City Shul’s “Behind the Scenes”
8 Day, 7 Night Tour of Israel

Take a fresh look at an ancient land with this ground-breaking behind the scenes tour of Israel’s best-hidden gems. With a different theme each day, you will have the opportunity to explore bohemian neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv, be wowed by the latest technology coming out of the Israeli start-up scene, travel deep into the Negev desert, enjoy rich cultures, and savour authentic home-cooked ethnic cuisine. Experience Israel’s diversity through a broad array of guides and speakers—artists, craftspeople, entrepreneurs, rabbis, activists and peacemakers, Orthodox and progressive, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and everything in between. With time for discussion, reflection, and relaxation, join us for this unique tour that will investigate the complex issues facing Israel, explore prospects for security and peace in the region, and celebrate the hospitality and culture of Israel’s most unique local communities, many of whom you’d never have the opportunity to meet on your own! With an ALL-INCLUSIVE price that covers everything: hotels, ALL meals plus wine with dinner, entrances, speakers, and ALL tips, you can just sit back and take it all in without stress.

Day 1, Sunday February 14: Real Israel
· Meet at hotel at 9am. Your adventure begins!
· Begin with visit the Bialik Rogozin School, an educational campus that serves at-risk children in grades K-12 from 28 countries. These are new immigrants, children of foreign workers, Sudanese and Eritrean refugees, and Israeli Arabs.
· on the roof of the Tel Aviv Bus Station, take in the view and learn about Herzl’s vision in Alteneland and how that grew into the modern city of Tel Aviv. Then make our way down through the bus station checking out modern art exhibits, a Filipino church, a Yiddish library, and a medical clinic that serves the African refugee community.
· Lunch in an Eritrean restaurant founded by refugees.
· Next, explore the bohemian Florentin neighbourhood with an expert Graffiti guide!
· Dinner at Nanuchka, a trendy Georgian restaurant.
Hotel: Art Hotel, Tel Aviv

Day 2, Monday, February 15: Artistic Israel
· Tour three of the hottest art galleries in the city with an art curator as our guide.
· After lunch in the art district, visit Holon for guided tours of the Design Museum and the Israeli Museum of Caricature and Comics where we meet with illustrator and creator of the Jewish superhero Falafel Man, Dorit Maya-Gur. Dorit will discuss the history of caricature and comics by exploring the links between popular art, politics and culture in Israel.
· Enjoy a private chef dinner party and an introduction to food photography with professional food photographer Dan Lev in his studio in south Tel Aviv.
Hotel: Art Hotel, Tel Aviv

Day 3, Tuesday, February 16: Innovation Israel
· Social innovation: Meet Israeli B Corp company MobileODT; MobileODT’s mission is to deliver affordable, practical healthcare innovation and make a difference in the world.
· Financial Innovation: Visit Bitcoin Embassy TLV to learn about one of the largest cryptocurrency communities in the world and see the first Bitcoin ATM in Israel.
Food innovation: Eat at Bar Kayma (which is Hebrew for “Sustainable”) and meet with shareholders of this vegan food co-op. Following the social protests summer of 2012, Bar Kayma was established as a cooperative vegan restaurant/bar and community centre.

Tourism innovation: Weather permitting, ride the TLV Balloon up 120 meters above the city, joined by the innovator who brought the balloon to Israel.

Innovation Meets Snack-time!: Meet the inventors of a personal 3D food printer called the Genie. Watch it in action and sample its food!

Business/peace innovation: We’ll have dinner at Alia Dassuki’s home in Jaffa. Her catering business is an outgrowth of her participation in the Arous El Bahr program that provides Arab women of Jaffa with tools and resources needed to advance financially and socially. Over dinner, hear from our speakers: two prominent Palestinian and Israeli businesspeople that believe in the urgency of reaching a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Hotel: Art Hotel, Tel Aviv

Day 4, Wednesday, February 17: Ethnic Israel

Visit the ancient Samaritan community of Holon. A community representative will talk with our group about how they are the remnant of the ancient kingdom of Israel and follow the customs of the Torah of Moses to the letter, to this very day.

Next visit the Cochin Heritage Museum and synagogue at Moshav Nevatim, an agricultural community just outside Be’er Sheva settled by Jews from Cochin, in southwest India. Learn about Cochin Indian Jewish history, culture, and religious observance. Enjoy traditional Indian Jewish food for lunch.

End the day in Be’er Sheva at a Karaite synagogue. There, meet members of the Karaite community. Karaite Judaism rejects later additions to the Tanach (Jewish Bible) such as the Talmud.

Enjoy a true Mizrachi dinner at “The Original Yemenite House.”

Hotel: Leonardo, Be’er Sheva

Day 5, Thursday, February 18: Desert Israel

Spend the morning visiting unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev, meeting their residents, and understanding the complicated Bedouin situation in Israel today. Lunch provided by a Bedouin family.

Spend the afternoon on a Jeep tour in Mitzpe Ramon, the Grand Canyon of Israel.

In the evening, travel to Salem’s Bedouin Hospitality Tent for a BBQ/beer night with a bonfire and drum circle.

Hotel: Mitzpe Ramon Inn

Day 6, Friday, February 19: Ecological Israel

Continue south and visit the Arava Institute and the eco-village at Kibbutz Lotan. At the Arava Institute, tour their experimental orchards and renewable energy park. At Lotan, see their Ecological Campus, organic gardens, constructed wetlands, and participate in a workshop on geodesic dome construction.

Lunch at Lotan’s teahouse and “downtime” to prepare for Shabbat.

Celebrate Shabbat services and dinner with the Reform Jewish community at Kibbutz Lotan.

For those who wish, head to Eilat for an optional evening out in the Eilat Promenade, or enjoy live music at the Red Sea Jazz Festival (at your own cost). Or, stay in at the kibbutz and enjoy the peace, open expanse, and quiet.

Hotel: Kibbutz Lotan Guest House
Day 7, Saturday, February 20: “Zen” Israel
· Go for a Shabbat morning desert walk with desert educator Michael Livni. Michael will enlighten us on tracking, animal and plant life, and how one can “live” the desert.
· Private lunch at Kibbutz Lotan, catered at the teahouse.
· Optional massages (at your own cost) or simply relax in the desert on Shabbat afternoon. For those who wish we’ll have afternoon Torah study with Rabbi Goldstein, and time to debrief with each other.
· In the evening, have dinner at Kibbutz Lotan and come together in the desert for havdallah and stargazing with an astronomy expert (weather permitting).

Hotel: Kibbutz Lotan Guest House

Day 8, Sunday February 21: Interfaith Israel
· Head north to Jerusalem.
· Have lunch with Rabbi Gilad Kariv, a Reform Rabbi and attorney in Israel, who serving as the Executive Director of the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism, ran for a seat in the Knesset in 2015 with the Labor Party.
· In the afternoon, visit the Mount of Olives where we will be welcomed into the home of Ahmad Abu El-Hawa, a Muslim leader. Along with other religious leaders, he founded the “Jerusalem Peacemakers”.
· Then meet Father Earmon Kelly, Vice Chargé of the Pontifical Institute Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center & Magdala and a leading Christian voice for interfaith understanding.
· Enjoy a gala farewell dinner in Jerusalem with an Israeli and Palestinian chef sharing the cooking at Shem Tov, the gem of Machane Yehudah Market.