Debit/credit cards are used in the Middle East. Contact your bank prior to leaving and give them the dates of your travel plans. Please remember to request an international number from your credit card or bank when you give them your travel dates. It makes it much easier to contact them, in the event that you need to do so.

In most cases, when you pay in U.S. dollars, you will receive back foreign currency. It is wise to carry quite a few smaller bills; \$1's, 5's, and 10's. You can use these for small purchases. Money belts or pouches are highly recommended to keep passports and money secure.

Passports

Make sure to have a valid passport, with a date of at least six months remaining from return date of the tour. If you do not have a passport, apply for one immediately. You can obtain information on applying for or renewing your passport at <http://travel.state.gov>.



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, 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.



Messages from our tour participants....

The trip to the Holy Land was a great experience. It was a trip of a lifetime for me. I learned a lot about the history, culture, religion, and the food was great. One thing I enjoyed seeing were all the fat happy cats around the area. I highly recommend this trip and have already told my friends and family about it.

Carly Pridham, San Jose, CA

I enjoyed the trip tremendously. I had no expectations. I enjoy traveling and when Carly asked if I would be her traveling companion, I was thrilled. I had not researched Israel, so other than we were going to the Holy Land, I had no background on all that that involved. It was inspiring that we actually visited and touched many of the Holy places of the Bible. Our guide and Pastor Jeff gave two perspectives of the places we visited. Both were very knowledgeable. It was awe inspiring. The trip was both inspirational and educational. The ruins were fantastic. It seems impossible that the level of the ancient architecture could have been achieved without modern machinery. We had many experiences such as floating in the Dead Sea, baptizing in the River Jordan, sailing on the Sea of Galilee, and experiencing beautiful sunsets. Shopping trips and visiting a brewery were added perks. The hotels, the bus, the food, and companionship were all great. I am so glad I went.

Judy Servaites, Dayton OH



Upcoming Tours

During the next few months, we are actively seeking tour hosts for the 2021-2022 tour seasons. If you have hosted a tour in the past, please give us a call to schedule dates for your next tour. If you haven't traveled with us before or haven't traveled to the Holy Lands, we welcome the opportunity to speak with you. You can contact our office directly at (760) 985-3540 or email us at office@alpha2omegatravel.org.

Tours 2020-2022

Host a tour - Discounted - Israel, January and February 2021

Jan 4-13, Jan 12-21, Jan 20-29, Jan 28-Feb 6, Feb 8-17

Complete package \$3399.00 per person Land only package \$2599.00 per person

Host a tour - Israel - Custom Pricing 2021

Apr 14-24, Apr 22-May 2, May 3-13, May 12-22, May 24-Jun 3

Jun 2-12, Jun 14-24, Jun 23-Jul 3, Jul 5-15, Jul 15-25, Aug 30-Sept 9

Oct 20-30, Nov 1-11, Nov 10-20

Host a tour - Discounted - Israel, January and February 2022

Jan 4-13, Jan 11-20, Jan 18-27, Jan 25-Feb 3, Feb 1-10

Complete package \$3399.00 per person Land only package \$2599.00 per person

Host a tour - Israel - Custom Pricing 2022

Feb 7-17, Feb 15-25, Feb 28-Mar 10, Mar 8-18, Mar 16-26, Mar 28-Apr 7, Apr 18-28, Apr 26-May 6

May 4-14, May 11-21, May 23-June 2, May 21-Jun 10, Jun 8-18, Jun 20-30, Jun 29-Jul 9, Jul 11-21

Aug 29-Sept 8, Sept 6-16, Sept 14-24, Oct 17-27, Oct 25-Nov 4

Nov 2-12, Nov 9-19, Nov 16-26, Nov 23-Dec 3

Join an existing tour

Israel, July 13-23, 2020 \$3952.00

Rome-Athens-Turkey, September 9-23, 2020 \$4653.00

Israel, October 18-29, 2020 \$4159.00

Israel, November 3-14, 2020 \$3996.00

Israel, March 4-15, 2021 \$3899.00

Israel, March 15-26, 2021- prices coming soon!

Israel, April 28-May 9, 2021 - \$3450.00

Israel, September 27-October 7, 2021 - \$3650.00

Israel, October 10-22, 2021 \$4299.00

Israel, October 20-30, 2021- prices coming soon!

Israel and Jordan, October 2021- dates and prices coming soon!

Israel, Jordan, and Turkey, November 2021- dates and prices coming soon!

Israel and Jordan, February 28-March 11, 2022—prices coming soon!

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