



Israel Trip Notes with Jerusalem Marathon **February 22 - March 5, 2013**

Why?

A few people were instrumental in getting me to Israel: Jeff my trainer suggested it; then while at the Paris expo a group of organizers were so welcoming and said to come even if I took 7 hours; then much later Lois the 50-states newsletter editor suggested it but was, like me, hesitant to do a foreign marathon alone. After a general invitation and a working itinerary prepared we ended up with Lois, Diana, Sharon, Mae, Edson, and Lynne. Well, we had Marcia and husband but poor gal broke her wrist and had emergency surgery 3 days before her trip. (More on that later.)

The marathon

It turned into a half. If you read my Coastal Trails Marathon report you'll know that I decided this was a year of 'signs' and it seemed time to revert to half marathons. But then suddenly a 'sign' erupted that almost caused me to revert to marathons . . . I'd switched Jerusalem to a half but when I turned up at the expo there I was still in the full marathon with bib number 111. Was that the number of my marathon starts? Maybe, but I held true to myself and got switched back.

At the end of the day

It was so very nice to start late with the half marathoners and treat it as a walk in the park. Not sure why my hips don't feel like just a walk in the park, but everything else very enjoyable. My finishing time is proof of my taking a 'walk' and it would have been a good finish time for a full marathon: maybe 3:20. I stopped, I went off course, I turned around and went backwards for an older runner I'd been with, and I took a zillion pictures. In between I stood a few times over monumental views and felt grateful to be there and meet so many unique folks,



Course

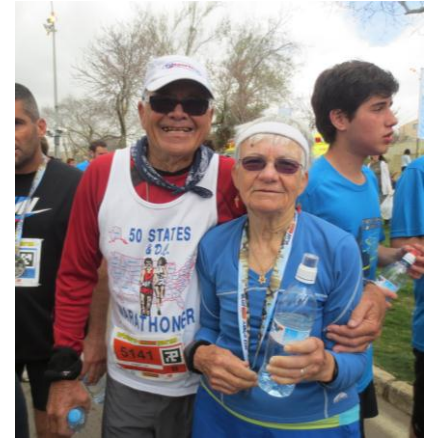
It was an interesting course and glad to see some of the sights I'd already seen from a van and/or walking with a tour guide, plus some residential areas that I'd not see otherwise. Part of the course is around the Wailing Wall and into Old Jerusalem and on cobblestone streets through the Jaffa Gate. (I later learned that the Palestinians were upset and wanted the marathon canceled.) Something about seeing these things on your own feet makes you feel more relationship to it. I'd say "makes you feel like you own it" but obviously no one owns any of Jerusalem though many try. (Can you imagine one house of worship divided up by religions and ethnic group sections?" True.)

Timing

I'd been worried about the timing since Shabbat closes up everything just a couple hours after I would have finished a full marathon. With a half marathon I got to sleep in 1 ½ hours longer, take my time,

and finish before the place closed up. Lois and Lynne did well with a 5:42 and a 6:26 and Sharon must have started early since she came in with Lois as did Mae.

Part of the course I was with a fellow from Phoenix who is 82 and his 40-something running partner is off to Antarctica for the marathon – with Diane and they'll also run in Santiago i.e., two continents. We met up with his wife later and she holds some running age records. This fellow had a 50-states shirt on so many slowed down to talk to him helping me meet many more folks than I might have. I remain glad to give up my Liberty crown knowing that I have too much LEO in me already and need to give the stage to others.



How did Jerusalem Marathon do?

This was only their third annual marathon and they could teach U.S. marathons a few things.

- Entry fee was very inexpensive.
- Tours, hotel and shuttles were easily set up on line with the official travel agent and prices were favorable (max \$150 for a single room in host hotel.) I thought the agent was high tech and next to perfect but some of my traveling companions didn't share that view. In defense of the travel agent, there were some complicating factors. Mine wasn't and every request I made was dealt with well.
- Expo was huge, convenient and well arranged in an adjoining international convention center practically attached to the host hotel. Entertainment, speakers, snack bar and loads of vendors were there and they started on Tuesday from 3 to 11pm for a Friday marathon.
- Bib pick up was convenient (except for some signs only in Hebrew.)
- T-shirt was by Brooks, well designed, and very nice quality. Cinch pack in matching blue colors was high quality too with zipper pocket included.
- Goodie bag had a granola bar and the usual flyers; it missed the 'stickers' for checking bags and I don't know how they handled bags.
- Pasta dinner at the expo site was one of the biggest and generous I've ever seen and it was included in the entry fee. They had a disco type band with the strobe lights. It went on from 5 until 11pm. Apparently everyone figured out that the date was a typo because hordes showed up.
- Start and finish line were in Sacher Park about 15-20 minute walk from host hotel and on grounds of the government buildings.
- Security into expo and staging area seemed surprisingly lax and certainly less than in NYC. I think they are assisted by being able to racial profile. Security on the course was the usual for Israel with two policemen and two Army types with Uzi's in hand.
- Starting line was convenient, great fun and on time with costumed people in attendance and enough English spoken to work.
- Course was amazing and took in many more historical sights



than I could have wished for and even though two old city gates, over cobblestones and into the old city. Only disruption was near the end when 10K runners met up with the half and the street was too narrow. One gal did a horrible fall in part as a result. It was one of the hilliest courses I can remember for a street marathon but those hills were appreciated for their overviews. Lois and Lynne thought it WAS the hilliest they'd seen and they got a golf cart to take them from the finish line.

- Costumes and bands were excellent and all unique.
- Food was non-existent until nearly at the end and then only bananas and the huge locally grown dates. The water was in tiny water bottles with adjoining recycle bins.
- Finish line got crowded and once over the mat it was far too crowded with runners going in both directions and quite a long walk to find the medals.
- Medals were all in Hebrew and interesting but nothing to write home about; they were tied with a just-ok ribbon which fortunately said "Jerusalem Marathon 2013" in English.
- Food at the finish seemed to be limited to fruit and it was in that crowded section so many of us avoided it. I never found water. Vendors out in the staging area were in far too much demand to get near to them. Here's picture of my post-race meal of Israeli foods at the hotel.
- A few space blankets were seen but most of us couldn't find them but could have used them. I'd fortunately kept both my shirts plus jacket.



Pictures from the web

http://www.google.co.il/search?hl=en&site=imghp&tbm=isch&source=hp&biw=1366&bih=643&oq=jerusalem+marathon+and+arab+wanting+to+cancel+&gs_l=img.3...58.19498.0.21138.69.12.0.57.4.1.224.1644.4j7j1.12.0...0.0...1ac.1.5.img.T6cV-XtvXq0&q=jerusalem%20marathon%20and%20arab%20wanting%20to%20cancel

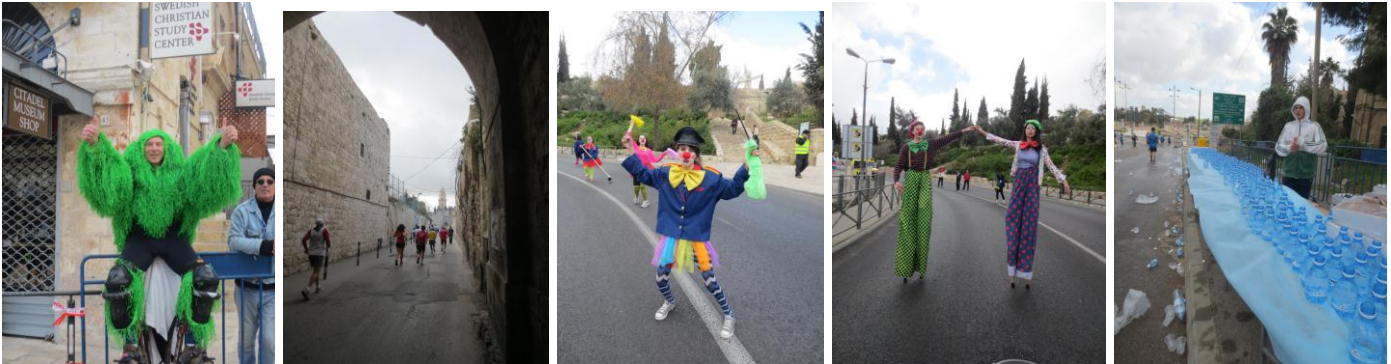
My course observations and entertainment



There was plenty of music, costumes and fun on the course. Note the number of women fully covered and/or running in skirts and headgear.



On the way to the Old City and then at the Wall with lots of costumes and entertainment to take us up the big hill.



Just before entering Old City of Jerusalem through Zion's Gate, and then still more entertainment. Fluid stations were only every 5 kilometers but they gave out small bottles of water. Later there would be bananas and huge dates. Not much else and next to nothing at the finish line.



A little Mexico on the course. The view from above looking down at Old City and Dome of the Rock.

And I thought all was safe?

Poor husband Tom read in local papers about this but decided if any terrorist action it would be at the start not at the end where I'd be: *PLO urges boycott of Jerusalem marathon – dated (AFP) / 27 February 2013 in RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories — The PLO has called for runners and sponsors to boycott the 2013 Jerusalem marathon, saying involvement implies acceptance of Israel's illegal annexation of the city's eastern sector. In a statement, the Palestine Liberation Organisation appealed to "all participants and sponsors of the International Jerusalem Winner Marathon to withdraw their sponsorship and participation or else become complicit in covering up Israel's grave human rights abuses in its occupation of the State of Palestine."* The race which takes place on Friday will see thousands of runners participating in the full 42-kilometre marathon, the half marathon or a 10-kilometre dash. It starts at the Israeli parliament and follows a hilly course, part of which goes through Arab east Jerusalem including a short stretch inside the walled Old City. In a joint statement, the Palestine Olympic Committee, the Palestinian Athletics Federation and the

Higher Council of Youth and Sports said the course demonstrated the “racist policies” of the Israeli government which was “moving the runners from west to east as though the city were truly united.”

“This marathon is part and parcel of other Israeli policies and practices in Jerusalem that are aimed at exerting Israeli control over the occupied city and isolate it from the rest of Palestine,” it said. “Sponsoring or participating in the marathon implies recognition and active participation by the individual or company in Israel’s illegal annexation and racist policies in Jerusalem.”

Yigal Palmor, spokesman for Israel’s foreign ministry expressed frustration over the call for a boycott. “The Palestinians would do better to be in favor of something instead of always being systematically against,” he told AFP. “If they were in favor of something that we could do together, that could help their cause faster than they think.” This year, organizers say 20,000 runners have signed up to compete in the city’s third annual marathon, with participants coming from 52 different countries.

Israel captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed it in a move never recognized by the rest of the world. The Jewish state considers Jerusalem its eternal and indivisible capital, a claim not recognized by the international community. The Palestinians want east Jerusalem as the capital of their promised state. The call came as an internal EU report found that Israel’s settlement construction in east Jerusalem was part of a deliberate strategy to prevent the city from becoming capital of two states.

Then following Tel Aviv’s near cancelation and death, Gaza would cancel their marathon since they wouldn’t let women run. I suspect that doing any marathon trip in Israel is a bit of a gamble.

Weather

It was quite favorable and I ran first in two shirts and a jacket with a Buff headgear and kept the two shirts on the entire time. Only two weeks later for the running of the Tel Aviv marathon they had to cancel it with near 100 degree weather but they ran the half anyway just starting earlier at 5am. Despite those precautions many were hospitalized, some in critical condition, and one young man died.

The most well laid plans

First we had Marsha and husband having to cancel. Marshal fell during a 50K and turns out the wrist is broken and needs pins and she was set for surgery on travel day so cancel they did.

Here’s from Lois who was traveling with Lynn from Chicago through JFK: *I got a call and then an e-mail from Delta that our flight to Tel Aviv had been changed. This is the e-mail I sent to the hotel in Tel Aviv (hope it got there). “My flight has been delayed. We will not arrive now until 2/25 7 a.m. Will not need hotel until evening of 2/25.”*

Oddly - because timing doesn't quite work - my hotel filled Saturday night with crew and passengers on a canceled delta flight to JFK. So there must have been more than one canceled flight. Me? Unusually easy and in fact couldn't have been better with lie-flat bed for a few hours of sleep. Now if I can just get home in time since Marie comes the next day for our Parisian adventure.

Jerusalem host hotel

The Crowne Plaza was with mixed reviews. I prefer to be near to action and this price was right at \$150 which included big buffet breakfast and internet (both are often add-ons.) Fortunately it was

built with quality and class but unfortunately a long time ago. Lovely built in wood cabinets were appreciated as were the many mirrors and marble surfaces as well as the new carpet. But it could use an updating of lighting and electrics as well as the a/c control. My disaster with their internet was likely rare: it would not allow outgoing through my JUNO email, and until the end of my stay they admitted it didn't support outgoing from Outlook. The efforts by their tech support closed down my iPhone which annoyed me to no end. The hotel has two restaurants and a convenient bar with reasonably priced food for Israel.

Like King Herod – the Jews that you love to hate

It's so impressive what the Israeli's have done with their country: New and modern despite their challenges. Tel Aviv built within the last 100-150 years; Jerusalem with so many ethnic background and problems; both cities feeling very comfortable and safe (but what are those continual sirens?) The Jewish folks have much to be proud of so is that what makes so many of them totally obnoxious? I read that the birth rate has been reduced by educating the females but you sure can't tell it by the amount of children especially surrounding the orthodox types.

Maybe important: any child under 26 years of age with any Jewish blood has the right to a ten day totally free tourist trip to Israel granted by an anonymous donor. The \$250 deposit is even refundable. See <http://www.birtherightisrael.com/Pages/Default.aspx> and if you know any child who qualifies, wants to go, and can't come up with the deposit or expenses, please let me know.

Arrival into Tel Aviv

"It's no Paris" by a long shot but it is interesting and it does sit on the Mediterranean. My hotel's balcony has a perfect view down the coast to old Jaffa and over the main city to the east.

Arrival into Tel Aviv was easy in part because I'd slept in a lie flat bed for five hours of the ten and arranged for a private sedan pick up. I don't always travel so well or easy and decided to hedge my bet. Thus I was able to walk miles during the day and didn't slow down until around 5pm.

My hotel was the Renaissance, a Marriott hotel, with thanks to Loudean (who is moving onto the Sheraton chain soon.) Here's from their website: *Best location in Tel Aviv; city center and with direct access to the Mediterranean beach; walking distance to business/entertainment/shopping; the heart of Israel offering the best location directly on the beach and within easy access to business, shopping and entertainment. Located in the city center, our superb luxury hotel in Tel Aviv is situated on the beach where you can sink into the warm white sand and Mediterranean Sea; air-conditioned; features a private balcony with fabulous views, well-lit work desk, wireless Internet, in-room safe and mini-bar; breakfast buffet; indoor swimming pool; on-site fitness gym; sun deck; all rooms with balcony and view of sea.*

It is Shabbat on Saturday so forget much more than walking which I did a whole lot of along the shore; I passed numerous noted beaches, bathers and surfers. Near to my hotel were a throng of wind surfers. Windy it was with huge gusts enough to knock you off your feet but that calmed down by the next day.

First Day's Walk(s)

My walking goal was old Jaffa and with many diversions it took about an hour but was well worth walking the steep stone steps of this first port and 5,000 year old city. It was its early filth, crowding and lack of sewers that caused the creation of Tel Aviv by families who wanted more space too. It's

hard to imagine that was only about a hundred years ago, not only because so much is built but that I didn't know so much filth could accumulate so fast.

High up in the gardens of old Jaffa I came across the dancers of a family Arab wedding in full costume and music. Down below at the port were restaurants and a large market edged by a multitude of fishing boats. A photographers dream, but again, this is no Paris.

Walking through the artist-quarter and into Yafo was the clock tower left from the Ottoman Empire when they built over 100 clocks. I started into the Florentin area but it was dim and dismal enough to take me back shore side and by the trade tower, Dan Panorama Hotel (Dan was an original family name of the area) and the equally unimpressive Intercontinental Hotel, heading to Carmel market. I got diverted to Ben Yehuda Street where I'd been earlier but this was the southern stretch leading into Dizengoff center and long shopping street part of which is covered with a highway. It was clear that I might as well be in America though a filthy part of America.

I'm reminded that the world is flat. Other than the Shabbat restrictions so much of what I've seen could have been about anywhere. Earlier I found a coffee shop for Internet then figured out that some streets and parks are connected too. It is somewhat absurd that my hotel charges \$26 a day Internet. It annoyed me and I refused to pay all the while just cutting off my own nose so to speak. (Later I would relent for a one 24-hour session so I could Face Time with Tom.)

Gordon Street and Dom Vos Street are near to my hotel and said to be good examples of Bauhaus homes. White city isn't very white but they do have the columns that lift the front part of the house up like stilts for I don't know what reason, and they do have the round balconies. These streets are also site of many art studios where it is common to walk in one and out the back door to the back street.

The park of Ben Gurion Street was nicer and ringed by richer homes: tree lined with pedestrian walkway and wee eating kiosks that were open, Shabbat or not. Lots of bicycle lanes everywhere and here it was so wide as to differentiate each mode of travel with center lanes for bicycles, side lanes for pedestrians, then a line of trees, with cars on either side. Very Champs Elyse looking though in smaller form.

Tel Aviv memory pictures



From my hotel balcony towards the Sheraton and old city of Jaffa; my hotel; old city of Jaffa and the steps and cats up to the top of the hill; I would feel a part of this wedding and later watch them dance and sing in their circle of music.



After the art shops and many little narrow cobblestone streets going up and down hills I found the port with restaurants, fun and celebrations as it was a holiday complete with big eats and celebratory costumes like for our Halloween. Many restaurants served the type of meal with a multitude of small dishes and taste to add inside of fresh made pita. We would experience that a number of times on later tours.



I was limited with how much more I could eat after setting in with my hotel's buffet breakfast. Yet again, over the course of travels I would sample many new and different foods.



The Renaissance is on the water and every room has a balcony and beach view. It was near to Parks and shopping areas and in between two ports. It is a Marriott so thank you very much Loudean for the discount.

Curiosities

- What is a Shabbat elevator? There is one in my hotel. All this is a bit amusing but nice that they believe and abide. Most everything closes Friday early evening through Saturday early evening. Even car services costs more. Jerusalem hotels won't check you in until Shabbat is over. Forget eating. Guess they diet? I'm told Friday evening brings some very dark neighborhoods by those who won't even use electricity on Shabbat.
- Security? On Shabbat I got into the hotel directly with no stop, no questions, and no security. The next day that wasn't possible without full security of bag check, the wand and questions. Guess

terrorists don't work on Shabbat either. Praise 'racial profiling' if you're one of those that aren't checked.

- On the way to Israel Newark gave extra security at the gate. I'd not realized how long the second line would be so I boarded with group four having gone through a second yet silly check.
- Prostitutes? Are you sitting down? In Tel Aviv there were masses of cards on the ground like on the Vegas Strip and they photograph women in various stages of undress and I only presume the language is Hebrew and it's soliciting 'escort' service.

My first full day

Sunday at 7:20am I took the Pearls of the Western Galilee aka Coastal Plains tour all the way up to the Lebanese border and to the edge of the Western Galilee Hills. Billed as: Caesarea, Haifa, Acre and Rosh Hanikra -- Drive along the coastal road to Caesarea, the ancient Roman capital and port, with a walking tour of the theatre, archaeological ruins and excavations. Continue to Haifa, for a scenic view of the city, port and Bahja Gardens. Proceed via Nahariya to Rosh Hanikra to visit the limestone grottoes on the border with Lebanon. Next stop in Acre, visit the Crusaders and Turkish underground city and crypt. Walk through the Old City, oriental market, Arab Mosque and the Old Port.

Here's from notes sent to Tom: King Herod might have been hated but he was also loved by some. He built Caesarea about 2,000 years ago as much because he was Roman and they enjoyed bloody sports and statuary and a much different way of life than those in Jerusalem. It was built on sand dunes then as much of the coastal area did, returned to sand dunes again in our recent history, only to be recovered enough that it's possible to see the massive structures. Caesarea was once the largest port in area, but many ports came and went. Too funny: almost too late I realized the ruins were all w/ fi connected. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesarea>



We drove through the Carmel wine valley with vines, lupine, cyclamen, poppies and lots more color. Saw Carmelite Monastery, more open fields, kibbutz and the others that are run more like co-ops and the small Arab plots too, learning the difference between the three. Did you know Kibbutz weren't as socialistic or communistic as some of us thought? Developed by the individuals not the government. This area is surprisingly all along the edge of the Western Galilee hills.

The Grottos were a little bit spooky. One rides the steepest cable car known in the world to the seaside and walks through these tunnels with the waves crashing up. Well, unless the caves are closed for too many waves. It's exactly at the border so one looks up at Lebanon and over into no-man's land and down the long pathway where no pictures are allowed and the UN operates. We took pictures anyway and of all the barbed wire.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosh_HaNikra_grottoes

Rosh HaNikra is the town and translates to "head of the grottos" is a geologic formation in Israel, located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, in the Western Galilee. It is a white chalk cliff face which opens up into spectacular grottos. The Rosh HaNikra grottos are cavernous tunnels formed by sea action on the soft chalk rock. The total length is some 200 meters. They branch off in various directions with some interconnecting segments. In the past, the only access to them

was from the sea and experienced divers were the only ones capable of visiting. Today a cable car takes visitors down to see the grottos.



The Book of Joshua mentions "Misraphot Mayim" as a place south of Rosh HaNikra that was the border of the Israelite tribes of the time). Jewish sages referred to the cliff as "The Ladder of Tyre" (Hebrew: sullam Tzor). The site was later renamed A-Nawakir ("the grottos") after an Arab conquest. The present name, Rosh HaNikra, is Hebrew for the later Arabic name "Ras-an-Nakura". Throughout human history, Rosh HaNikra served as a passage point for trade caravans and armies between Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Egypt, and Africa. During World War II, British Commonwealth forces blasted railway tunnels through the nearby rocks for trains running along the Cairo-Istanbul line. A railway bridge was destroyed by Jewish underground fighters prior to 1948 during the Night of the bridges operation. The tunnel portal leading to Lebanon has since been sealed. Nowadays all the railways on the Lebanese side of the border have been dismantled while the Coastal Railway in Israel currently ends near Nahariya, several kilometers to the south. Rosh Hanikra was the location where Israeli and Lebanese officials negotiated and concluded an armistice agreement in 1949 which ended the Lebanese-Israeli component of the 1948 War of Israeli Independence. A border passage across the Blue Line into Lebanon at the site is sometimes used by UNIFIL personnel.

Acre or Akko. Site for lunch of hummus or falafel choice but both are chick peas and hummus was on the table anyway so I got mixed grill but only after asking for a caffeine fix of a cappuccino first. The table was full of unusual tastings like salads, beets, the hummus, spiced vegetables, etc.

Akko is said to be one of wonders of the world and I'd certainly agree it deserves the title. It is a whole ancient port city above ground and then a whole ancient-er city underground. Huge money would have been spent by the Crusaders and then the Turks to build it. The Hospitaliers and the Templers really made their mark and we walked through the huge and well developed sewer systems of the Templers. Had not Akko been held during Napoleon's warring, the world might be a lot different today? Maybe we have Akko to thank for not speaking French? Funny story: When the Turks took over the Crusaders buildings, the just filled it in with sand and built on top. As our guide suggests, only a Turk would think of doing it that way. The Crusaders stone work was rich and well built. The Turks, well, you can guess.

In Akko we had our daily shopping fix in a couple copper shops and one gave us a demo of how they form the artistic plates. I saw some unique jewelry and a little silver filigree box that I would have had if I were a shopper.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acre,_Israel

Antiquity - Acre is one of the oldest continuously inhabited sites in the region. The name Aak, which appears on the tribute-lists of Thutmose III (c. 16th century BC), may be a reference to Acre. The Amarna letters also mention a place named Akka, as well as the Execration texts, that pre-date them. In the Hebrew Bible, (Judges 1:31), Akko is one of the places from which the Israelites did not drive out the Canaanites. It is later described in the territory of the tribe of Asher

and according to Josephus, was ruled by one of Solomon's provincial governors. Throughout Israelite rule, it was politically and culturally affiliated with Phoenicia. Around 725 BC, Akko joined Sidon and Tyre in a revolt against Shalmaneser V.



We had plenty of discussion about the fluctuation of ownership of the coast line as it went from one country to another: Roman vs. Christian vs. Muslim. Sounds like whenever the Muslim's took over everything deteriorated. It was once very built up and a power house for trade but not much more than a hundred years ago Israel lands were barren desert or swamp and much neglected.

At Akko the Turkish bazaar was a challenge to get through; it was tight, heavily packed with both merchandise and people with a strong desire to sell. One of the gals, a fellow hiker, told me I must try fresh squeezed pomegranate juice and then bought me one and it was a delight. Pomegranates are everywhere here, as are the current crop of avocados.

On way out of the city to Haifa one of guys got up for moment to collect his backpack from the luggage rack then did a major fall from one end of bus to next. We had just learned about a past client who got hit by a rogue wave at the grottos then had to be helicoptered out with broken leg.

Haifa and gardens: This is now the third largest city and next to last largest port city now that another port has been built farther south. They say Tel Aviv plays, Jerusalem prays and Haifa pays. It is the financial powerhouse of workers, port and factories.

The big tourist attraction is the gardens of Eden built by the Baha'i faith and home to their leader's crypt. Interesting and worth looking up. They honor all gods and I've often wondered (please don't strike me down!) how it is that we can think everyone but US are going to hell. They believe that no one is superior and certainly not worth creating war over. To have a Baha'i headquarters in Haifa they



Akko really did qualify as a Wonder of the World that so much underground remains from early Crusade days, but so did we wonder why the beautiful white grain elevator. Another wonder.

Back to Tel Aviv at the start of the trip

Lois and Lynne arrived early this morning, only one day late. When emailing they sounded all set and not much interested in my plans, which was fine, so I was alone for the day. It was my goal to sleep in and have a very long and leisurely breakfast over newspapers and countless cups of coffee and I was successful taking all of the morning until nearly 11am.

Then I was quickly off to the hop on/hop off bus tour of the city. I can't say it was great but we covered a lot of ground, some of it I'd done on my feet and some of it I'd never have known to see. I picked it up just outside my hotel and it costs just a pittance of something like 45 shekels which is something in the range of \$12-\$13.

First driving down the coast southerly, it was the same as what I'd walked my first day but you see it differently from a bus. By all the big hotels across the numerous noted beaches we would eventually get to Old Yafo and circle around and under where I'd watched the music and dancing of an Arab wedding. By the clock tower and shopping district primarily for shoes, into the artist's quarter and Neve Tsedek, we'd eventually go down Rothschild Avenue with the embassy estates and big shops and lovely homes. Well, more lovely than other areas. The architecture doesn't do a lot for me being rather stark and the white being dingy. Shenkin Street, then the theatre district and museums and finally down Dizingoff Center and street where the main shopping occurs and some of it elevated. I'd walked there my first day and was actually rather amazed at myself for all the miles I did. Ben Gurion Road I'd seen but I never caught which was his house and now a museum. Rabin Square and the memorial where he was assassinated was new as was the Tel Aviv Museum, Azrael Towers and second train station. Many more museums, University area and big overlook of the city completed the tour until we were into the terminal.

Later I'd walk southerly along the shore to the first port area where the tour had taken me. I was out long enough to get the sunset which went on for more than an hour with the final touches being the most dramatic and long after the sun had set. The shore is amazing as much for the entire boardwalk and equally special for all the people who are out walking, running, bicycling, roller boarding, etc. the areas. I walked through Independence Park again and by the Ben Gurion Boulevard too.

Blessed! Thoughts on eve of departure from Tel Aviv

While I say that you may as well be in NYC as Tel Aviv that isn't quite fair. The Mediterranean seaside is quite the draw. My first afternoon I walked a very long ways southerly to the first known port known as Old Jaffa. (Lois and Lynne suggest it was over 5 miles one way and I was farther

north.) Today I retraced some of that after also driven it. Then this evening I set out to walk northerly as far as I could. It's really lovely if not dramatic and to think this Israeli rebuild is only about 100 years old.



Some high rise buildings from the Rockefeller area plus some not-unusual soldiers on the streets. The weird art work is in their museum quarter. Everybody in every country is just trying to be different? Now it's the norm.



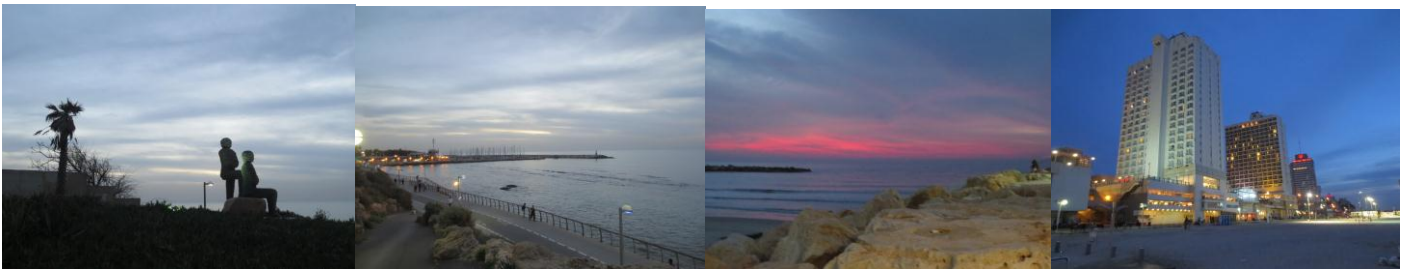
I tried to get a fix on the Bauhaus architecture and walked two neighborhoods famous for it but it just didn't catch me as anything but super simple and uninteresting. The high rises do typically feature balconies so as to see more of the seaside. More interesting was the Yitzhak Rabin Square and Holocaust Museum and place where he was assassinated in 1995.



The opera house, multitude of high-rises and their Azreli Center with three shapes of high-rise and great observation tower. High on the hill was a university complex that I drove through.



Yes there were homeless people in the parks too which sort of surprised me but why should Israel be immune? Back to the beachfront and near to my hotel was a memorial to the Altalena that failed off this shore and with enough description to bring tears. I suppose all countries have some 'ghosts' but Israel has more than their fair share.



The evening long walk on the boardwalk to the northernmost port of Tel Aviv was a delight and I spent plenty of time just watching the sky, the colors and the people. The picture of the boys gawking in the toilet windows brought a smile.

As did sitting on my balcony looking out to sea and southwards towards the lit skyline and old Jaffa sticking out to sea behind the high rises I can't think of many places as special. Maybe Honolulu. Maybe Miami. Perhaps Rio de Janeiro. All have their downsides and Tel Aviv rates very high as being special. It sure deserves it.



Of which is also to say how lucky I feel to have been able to see this sight. Feel their history. Know how important this city and country is to the Jews. To get more understanding of the history. I am truly blessed: Physically. Mentally. Financially. To have enough.... To know when is enough....

Early tomorrow I am off to Jerusalem for about seven days. How lucky is that!

Moving onto Jerusalem



How to get from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem? I'm told the train is the prettiest but priciest and longest at 75 minutes. The bus is the most logical. But that would take a taxi to the bus, then the bus and who knows what schedule, then a taxi to the hotel, so all-in-all a \$50 full day tour that will transport me from hotel to hotel was a good deal in my book.

Tuesday notes home

It is one hour drive from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem if no traffic. I will take all day! It is another beautiful day though the start and the first day was part foggy then very windy. Hotel pick up is 7:30am. The whole concept seemed a bargain; I pay a wee bit more or similar and get entertained for the day plus taken to a local restaurant to learn new foods, more touring, then dropped direct at my Jerusalem hotel at end of day. Some of the tour will be overlap but heaven knows I can use the double education. Plus the land between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem is certainly new and maybe even the wildflowers we had on the drive up the coast northerly.

Saw many all-new cities that did look white plus all different architecture. Big cemeteries and historical sites would suggest that if one had a car the Plains would have interest. One new city looked new but had been founded 2000 years ago. Where had it gone? That has happened over and over in Israel with one conqueror after another – and all in the name of religion! Some of this history is enough to make you wonder about religions

Went from lush green to sudden dessert to what is called the West Bank even though it's not far west. Grazing laws are different and in the West Bank goats are let go and they are like lawnmowers. It suddenly became rocky with tiny settlements set among big hills, rolling hills. Several villages were encircled by fences and walls. Palestinian settlements with some that were just settled by Supreme Court. Road closures now reopened but there remain checkpoints where they look into the van, we're requested by the driver and/or tour guide to smile, and then we're waved through. Racial profiling is alive and well and we are often grateful for it.

Tour guides often claim the news gives only bad sides yet we hear examples of coexistence and working together. Discussed new South African decision to mark which side manufactures and how complicated and wrong that can become. Went thru industrial sections where both nations work side by side. All our tour guides were well versed in history and filled us in, either academically or with humor. One guy was working on his PhD in history. Another had been a tour guide for "2 weeks and 38 years." Always we got their historical perspective. Once we got the political side of some of their wars and how many were miracles. Like the story of only having 6 million bullets available but ...

Wow, we went by and could see Ramallah and went thru checkpoints. Realizing it was only ten miles away and yet a really big distance – politically. Such an oddity that Jerusalem may become capital of two states if there is a division.

Plenty of tour guides mentioned the problem of the ultra-orthodox or Hasidic Jews not sharing in work or Army burden and how they are having a disproportionate number of children. I later learned that there's even an institute to determine how to live with Shabbat and one can only imagine that is a tax burden too. I should add some info about Shabbat for those who are as ignorant as I am. The hotel had all kinds of arrangements from a low energy elevator, pre-set alarms, low lighting, no telephone, etc.

Curiosities

- Tours are either tourist class or business class. Pay for tourist and you might get the smaller mini-van like I did on trip to Jerusalem. I paid up for coastal plains trip.
- Black coffee in hotel room is an instant coffee that requires constant stirring or it settles to bottom and is real mud. Chew your coffee? Housekeeping couldn't imagine why I wanted the Nescafé instant.
- Hebrew has snuck in many English words. Purists are not happy about that.
- Traffic can be gruesome. We saw miles worth going into Tel Aviv and took a detour for the Coastal Plains trip.
- Saw what I thought was a Tel (mound of old cities built over time one on top of the other) but turned out to be a major dumping ground. Now that Israel also turned Eco it's newly planted as a green park for recreation with theater built within too.
- Uneven numbered roads go east and west whereas other countries opposite. Only Canada numbered this way.
- Halloween - Yesterday was last day of Jewish Halloween which lasted three days where folks dress in costumes.

We drove by Lot, the new city outside the airport, and where Richard the Lion Heart fought against Saladin. It is where the agreement was signed giving birth to new country. We arrived into Jerusalem at 9am and picked up two more tourists at Leonardo hotel which was next to the famous American Colony Hotel, home to journalists and often in the news.

Big question: what is the difference between a freedom fighter and a terrorist. . . . I'd guess it's a thin line and depends on what side you are on.

Visited my first time to Mt of Olives which is the highest hill overlooking the Old City and where Jesus allegedly entered Jerusalem. I would subsequently be on two more tours that went up to Mt Olive and each would stop at a different area and give a different view and verbal perspective. The first trip included tourist camels which reminded me of the sweet smiling faces of llamas and alpacas of Peru.

Every tour stopped us at a private shopping area and suggested we get it over with and not try to shop in the Old City. This one offered us Turkish black coffee that's very sweet with added cardamom. It was good for one sip It was on this trip that I met an East Londoner who was backpacking for six months. Our tour to the Old City this time entered via the Lions Gate. The driver

took us up the hill saving us the walk and in order to do so on the one way street he backed up the entire block. Fast! We all held our breaths and smiled.



I had three different tours into the Old City and amazingly everyone was different. Even up on Mt Olives we stopped at different places and thus had a different view, and a different spin on the story. I was enchanted with the smiling camel, like the llamas of Peru. See Dome of the Rock? And every visit we entered from a different gate and here was the Lions Gate. The first tour took us to each Stations of the Cross but the problem was all the crusaders carrying their own crosses going the same route along the Via Dolorosa. Each ended at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher but even there each tour saw something different. My first tour took in the early Stations and subsequent tours stated near the Via Dolorosa and the Fifth Station or later.



The third picture is Mary's birthplace complete with a church in her honor.



At the church of flagellation. Just one of many churches and I began to wonder if they all could really be historical or if they might be wishful thinking.



The “hand” is a door-handle or door knocker. Here’s one of three parrots I saw in the market. And yes, there are lots of commercial enterprises from foodstuff to belly dance looking clothing and while at first it seemed offensive we were reminded that the Via had shops and money changers during the time of Jesus too. But really – do we need “Stop and Shop: Mike Store”????



One of the crusaders and they were en-masse my first trip in. The low door is the only entryway into one of the Stations and a church where the Queen of Sheba is pictured. She went home with a lot more than intended but I don’t think the mosaic or fresco shows her pregnancy.



The mosaic art shows the story and in particular the stone where Jesus was cleaned. That stone is there with many crusaders bringing their articles and garments for blessing I suppose. Note the H&M bag being rubbed across the stone. This church was built by the crusaders in the 12th century but added to many times. The more bewildering aspect is how several Christian communities share the church with each ‘owning’ a portion or chapel or altar. The picture at the end was only open my first visit and I believe is owned by the Greeks and it contains a marker said to be the ‘beginning’ or marker for the center of the world. Just outside is the main rotunda that we didn’t have a chance to

get into until my third visit: THE TOMB. On my first visit we got into the cave where Jesus was said to have been held and that's my shadow inside it. Amusing.



At another visit we would see a ceremony with monks and candles. The lines were horrific. The crowds were suffocating but each time the crowd was in a different place and we were able to see different places. It seemed that many crusaders wanted to kiss one or all of the locations where Jesus was said to have been.



I suppose the Western or Wailing Wall is the most popular and notable but my least favorite place to be as the public display was offsetting. Men and women have separate sides but many were taking photos over the barrier wall. On my third visit I simply took a walk in another direction while folks put their notes and requests into the wall. The people were at times interesting but I felt like a voyeur and uncomfortable watching them.



The markets and street vendors were a delight and maybe that's why I came home with a couple extra pounds. I would have liked to see more of the Old Caro or shopping street and here is a mural at the end of the ruins showing what it might have looked like: except see the humor? The painter added a little boy in a baseball cap and backpack far down on the right hand side.

The last of the three tours took us into the Armenian Quarter and that was the original and better preserved. Their church with chanting going on is only open about a half hour a day and we managed to get inside and I recorded the songs.

I would have liked to do the Rampart Walk too but realize that one can't ever do everything and it's not so bad to leave some things undone. Better that than leaving having been bored the last day.

Challenge: upon registering at the Crowne Plaza in Jerusalem, my outgoing mail ceased to work. Hours (no exaggeration) of tech help only compounded the problem. I'd been able to send emails through my iPhone from restaurants and museums but after a failure by Crowne Plaza techs, no outbound would work anywhere. I was not very polite about it after he admitted that their system doesn't accommodate some email providers or Outlook – a major provider. A couple days later my Outlook on the computer began working but by then we'd screwed up my JUNO settings and outgoing never worked again until a visit to the Apple Store when I got home. It annoyed me to no end as this is my main means of communication with Tom.

Wednesday to Jerusalem of Gold tour

The day started very pleasantly with a big buffet breakfast with Mae and Sharon. Fascinating gals in their own right with both having super stories and being most impressive. I had pause at the buffet offerings as they were foodstuff I'd love to eat for dinner but am not so sure I want all the salads and raw fish for breakfast.

Jerusalem wisely made a ruling that all buildings had to be faced with the white Jerusalem stone. While that ruling probably started with the British mandate, it has remained. Too bad it didn't stay so white but like the White City of Tel Aviv, it's creamy or faded in many places. Of 7 million population of Israel, close to 1 million reside in Jerusalem with it being about 1/2 million Jewish and 200,000 Arabs. 35,000 live in the confines of the Old City where the original inhabitants are about 1,000 Armenians now. Amazing to realize that the Old City is 4,000 years old but the new is only 700. I say only tongue-in-cheek. We got the history from Jewish side and how they had no choice but to engage the 967 war. Wall was closed and homes were lost. We mostly see all road signs in three languages. What a challenge for all to live together peacefully so no wonder it's not always so peaceful.

Thursday took us to the Dead Sea

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea - fascinating and a good read but too much to copy into this report.

And to Masada

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masada> - an ancient fortification in the Southern District of Israel, on top of an isolated rock plateau (akin to a mesa) on the eastern edge of the Judean Desert, overlooking the Dead Sea. Herod the Great built palaces for himself on the mountain and fortified Masada between 37 and 31 BCE. The Siege of Masada by troops of the Roman Empire towards the end of the First Jewish–Roman War ended in the mass suicide of the 960 Jewish rebels and their families holed up there. Masada is Israel's most popular paid tourist attraction.

The cliffs on the east edge of Masada are about 1,300 feet high and the cliffs on the west are about 300 feet high; the natural approaches to the cliff top are very difficult. The top of the plateau is flat and rhomboid-shaped, about 1,800 feet by 900 feet. There was a casemate wall around the top of the plateau totaling 4,300 feet long and 12 feet high, with many towers, and the fortress included

storehouses, barracks, an armory, the palace, and cisterns that were refilled by rainwater. Three narrow, winding paths led from below up to fortified gates.



Notes home for the Thursday February 28 tour to Masada and the Dead Sea

So nice that we drove via much of the marathon route and it was already signed so we were clear where it was. Getting the lay of the land, realize that we are 800 meters above sea level in Jerusalem and going to 1200 meters below or 3600 feet to the Dead Sea. Dead Sea is the lowest place in world. It's an oddity that since 400 meters of air is above, so you're filtered from the bad rays; thus spas here are common. This is the saltiest lake in world at 33 percent versus Salt Lake City at 22 percent all caused by evaporation. Salary word comes from verb salt. Israel exports \$30 million of salt. This is a bird paradise and passageway for migration. Ears pop very quickly on way down. Saw a huge stone pillar at edge of highway showing sea level.

Clouds and rain get stuck and thus we moved from Jerusalem's green fertile grounds to a sudden desert; moved from green to gray yellow which will remain this way 11 months of the year. Only the Bedouin can handle this terrain. They marry four women then have even forty children. Women and children do all the work and in their civilization women are still purchased. All along the sides of the roads we saw their tent shanties like they lived 2 to 4,000 years ago. Looked worse than gypsies.

Passed the Good Samaritan Inn as well as being able to see Jericho in the distance. It's the oldest city in the world at 10,000 years old. Highway edge gave us camels and little markets all pretty much looking like they are for tourists. Palestinians now control Jericho and the surrounding area. Border control like at Texas Big Bend area and border. Date farms everywhere. One third of world's dates come from here. Each tree gives 350 kilo of dates year.

Kamran Caves were seen in the distance; this is where the Dead Sea scrolls were found. Guide recommended Shrine of the Book next to Israel museum (which I later did.) Marie and I saw special exhibit on loan from there while it was displayed in NYC.

Stopped for a visit at the Ahava Cosmetics factory; it is known all over world. Factory said to have prices less than duty free. After a sales pitch the pitch was high and I might be the only one who didn't purchase. I'm happy with how I look and don't mind admitting to using a 99 cent aloe vera product for years. Shoppers were like the scenes I've seen for bridal dress sales with plenty of pushing and shoving going on but I later realized this is much of the Jewish way.

Onto Masada: King Herod was a converted Jew who was both loved and hated. He had a series of palaces including Caesarea but this Masada was only for protection and actually never even visited

by Herod. Included an amazing water diversion methods with twenty cisterns filled with enough water for their nearly 1000 people for 20 years. Palace was just a hiding place in case needed.

Dramatic story of the end of the village which happened much later and had to do with 960 suicides. We could see the Roman encampments and walls all around and where the final breach was made but before then the entire village decided to NOT be taken. These stories have been proven but were first learned by a couple old women and children who had hid from the suicide pact. After a one hour walking tour we were left at a series of cafeterias and can you believe -- then we found a McDonald in their cafeteria.

The stop at the Dead Sea was after Masada tour probably so those who indulged didn't have so much time with 'salt' which felt like sand on their bodies and in their hair. Of course the Sea is really a huge lake with spas on both sides including on the Jordan side. It is unfortunately dying with fresh water being used or diverted instead of being refilled. It has lost 150 feet and still losing 30 meters a year. There's a proposed solution about building a canal but it requires agreement with Jordan and not consummated yet.

Offered were a hot water option, salt or clear water, or even a massage; then we were reminded to never get head in water as it'll blind you for ten minutes. The salt water will also turn silver jewelry black. Two hours to lounge. Shocking the folks who have no shame and will bare huge flabby bodies with only a bikini or speedo just like we saw in Rio de Janeiro; it's probably pretty healthy that they are comfortable in their bodies.

Along the way we saw Ibex along the side of the road and also a huge herd closer to Masada as seen from above.

Saturday to Galilee Biblical Highlights

6am departure meant we lost breakfast. But then didn't come until 6:45 and still had two pick-ups causing a 7am start. Our guide was Danny who went thru history and boundary changes by showing us various maps including one of the new Walls. We see Walls and electric fences all over.

We went into Nazareth the Old City and the new church commemorating where Mary learned from the angel that she would give birth to Jesus. She was only engaged to Joseph at the time. Church built around old Byzantine ruins. All around the old we see the new rooftops of water tanks and solar panels as required by law.

Into the city of Cana and their church: Best was the dessert wine samples of Cana that not only tasted good but was amusingly listed as the first miracle wedding wine: a wine label sure to create a sale.

Very much enjoyed lunch at a place that was full of tourists where we were offered St. Peter's fish also known as tilapia while overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Must ask daughter why we aren't to eat tilapia any more. I can't believe it so I ate it anyway. For me, it was a nice tourist restaurant seaside with generous salad bar, two fish, potatoes then dates and Turkish coffee for about 120 shekels including a glass of wine.

From there we had a view of Mt Hebron's snow-capped mountain just in the distance over the Sea of Galilee. Into Tiberius which is one of four holy cities: Hebron, Jerusalem, Tiberius (Talmud home) then Safed (made famous recently by Madonna and her Kabbalah studies.) I was sorry to miss seeing Safed but made the conscious decision to see what I saw well and not do 'fly-overs.'

The tour included the Tablag church commemorating the feeding of 5000 with just a little bit of fish and bread; later we went onto Peter's Primacy: he was first pope.

Onto Capernaum's Church and synagogue where Jesus lived and where we had a view of Galilee and where we would be given a surprise offer to sail the waters. Coming back from the boat ride gave us time to see the 2,000 year old fishing boat from the time of Jesus; it was preserved in time and shown in the museum called Man of the Galilee. We had a view of the shores of the Golan Heights. So many names we know from news reports.

We stopped at a kibbutz with a baptismal site sitting on the Jordan River. It was a surprisingly big business of baptizing and folks were even lined up in the water. You could buy your video and bottles of holy water. Big business of selling the robes, the video, books, etc.

On the way home it was a drive all along the Jordan River; it seemed only a kilometer away to see Jordanian settlements on the other side of the river. It was first a fertile valley but it soon becomes desert.

As an added site the driver took us to Beit jil (spelling?) but it was closed so we just saw it through the fence and from an aerial view. It was where King Saul was beheaded and displayed and we could see the old hippodrome.

Bethlehem

Notes home from tour to Bethlehem and Old Jerusalem: I do wonder if anybody is picked up on time: 9am turned into 9:20 and another day even worst at 6:40am when it was supposed to be 6am. I'm grumpy enough in the morning

Jerusalem is such a full and condensed city. One hears sirens often yet I feel plenty safe. Oops just heard about a lovely ballerina from Paris getting mugged on Mt Olive yesterday and even worst is that the police wouldn't help or take report since it was Shabbat, then a group was stoning the police car which took her to the closed station, allegedly for working on Shabbat: all this in the name of religion? Guess when you think of all the wars started in the name of religion it should be no surprise.

Hotels: yesterday Lois and Lynne had to change hotel rooms due to ant-infestation. I know because they walk to my hotel to use computer. Mae and Sharon had to change rooms due to a total toilet malfunction. Then Lois and Lynne had to move again so they could paint on their floor.

Tour went by Mt Scopus then to Mt Olive via the hilltop Hebrew University which is oldest university in country. Scopus is at 800 meters and at border of Judean dessert with a view of the Jordan Valley. This was my third time up yet still a different view and new information. Or did I just forget? All pieces starting to come together and make more sense.

Jerusalem's white stone was mandated as a facing to all buildings back in the British control days and the law remains meaning about 99 percent of buildings match. It helps but it isn't as white as expected.

Gas is about 9 shekels per liter but cars aren't generally as small as European countries. This would equate to a bit more than European prices but the good news is that natural gas has recently been discovered within their boundaries whereas they'd been totally reliant on the outside before.

Many areas have settlements and apartment blocks that remind me of Hong Kong resettlement areas. Very heavy concentrations of people.

Bethlehem means town of bread. It is surrounded by a big wall so the border crossing is time consuming and not easy. In fact, security and border crossing was much more than expected. We walked thru no-man's land with no pictures allowed and this wasn't a place to take any chances. We had series of guides who passes us off to the next one.

Our goal was not only the town of Bethlehem but the caves where Jesus born. It should not have surprised me that there was a huge line up with one hour wait and pushy crowds. Our guide knew the policemen and took us by 2s and 3s to the front of the line where we pushed and shoved too.

Like happened to me on a bus in China, we were literally hijacked for shopping. I played along and spent quite a bit on one item. Back over the border took until 2pm before we had a lunch stop so fortunately I had some food. Our lunch stop would be a monastery with garden courtyard and many old olive trees for late lunch. Greek Orthodox with many frescoes.

Then off to one of first octagonal churches in world and stone remains where Mary was just pre-birth. It was just a foundation but clear in its shape. We saw it just as we were reentering Tel Aviv during rush hour.

We drove into the Old City via still another route which was oddly modern: the first startling sign and realizing this was another world was seeing a Nespresso store. This tour was till more new areas of quarters with going into the inner part of the Armenian quarter and attending a church service being the more striking and entertaining. This church is only open for about 30 minutes a day to outsiders so we were lucky to make it on time and hear their chanting – which I recorded. Of course the Wailing all had to be on the tour again so I wandered along new paths instead.

Our guide looked like an unmade bed but spoke well and with little accent. It's not unusual to hear an o at the end of each word. He had a shock full of curly black hair and a few days of black facial hair complete with cotton clothes straight out of the dirty clothes hamper.

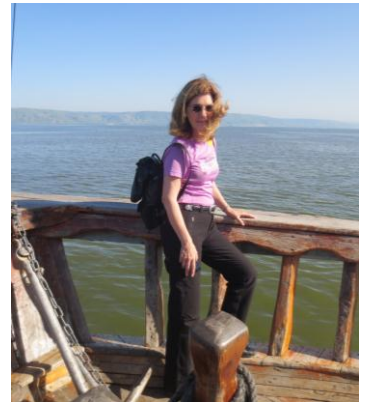
Over lunch we'd met a couple who suggest staying at the inexpensive Gordon Hotel in Tel Aviv (not hostel) across from my Renaissance Hotel. They said it was simple and small but gave a refrigerator of wine and beverages and great help and service.



A new church built around the ruins of the old was not unusual, and in the case of Mary's church, gifts of art work came from many nationalities and lined the halls both inside and out. In Cana there were wines offered and by then I was grateful for all the sampling I could get.



From the little church at the edge of the Sea of Galilee we would go to the Museum of the Man of Galilee and set sail. Can you tell the gals need a drink too? We were all probably getting church' d out and I began to feel like 'if you've seen one you've seen them all' but of course different Jesus or Mary or somebody things went on in each of them, or hopefully did. This museum and its famous 2,000 year old boat that could have been owned by Jesus was a delightful change. There were wine samples there too so maybe that helped.



Next up was a visit to a kibbutz on the edge of the Jordan River where baptisms were performed. Many. They were lined up and after being baptized you could purchase your bottles of holy water, or a video, or the garments, or any number of souvenirs. This is religion?



After the lining up to be baptized with all the huge catfish in the water, seeing the calm burial ground was nice.



Going to Bethlehem was more than a challenge and more border crossing than we'd encountered. One is handed off from one guide to another, one handler to another, and at one point we walk

through no-man's land on our own. But they need employment and commercialism is well and alive. See Star & Bucks? We were accosted everywhere to purchase, well, except by this nice looking young priest. His church was a zoo and the lines were going to take from 1-2 hours until our guide got us in two at a time into the mass of people. I'd say it was rather dangerous to get down into the caves where Jesus had been born and where everybody wanted to kiss the spot marked with a star. I wouldn't have believed the ugliness of the crowds had I not seen it for myself. Again, this is religion?



Though there are hundreds of pictures I'd love to share, here's my third and final trip into the Old City's market where I could have spent days watching the crusaders, wild costumes, looking at weird offerings like pipes, parrots, mineral rocks, red bras and bikini undies in the Arab Souk and any kind of head covering you might need presumably to match an outfit. Another section might include types of food encountered, but I'll spare you, my tired fingers, and get on with closing up these many pages of great delight.

Israel Museum and Shrine of the Book (Dead Sea Scrolls)



From their web site: *The Israel Museum is the largest cultural institution in the State of Israel and is ranked among the world's leading art and archaeology museums. Founded in 1965, the Museum houses encyclopedic collections, including works dating from prehistory to the present day, in its Archaeology, Fine Arts, and Jewish Art and Life Wings, and features the most extensive holdings of biblical and Holy Land archaeology in the world. In just forty-five years, thanks to a legacy of gifts and generous support from its circle of patrons worldwide, the Museum has built a far-ranging collection of nearly 500,000 objects, representing the full scope of world material culture.*

In the summer of 2010, the Israel Museum completed the most comprehensive upgrade of its 20-acre campus in its history, featuring new galleries, entrance facilities, and public spaces. The three-year expansion and renewal project was designed to enhance visitor experience of the Museum's collections, architecture, and surrounding landscape, complementing its original design by Alfred Mansfeld and Dora Gad. Among the highlights of the Museum's original campus is the Shrine of the Book, designed by Armand Bartos and Frederick Kiesler, which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest biblical manuscripts in the world, as well as rare early medieval biblical manuscripts. Adjacent to the Shrine is

the Model of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period, which reconstructs the topography and architectural character of the city as it was prior to its destruction by the Romans in 66 CE, and provides historical context to the Shrine's presentation of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Museum's celebrated Billy Rose Art Garden, designed for the original campus by Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi, is counted among the finest outdoor sculpture settings of the 20th century. An Oriental landscape combined with an ancient Jerusalem hillside, the garden serves as the backdrop for the Israel Museum's display of the evolution of the modern western sculptural tradition. On view are works by modern masters including Jacques Lipchitz, Henry Moore, Claes Oldenburg, Pablo Picasso, Auguste Rodin, and David Smith, together with more recent site-specific commissions by such artists as Magdalena Abakanowicz, Mark Dion, James Turrell, and Micha Ullman.

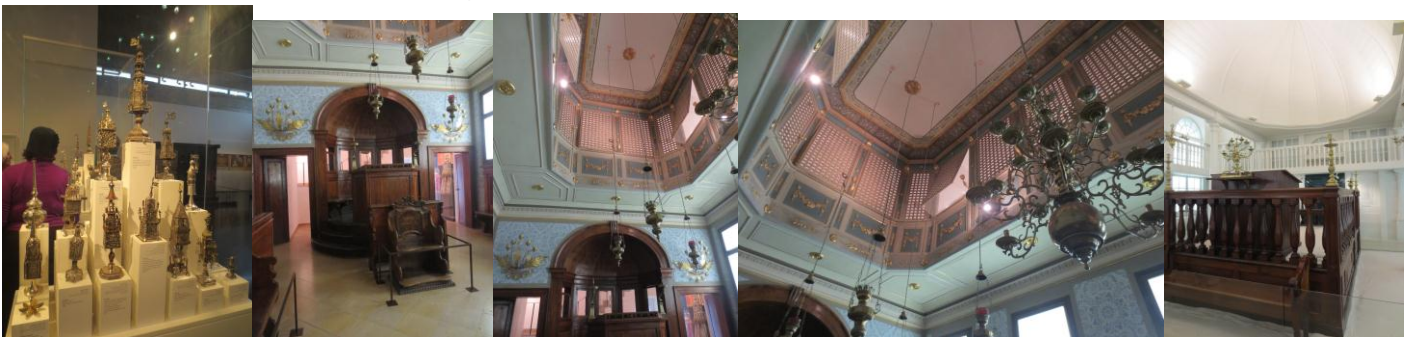
I managed two guided tours, one of the Jewish Art and Life and one of the Shrines, then wandered on my own for the rest of a day. King Herod's exhibition was a good follow up to visiting Caesarea and Masada. For more info see http://www.english.imjnet.org.il/page_1364



From the hotel to the Israel museum was a path walked quite a few times, via the government buildings, some of which had won architectural awards, and the park's rose garden. This time I took time to go through each and to take a picture of the big flower clock at the start line.



I can see the best of museums in my nearby NYC but when traveling I like to visit the local history museum. This was perfect with artifacts explaining the Jewish religion, their past, customs and costumes. This is a bridal carriage.



These are the Torah spindle tops and there was a large collection. A number of synagogues from different countries were complete and some old, some freshened, but all most interesting since I had a guide. The balcony is for the women



Some of the places we'd visited were made more understandable by the museum but the pink lady with a stomach ache never clicked. The special on King Herod was a first and most special but no pictures were allowed.



The recreation of Old Jerusalem from the second temple period helped. The black granite slab is part of the Shrine of the Book museum on the same grounds and the white topper represents the top of the ceramics that held the Dead Sea Scrolls when found in caves. Pictures were not allowed. The museum was a long tunnel (see last picture which was the last one I was allowed to take) ending underneath the dome.



Outdoor sculpture gardens are a great entertainment in my book and these would have taken me much more time had it not been so cold and windy. The view over the city was worth the cold as was the 'bean' silver piece made by the same artist that made Chicago's Bean.

Transport

The last night I went to an airport hotel, or allegedly airport, in preparation for the morning flight. This was a mistake as it was a long ride to the airport and on the opposite side so my ride from Jerusalem to this "airport hotel" was much too long and cost extra. If I weren't nervous about traffic, I'd have gotten up earlier and taken the \$20 hotel shuttle to the airport directly. The marathon travel agent charged me \$40 hotel to airport but it was a private ride (with Wi-Fi in the car.) The hotel was nice, a decent price with breakfast plus wine reception in the evening, but logistically wasn't the best idea.

The End to a very unique trip

I could go on and on. (To which Tom laughed – as if I didn't!) I could dream of another adventure to Israel. But probably neither will happen yet I am absolutely delighted to have made this adventure and found it to be one of my most unique and best learning experiences in a very long time.

Religion – so confusing

An atheist was walking through the woods.

'What majestic trees!'

'What powerful rivers!'

'What beautiful animals!'

He said to himself.

As he was walking alongside the river, he heard a rustling in the bushes behind him. He turned to look. He saw a 7-foot grizzly bear charge towards him. He ran as fast as he could up the path. He looked over his shoulder & saw that the bear was closing in on him. He looked over his shoulder again, & the bear was even closer. He tripped & fell on the ground. He rolled over to pick himself up but saw that the bear was right on top of him, reaching for him with his left paw & raising his right paw to strike him. Instantly, the Atheist cried out:

'Oh my God!'

Time stopped.

The bear froze.

The forest was silent.

As a bright light shone upon the man, a voice came out of the sky. 'You deny my existence for all these years, teach others I don't exist and even credit creation to cosmic accident.' 'Do you expect me to help you out of this predicament?' 'Am I to count you as a believer?'

The atheist looked directly into the light, and said: 'It would be hypocritical of me to suddenly ask you to treat me as a Christian now, but perhaps you could make the BEAR a Christian?'

'Very well', said the voice. The light went out. The sounds of the forest resumed. And the bear dropped his right paw, brought both paws together, bowed his head & spoke:

'Lord bless this food, which I am about to receive from Thy bounty through Christ our Lord, Amen.'

Thoughts on a true religion

One day a man saw an old lady, stranded on the side of the road, but even in the dim light of day, he could see she needed help. So he pulled up in front of her Mercedes and got out. His old Pontiac was still sputtering when he approached her. Even with the smile on his face, she was worried. No one had stopped to help for the last hour or so. Was he going to hurt her? He didn't look safe; he looked poor and hungry. He could see that she was frightened, standing out there in the cold. He knew how she felt. It was that chill which only fear can put in you. He said, 'I'm here to help you, ma'am. Why don't you wait in the car where it's warm? By the way, my name is Bryan Anderson.' Well, all she had was a flat tire, but for an old lady, that was bad enough. Bryan crawled under the car looking for a place to put the jack, skinning his knuckles a time or two. Soon he was able to change the tire. But he had to get dirty and his hands hurt. As he was tightening up the lug nuts, she rolled down the window and began to talk to him. She told him that she was from St. Louis and was only just passing through. She couldn't thank him enough for coming to her aid.

Bryan just smiled as he closed her trunk. The lady asked how much she owed him. Any amount would have been all right with her. She already imagined all the awful things that could have happened had he not stopped. Bryan never thought twice about being paid. This was not a job to him. This was helping someone in need, and God knows there were plenty, who had given him a hand in the past. He had lived his whole life that way, and it never occurred to him to act any other way. He told her that if she really wanted to pay him back, the next time she saw someone who needed help, she could give that person the assistance they needed, and Bryan added, 'And think of me.' He waited until she started her car and drove off. It had been a cold and depressing day, but he felt good as he headed for home, disappearing into the twilight.

A few miles down the road the lady saw a small cafe. She went in to grab a bite to eat, and take the chill off before she made the last leg of her trip home. It was a dingy looking restaurant. Outside were two old gas pumps. The whole scene was unfamiliar to her. The waitress came over and brought a clean towel to wipe her wet hair. She had a sweet smile, one

that even being on her feet for the whole day couldn't erase. The lady noticed that the waitress was nearly eight months pregnant, but she never let the strain and aches change her attitude. The old lady wondered how someone who had so little could be so giving to a stranger. Then she remembered Bryan.

After the lady finished her meal, she paid with a hundred dollar bill. The waitress quickly went to get change for her hundred dollar bill, but the old lady had slipped right out the door. She was gone by the time the waitress came back. The waitress wondered where the lady could be. Then she noticed something written on the napkin. There were tears in her eyes when she read what the lady wrote: 'You don't owe me anything. I have been there too. Somebody once helped me out, the way I'm helping you. If you really want to pay me back, here is what you do: Do not let this chain of love end with you.' Under the napkin were four more \$100 bills.

Well, there were tables to clear, sugar bowls to fill, and people to serve, but the waitress made it through another day. That night when she got home from work and climbed into bed, she was thinking about the money and what the lady had written. How could the lady have known how much she and her husband needed it? With the baby due next month, it was going to be hard... She knew how worried her husband was, and as he lay sleeping next to her, she gave him a soft kiss and whispered soft and low, 'Everything's going to be all right. I love you, Bryan Anderson.'

Israel through the eyes of Lois (with thanks for sharing the report)

The biggest adventure for this year, the Jerusalem Marathon, has occurred for me. The weather in Israel was perfect, very comfortable for walking in the daytime and worth a light jacket at night. And walk we did! In 1 ½ days in Tel Aviv and 7 days in Jerusalem, I truly believe that we covered a great deal of the two cities on foot. I have to love cities that have semi-feral cats running freely around the buildings (and being taken care of – I watched a man in the Arab (?) market area bringing out fresh chicken to feed a group of about five. There was a beautiful tortoise shell that manned, with her human friend, the security booth at the host hotel. She was very willing to speak with me.

There were shops serving incredible fresh meals that are based around fresh vegetables and beautiful breads in the countless bakeries. Being a health fanatic, I was very impressed by the wonderful food, most of it grown there in Israel.

In Tel Aviv we got in at 2 a.m., thanks to a cancelation of our Delta flight. It was a strange few hours in the hotel lobby until a room was available. I am time zone challenged and had canceled the first night of the room, thinking we wouldn't need it. We washed up and took to the streets immediately, covering three museums, the Palmach, the Ben Gurion House, and one other, and then walked down to the Old Jaffa area, which in my conservative estimation was about a 5 ½ hour walk. Note: Walking a marathon can hurt more than running a marathon.

Israel is a small state, and the bus from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem took about ½ hour. The expo was open for three days until 11 p.m., which was great. We were able to go there first and do packet pickup. Many things were in both English and Hebrew and it was no problem to find the booths for the marathon number and the shirt, which was a nice short sleeved tech shirt. There was a plastic chip in the packet and a location to test it. There was no information booth, which proved a bit of a problem, but we asked around until we got our answers. We decided to hit the pasta dinner 2/28, which was free to runners and very, very nice with all sorts of pastas, salads, breads, etc. in the hotel where the expo was located.

We also walked from our hotels to the start, to check things out for race morning. Men were there setting up. We engaged a very jovial man in conversation and found out that he was a retired brigadier general in the Israeli army. He was very friendly, very interested in us and our marathon numbers, and later squired us around the pasta dinner and introduced us to his wife. Later, after we arrived home, he interviewed a couple of us for an Israeli radio program he emceed.

The marathon started promptly at 7 a.m. on March 1. There were about 1200 of us. We were running through the city, but the course avoided brick and cobblestone streets for the most part. We started near the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, and covered many of the sites of the city including the Hebrew University, and Arab, Jewish and other markets (that's where the cobblestone streets were). I carried a bottle for the first 5K, but didn't need it as water stations were plentiful (about every 5K). Occasionally the stations also had fresh dates and other fruit. Periodically, especially in somewhat isolated places, there were pairs of soldiers with impressive looking guns were stationed along the way. It was a beautiful course and everyone seemed to know about the marathon, so we had many cheering sections. I talked with

my friends afterward and we agreed that it was probably one of the most challenging road courses we'd run (and among us we had run a lot), due to the unrelenting long up and down hills throughout. I came to the conclusion later, after asking directions a few times that Israelis can't even define straight or flat! We agreed among us that this may have been the most challenging road race we had ever done. I felt pretty lucky to come in at 5:41 (chip time). At the finish there were cakes, water and fruit waiting. The course was open for seven hours, though a couple of friends had to work to get their time counted. There were lots of people cheering and action right to the end. Friend Lynne and I must have looked pretty pitiful, because a man we had spoken to after the race drove up to us as we hobbled back to the hotel, scooped us up in a golf cart, and took us to the edge of the long green, saving us a great deal of whining.

The race provided five tours, and we picked up on four of them. The guides were all excellent and the groups were small enough that you could ask questions. We visited the Western Wall (which is a fragment of the first temple), Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, and the Arab and Jewish markets among others. Perhaps the most moving site of all was Vad Vashem, the holocaust museum. I had visited the holocaust museum in D.C., and this felt smaller. Last, before leaving, I walked into the portion dedicated to the children. It was a cave-like atmosphere, very dark, with barely enough light to direct you through. There were hundreds of points of light, like stars, above. There was only one sound: the sound of a voice, reciting the names of the children who had lost their lives.

Check it out at <http://www.jerusalem-marathon.com/>. If you play around with Google, you can find the site which is in English.

Itinerary

Fri Feb 22 – Day 1

3:50pm Depart Newark via United #84 - 10:30 hour flight

Sat Feb 23 – Day 2

9:20am Arrive Tel Aviv TLV

Sedan Car from TLV Airport to hotel – call 866 666 6666 or 212 666 6666 prior to departure to confirm details. Or 972 3 975 4044 in Israel. Prepaid iSeatz Voucher holder, reservation #375818 and voucher ID 34 4955 375818. Sedan #1251-1946. Give prepaid voucher form for driver.

Info for public transport: Per <http://www.telaviv-airport.com/Transportation.cfm> - Israel Railways operates the Ben Gurion Airport Railway Station, conveniently located in the lower level of Terminal 3. From this station passengers may head to Tel Aviv and destinations to the north. The journey to Tel Aviv takes about fifteen minutes and costs 12 NIS (approx. US\$2.80). Over a million passengers used the line in 2005. Heading South from the station, two lines branch out, one heading towards Lod where connections can be made to southern destinations on the rail network, such as Be'er Sheva, Jerusalem, and Ashdod. The other line connects the station to Modi'in. The Modi'in line is part of a new rail line under construction from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem which is scheduled for completion in 2012.

Bus or taxi: The airport is served by regular inter-city bus lines, a special airport shuttle with express service to Tel Aviv, Sherut "shared" door to door taxi vans, and standard taxis. An Egged #5 shuttle bus ferries passengers between the terminals and a small bus terminal in the Airport City industrial park where they can connect to regular Egged bus routes passing through the area. Passengers connecting at Airport City can pay for both rides on the same ticket, not paying extra money for bus #5. Other bus companies directly serve Terminal 3, and the airport also provides a free shuttle bus.

Hotel Renaissance Tel Aviv by Marriott – 3 nights
121 Hayarkon Street, (between Ben Gurion and Frishman) Tel Aviv, 63453 Israel
Tele 972 3 521 www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/tlvbr-renaissance-tel-aviv-hotel/
Coffee maker and mini bar yes; WiFi for fee; breakfast buffet \$25

From hotel website: Best location in Tel Aviv; city center and with direct access to the Mediterranean beach; walking distance to business/entertainment/shopping; the heart of Israel offering the best location directly on the beach and within easy access to business, shopping and entertainment. Located in the city center, our superb luxury hotel in Tel Aviv is situated on the beach where you can sink into the warm white sand and Mediterranean Sea; air-conditioned; features a private balcony with fabulous views, well-lit work desk, wireless Internet, in-room safe and mini-bar; breakfast buffet; indoor swimming pool; on-site fitness gym; sun deck; all rooms with balcony and view of sea.

Tel Aviv is wired: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Tel-Aviv-Free-Wi-Fi-City---Heaven-For-Wired-Business-Travelers&id=867797>

Sat Feb 23 – cont'd

Open for half day city tour

Sun Feb 24 – Day 3

Open for full day tour

Lois and Lynne arrive Tel Aviv at 2:40pm

Mon Feb 25 – Day 4

Open for full day tour

Missed the Tour D Western Coast and Haifa tour out of Jerusalem. Consider it out of Tel Aviv? It was a very long day from 6am to 7pm day.

Tue Feb 26 – Day 5

Travel to Jerusalem; transport not booked but public transport appears to be easy.

Sharon and Kay arrive Tel Aviv at 3:30pm

Marsha and husband arrive Tel Aviv

Hotel Crowne Plaza Jerusalem – 6 nights
Givat Ram, Jerusalem, 91130 Tele 972 2 658 8888 Fax 972 2 651 4555
www.crowneplaza.com/hotels/us/en/jerusalem/jrscp/hoteldetail

Yes coffee and tea pot, free wi-fi and mini bar; breakfast included

From hotel website: delight in the views of the Old City's pale golden domes and the Judean Mountains to the south from your private balcony. On a hillside Crowne Plaza Jerusalem hotel, next to International Congress Center, closest hotel to Tel Aviv, for views over the golden city; spacious Lobby, enriched with champagne colours and marble surfaces; towers over the Givat Ram area, adjacent to the immense events space at Jerusalem's International Convention Centre and 10 minutes' drive to the Har Hotzvim industrial park; 30 minutes from Ben Gurion International Airport via the 24-hour Neshet taxi service; Fitness Centre sauna and treatment rooms; complimentary tennis courts; indoor pool covered with a retractable roof; less than 10-minute walk to Machane Yehuda outdoor marketplace, where boisterous traders will tease you with mountains of olives and blocks of halvah or offer you cardamom-spiced coffee; another 30 minutes to reach Damascus Gate, where 3,000 years of history is crammed inside the Old City walls; nearby neighbourhood of Nachlaot for a peep into pretty, hidden courtyards and tiny synagogues filled with worshippers and melodies; complimentary Saturday morning walking tour of the venerable alleys.

3:00pm Expo and packet pick up at Jerusalem International Convention Center (JICC) to 11pm
Located across street from hotel

Wed 2/27- Day 6

9:00am Depart to Jerusalem of Gold: Old and New tour "A" from hotel lobby – to 4:30pm
Paid \$62

Drive to the Mount of Olives for a panoramic view of the city. Enter the Old City and walk through the Armenian and Jewish Quarters to the recently excavated and restored Cardo, the Roman road. See the Jewish Wailing Wall - the Kotel and continue to the Christian Quarter. Walk along the Via Dolorosa and visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Proceed to the New City; view the Knesset - Israel's parliament and visit Yad Vashem, the Memorial to the Holocaust. On Saturdays and Jewish Holidays, instead of Yad Vashem, the tour will take you to visit King David's Tomb, the Room of the Last Supper and Dormition Abbey. Modest dress (no shorts or sleeveless shirts) and head covering are required for visiting holy sites. Entrance fees are included. Lunch is not included.

3:00pm Expo at Jerusalem International Convention Center (JICC) to 11pm
Located across street from hotel

Thu 2/28 – Day 7

9:00am Depart to Massada and Dead Seas tour "B" from hotel lobby – to 5:00pm
Paid \$92

Depart via the Judean Hills to the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth. Visit the "Ahava" Dead Sea Cosmetics factory. Drive along the shores of the Dead Sea to Massada. Here you will learn about the heroic story of the Jewish Fighters. Ascend by cable car and tour the mountain fortress built by King Herod, where the Zealots made their last stand against the Romans. Visit the remains of the walls, palaces, synagogue, water cisterns, mosaic floors and Roman baths. Descend by cable car. Continue to the Dead Sea, where you will enjoy the unique opportunity to swim and float in the Dead Sea,

which many believe have its therapeutic effects. On the way back, view the Qumran caves, where the Dead Sea scrolls were found. Comfortable walking shoes, head covering, sun protection lotion, bathing suit and towel are recommended. Entrance fees are included. Lunch is not included.

3:00pm Expo at Jerusalem International Convention Center (JICC) to 11pm
Located across street from hotel

5:45pm Pasta dinner included in registration until 10pm for full and half marathoners
At Expo JICC with invitation included in race packet.

Fri 3/01- Day 8

7:00am Marathon start – course closes at 2pm

8:30am Half marathon start with 10K start at 10:30am

www.jerusalem-marathon.com – registration #534556

Starting point: Israeli Parliament/Knesset.

Ending point: Sacker Park

Organization point is at Sacker Park which is within walking distance from the parking lots and will be signposted and directed by stewards along the route. (Earlier we were told it was 15 minute walk from hotel.) Available: baggage check with provided stickers, dressing areas and handing of registration problems.

2012 had 812 runners timed to 6:50 though they appeared to have pulled up the 40K mat at 5:42

Afternoon free but most everything closes up for Shabbat – try to get to Friday afternoon market

Sat 3/02 – Day 9

Religious holiday – but all tours are offered at marathon site

Note: Crowne Plaza Hotel has a free morning walking tour of venerable alleys in Nachlaot neighborhood.

6:00am Depart to Biblical Highlights tour “C” of North with Nazareth, Tiberias, Galilee and Capernaum – to 7:00pm – Paid \$82

Depart Jerusalem via the landscape of Lower Galilee to Nazareth, the town where Jesus spent his childhood. Visit the Church of Annunciation and the Church of St. Joseph. Continue via Cana to Tiberias, the lovely resort town. Drive along the Lake Kinneret to visit Capernaum and view the ruins of the ancient synagogue where Jesus taught. Continue to Tabgha, site of the Miracle of Fish and Loaves. Proceed to Yardenit, the famous Baptismal site. Modest dress (no shorts or sleeves shirts) and head covering are required for visiting holy sites. Entrance fees are included. Lunch is not included.

Sun 3/03 – Day 10

9:00am Depart to Jerusalem and Bethlehem tour “E” from hotel lobby – to 4:30pm
Paid \$90

Drive to the Mount of Olives for a panoramic view of the city and visit the Garden of Gethsemane. Enter the Old City and walk through the Armenian and Jewish Quarters to the recently excavated and restored Cardo, the Roman road. See the Jewish Wailing Wall - the Kotel and continue to the Christian Quarter. Walk along the Via Dolorosa and visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Continue to Bethlehem for an overview of Shepherd's Field. Drive through Rachel's tomb to visit the Church of Nativity and Manger square. Modest dress (no shorts or sleeves shirts) and head covering are required for visiting holy sites. Entrance fees are included. Lunch is not included. **Passports are required.**

Mon 3/04 – Day 11

Leave open.

6:00pm? Time to be confirmed for travel to Tel Aviv Airport hotel via shuttle at \$40 for next day's flight Shuttle runs from 9:30am each 2 hours and through 10:30pm (in the summer)

Hotel Sadot Airport Hotel by Atlas Boutique
Assaf Center Street Assaf HaRofen, Beer Yaakov Tele: Tel: 972-8-9199100

The design of the Sadot Hotel, inspired by the lush fields that surround it (sadot means "fields" in Hebrew), is no more than a 10-minute drive from Ben Gurion International Airport, and it is the closest hotel in Israel to the country's major international airport. Located in the brand new "Assaf-Center" shopping mall, the hotel is situated just off the Tzrifin Junction and a very short walk from the Assaf Harofeh Medical Center. The Sadot Hotel is ideally-located for everyone wanting to be in a central location while engaged in business or visiting family in Airport City, Ramle, Lod, Rehovoth and Rishon Le Zion, as well as Tel Aviv and even Jerusalem. The Sadot Hotel's 37 spacious guestrooms include one suite and 10 junior suites. Most rooms have a kitchenette, for the particular convenience of long-term guests. Guests can enjoy lunch and dinner in the restaurants and eateries at the new Assaf Center mall (weekdays only). Room Amenities: Spacious, elegantly-designed rooms, Air-conditioning, Multi-channel TV (LCD), Free Internet access (Wi-Fi), DVD player, Coffee/tea set, Mini fridge & mini safe, Hair dryer. All rooms on Bed & Breakfast basis. Refreshments & snacks "Happy Hour" every evening (excluding Fri - Sat).

Lois and Lynne departs just after midnight Monday night or Tuesday at 12:40am

Tue Mar 5 – Day 12

11:20am Depart Tel Aviv TLV via United #85 - 12:30 hour flight
4:40pm Arrive Newark EWR

Participants

Lois Berkowitz –at Best Western in Tel Aviv with Lynne; Leonardo Inn aka Jerusalem Gardens with Lynne

Departs Detroit Sat 2/23 at 3:30pm thru JFK arriving Tel Aviv Sun 2/24 at 2:40pm via DL268

Departs Tel Aviv Tue 3/05 at 12:40am thru JFK arriving Detroit Tue 3/05 at 11:05am

Lynne (Mr.) Hans – at Best Western in Tel Aviv with Lois; in Jerusalem Gardens (Leonardo Inn)

LV Delta 3301 out of Detroit 3:30 p.m. 2/23/13; AR 5:29 p.m. New York Kennedy

LV Delta 268 9:10 p.m. New York Kennedy; AR 2:45 p.m. 2/24 Tel Aviv

LV Delta 269 12:40 a.m. from Tel Aviv 3/5/13; AR 5:40 a.m. New York Kennedy

LV Delta 3353 7:55 a.m. New York Kennedy; AR 10:18 a.m. Detroit

Sharon Kerson and Kay at host hotel – Sharon cell 310 936 4964

Departing LAX AA Mon 2/25 at 8:45am thru JFK/Heathrow; arriving Tel Aviv Tues 2/26 at 3:30pm.

Departs Tel Aviv 3/7 at 7:20am after staying in Tel Aviv the last night.

Booked Tour E, Jerusalem of Gold tour on Wed 2/27.

Going up north Mon and Tues to Golen Hts, Tiberias and a spa. Not going to the Dead Sea, Masada, or Vad Vashem,

Edson Sanches – staying with Sharon and Kay 2/28 thru 3/04 – remove from distribution list by request

Marsha White and husband

Departing JAX to JFK to Tel Aviv on DL Mon, Feb 25 arriving Tue Feb 26.

Departing Tel Aviv Wed Mar 6 at 12:40 am, home at 5:30pm. Tickets were \$1092.

Past participant: Ginny Turner went to inaugural marathon and report available on her blog

Notes

Electrical voltage is 220 volts and 50 HZ. Plug adapters appear to be different from European but despite the 3rd hole or prong need, my European adapters worked. Jerusalem benefit cards came from the marathon tour company and were in our goodie bag. They apply to various sites, restaurants, shops and much more though I never used it, having forgotten for the museum.

Tourist sites as a must-see per Sharon and Lois:

Kotel (Western Wall) with Western Wall Tunnels. Suggest trying to see on Friday – many people will be praying there

Temple Mount, site of the 1st and 2nd temples, today the location of Dome of the Rock and the Al Aksa Mosque.

Arab shuk (market) and Moslem quarter

Tomb of the Patriarchs

Night Spectacular at Tower of David Museum. "walls of the citadel serve as a stage for a night time show which is a celebration of sight and sound, depicting the story of Jerusalem."

Dead Sea Basin

Masada – Herod's mountain palace and site of the Jewish Zealots' last stand against the Roman Legionnaires. Do this and the Dead Sea on Saturday, since many other activities will not be possible on Shabbat.

Bathe in the relaxing and healthy sulfur springs at the Mineral Beach and float in the Dead Sea

Vad Vashem complex, Jewish National Memorial to 6 million victims of the Holocaust

Machaneh Yehudah – open air market

Safed, center of Jewish mysticism for hundreds of years; visits to Ari, Caro, or Abuhav Synagogues, visit to Safed Candle Factory

Israel Museum

Day trip to Petra in Jordan

Israeli Farmers' market well worth attending.

Recommended reading:

From Judy: "Walking the Bible" by Bruce Feiler - Extremely popular.

"Walking Israel" by Martin Fletcher sounds wonderful, described as "packed with hilarious moments, historical insights, emotional, true life tales, and above all, great story telling." DONE

From Trip Advisor: *To put your travels of Israel into context, it's helpful to learn about the struggles of the nation. The first book travelers should read is Thomas Friedman's nonfiction From Beirut to Jerusalem. DONE. This wonderfully written book gives insight into the political history of the region, which is essential for understanding where things stand today. Of course, if you'd like to delve farther back into the history, you could start with both the Old and New Testaments, as so much of what you will see will be biblical in nature. For an overall view of the entire region, Bernard Lewis's The Middle East is a good starting point.*

While the guidebooks can tell you what to see in Israel, it's the literature that really gives you a sense of the heart of Israel. Just about any book by Israeli author Amos Oz will be outstanding reading for your travels, but in particular, My Michael is a stunning work. The lush writing will captivate you, but the descriptions of Jerusalem post-WWII shows what Israel was like in the beginning of statehood. For a more modern view on Israel, Risa Miller's Heavenly Heights follows a group religiously observant American Jews who make aliya (Jewish people who return to Israel to live) to a West Bank settlement called Heavenly Heights. For another glimpse into the lives of the Orthodox in Israel, Ruchama King's Seven Blessings is a beautiful story about matchmaking. Superb writing and it would be a wonderful book to read while traveling in Israel.

For a view on the other side of Israeli politics, consider Michael Gorkin and Rafiqah Othman's Three Mothers, Three Daughters: Palestinian Women's Stories, in which the two interviewed six Palestinian women living in various parts of Israel. Amira Hass's Drinking the Sea in Gaza is rather controversial but it definitely portrays a different view of Israel than what you'll get from touring Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

James A. Michener's The Source is fascinating in re-creating the events of a single location in Israel over the course of thousands of years. DONE. The story takes place on an archeological dig, and as an artifact at each layer is uncovered, the story of that time period is told. The stories are so interesting that the choppy writing is forgiven.

It's hard to find, but if you have the opportunity to watch the Israeli TV show (subtitled in English) Florentine, it's well worth it! This Friends-like show follows close to a dozen young people (post-Army) living in Tel Aviv. Really shows you what life is like on a day-to-day basis for young people in Israel.

For more local color in the realm of fiction, try Etgar Keret's The Nimrod Flipout and Savyon Lebrecht's A Good Place for the Night. Both are books of short stories translated into English as easily available.

From: rundonrun@aol.com to Lois

Sent: Saturday, June 02, 2012 1:40 PM

Jerusalem's railway station is a 10 minute taxi ride to the city itself but my taxi driver dropped me off at the Ja'afar Gate and would go no further. He warned me it would be absolute chaos inside which indeed it was! It was not a religious holiday, neither Jewish nor Christian, but the citadel was packed with visitors, tourists, vendors and locals. Not much room to pass either in those narrow streets and walkways but I'm glad I went - I believe everyone who has the opportunity to go that far should visit Jerusalem. So inexpensive and easy to get to by train but that \$\$ figure you quoted for the whole tour seems way out of whack.....I paid less than a third of that sum but then that was in 2007. I always prefer to travel simply with a friend(s) or even alone - there's always someone in a tour group who shouldn't be there, someone who complicates a schedule, cannot get up in the morning, gets sick, doesn't like the local food.....am I being overly intolerant? But I really hope YOU can make it one of these days, Lois. Didn't Gary have relatives in Israel?

Cont'd

I have a Sea of Galilee Guide which I'll copy and mail to you assuming you plan to select scenic Tiberias from the few Israeli marathons being run. You questioned the weather there on race day 4 Jan 07. Sunny in the low 70's by mid-day but a powerful cooling wind blew in off Galilee just before the 13.1m turn-around. The marathon started on the waterfront and ran south from Tiberias along the Galilee coastal road thru several villages...hardly any vehicle traffic. I flew into Tel Aviv, stayed there a couple of days where one day would have been enough. Apart from the Mediterranean coast it's not an attractive city. Don't bother with a rental car. I took the train to Tiberias and to Jerusalem, used the local bus services and found taxis safe and inexpensive. The trains were clean, uncrowded and fast.

Info about Israel from my world traveler friend Ellen --

Sure you can do it! No problem.

The advice to not rent a car is probably worth listening to. In 1982 there was a war in Lebanon. Israel was lightly populated and there was almost NO traffic on the road, except in the cities. If I encountered 2 cars between Nazareth and Tiberias, I don't remember them. Because of the explosion in world population, EVERY place on the planet is developed within an inch of its life now, so I imagine Israel is very different from what I experienced.

An Israeli friend told me NOT to drive down the Jordan River Valley. But when I mentioned this to the concierge at the hotel in Tiberias, she said, "Why not? We all do. It's perfectly safe So I did. We passed numerous check points, but there was NOBODY on that road. I'm sure that's all changed. I remember traffic in Haifa, but mainly I remember empty roads. That drive down the Jordan River valley was an important experience. I immediately understood why Israel had to capture the Golan Heights. It's just a bluff top across the Jordan River (that should be called Jordan Creek). and the Syrians had set up guns on top and were shooting at people in the valley. The top of the Golan Heights was no further away from the road on the Israel side than the apartment building across the parking lot from my building. You could practically spit from the Golan Heights and hit somebody in the Valley. The news made it sound like an act of aggression on Israel's part to capture the Golan Heights. Instead it was an act of self-defense. But you had to see it to understand.

I do remember one bit of traffic. I got lost going from Bethlehem to the airport in Tel-Aviv, so I stopped at a coffee shop to ask directions. A cab driver was there and he said, "Follow me". I don't know where we were, but there was city traffic. I followed him across 6 lanes of traffic to turn left. It was a chaotic ride, but what I learned is if everybody is making up their own traffic rules, you can, too. After that, I never had any trouble driving in heavy traffic - in Mexico City and other scary places. I just made up my own rules.

Later cont'd

You're right. Israel is very small. I stopped in Israel on my way to Egypt in 1982. The woman who was going to be my roommate in Egypt decided to go early and go to Israel with me. We flew into Tel-Aviv, and stayed overnight there - to get our land legs and recoup from jet-lag. The next day, we toured old town, drove to Haifa, then toward the Sea of Galilee, stopped in Nazareth and found a guide who took us on a tour of the basilica there. We continued on to Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee and arrived in time for a leisurely dinner along the sea wall. I found a boatman who took me out on the Sea at night. I just wanted to experience it and imagine what it must have been like to see Jesus walking on the water. (Unfortunately, the boatman brought a guide who would not shut-up. He just kept talking at me continuously when I just wanted quiet).

We left Tiberias the following morning after breakfast. We drove down the Jordan River Valley, stopped at the ruins of a refugee camp, and stopped repeatedly to bird watch, and arrived at old Jericho around 11:00 AM. We went for a tour of the ruins, stopped for an orange juice along the road, and were in Jerusalem by about 12:30. WE stayed at the King David Hotel (which was THE place to stay in those days) went to the wailing wall that afternoon. The following morning I got talked into letting an Arab guide give me a tour of the Via Delorosa (quite worthwhile), visited the temple and the mosque on the Temple mound, Went through the Christian Basilica, walked back to the hotel for lunch, then packed up, checked out and drove to Bethlehem. WE toured the church built over the spot where Jesus was born, shopped for manger figures at an Arab shop, then drove back to Tel-Aviv in time for a 5:00 PM flight to Egypt.

Will you rent a car? The distances between places are surprisingly small. I did not have time to go to the Dead Sea or the Masada, but saw everything else I wanted to see in 3 nights and 3 days. And we never hurried.

Story to share: I was a broker at Merrill Lynch in those days. I was attached to the big Merrill office in downtown LA where there were no private offices, just a huge "bull pen" (as we called it) with all 80 brokers at desks lined up in rows. The place was VERY noisy. Merrill bought out another brokerage firm (White Weld) and ended up with two offices a block apart - our office and one on the 50th floor of the First Interstate Bank Building a block away. I went over and surveyed the new office and decided I'd move heaven and earth to get transferred there (It was quiet, there were many private offices, and private booths in the middle of the board room. (shoulder-high walls and private space large enough for a desk, file cabinets and counter space.) I got transferred there and found myself working with a new bunch of brokers who had chosen to stay with Merrill when White Weld was bought out. One was named Burt Rosen. His office was just across from my booth. Now for some reason that I never figured out, Burt would come out of his office, lean on the wall

of my booth, and starting singing at the top of his voice, "Don't Cry for me, Argentina" from Evita (playing locally at the Music Center) I'd just sit there looking at him and finally I just said, "Hello Burt". He stopped singing and said hello and went into his office. He repeated this behavior to the point that it got to be a habit. I thought he was nuts!

We all had coffee and lunch in the First Interstate cafeteria on the 3rd floor. One day over lunch I told Burt I was going to Israel. He said, "Say hello to my relatives". I said, "So Burt, how am I supposed to recognize our relatives?" He said, "They'll be singing 'Don't Cry for me Argentina', and we both laughed.

Well, Evelyn and I were having dinner at an outdoor restaurant along the sea wall at the Sea of Galilee, eating St. Peter's fish (the predominant item on the menu). All of a sudden, a loud speaker came on from a restaurant down the block, and a woman started singing "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina". I nearly dropped my fork, as I said to Evelyn, "Oh my God. It's Burt Rosen's relative". I was totally spooked! Why else would anyone in Israel be singing Don't Cry for me, Argentina? It had to be Burt's relative!

i understand why you're excited. You'll see Israel with Jewish eyes. I saw it with Christian eyes and it was pretty amazing.

Official Travel Agent

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