



Jewish Federation
OF GREATER HOUSTON



Jewish Federation of Greater Houston Community Mission*

***Tentative Program subject to change**

November 7-14, 2022

The J² way

J² crafts journeys of inspiration, education, and Jewish connections to Israel and worldwide. We are guided by a simple but powerful concept. No two trips are the same; each experience should be personal, meaningful, and backed by superb service. Travel is not just about the places you visit, but the connections you make along the way.

PASSIONATE **JEWISH JOURNEYS**
Educational trips, curated expeditions & missions.

NEW YORK | TEL AVIV



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Program **Outline**

01: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7 | OPENING EVENT | TLV

- ◇ Check in at Tel Aviv Hilton Hotel.
- ◇ **Welcome cocktail** and **dinner** at the hotel to begin our journey. Welcome remarks by chairs **Russ and Leslie Robinson**.

02: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8 | TRACK DAY #1 | TLV

- ◇ **"Israel Today, almost 75"** Briefing by **David Siegal**, former Israeli Consul General.

See sample track components

ALL TRACKS:

- ◇ **Festive dinner** at **Riverside** on the banks of the Yarkon River.

03: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9 | TRACK DAY #2 | TLV

See sample track components

ALL TRACKS:

- ◇ **Free evening** to enjoy Tel Aviv's culinary scene
- ◇ **Optional:** Late night Tel Aviv bar tour.

04: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10 | TRACK DAY #3 | TLV

- ◇ "Our response to the crisis in **Ukraine**" Briefing by senior Jewish Agency and JDC officials.

See sample track components

ALL TRACKS:

- ◇ **Mission party**



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05: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11 | ELECTIVES | JLM

- ◇ Checkout from the hotel

You will preselect your choice from the following:

YAD VASHEM

- ◇ Visit **Yad Vashem**, the national memorial to the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust, an essential emotional and educational experience. Your tour will include: The Avenue of the Righteous, The Historical Museum, and The Children's Memorial, commemorating the 1.5 million children lost during the Holocaust.
- ◇ Continue to **Mount Herzl**, Israel's national cemetery where the leaders of the nation are buried.

CITY OF DAVID

- ◇ Explore the **City of David**, the core of ancient Jerusalem, and learn how the city was administered during the First Temple period
- ◇ Join the Temple Mount **Sifting Project** and help reveal the secrets of the Temple Mount. A chance to touch a part of history through sifting and sorting artifacts.

ISRAEL MUSEUM

- ◇ Visit the **Israel Museum** with its fascinating collections that range from archaeology and the Dead Sea scrolls to Jewish life and art, and from an open-air model of Jerusalem during the Second Temple to contemporary Israeli and European art, and an amazing **sculpture garden**.

DIG AT BEIT GUVRIN

- ◇ Get in touch with the land and history of Israel during an archaeological dig at the **Beit Guvrin Caves**. Uncover pottery from the Hellenistic period, 2300 years ago before crawling through the Maresha Cave Labyrinth, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



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HIDDEN GEMS

- ◇ Discover **Hanevi'im Street** (Street of the Prophets) and learn about the extraordinary people that lived in one of Jerusalem's first modern neighborhoods. Visit the homes of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the reviver of the Hebrew language, and artist Anna Ticho, view the Ethiopian Church, the Italian Hospital and other interesting buildings
- ◇ Visit The **Italian Museum** and learn about this less known but fascinating Jewish community.

ALL ELECTIVES:

- ◇ Check into the hotel with time to prepare for Shabbat.
- ◇ **Pre-Kabbalat Shabbat** ceremony
- ◇ Proceed to the **Kotel** for personal reflection as we welcome Shabbat.
- ◇ **Festive Shabbat dinner** at Beit Shmuel overlooking the walls of the Old City with guests and **A Capella singing group**



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06: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12 | OPTIONAL TOURING | JLM

◇ (Optional) Shabbat morning services at a local synagogue.

Options include:

- **Walking tour** to the heart of Jewish life, history, and holiness, The **Old City's Jewish Quarter**, ancient ramparts, climbing to the rooftops for a bird's-eye view of the diverse, yet closely bound, communities of the Old City, walking through the Cardo, the main street of Roman-ruled Jerusalem.
- **Walking tour** to the **Tower of David Museum** where the story of Jerusalem is told with exciting exhibitions and in an amazing location.
- Visit the **Israel Museum** with its fascinating collections that range from archaeology and the Dead Sea scrolls to Jewish life and art, and from an open-air model of Jerusalem during the Second Temple to contemporary Israeli and European art.

All:

- ◇ Return to the hotel
- ◇ **Bus conversations** -What we've seen and felt during our journey: Share the experiences and discoveries that have inspired you
- ◇ **Three Stars in the Jerusalem Sky:** At nightfall, we will mark the end of a special Shabbat with a communal **Havdallah** ceremony.
The President of Israel, Isaac Herzog has been invited to join us.
- ◇ **Optional** late-night tour of the **Western Wall Tunnel**, the underground continuation of the Kotel, and examine important archaeological discoveries that are revising our understanding of daily life in ancient Jerusalem.



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07: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13 | ELECTIVES | JLM

You will preselect your choice from the following:

- ◇ **Optional** morning walk (or run) on the disused railroad tracks.
- ◇ **Guest speaker:** "Challenges and hopes for the future" **Jeff Swartz** Co-Founder and Board Chairman of Maoz, and former CEO of Timberland.

MASADA

- ◇ **The Last Stand:** Climb via the Snake Path OR take the cable car to the top of **Masada** with its extraordinary views and fascinating archaeological remains. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is where Jewish rebels are believed to have made their final attempt to resist Roman invaders (c 74 CE). We'll learn about Masada's importance as a symbol of Jewish defense and discuss its influence on modern Israel.
- ◇ Float into happiness at the **Dead Sea**. Not much can live or swim in what is the saltiest piece of water in the world, nine times saltier than the ocean, but the weightless feeling of floating is great fun.

HERODIAN (and wine)

- ◇ Visit **Herodian**, where King Herod built an impressive palace-fortress and where he is believed to have been buried in 4 BCE. This archaeological Site is the ideal place to explore the clout and character of one of ancient Israel's most influential and polarizing figures.
- ◇ **Wine tasting** at a local winery including a discussion on the rapid rise in the quantity and quality of Israeli wine.

BEGIN HERITAGE AND MARKET

- ◇ Visit the **Begin Museum**, an experiential multimedia exhibit telling the story of the one of the most important chapters of the State of Israel through the life of the late Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.
- ◇ Taste, drink, and learn at the **Mahane Yehuda** open-air Shuk (market) as we sample food and sweets from all over the Mediterranean and the Middle East and try to figure out what is Israeli about Israeli food. We will also take a special look into the secret of Israeli spices.



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BETHLEHEM

- ◇ Explore Bethlehem, a Palestinian town on the **West Bank** and, as the birthplace of Jesus. We'll also examine contemporary life in Bethlehem. See how the Palestinian conflict with Israel impacts the local population and find out why, in such a religiously significant town, the size of the local Christian community is dwindling.
- ◇ A Message on the Wall: The famous, if anonymous, British street artist known as **Banksy** first came to Bethlehem in 2005. See murals and messages that he and other artists have painted on the Security Barrier that separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem.
- ◇ My Home in Gush Etzion: Dialogue with **Oded Ravivi**, Mayor of Efrat.

LIGHT RAIL

- ◇ 1 City, 2 States, 3 Religions, and 4 Tribes: Take a ride on **Jerusalem's light rail** and experience the mosaic of the Jerusalem population. As we travel through Jerusalem's diverse neighborhoods, including those populated by Hareidim and Arabs, we'll note the difference between East and West Jerusalem and the ongoing struggles between the city's different communities. Discuss whether Jerusalem is divided, as former President Ruby Rivlin has suggested, into four "tribes."

All Electives:

- ◇ Return to hotel with time for last minute shopping and packing.
- ◇ **Farewell dinner** at the hotel.

08: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14 | UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN | FLIGHT

- ◇ Check out.
- ◇ Transfers to Ben Gurion International Airport



Sample Track Components

TAPESTRY FOR THE SENSES

Seeing and appreciating art, tasting food, hearing music, dancing (maybe...) and immersing yourself in Israeli culture- that's what you can expect on this track.

Sample components include:

- ◇ See the latest **Street Art** and learn what it reveals about life, ideas and ideology in Israel's cultural capital.
- ◇ A showcase of Israeli fashion and jewelry design, curated by a fashion expert at **Israeli Fashion Today**.
- ◇ One of the galleries we will visit during this track will be the **Braverman Gallery**, a leading member of the contemporary art scene in Tel Aviv, specializing in video-art and installations.
- ◇ **ANU - Museum of the Jewish People**, dedicated to telling their story and representing their diversity, highlighting the cultural riches of a variety of communities in different periods of history until the present day.
- ◇ **Middle Eastern cooking workshop** with chefs at Tel Aviv's **Cooking Studio**.
- ◇ Israeli beer is becoming famous, one of the best brands is **Jem's** based in **Petach Tikva**, Houston's new sister city. We'll visit the **brewery** and taste what it's all about.
- ◇ Meet winemakers and sample some of the best new Israeli wine at a **winery**.



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ISRAEL IN MOTION

If you prefer outdoors to indoors, if you care about the environment and about your own wellness this track will be good for you.

Sample components include:

- ◇ **Yoga Session** on the beach.
- ◇ On board a specially designed ship, meet **Arik Rosenblum** - executive director of **EcoOcean**, a non-profit Israeli organization created to empower people to care for the marine and coastal environment of Israel by means of research, education and civic engagement.
- ◇ A hands-on activity at the educational agriculture farm at **Petach Tikvah**
- ◇ Bike or hike at source of the **Yarkon River**, once one of Israel's most polluted rivers, but community action has worked to make a significant change.
- ◇ Hike in **Nahal Katlav** in the Judean Hills working your way down the mountain from the Bar Giora Ridge to the Sorek Stream through trees, reeds, and archaeological ruins.
- ◇ Ride **ATV's** along the famous **Burma Road**, which was hastily constructed during the War of Independence in an attempt to break the siege of Jerusalem.
- ◇ **Khan Sha'ar HaGai**, is a new national memorial site situated on the main road connecting the lowlands with Jerusalem, dedicated to those who constructed this passage to Jerusalem.
- ◇ Israeli beer is becoming famous, one of the best brands is **Jem's** based in **Petach Tikva**, Houston's new sister city. We'll visit the **brewery** and taste what it's all about.
- ◇ **ANU - Museum of the Jewish People**, dedicated to telling their story and representing their diversity, highlighting the cultural riches of a variety of communities in different periods of history until the present day.
- ◇ Experience a game of **wheelchair basketball**. Our team will include adults and children with disabilities who are receiving life-changing support and opportunities at the **Accessible Health Zone**.



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20 YEARS LATER

If you haven't visited Israel in the last 20 years, and you're interested in seeing two decades of change and progress, this track is for you.

Sample components include:

- ◇ **The Israeli Innovation Center** which celebrates the people and companies that are making Israel the "innovation nation." Located at the **Peres Center for Peace and Innovation**, it has continually updated, high-tech exhibits on everything from artificial intelligence to the latest developments in water use.
- ◇ Looking ahead: **Petach Tikvah's newest projects** and their plans for the next 20 years.
- ◇ The **Shafdan Wastewater** Treatment Plant, which reclaims water for agriculture from cities in the Greater Tel Aviv region is one of the largest and most advanced facilities of its kind in the world.
- ◇ **Meitarim** at Nacham, near Beit Shemesh, part of a nationwide network of pluralistic schools bringing Jewish-Israeli diverse populations to study in an inclusive framework.
- ◇ Join the volunteer organization **Leket** Israel for a **hands-on activity**, we'll be harvesting fruits and vegetables that will be donated to the needy.
- ◇ **ANU - Museum of the Jewish People**, dedicated to telling their story and representing their diversity, highlighting the cultural riches of a variety of communities in different periods of history until the present day.
- ◇ **Amigour**, the Jewish Agency's flagship program of housing for the elderly.
- ◇ Tour the **White City** to see how **Bauhaus** architecture is alive and well a hundred years on.
- ◇ Visit **Contemporary** Israeli art galleries and meet some of the artists.



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BEYOND THE HEADLINES

This track will deal with Israel's complex reality and dilemmas which inevitably affect the security situation internally and in the region.

Sample tracks include:

- ◇ The outcome of the spring 2021 riots. Join students in Haifa from **Leo Baeck School** for a visit to **Wadi Nisnas**, a small Arab neighborhood populated by both Christians and Muslims.
- ◇ **ANU - Museum of the Jewish People**, dedicated to telling their story and representing their diversity, highlighting the cultural riches of a variety of communities in different periods of history until the present day.
- ◇ Briefing by **Avital Leibovich**, Director of AJC (American Jewish Committee) Jerusalem.
- ◇ How does **Petach Tikvah** monitor and respond to a variety of "security situations"? We'll meet commanders and volunteers; we'll see their operational headquarters and some of the equipment at their disposal.
- ◇ Israeli communities near the border with **Gaza** have endured thousands of rockets and other attacks over the last decade. We'll talk on site with **Chen Kotler Abrahams** an Israeli mother, about living and bringing up children in a place where terror and trauma are commonplace.
- ◇ **Ramallah** is the political center of the Palestinian Authority of the West Bank. Tour the city with **Rami Nazzal**, an internationally published Palestinian journalist and meet with activists for an authentic account of Palestinian life.
- ◇ Understand the realities of crossing between Israel and the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority at the **Kalandia Checkpoint**.
- ◇ Visit the **Psagot Winery** with **Miri Maoz Ovadia**, spokesperson for the Jewish settlers of the Binyamin region. Meet **Jewish settlers** living in the heart of the Samaria/the West Bank and find out why they choose to live in these disputed and sometimes dangerous areas.
- ◇ **Shiloh** – According to the Bible, before Jerusalem and the Temple were built, Jewish life and worship revolved around **Shiloh**. We'll visit the site where it is believed that the Tabernacle rested and where pilgrims came to pray and offer sacrifices.