

MIDDLE EAST COMMUNITY PROGRAM 2023

Israel and Palestine: between territory and community

We propose an experience of knowledge of this unique territory and its places. It is a trip to introduce the Israeli-Palestinian reality and an opportunity to encounter the different communities and realities on the ground.

In such a difficult historical moment for the Middle East, we want to show and share experiences of possible coexistence between people, cultures, and religions. We do not aim to propose an ideal model, but our goal is to show the communities, works and projects, which will tell and witness the reality of this Land.

The proposed program allows **the deepening of three interconnected dimensions**.

Territorial and Cultural Dimension

The program represents a unique opportunity to discover and learn the territory. Numerous *fieldtrips* are scheduled to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Samaria, Jericho, Galilee, and Golan Heights to understand the cultural and historical relevance of these places and to discuss the geopolitical reality of the conflict. Special attention will be devoted to the local cultural heritage.

Historical and Political Dimension

Israel and Palestine have been for centuries the centre of the most important and longest Empire in history. This Land has witnessed both peaceful coexistence and bloody wars between people and religions. Nowadays the situation is complicated and needs expertise to make it clearer. For this reason, numerous lectures, meetings and debates with Professors, members of civil society, associations working in different fields and grassroots organisations will be organised.

Social Dimension

The program aims to show also charitable works and social, educational and cultural projects. The meeting with these initiatives will be an opportunity to discover the importance of the ancient and articulated Christian presence in the Middle East, at the service of the most vulnerable population. These will be opportunities to dialogue and encounter with the local Palestinian community.

The program represents a unique opportunity to learn about a complex and fascinating reality, live a 360° experience in the field, and have the possibility to meet and hear testimonies of people actively involved in the territory.

Notes:

- In addition to the activities listed in the program, suggestions of readings will be given to deepen the topics covered. A tutor will accompany the participants throughout the program to help the students listen and comprehend the topics and discover the places.
- During the trip, there will be many opportunities to meet and talk with local experts, projectionists, and pro Terra Sancta partners.
- During the program, there will be moments of reunion to discuss the topics and to allow students to feel free to ask any question.

PROGRAM

MIDDLE EAST COMMUNITY PROGRAM 2023
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23rd of July – 6th of August

Week I

SUN 23/07

Morning: Arrival in Bethlehem and accommodation at the Guesthouse.

Afternoon: Meeting with the staff of pro Terra Sancta Association: slideshow of the activities, the overall form of the program and the introduction to the social-political context and the projects promoted by proTS.

Welcome dinner at Dar Al-Majus Guesthouse, located in the historical center of Bethlehem.

Overnight stay in Bethlehem.

MON 24/07

Morning: Visit of the historical center Bethlehem, the Basilica of the Nativity, the Milk Grotto Church and walk in Star Street to visit the Bethlehem Mosaic Center. Walk and shop in the suq, the traditional market.

Afternoon: introduction to the geopolitical situation of the city of Bethlehem and walk along the separation wall, built after the Second Intifada. Visit to Aida Refugee Camp and meeting with associations active in the camp.

Overnight stay in Bethlehem.

TUE 25/07

Morning: lecture of a Palestinian Filmmaker/Producer and Oral History Researcher and screening of some of her short films.

Afternoon: lecture with a Bethlehem Professor on the topic "Occupation and Threats on Palestinian Biodiversity" and visit the Palestinian Museum of Natural History and its botanical garden. Visit the Banksy's Walled Off Hotel and Exhibition.

Overnight stay in Bethlehem.

WED 26/07

Morning: easy hike in the Wadi Qelt desert and visit the Greek-orthodox Mar Saba Monastery, built in a canyon of the desert. Typical Palestinian lunch in the village of Battir, UNESCO World Heritage.

Afternoon: visit Jerusalem out of the walls and meet with members of the Israeli and Palestinian civil society in the Sheik Jarrah neighborhood, East Jerusalem.

THU 27/07

fieldtrip - Departure for **Jerusalem** – guided visit of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Armenian Quarter, Jewish Quarter, Islamic Quarter, Christian Quarter - Via Dolorosa and the Holy Sepulcher, the Western Wall, the Basilica of St. Anne. Visit of the Custody of the Holy Land.

Lunch in the Old City.

In the afternoon, there will be a meeting with a local association supporting and helping African asylum seekers in Israel, pro Terra Sancta has been cooperating with them since 2018. Return and overnight stay in Bethlehem.

FRI 28/07

fieldtrip – Departure for **Jericho** – crossing the desert of Judah, Wadi Qelt, we descend to Jericho, the oldest city in the world continuously inhabited until today. Stop and panoramic view of St George in Koziba, an ancient Monastery built into the canyon. Visit the Tell es-Sultan archaeological site and Ein es-Sultan spring. Meeting and lunch with the *Mosaic Center* staff, which is the place of the manufacturing of mosaics pro Terra Sancta has been collaborating for years. Visit Hisham Palace and the Dead Sea. Return and overnight stay in Bethlehem.

SAT 29/07 – SUN 30/07:

fieldtrip – Departure for **Galilee** – the excursion is an occasion to address and discuss important issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as the territory and the identity. Visit to Nazareth and the Basilica of the Annunciation. Visit to some places on Lake Tiberias (Tabgha, Capernaum). Overnight stay on Lake Tiberias. We continue the next day to the **Golan Heights**, from which it is possible to see Lebanon and Syria and understand the problems that still today are the reason of the division between Israel and the Arab world. Visit to the sites of the Kippur war (Tel Saki, Valley of Tears) and the city of Majdal Shams. Return and overnight stay in Bethlehem.

Week II

MON 31/07

Morning: Lecture of a professor from the Bethlehem University on the topic: “The Christian Community in the Middle East”. Visit to the University of Bethlehem, which is the first University founded in the West Bank.

Afternoon: Visit of some of the charitable projects supported by proTS in Bethlehem: The Antonian Society and the house for disabled children Hogar Niño Dios. Overnight stay in Jerusalem.

TUE 1/08

fieldtrip – Departure for **Hebron** – city tour together with a local guide. Meeting with local associations. The city has great Biblical and historical relevance, reason why nowadays it is one of the centres of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Visit of the Old City and the Tomb of Patriarchs, both UNESCO World Heritage. After that, we will move to the village of At-Tuwani, in the South Hebron Hills, and meet the local community and Youth of Sumud Association activists. Return and overnight stay in Jerusalem.

WED 2/08

fieldtrip – Departure for **Bethany** – Visit of the archaeological site, the Tomb of Lazarus and the conservation and development project of pro Terra Sancta. Meeting with experts on local heritage conservation regarding the topic "Palestinian Cultural Heritage and the Challenges for Economic Development." Meeting and lunch with women from Al-Hana center and the local community.
Return and overnight stay in Jerusalem.

THU 3/08

Morning: Visit the Haram al-Sharif Compound: Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque. Visit the Flagellation Convent and the Terra Sancta Museum.

Afternoon: Visit of the Mount of Olives: The Garden of the Gethsemane; the Church of Nations and the Dominus Flevit. Break at the Educational Bookshop in East Jerusalem.

Overnight stay in Jerusalem.

FRI 4/08 – SAT 5/08

fieldtrip – Departure for **Samaria** - Visit the archaeological site of Sebastia, the old town and the tomb of John the Baptist. Typical lunch and meeting with local young people involved in the conservation and development project.

Afternoon: visit to Nisf Jubeil and the ceramic workshop of the Mosaic Centre. Overnight stay in Sebastia.

The following day we will visit Nablus with a local guide. Nablus is a city of historical importance since it was the capital of the region at different times.

Return and overnight stay in Jerusalem.

SUN 6/08

Closure moment of sharing and lunch.

Departure to the airport.

PROPOSED / OFFERED BY:

Pro Terra Sancta Network



Pro Terra Sancta is a network that promotes / fosters and creates projects of conservation and enhancement of the cultural and natural, of support to the local communities and of assistance in the humanitarian emergencies. It promotes tours and visits in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, fostering a sustainable tourism that values the cultural heritage and the local communities.

IN COLLABORATION WITH:



Mosaic Centre

The Mosaic Centre is a non-profit organization, which aims to safeguard and foster the cultural heritage of the Palestinian Territories.

Application Terms:

- The cost of the program is € 1.700, some scholarships will be offered to reduce the participation fee;
- To apply send an updated CV and motivational letter to visit@proterrasancta.org no later than the 12th of April 2023 (subject of the email APPLICATION MECP 2023).

The price includes:

- Accommodation at our guesthouses in double or triple room (single supplement € 170);
- Social/cultural guided visits;
- Transportation and accommodation during fieldtrips;
- Contribution for lectures and meetings;
- Educational material;
- Pick-up service at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv (round trip);
- Traditional Palestinian lunch and dinner included in the program;
- Medical insurance for the duration of the program.