

# Jerusalem and Dead Sea Tour: Ancient History Meets Natural Wonder

📍 Ein Bokek, Ein Bokek, Israel



Discover two of Israel's most iconic experiences in one extraordinary day. This Jerusalem and Dead Sea Tour combines the spiritual depth of Jerusalem's Old City with the natural wonder of the Dead Sea, Earth's lowest point at 430 meters below sea level. Walk through 3,000 years of history at the Western Wall and Church of the Holy Sepulchre, stand atop Masada's ancient fortress where Jewish rebels made their last stand against Rome, and float effortlessly in the Dead Sea's mineral-rich therapeutic waters on your Jerusalem and Dead Sea Tour.

With hotel pickup from Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, expert licensed guide, air-conditioned transport, and entrance fees included, you'll experience Israel's essential historical and natural highlights without the logistics stress of navigating checkpoints, desert roads, and crowded holy sites on your Jerusalem and Dead Sea Tour.

Available every day with guaranteed departures. This Jerusalem and Dead Sea Tour is Israel's most popular combination tour for travelers who want both cultural immersion and unique natural experiences in a single journey.

## Tour Facts

Group Size:  
**50**

Language:  
**English, Spanish, German, French**

Duration:  
**12**Tour Type:  
**continuous**

## Tour Itinerary

### 07:15 AM : Hotel Pickup (Tel Aviv)

Pickup from Tel Aviv hotels between 07:15-07:45 AM. Jerusalem guests depart at 08:30 AM (shorter distance to first site). Our driver locates you by hotel name; wait in your lobby at the designated time.

Comfortable air-conditioned coach departs toward Jerusalem. Your licensed guide introduces the day's itinerary and provides overview of Jerusalem's 3,000-year history as the eternal city holy to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Duration  
**1 Hour**Location  
**tel aviv**

### 09:00 AM : Mount Scopus Panoramic Viewpoint

Begin at Mount Scopus, 826 meters above sea level, for breathtaking panoramic views across Jerusalem. From this elevated vantage point, the entire Old City spreads before you like a 3D historical map.

Your guide points out major landmarks visible from here:

**The Old City:** Ancient walls built by Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century, enclosing 0.9 square kilometers of layered history from biblical times through Roman, Byzantine, Crusader, and Ottoman eras.

**Temple Mount:** The golden Dome of the Rock glints in morning sunlight, marking where Abraham bound Isaac and where Muhammad ascended to heaven according to Islamic tradition. The Temple Mount platform is where the First and Second Jewish Temples stood before their destruction.

**Mount of Olives:** Across the Kidron Valley, the Jewish cemetery cascades down the slope with 150,000 graves. According to Jewish tradition, the resurrection will begin here when the Messiah arrives.

**Garden of Gethsemane:** Below Mount Scopus, the garden where Jesus prayed before his arrest. The Church of All Nations' golden mosaic facade is visible, built over the rock where Jesus knelt in prayer.

**Kidron Valley:** The steep valley separating the Old City from the Mount of Olives, mentioned numerous times in both Old and New Testaments.

This orientation helps you understand Jerusalem's geography before entering the dense, complex Old City where streets twist and religious sites layer atop each other.

Duration  
**20 Minutes**

## 09:30 AM : Enter Jerusalem Old City via Zion Gate

Descend from Mount Scopus and approach the Old City's southern walls. Enter through Zion Gate, one of eight gates in the Ottoman-era walls. Notice the bullet holes and shrapnel damage from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War still visible in the stone—a reminder of Jerusalem's contested modern history.

The gate leads directly into the Armenian Quarter, one of the Old City's four quarters (Armenian, Jewish, Christian, Muslim). Each quarter has distinct architecture, languages, and religious character despite being packed into less than one square kilometer.

Duration  
**15 Minutes**

## 09:50 AM : Jewish Quarter and Byzantine Cardo

Walk through narrow stone streets toward the Jewish Quarter, rebuilt and restored after 1967. The quarter sits on the highest of the Old City's hills and contains some of Jerusalem's oldest archaeological remains.

### Byzantine Cardo:

See the excavated and partially restored Cardo, the main street of Byzantine Jerusalem built 1,500 years ago. The name comes from the Latin word for "heart"—the Cardo was the heart of the Byzantine city.

Walk beneath reconstructed arches where original columns still stand after 15 centuries. Some sections remain below current street level (excavated 6 meters down), while restored portions now house modern jewelry stores and galleries in the same stone structures used by Byzantine merchants.

The Cardo stretched 600 meters from today's Damascus Gate to the Jewish Quarter, lined with shops selling goods from across the Byzantine Empire. Your guide explains how Jerusalem's street level has risen dramatically over centuries as new buildings were constructed atop ruins of previous eras.

### Jewish Quarter Highlights:

- **Hurva Synagogue:** Its white dome dominates the quarter's skyline (rebuilt 2010 after destruction in 1948)
- **Broad Wall:** Remains of Jerusalem's ancient fortifications from 8th century BCE, built by King Hezekiah
- **Stone houses:** Restored residential buildings maintaining traditional Jerusalem limestone architecture

Duration  
**30 Minutes**

## 10:30 AM : Western Wall

Descend via stone steps toward the Western Wall plaza, the spiritual heart of Jewish faith and Judaism's holiest prayer site.

## The Western Wall (Kotel):

This 62-foot-high limestone wall is a surviving remnant of the retaining wall that supported the Temple Mount platform built by King Herod the Great between 20 BCE and 19 BCE. When Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE, they left this western support wall standing.

For 2,000 years, Jews have prayed at this wall—the closest accessible point to where the Holy of Holies once stood in the Temple. The massive stones (some weighing 400+ tons) were quarried and transported without modern machinery, demonstrating Roman and Herodian engineering mastery.

### Your Experience:

You can approach the wall itself. The plaza is divided: men enter the left section (head covering required; disposable paper kippot provided if needed), women enter the right section.

Touch the ancient stones worn smooth by millions of hands over two millennia. Insert a prayer note (kvittel) into the cracks between stones—millions of handwritten prayers are wedged into these crevices, a tradition dating back centuries.

Watch Jewish worshippers praying, swaying in devotion, and celebrating Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. The atmosphere is both joyful (celebrations) and solemn (mourning the Temple's destruction).

From the plaza, look up to see the Temple Mount platform above, where the Dome of the Rock's golden dome and Al-Aqsa Mosque stand (not accessible to tour groups due to security restrictions and Muslim religious sensitivities).

Your guide waits at a respectful distance in the plaza and reconvenes the group after 20-30 minutes.

Duration  
**30 Minutes**

## 11:15 AM : Via Dolorosa

Walk from the Jewish Quarter through the Muslim Quarter toward the Via Dolorosa, the traditional route Jesus carried the cross from Pilate's judgment hall to Golgotha (Calvary).

The Via Dolorosa ("Way of Suffering" in Latin) has 14 Stations of the Cross marking events during Jesus's final hours. Your guide stops at key stations:

**Station V (Simon of Cyrene Helps Carry the Cross):** At the intersection where Via Dolorosa bends upward. Simon, a visitor from North Africa, was compelled by Roman soldiers to help Jesus carry the cross when he could no longer bear it alone. A small Franciscan chapel marks this spot.

**Station VII (Jesus Falls the Second Time):** A small chapel in the narrow street. The route here climbs steeply toward Golgotha, making it difficult for Jesus weakened by beatings and carrying the heavy wooden cross.

**Stations IX-XIV:** These final stations are inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (covered in next section).

Your guide explains that while the exact historical route may differ based on archaeological evidence, this traditional path has been walked by Christian pilgrims for over 1,000 years. The spiritual

significance transcends precise historical accuracy for most believers.

The Via Dolorosa passes through the Muslim Quarter's bustling markets, creating a striking contrast: vendors selling falafel and fresh juice while pilgrims carry wooden crosses and pray at each station.

Duration  
**30 Minutes**

## 12:00 PM : Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Enter Christianity's most sacred site, built over Golgotha (Calvary) where Jesus was crucified and the tomb where he was buried and resurrected.

Six Christian denominations share control of this church (Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Coptic Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, and Ethiopian Orthodox), creating ornate architectural complexity. Each denomination controls specific chapels, altars, and prayer times according to the Status Quo agreement dating to 1852.

### **The Stone of Anointing:**

Immediately inside the entrance, a pink-red limestone slab marks where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared Jesus's body for burial, anointing it with myrrh and aloes. Pilgrims touch, kiss, and rub personal items (rosaries, crosses, cloths) on this stone, believing it retains sacred power.

The stone is surrounded by ornate hanging lamps (eight in total, each belonging to a different denomination), constantly burning according to the Status Quo agreement.

### **Calvary/Golgotha Chapel (Upstairs):**

Climb 18 steep stone steps to reach the crucifixion site. Two altars mark this location:

**Greek Orthodox Altar:** Sits directly over the rock of Golgotha. The rock is visible through glass panels beneath the altar. You can kneel and reach through a hole under the altar to touch the actual rock where the cross stood—one of Christianity's most powerful physical connections to Jesus's sacrifice.

**Catholic Altar (Altar of the Nailing to the Cross):** Commemorates where Jesus was nailed to the cross before it was raised. Ornate mosaics depict the crucifixion scene.

The entire area is richly decorated with gold, silver, jewels, icons, and hanging lamps—centuries of devotional offerings creating overwhelming visual splendor.

### **The Edicule (Jesus's Tomb):**

The small chapel-like structure in the center of the church's rotunda marks Jesus's burial tomb. Due to constant visitor volume, there's typically a 30-90 minute queue to enter.

Your guide will assess the queue length:

- **If 30 minutes or less:** You'll likely enter
- **If 60-90+ minutes:** Your guide will position you to view the exterior while explaining the interior

**If you enter the Edicule, you'll see:**

- **Chapel of the Angel:** Tiny antechamber where tradition says an angel sat announcing the resurrection to Mary Magdalene and other women
- **Burial Chamber:** Even smaller inner room (maximum 4-5 people at a time, 30-60 seconds allowed) with a marble shelf covering the rock bench where Jesus's body was laid

If the queue is too long to enter, viewing from outside is still profoundly moving. Your guide describes the interior and the theological significance. Many pilgrims find that experiencing the church's overall sacred atmosphere—incense, chanting monks in multiple languages, flickering candles, hushed prayers—is equally powerful as entering the tomb itself.

#### The Rotunda:

The soaring dome above the Edicule creates ethereal light filtering through high windows. The current dome was rebuilt after an 1808 fire destroyed the previous structure. The interplay of light, incense smoke, and architectural grandeur creates an otherworldly atmosphere.

#### Additional Chapels:

Time permitting, your guide may show you:

- **Chapel of Adam:** Directly beneath Calvary, where tradition says Adam's skull was buried (Golgotha means "place of the skull")
- **Syrian Orthodox Chapel:** Contains part of the rock tomb where Joseph of Arimathea was buried
- **Prison of Christ:** Small chapel where tradition says Jesus was held before crucifixion

Duration  
**45 Minutes**

### 13:00 PM : Lunch Break in Old City

Pause for lunch (not included in tour price) in the Christian or Muslim Quarter. Your guide recommends authentic local restaurants based on your preferences:

**Abu Shukri:** Famous for hummus, considered among the best in Jerusalem (25-40 NIS / \$7-11)

**Christ Church Café:** Western-style sandwiches and salads in quieter setting (45-60 NIS / \$13-17)

**Old City Markets:** Quick options include fresh-baked pitas, falafel (20-25 NIS), fresh-squeezed juice (15 NIS), Arabic pastries

Alternatively, explore the **Old City souks** (markets) during lunch break: vendors sell carved olive wood nativity sets, Armenian ceramics, spices (za'atar, sumac), Dead Sea cosmetics, and traditional Arabic sweets. Your guide gives you a meeting point and time.

Duration  
**45 Minutes**

### 14:00 PM : Depart Jerusalem for Dead Sea

Board the coach and depart Jerusalem, heading east through the Judean Desert toward the Dead Sea. The landscape transforms dramatically from Jerusalem's hills to stark desert within minutes.

As you descend from Jerusalem (800 meters above sea level) to the Dead Sea (430 meters below sea level), you drop over 1,200 meters elevation in just 30 kilometers—one of the world's steepest sustained descents.

#### En Route Highlights:

**"Sea Level" Sign:** The tour pauses briefly at the marker indicating you've reached sea level. From here, the road continues descending another 430 meters to reach the Dead Sea shore—Earth's lowest accessible land point.

**Judean Desert Views:** Beige-pink cliffs, deep canyons (wadis), and dramatic geological formations visible from the highway. Your guide explains the desert's biblical significance: where David hid from King Saul, where John the Baptist preached, where Jesus fasted for 40 days.

**Jericho in the Distance:** On clear days, you can see Jericho to the north—the world's oldest continuously inhabited city, dating back 11,000 years.

**Dead Sea Overview:** Your guide explains the Dead Sea's unique characteristics:

- **Lowest point:** 430 meters below sea level (and sinking 1 meter annually)
- **Extreme salinity:** 34% salt content (10 times saltier than ocean water)
- **No marine life:** The name "Dead Sea" comes from its inability to support fish or aquatic plants
- **Shrinking rapidly:** Water diversion from the Jordan River has reduced Dead Sea size by 30% since 1960
- **Mineral wealth:** Rich in magnesium, calcium, potassium, and bromine with therapeutic properties

Duration  
**60 Minutes**

### 15:15 PM : Dead Sea Beach Experience

Arrive at a private Dead Sea beach facility with full amenities: changing rooms, showers, lockers, freshwater pool, shaded lounging areas, and beach access.

#### Dead Sea Float (60-90 minutes):

Wade into the Dead Sea's warm water (temperature stays 20-25°C year-round). The extreme 34% salinity creates instant, effortless buoyancy—you literally cannot sink no matter how hard you try.

First-timers are amazed at the sensation: sit back and your body floats horizontally on the surface with zero effort. You can "stand" upright with legs hanging down and your torso stays above water. Many people read newspapers or magazines while floating—the iconic Dead Sea experience captured in thousands of tourist photos.

The water feels thick, oily, and slippery due to high mineral content. It's a strange, otherworldly sensation unlike any other swimming experience.

#### Critical Safety Guidelines (Your guide explains these carefully):

**NEVER put your face underwater** - The salt burns eyes, mouth, and nose intensely. If you accidentally

get salt water in your eyes, it can take 30+ minutes of continuous freshwater rinsing to stop the burning sensation.

□ **DO NOT shave 24 hours before** – Salt stings any cuts or abrasions, even microscopic ones you can't see. Fresh razor burn or waxed skin will be extremely painful.

□ **Enter and exit slowly** – Mineral deposits make the shore extremely slippery. People frequently fall while entering or exiting.

□ **Limit float time to 15-20 minutes** – Despite being in water, the high mineral content can actually dehydrate your skin. Extended exposure causes skin irritation.

□ **Rinse immediately after floating** – Salt crystallizes on skin if left to dry, causing irritation and discomfort.

□ **Bring old water shoes or sandals** – The shore has sharp mineral crystal formations that can cut feet.

### Dead Sea Mud Treatment:

Natural black Dead Sea mud, rich in 26 minerals (magnesium, calcium, potassium, bromine, iodine, and sulfur), is available at the beach (sometimes included in facility fee, sometimes for purchase 20-30 NIS).

Cover your body with the smooth, cool mud and let it dry in the desert sun for 10-15 minutes. As the mud dries, you feel your skin tightening. Rinse thoroughly in the Dead Sea or showers.

### Dead Sea mud is renowned for:

- Deep exfoliation of dead skin cells
- Improving skin hydration and elasticity
- Reducing inflammation and puffiness
- Relieving muscle and joint pain
- Treating skin conditions like psoriasis, eczema, and acne
- Detoxifying skin by drawing out impurities

Many people visit the Dead Sea specifically for these therapeutic benefits. Medical tourism for skin and joint conditions has been documented here for thousands of years.

### Freshwater Pool & Relaxation:

After rinsing off salt and mud, relax in the facility's freshwater swimming pool or lounge on sunbeds under palm-frond shade structures. The stark desert beauty surrounding you—turquoise Dead Sea waters contrasting with beige mountains—creates surreal, peaceful atmosphere.

The facility typically has a small café selling cold drinks, snacks, and ice cream (not included in tour price; budget 20-40 NIS).

### Photography Opportunities:

The Dead Sea offers Instagram-worthy photo opportunities:

- Floating while reading a newspaper or book
- Covered in black mud (get someone to photograph you before rinsing)
- White mineral salt formations crystallizing on the shore
- Mountains of Jordan across the water
- Sunset over the Dead Sea (if timing allows on return journey)

Duration  
**2.5 Hours**

### **17:45 PM : Depart Dead Sea for Return Journey**

Board the coach for return journey to Tel Aviv (90 minutes) or Jerusalem (60 minutes). Your guide answers final questions and provides recommendations for the rest of your Israel trip.

Consider combining this tour with our [Caesarea Haifa Acre Rosh Hanikra tour](#) or [Galilee and Nazareth tour](#) for a comprehensive 2-3 day Israel experience.

Duration  
**1.5 Hour**

### **19:15 PM : Tel Aviv Hotel Drop-Off**

Arrive back at Tel Aviv hotels between 19:00-19:30 (evening rush hour may extend to 19:45). Jerusalem guests arrive approximately 18:45-19:00.

Duration  
**1 Hour**