



Dear Travelers,

How do we describe the trip of a lifetime to follow Jesus in His homeland?

It is overwhelming to think about all the wonderful experiences we shared as we traveled through Israel and Jordan. With our amazing local guide, Matthew, we explored many ancient and Biblical sites together. He gave us detailed information and great insights into the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim histories, cultures, and traditions of this Holy Land. Our Ambassador, Barb, was so kind to always be with us and to help us with anything we needed. Kathy (a fellow traveler) inspired us with her spiritual leadership. I have so many memories of the places we visited.

Traveling through Israel, I was surprised to see how green it was! The stoutly date palms, the blooming almond trees, and the wildflowers scattered on the hillsides, were a springtime delight. And then there was the vast desert and the rugged mountains, too, as I had always pictured in my mind.

Being where Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and raised in Nazareth, made me think of the young Jesus and His family. Visiting where he carried on His ministry at Capernaum and the Galilee, gave me a new perspective on His life and His love for all people. I could envision Jesus calling His first disciples, who were casting their fishing nets, to follow him and become fishers of men. Hearing the Beatitudes, where Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount, we felt like he was really speaking to us.

On the fun side, we danced in the Mediterranean Sea, and floated in the Dead Sea! We enjoyed knafe, a popular desert, while listening to the church bells in Nazareth, and were reminded that we were really in Israel. A camel ride and authentic lunch at Abraham's Table took us back to ancient times. It is not easy to get on and off a camel!

Ascending into Jerusalem, the clouds formed an angel with a cross to guide us. It was a sign that God was with us as we came into this Holy City. I loved all of Jerusalem! Our first view of the city, at the top of the Mount of Olives, was simply breathtaking. Strolling down the path that Jesus took on His donkey on Palm Sunday, to the Garden of Gethsemane, it was hard to believe that we were really here with Jesus.

We experienced many spiritual moments during our time in Israel, all very emotional and faith-filled moments. Walking in the footsteps of Jesus on the Via Dolorosa, where He journeyed to the cross, I felt His sadness and pain, yet also hope in His forgiveness, resurrection, and grace.

Israel indeed took my heart! I fell in love with this beautiful country. But as a rainbow led us on to Jordan, I knew we would have a few more adventures. On Mount Nebo, looking upon the same view of the Promised Land that Moses saw before he went to Heaven, it was a beautiful and peaceful sight. And Petra, I will never forget the moment of our first view of The Treasury, El Khazneh, peeking out between two enormous red rock cliffs... it was magical!

Sincerely,

Judy Sorensen (Biblical Wonders of Israel and Jordan, February 2022)

