MST Biblical Archaeology

Study Tour 2016

Bethsaida Excavations Project

With Other Sites of Archaeological Importance in Israel
MST is delighted to offer its students the opportunity to participate in the Bethsaida Excavations Project in 2016, and to visit other sites of archaeological importance in Israel.

MST Biblical Archaeology Study Tour 2016 BB245/445/645
30 June – 16 July 2016
Lecturer: Gillian Asquith

Itinerary

Thursday 9 June: Departure from Melbourne
This afternoon we will depart from Melbourne on our El Al flight to Tel Aviv, Israel via Bangkok.

Friday 10 June: Arrival in Tel Aviv – Jerusalem
We'll arrive at Ben Gurion airport early in the morning and drive to our hotel in Jerusalem at the foot of the Mount of Olives. We'll drop our luggage with the concierge and climb the Mount of Olives for a stunning view of the Dome of the Rock and the Temple Mount. After plenty of time for photographs, we'll make our way down the Mount of Olives, walking to the Garden of Gethsemane and visiting the Church of All Nations and other sites of pilgrim significance on the way. We'll have lunch (at our own expense) in the Old City. Those who still have energy can explore more of the Old City or there will be the option of a nap back at the hotel. Dinner will be at our hotel (the Commodore or similar).

Saturday 11 June: Jerusalem
Today we'll walk through the bustling Old City to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to see the traditional site of Jesus’ crucifixion and burial. We'll also visit the Tower of David Museum to get an overview of the history of ancient Israel. There will be some free time later to explore more of the Old City. Breakfast and dinner included.
Sunday 12 June
We leave Jerusalem for the time being to head up to the Sea of Galilee. On the way we'll visit Megiddo, an ancient city from time of King Solomon with impressive remains. We’ll drive around the Sea of Galilee and call at Migdal, the home of Mary Magdalene. This is a particularly important site due to the discovery of a first-century synagogue. Late in the afternoon we’ll arrive at Nof Ginosar, a kibbutz and hotel right on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, that will be our home for the next two weeks. There’ll be time for a swim from the hotel’s private beach, before dinner and bed. Breakfast and dinner included.

Monday 13 June
Meet the Bethsaida Excavations Project Lead Excavator, Dr Rami Arav, for your orientation to the Bethsaida site. You’ll be introduced to the various sections of the dig under excavation this year. We’ll then head off to the Ginosar Museum to handle some of the more important finds from previous years’ excavations. The Ginosar Museum houses the famous 1st Century Galilean fishing boat and we’ll spend some time learning about its construction and preservation. While on the dig, breakfast, lunch and dinner are included.

Tuesday 14 June – Friday 17 June: Bethsaida Archaeological Dig
We’ll be up before breakfast today to start some serious digging. The daily routine for the next two weeks will look like this:

5.30am Leave Kibbutz Ginosar
9.00am Breakfast on-site
11.00am Popsicle break (the dig is run by Americans!)
12.30pm Return to the kibbutz for lunch and a swim in the Sea of Galilee
4.30pm Pottery reading; photographing, sorting, cataloguing, labelling and bagging the finds.
7.10pm Dinner in the hotel dining room
8.00pm Lecture

Saturday 18 June
We have a break from digging over the weekend which gives us the opportunity to see some of the archaeological sites in northern Israel. Today we start by visiting some first-century tombs deep below the Sisters of Nazareth Convent. We’ll spend some time at the first-century city of Sepphoris – the likely location of ‘the city on a hill’ that Jesus talks about. On the way home we’ll have a devotion at the tranquil church overlooking the Sea of Galilee that commemorates the Sermon on the Mount. Breakfast and dinner included.

Sunday 19 June
This morning we’ll start at Capernaum and see the house that most likely belonged to Peter. We will then head north to Caesarea Philippi. The geopolitical significance of this area will give us a deeper understanding of Peter’s confession of Christ (Mark 8:29). We’ll visit the lush northern worship centre of Tel Dan with its Canaanite and Israelite city gate structures. In the afternoon we’ll visit the ancient site of Hazor. We will also visit the ruins of Chorazin, one of the three cities cursed by Jesus for their lack of repentance. Breakfast and dinner included.

Monday 20 June – Friday 24 June
Another week of digging for buried treasure. All meals included.

Saturday 25 June
We say good-bye to the Bethsaida community today and drive down through the Rift Valley to our hotel in Jerusalem. On the way we’ll stop at Tabgha, a beautiful church that commemorates the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. We’ll also visit the magnificent Roman ruins at Beth Shean, the capital city of the Decapolis. We’ll drop our luggage at the hotel again before heading out into the Old City. This afternoon we’ll visit the Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed the man who had been an invalid for 38 years (John 5:1–13). Breakfast and dinner included.

Sunday 26 June
Today we’ll worship with a local congregation before going to Yad Vashem – the Holocaust Museum. Breakfast and dinner are included.

Monday 27 June
We’ll start off today in the Israel Museum seeing artifacts that pertain to many eras of biblical history. Later in the afternoon we’ll spend some reflective time in the Garden Tomb. Breakfast and dinner are included.

Tuesday 28 June
We’ll visit the spectacular remains of Herod’s Temple today in the Jerusalem Archaeology Park. Then we’ll head up into the Jewish quarter of the Old City to look at some houses that were occupied on the eve of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. While we’re in this
part of Jerusalem, we'll visit the old City of David for a walk through Hezekiah's Tunnel.

**Wednesday 29 June**
Herod the Great's building policy left a lasting legacy throughout Israel and today we drive down through the Judean wilderness to Masada. Herod's palace at Masada perches atop a rocky plateau and after a cable-car ride to the top, we'll explore the fortifications. The damage caused by the Romans in the First Jewish War is a poignant reminder of the mass suicide of 960 Jewish rebels when they realized that their fate was sealed. Then we'll tour the remains of the community at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. There will also be an opportunity for a swim (or rather, a float) in the Dead Sea, before returning to Jerusalem. Breakfast and dinner are included. In the evening we'll enjoy a Sound and Light Night Spectacular at the Tower of David tracing the history of Israel.

**Thursday 30 June**
Our last full day in Jerusalem! Those people heading back to Melbourne will check out of the hotel and leave their bags in the rooms of those of going on to Greece. We'll start the day with a walking tour of the Western Wall tunnels, then we'll head to the Rockefeller Museum for some more archaeological treats. In the afternoon there'll be some time for last-minute souvenir shopping. There'll be time for a quick shower in the hotel before the group splits up. We'll say our goodbyes to those people heading home and wave them off to the airport in Tel Aviv. Breakfast included for everyone, dinner included for those transferring to Greece.

**Friday 1 July**
Those of us heading to Greece will board our early morning flight for Athens.

**Saturday 2 July**
Those returning to Melbourne arrive back at 12.05pm. There will be a 10 hour layover in Bangkok on the way home. You may wish to book an optional half-day tour (at your own expense).

**Cost includes**
All flights and taxes.
- 7 nights twin or triple share hotel accommodation in Jerusalem.
- 13 nights triple share at Nof Ginosar.
- Breakfast and dinner daily, all meals while on the Bethsaida dig.
- Entrance fees to all sites mentioned in the itinerary.
- All transport, transfers and tips.

**Cost excludes**
- Visa for non-Australian passport holders.
- Tips to porters
- Meals not listed in the itinerary.
- Item of a personal nature e.g. laundry, internet etc.
- Drinks
- Compulsory travel insurance.

Students enrolled in a course with the Australian College of Theology can take this study tour for credit and receive FEE-HELP (if eligible). The MST Unit Fee will apply in addition to the costs below.

Upfront cost due by 1 March 2016: $4715, plus $2050 deferred on FEE-HELP. Total cost: $6765.*

*These prices are dependent on the availability of airfares and the stability of the Australian dollar. If the cost of airfares increases by 8 December 2015 you will be notified and given the opportunity to withdraw from the tour without loss of your deposit.