

MIDDLE EAST COMMUNITY PROGRAM 2024

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 field trips 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.

The proposed visits include:

- **Jerusalem**, walk and guided visit of the Old City. Visit to the Holy Sepulchre, Gethsemane, and the Tomb of Mary. Visit to the Western Wall and the Temple Mount (including the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque). Visit to the Convent of the Flagellation and the Terra Sancta Museum, where an educational project, funded by the European Union, is implemented.
- **Bethlehem**, visit of the historical center of 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. Walk along the separation wall, built after the Second Intifada. Visit to Aida Refugee Camp, one of Bethlehem's three refugee camps, and Banksy's Walled Off Hotel with the artist's exhibition.
- **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, Ein es-Sultan spring and Hisham's Palace. Visit to the Mosque of Nabi Musa and stop at the Dead Sea.
- **Bethany**, visit of the archaeological site, the Tomb of Lazarus, and the conservation and development project of pro Terra Sancta.
- **Galilee**, stop at the site of the Baptism of Jesus and the Good Samaritan location. Visit to Nazareth and the Basilica of the Annunciation. Visit to some locations on the Lake Tiberias (Tabgha, Capernaum).

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 organizations will be organized. Through the proposed meetings, listed below, the intention is to give a broader vision of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thanks also to the intervention of experts:

- lecture of a Palestinian Filmmaker/Producer and Oral History Researcher and screening of some of her short films;
- Lecture on the topic "Occupation and Threats on Palestinian Biodiversity";
- Lecture on the theme "History and Culture of the Palestinian People" at Bethlehem University;
- Meeting with experts on local heritage conservation regarding the topic "Palestinian Cultural Heritage and Challenges for Economic Development";
- Lecture on the topic "Islamic History and Archaeology in Palestine";
- Meeting with members of the Custody of the Holy Land and professors of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum on the topic "Status quo, rights of ownership of holy places".

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. Among the various organizations, meetings are proposed, by way of example, with:

- 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;
- *Antonian Society* and *Hogar Nino Dios*, a house for disabled children, charitable projects supported by pro Terra Sancta Bethlehem;
- *Jerusalem African Community Centre*, a local association supporting and helping African asylum seekers in Israel, with whom pro Terra Sancta has been cooperating since 2018;
- *Mosaic Centre*, a Palestinian non-profit organization committed to the protection of Palestinian cultural heritage. Founded in January 2004 as part of an Italian-Palestinian development project, it continues to work with pro Terra Sancta on projects for the conservation and enhancement of cultural sites and community awareness.

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.

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 unit cost of the program will be communicated to people who are interested in participating. When registration closes scholarships will be made available to reduce the participation fee.
- To apply, please send your CV and a motivational letter to visit@proterrasancta.org no later than **June 15, 2024** (with the subject MECP 2024 APPLICATION).
- The program may be subject to change due to security conditions in the country.

The price includes:

- Accommodation at our guesthouses in double or triple rooms (single rooms are available for an additional fee);
- Social/cultural guided visits;
- Transportation and overnight stays during field trips;
- Contribution for meetings and lectures;
- Educational materials;
- 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.

Security

The travel organization is managed by our on-site staff, ensuring the safety of the places that will be visited as scheduled.

Travelers are encouraged to obtain general information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which explicitly states whether or not the destinations are subject to formal advice. The decision to participate following these verifications implies a conscious assumption of travel risks.