

Bethlehem, Jericho & Qasr al-Yahud Day Tour

📍 Bethlehem, Bethlehem



Experience three of the Holy Land's most sacred biblical destinations in one powerful day.

This Bethlehem Jericho tour takes you from the oldest city on earth to the birthplace of Jesus, with a stop at the Jordan River where John baptized Christ.

Descend through the dramatic Judean Desert to Jericho, 258 meters below sea level.

Stand before the ancient Zacchaeus Sycamore Tree and gaze up at the Mount of Temptation where Jesus fasted forty days.

Visit [Qasr al-Yahud on the Jordan River](#), the authentic baptism site with the option to be baptized yourself.

Enter the [Church of the Nativity](#) in Bethlehem through the Door of Humility and descend to the grotto where a silver star marks the exact spot of Jesus's birth.

Walk through Shepherds' Field where angels announced the nativity to shepherds on Christmas night.

With hotel pickup from Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, or Herzliya, licensed tour guide, and air-conditioned transport included, this Bethlehem Jericho tour lets you experience Israel's most significant biblical landscapes without navigating checkpoints, desert roads, or unfamiliar territory yourself.

The Bethlehem Jericho tour is available in English, Spanish, French, and German, and operates Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday with guaranteed departures.

This is the essential Bethlehem Jericho tour for Christian pilgrims and anyone who wants to experience the story of Jesus beyond Jerusalem's Old City walls.

Tour Facts

Group Size:
50

Language:
English, Spanish, French, German

Duration:
10

Tour Type:
continuous

Tour Itinerary

07:00 AM : Hotel Pickup (Herzliya / Tel Aviv)

Pickup from Herzliya hotels at 07:00 AM. Tel Aviv hotel pickup between 07:15-07:30 AM. Jerusalem guests depart at 08:30 AM (shorter distance to first sites). Our driver locates you by hotel name; wait in your lobby at the designated time.

Comfortable air-conditioned coach departs south from Jerusalem toward the Dead Sea region. Your licensed guide introduces the **Bethlehem Jericho tour** itinerary and sets the biblical context for the three major destinations you will visit: Jericho, Qasr al-Yahud, and Bethlehem. The tour is guided in your selected language (English, Spanish, French, or German). Note: guiding in Jericho and at Qasr al-Yahud is conducted in English only, regardless of your selected tour language.

Duration
1 Hour

09:00 AM : Judean Desert Drive: Inn of the Good Samaritan & Wadi Kelt

The first segment of the **Bethlehem Jericho tour** drops steeply through the Judean Desert, one of the most dramatic landscape transitions in Israel. Within minutes of leaving Jerusalem's hills (800 meters above sea level), you enter a vast, sun-bleached wilderness that hasn't changed in thousands of years.

Inn of the Good Samaritan (Drive-by):

Along the ancient road from Jerusalem to Jericho, your guide points out the traditional site of the Inn of the Good Samaritan, where Jesus set one of his most famous parables (Luke 10:29-37). A man traveling this road was beaten by robbers and left for dead. A priest and a Levite passed by without stopping. Only a Samaritan, considered an outsider by Jewish society, stopped to help, bandage his wounds, and pay for his care at a nearby inn.

This parable was set along this exact road because it was historically notorious for bandits. The terrain, with its deep wadis (dry riverbeds) and hidden caves, provided perfect ambush points. Travelers in antiquity feared this route, which is why Jesus chose it as the setting for a story about compassion in dangerous circumstances.

Wadi Kelt and Monastery of Saint George:

As the road winds deeper into the desert, you catch dramatic views of Wadi Kelt, a steep-sided canyon cutting through the barren landscape. Clinging to the sheer cliff face on the northern wall of the wadi is the 5th-century Monastery of Saint George of Koziba, one of the most photographed monasteries in Israel.

The monastery was founded by five Syrian monks around 480 CE and has been continuously occupied

for over 1,500 years (with brief interruptions during invasions). It's built directly into the rock face, with rooms, chapels, and gardens suspended hundreds of feet above the canyon floor. Monks still live here today, accessible only by a steep trail from the canyon rim.

Your guide explains that Wadi Kelt is identified by many scholars as the "valley of the shadow of death" described in Psalm 23. The narrow, dark canyon with its towering walls makes this identification immediately understandable when you see it in person.

Sea Level Marker (Photo Stop):

The **Bethlehem Jericho tour** pauses briefly at the roadside marker indicating you have reached sea level. From here, the road continues descending another 258 meters to reach Jericho, the lowest city on earth. This marker is a popular photo opportunity, the desert stretching endlessly behind you, the Dead Sea shimmering in the distance.

Duration

30 Minutes

09:45 AM : Jericho: The World's Oldest City

The **Bethlehem Jericho tour** arrives in Jericho, sitting in a lush oasis, sitting in a lush oasis fed by underground springs at 258 meters below sea level in the Jordan Valley. The contrast with the barren desert you just drove through is striking: date palms, banana plantations, and bougainvillea appear seemingly out of nowhere. This agricultural abundance is what drew human settlement here over 10,000 years ago, making Jericho the oldest continuously inhabited city on earth.

Biblical Significance:

Jericho features in some of the most dramatic stories in both the Old and New Testaments:

Old Testament: After forty years of wandering in the desert, Joshua led the Israelites to the walls of Jericho, the first Canaanite city blocking their entry into the Promised Land. God instructed the Israelites to march around the city once a day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day, blowing rams' horn trumpets. On the seventh day, the walls collapsed and the Israelites took the city (Joshua 6). Archaeological excavations at nearby Tel es-Sultan have revealed walls and fortifications dating back to 8000 BCE, making it one of the most significant archaeological sites in the Near East.

New Testament: Jesus passed through Jericho multiple times during his ministry. After his forty-day fast on the nearby Mount of Temptation, he entered the city, and it was here that several Gospel events took place.

Zacchaeus Sycamore Tree:

Your guide takes you to the ancient sycamore tree in the center of Jericho, traditionally identified as the tree the tax collector Zacchaeus climbed to catch a glimpse of Jesus as he entered the city surrounded by followers (Luke 19:1-10).

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, wealthy and widely despised by the people of Jericho for collaborating with Rome and enriching himself at their expense. Being short in stature, he couldn't see over the crowd, so he ran ahead and climbed this sycamore tree. When Jesus reached the tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." This scandalized the crowd, who couldn't understand why Jesus would choose to dine with a sinner. But the encounter

transformed Zacchaeus, who pledged to give half his wealth to the poor and repay anyone he had cheated four times over.

The tree, gnarled and ancient with thick spreading branches, is enclosed by a low wall. Whether or not this is the exact tree from the Gospel account, it is a living sycamore of significant age in the exact location described in Luke's account, and it brings the story to life in a tangible way.

Mount of Temptation (Viewpoint):

From Jericho, look up at the imposing cliff face rising 366 meters above the city. This is Jebel Quruntul, the Mount of Temptation, where Jesus retreated into the wilderness to fast for forty days and forty nights after his baptism (Matthew 4:1-11).

During this fast, the devil appeared three times to tempt Jesus:

1. **First temptation:** Satan told the starving Jesus to turn stones into bread. Jesus replied: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."
2. **Second temptation:** Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem and told him to throw himself down, claiming angels would save him. Jesus replied: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."
3. **Third temptation:** Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world from the mountaintop and offered them in exchange for worship. Jesus replied: "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."

Halfway up the cliff, the Greek Orthodox Monastery of the Temptation (Monastery of Qurantul) clings to the rock face, built around the cave where tradition says Jesus sheltered during his fast. The monastery is accessible by cable car (not included in this tour itinerary), but the view from below is spectacular, the white and tan building seemingly defying gravity against the bare vertical rock.

Your guide explains the geography: standing in Jericho and looking up at the Mount of Temptation, you understand the physical reality of the Gospel narrative. The wilderness here is absolute, the heat extreme, the isolation total. This is not a metaphorical wilderness; it is one of the harshest landscapes on earth. This stop alone makes the **Bethlehem Jericho tour** one of the most visually powerful day trips in Israel.

Passport Note:

You must carry your valid passport throughout the Jericho visit. Identification checks may occur at various points.

Duration
45 Minutes

10:45 AM : Qasr al-Yahud: The Baptism Site on the Jordan River

The **Bethlehem Jericho tour** leaves Jericho and drives a short distance to Qasr al-Yahud, located on the western bank of the Jordan River, not far from where the river empties into the Dead Sea. This is one of the most significant biblical sites in the Holy Land, and the atmosphere here is markedly different from the bustle of Jericho.

Biblical Significance:

Qasr al-Yahud (Arabic for "Castle of the Jews") is associated with three transformative biblical events:

1. The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17):

This is the site where John the Baptist recognized Jesus of Nazareth and baptized him in the waters of the Jordan. As Jesus emerged from the water, the Gospels describe the heavens opening, the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and a voice from heaven declaring: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This moment marks the beginning of Jesus's public ministry and is one of the foundational events of Christianity.

John had been baptizing followers in the Jordan River, calling them to repentance and proclaiming the coming of the Messiah. When Jesus arrived and asked to be baptized, John initially protested, saying he was not worthy. Jesus insisted, and the baptism that followed became the model for the Christian sacrament practiced by billions of believers for two thousand years.

2. The Israelites Crossing into the Promised Land (Joshua 3-4):

After Moses's death, Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. According to the Book of Joshua, when the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the Jordan, the waters stopped flowing and piled up upstream, allowing the entire nation to cross on dry ground. Joshua then commanded twelve men (one from each tribe) to take stones from the riverbed and pile them as a memorial, so that future generations would remember how God had brought them into the land he had promised.

3. Elijah's Ascension to Heaven (2 Kings 2:1-14):

Near this location, the prophet Elijah struck the Jordan River with his cloak, the waters parted, and he crossed over. On the other side, a chariot of fire appeared and Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. His successor, Elisha, picked up Elijah's fallen cloak and struck the Jordan again, and the waters parted for him as well, confirming that the spirit of Elijah now rested upon him.

Your Experience at Qasr al-Yahud:

The site today is a peaceful, well-maintained area on the western bank of the Jordan River. The river here is narrow, perhaps 10-15 meters across, with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan visible on the opposite bank. Depending on the season, the water ranges from ankle-deep to waist-deep along the access stairs.

Wooden steps lead down to the water's edge. Many visitors come specifically to be baptized here, dressed in white baptism gowns (available for purchase or rental on-site for approximately 30-50 NIS). The baptisms are self-directed or conducted by members of your own religious group; no on-site clergy perform baptisms as part of this tour.

Even if you do not plan to be baptized, simply standing at the water's edge of the Jordan River is a profoundly moving experience. Look across the narrow river to Jordan, where early Christian tradition placed the baptism on the eastern bank (Bethany Beyond the Jordan). Today, both sites are recognized, and pilgrims visit from both sides. For many travelers, this is the emotional highlight of the entire Bethlehem Jericho tour.

Facilities at Qasr al-Yahud:

- Clean public restrooms and changing facilities
- Baptism gown sales/rental kiosk
- Small gift shop
- Covered waiting area with shade

- Drinking water

Photography:

Photography is permitted throughout the site. The approach to the river, the steps leading into the water, and the view across to Jordan all provide meaningful photo opportunities. If you or someone in your group is being baptized, consider asking a fellow traveler to photograph the moment.

If you plan to be baptized, bring:

- Change of dry clothes in a bag
- Plastic bag for wet baptism gown/clothes
- Towel
- Waterproof case or bag for phone/camera

Duration

45 Minutes**11:45 AM : Drive to Bethlehem via Judean Mountains**

The Bethlehem Jericho tour boards the coach and ascends from the Jordan Valley back into the Judean Mountains, climbing over 1,000 meters elevation as you head toward Bethlehem. The landscape shifts from desert to terraced hillsides with olive groves and scattered villages.

Your guide provides context for Bethlehem's significance:

Bethlehem (Hebrew: Beit Lehem, "House of Bread") sits on the edge of the Judean Hills, about 10 kilometers south of Jerusalem. It has been a place of importance since the time of the Patriarchs. Rachel, wife of Jacob, was buried near Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19). Ruth gleaned grain in the fields around Bethlehem (Book of Ruth). Jesse, father of King David, lived here, and David was anointed king by the prophet Samuel in this town (1 Samuel 16).

The prophet Micah foretold that a ruler of Israel would come from Bethlehem: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel" (Micah 5:2). This prophecy is central to the Christian identification of Jesus as the Messiah, since the Gospels of Matthew and Luke both place his birth in Bethlehem.

Checkpoint and Guide Logistics:

Bethlehem is located in the Palestinian Authority. Your tour will pass through an Israeli checkpoint. This is a routine security procedure; simply have your passport accessible. Depending on the day, your vehicle may change and a local Palestinian guide may join to provide expertise on Bethlehem's sites. Your main guide coordinates the transition smoothly.

Duration

45 Minutes**12:30 PM : Bethlehem: Manger Square and the Church of the Nativity**

The Bethlehem Jericho tour arrives in Bethlehem and heads directly to Manger Square, the central plaza of the city and the location of the [Church of the Nativity](#), a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2012.

Manger Square:

The wide, paved plaza serves as the civic and spiritual heart of Bethlehem. The square is bordered by the Church of the Nativity on the eastern side, the Mosque of Omar to the west (built in 1860 and named after the Caliph Omar who prayed near the church in 637 CE but refused to pray inside it, fearing his followers would later convert it to a mosque), and modern municipal buildings to the north.

On Christmas Eve each year, tens of thousands of pilgrims and visitors fill this square for midnight Mass and celebrations broadcast worldwide. Your guide describes the scene and its significance as the world's most famous Christmas gathering.

The Door of Humility:

Approach the entrance to the Church of the Nativity. The original grand entrance was reduced to a tiny opening only 1.2 meters (4 feet) high during the Ottoman period, possibly to prevent soldiers from riding horses into the church, possibly to force all visitors to bow in humility as they enter the birthplace of Christ. Today, every visitor, regardless of wealth, status, or power, must duck and bow to enter. This is the famous Door of Humility, and passing through it is a memorable physical experience.

Inside the Church of the Nativity:

The Church of the Nativity was originally built by Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena in 327 CE, making it one of the oldest continuously operating churches in the world. The current structure dates largely to the 6th-century reconstruction under Emperor Justinian, with additions and renovations over subsequent centuries by Crusaders, Armenians, and Greek Orthodox clergy.

The Main Basilica:

Step inside and enter a vast nave lined with rows of red limestone columns (44 original Corinthian columns from the 4th century still stand). Above the columns, remnants of stunning 12th-century Crusader-era mosaics depict angels, saints, and scenes from the life of Christ. These golden mosaics were recently restored in a massive international conservation project and now gleam with renewed brilliance.

The wooden roof beams (donated by King Edward IV of England and Philip the Good of Burgundy in the 15th century) span the nave above. The floor in some sections has been opened to reveal fragments of the original 4th-century mosaic floor from Constantine's church, visible through glass panels.

The Grotto of the Nativity:

Descend the narrow stone stairs on the right side of the main altar into the underground grotto, the spiritual heart of the church and one of Christianity's most sacred spaces.

The grotto is a small, low-ceilinged cave illuminated by 53 silver lamps hanging from the ceiling, each belonging to a different Christian denomination. The air is warm and scented with incense. The space is intimate and hushed despite the constant stream of visitors.

The Silver Star:

Set into the marble floor beneath an altar is a 14-pointed silver star inscribed in Latin: "Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est" ("Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary"). This star marks the traditional spot of Jesus's birth. Pilgrims kneel to touch or kiss the star, many with tears of devotion.

Nearby, a few steps away in the same grotto, is the **Manger**, a stone alcove where tradition says the infant Jesus was laid in a feeding trough because there was no room at the inn (Luke 2:7).

Important: Due to the extremely high volume of visitors, access to the Grotto of the Nativity may involve waiting in line, and your time inside the grotto is limited. On particularly busy days (holidays, weekends), entrance to the grotto may be restricted. Your Bethlehem Jericho tour guide manages timing to give you the best possible access. Even if the grotto queue is very long, you will still fully experience the main basilica, the Crusader mosaics, and the adjacent churches.

Church of Saint Catherine:

Exit the basilica and enter the adjacent Crusader-era Church of Saint Catherine, built in the 12th century and renovated in 1882. This Roman Catholic church is where the annual Christmas Midnight Mass is celebrated and broadcast live to hundreds of millions of viewers worldwide.

The church is elegant in its simplicity compared to the ornate basilica. A statue of Saint Jerome stands in the courtyard, and from here you descend into the underground grottos connected to the nativity cave system.

Saint Jerome's Grotto:

Below the Church of Saint Catherine, explore the underground chambers where Saint Jerome (347-420 CE) spent over 30 years living and working. Here, in these simple stone rooms beneath Bethlehem, Jerome completed the Vulgate, his translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. The Vulgate became the standard Bible of Western Christianity for over a thousand years and profoundly influenced the development of European languages, literature, and theology.

The grottos include Jerome's study and the tomb-shrines of Saint Jerome, Saint Paula, and Saint Eustochium (Roman noblewomen who established a monastic community here alongside Jerome). The chambers are connected to the Grotto of the Nativity through underground passages, though these are not always accessible to visitors.

Duration

1 Hour

13:30 PM : Lunch Break in Bethlehem

The **Bethlehem Jericho tour** pauses for lunch (not included in tour price) near Manger Square or at a nearby restaurant recommended by your guide.

Options:

- Local Palestinian restaurants serving traditional dishes: maqluba (upside-down rice and meat), musakhan (roasted chicken with onions and sumac on flatbread), lamb kebabs, hummus, falafel
- Budget approximately 40-70 NIS / \$11-19 per person
- Many restaurants near Manger Square cater to tour groups with fixed-price menus

Time permitting, explore the shops around Manger Square selling olive wood carvings (nativity sets, crosses, rosaries), mother-of-pearl jewelry, embroidered Palestinian textiles, and Dead Sea cosmetics. Bethlehem is famous for its olive wood craftsmanship, and items purchased here directly support local artisans.

Duration
45 Minutes

14:15 PM : Shepherds' Field

A short drive from Manger Square brings you to Shepherds' Field on the eastern outskirts of Bethlehem, in the village of Beit Sahour.

Biblical Significance:

This is where, on the night of Jesus's birth, an Angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds watching their flocks in the fields:

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:8-11)

The shepherds then went to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus in the manger, exactly as the angel had described.

Chapel of the Angels:

The Franciscan chapel at Shepherds' Field was designed by the Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi (who also designed the Church of All Nations at Gethsemane and the Church of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor). The small, domed chapel features beautiful interior murals depicting the angel's annunciation to the shepherds. The acoustics inside the chapel are remarkable, designed to amplify voices so that even whispered prayers or hymns fill the space.

The Setting:

Standing in Shepherds' Field, you look out across gentle, terraced hills toward Bethlehem. The landscape is dotted with olive trees and low stone walls. In the distance, the modern buildings of Bethlehem rise above the historical town. This is the view the shepherds would have seen when they looked toward the city where the newborn Messiah lay.

For many visitors, this is the most emotionally moving stop on the entire Bethlehem Jericho tour. Away from the crowds and queues of the Church of the Nativity, the quiet of the fields and the simplicity of the chapel create space for personal reflection. It's a fitting final biblical stop before the Bethlehem Jericho tour begins the journey home.

Duration
30 Minutes

14:50 PM : Depart Bethlehem for Return Journey

Board the coach and depart Bethlehem, passing back through the checkpoint and heading north through the Judean Mountains toward your drop-off point.

Your Bethlehem Jericho tour guide answers final questions and provides recommendations for the rest of your time in Israel. Consider combining this Bethlehem Jericho tour with our [Jerusalem Full Day Tour](#) for a comprehensive Holy Land experience, or our [Masada and Dead Sea Tour](#) if you want to explore the Judean Desert further.

Duration
1.5 Hour

18:00-19:30 PM : Hotel Drop-Off

Return to your original pickup location:

- **Jerusalem guests:** Arrive approximately 18:00-19:00
- **Tel Aviv guests:** Arrive approximately 19:00-19:30
- **Herzliya guests:** Arrive approximately 19:30-20:00

Evening traffic may extend arrival by 15-30 minutes. Drop-off at a different location from pickup is available for a supplement (see pricing section).