



# MEJDI TOURS

## **The Desert Calls, the Holy Land Beckons: A Women's Journey of Transformation in Israel**

March 14 – March 23, 2019

### **TENTATIVE ITINERARY**

#### **Day 1, Thursday, March 14, 2019: The Journey Begins**

- Arrive at Ben Gurion Airport and transfer on your own to the hotel in Tel Aviv.
- CULINARY PACKAGE MEAL: At 5:00 pm, we will meet up with those who have already arrived and leave for a 6:30 pm Dinner in the Dark, served by **blind waiters** at the Nalaga'at Center.
- If you are not joining culinary program, have dinner on your own at recommended restaurants near the hotel.
- After dinner, the entire group will meet up at the hotel to for an opening program.
- *Hotel:* Ruth Daniel Residence, Jaffa [optional D]

#### **Day 2, Friday, March 15, 2019: Encounter with the Feminine Spirit of Tel Aviv**

- The Eretz Israel Museum will introduce the first of our four elements: Earth. A highlight of this archaeological museum is its collection of 14<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE artifacts from the Egyptian-Midianite Mining Temple in Timna in the Arava Desert. We will pay special attention to objects bearing the image of Hathor, the patron goddess of mining, a figure whom we will revisit later in the tour.
- Lunch on your own at Shuk HaNamal, an indoor food and produce market, with an extra outdoor organic market on Fridays.
- Visit Comme il Faut (Bayit BaNamal), a unique store and exhibition space that is dedicated to the female body and its various needs: food, body, fashion, art, thought, and spirit. After several years in the Israeli fashion world, the founders began to pay attention to the pattern of oppression of the modern patriarchal society in which we live.
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- Since then, every clothing item that has been designed, every image produced, and every sentence written by the brand has been committed to the feminist worldview.

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- We will then have the opportunity to visit the world of Israeli feminist sexual liberation at The Sisters, a women-focused sex dedicated to the premise that sexual pleasure is a basic right of every woman. The guiding principle of Sisters' day-to-day activities is to open communication among women about sexuality, and to share real and reliable information about sex to promote pleasure, health and happiness.
- We will then return to the hotel and prepare for Shabbat.
- In the late afternoon, we will connect with the element, Water, as we dip our toes into the Mediterranean Sea. We will then join a group of beachside drummers who have gathered every Friday for the last 20+ years to welcome in Shabbat with rhythm, music, and dancing.
- As Shabbat comes in, we will experience the element, Fire, as we light Shabbat candles together.
- At 5:30 pm, we will join the egalitarian community of Beit Tefilah Israeli for a special musical Israeli Kabbalat Shabbat, including traditional and contemporary prayers, singing, dancing, and new Israeli music.
- Return to the hotel for Shabbat dinner.

*Hotel:* Ruth Daniel Residence, Jaffa [B, D]

### **Day 3, Saturday, March 16, 2019: The Myth and Magic of Women in Jaffa**

- Have the morning free to sleep in, explore the city on your own, or attend services at Mishkanot Ruth Daniel, a Reform synagogue led by Rabbi Mira Raz, located next to the hotel.
- We will enjoy a group lunch together in the Jaffa Fleamarket.
- We will then visit the Made in Eretz Israel vintage Israeli kitchen gallery for a chance to browse nostalgia from the 1940-1970s, many items reflecting gender roles from the eras they represent.
- We'll stop outside of the Tabeetha School to hear the story of Jane Walker-Arnott who founded this school for girls.
- We will take a coffee break at Basma's Coffee and learn about Basma's famous smile.
- We will then take a special tour of the Ilana Goor Museum focusing on the Female Identity in Art: Beyond Sexuality and Motherhood. The image of the woman in art has historically reflected the male gaze, either of the artist or the viewer for which the work was intended. The woman was usually presented as a mother, a seducer, or a muse. Here and there strong women were depicted as "helpers" of the man ("*ezer kenegdo*"), and rarely as powerful in their own right.

- In this tour we shall follow the female identity and its complexity, as manifested in Ilana Goor's work and in the works of other artists in the fascinating collection Goor has collected over the years.
- We will stop at St. Peter's Catholic Church where, according to Christian tradition, Saint Peter resurrected Tabitha, a disciple of Jesus, famed for helping the city's poor.
- At the heart of Old Jaffa, we will find images of the 12 Zodiac signs and make own wishes at the Wishing Bridge.
- We will conclude by making *Havdallah* overlooking Andromeda Rocks, where we will learn about the legend of Queen Cassiopeia chaining her daughter, the Goddess Andromeda, to the cliffs out of jealousy of her beauty.
- Have a free evening. Or :
- CULINARY PACKAGE MEAL: Dine at the trendy Nanuchka, a once-carnivorous Georgian restaurant/bar that became vegan when owner Nana Schreier decided she was finished with meat. Enjoy new-to-you flavors and fresh-from-the-oven Georgian pastries and breads, as well as chinkalis, Georgian dumplings and stuffed vegetables.

*Hotel:* Ruth Daniel Residence, Jaffa [B, L; optional D]

#### **Day 4, Sunday, March 17, 2019: In the Wilderness: Meeting with Women's Ancient Desert Culture**

- After breakfast, we will participate in an aromatherapy workshop with Leah Sands at the hotel. (Those sensitive to smells may opt out.)
- We will check out from the hotel, and travel to Kiryat Gat to visit the Atachlit Farm. There we will learn about traditional Ethiopian culture from women in the community. Atachlit houses a cultural center dedicated to the preservation and teaching of traditional Ethiopian crafts. After a tour, we will participate in Ethiopian cookery workshop where we will have the opportunity to savor the tastes of injera and the traditional spice, *chao*.
- We then will travel to the Negev desert to the Bedouin township of Lakiya. We will spend the afternoon with the women of Sidreh, a Bedouin Women's Rights NGO that also houses a women's weaving cooperative.
- We'll continue south to Mitzpe Ramon. Once we arrive, we will check in and have dinner and gather afterward to set our *kavannot*/intentions for our time in the desert.

*Hotel:* Ramon Suites Hotel, Mizpe Ramon [B, L, D]

#### **Day 5, Monday, March 18, 2019: Awaken our Senses: We call to Her**

- We will begin the day with yoga and meditative walk in the desert along the edge of the crater.

- We will then visit the Zlilei Hamidbar (Sounds of the Desert) Park along the northern cliff of Maktesh Ramon where we can admire stone and interactive sculptures and listen to gongs and bells set in motion manually or by the wind.
- Visit Faran Cosmetics, a local factory that makes organic makeup and organic goat and camel milk soaps.
- We then will have some free time in Mitzpe Ramon's Spice Route Quarter for lunch on your own and an opportunity to check out some of the many galleries and shops.
- We then will have the opportunity to participate in a desert baking field workshop with Hadas Meir, owner of Lasha Bakery. We will make our own dough outside and bake our bread on an open fire in a special Potjiekos bread-baking dish. Hadas has said: "In the field workshops you really feel the desert...baking bread outside, the desert becomes an active ingredient in the baking, which is very moving. All the different elements—earth, wind, water, and fire—come into play, and at the end of the workshop we have a meal outside, and the bread is the key component of that meal."
- The Holy One promises the biblical Patriarchs and Matriarchs: "I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky." After dinner, we will sit underneath this very same beautiful clear sky (as our ancestors OMIT) with an astronomer who will guide us in the wonder of the diamonds painted on the sky.

*Hotel:* Ramon Suites Hotel, Mitzpe Ramon [B, Breadmaking, D]

#### **Day 6, Tuesday, March 19 2019: Connecting to the Divine Mother of the Desert**

- We will head south to Timna Park, the site of the world's first copper mine. Thousands of ancient mining shafts can be seen throughout the park as well as remains of smelting furnaces dating back to ancient imperial Egypt. We will continue learning about the goddess Hathor.
- We will have lunch on our own at King Solomon's Khan restaurant.
- We will make an "essential" stop for some chocolate milk or ice cream (cost covered) at Kibbutz Yotvata, one of the country's largest dairy producers.
- We then will visit the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies whose student body is comprised of Jordanians, Palestinians, Israelis, and other students from around the world. Tour their experimental orchards and renewable energy park and hear from their staff or program participants.
- After returning to Mitzpe Ramon for dinner, we will have an optional Rio Abierto ("open river" in Spanish) workshop with Vered Shomron, an interdisciplinary artist and designer and a certified mind-body therapist in the Rio Abierto method. Rio Abierto is an experience involving motion, sound, touch, relaxation and diverse music from around the world. The workshop evokes the joy, vitality and serenity we all possess.

*Hotel:* Ramon Suites Hotel, Mizpe Ramon [B, ice cream, D]

**Day 7, Wednesday, March 20, 2019: Bringing the Inspiration Home: Celebrating Peacemakers and Purim**

- We will check out after breakfast and head to the impressive Mount Sodom, rising from the Dead Sea, with its unusual rock formations including one called “Lot’s Wife,” after the biblical story.
- We will have lunch at the Dead Sea and have time to relax at a spa.
- We will ascend to Jerusalem and check into the hotel.
- We will meet an Israeli woman and a Palestinian woman from the peacemaking organization the Parents Circle-Families Forum (PCFF). Members of this organization have all lost family members to war, terrorism, or violence. Both women contributed recipes to PCFF’s “Jam Session Cookbook - Recipes for Friendship, Jams and Remembrance.” The women will bring samples for jams that we will use with them to bake hamentashen for Purim. Two female first-year Hebrew Union College rabbinical students will join our group to assist us in making the hamentashen. Culinary package participants will receive a copy of their cookbook.
- Have a free evening.
- CULINARY PACKAGE MEAL: Katy’s is a small and celebrated French bistro with Middle Eastern touches in downtown Jerusalem. Moroccan owner, Katy, is very “hands-on” and makes sure to offer warm and personal service. Guest speakers/Peacemakers will join us for the dinner.

*Hotel:* Beit Shmuel, Jerusalem [B, L, optional D]

**Day 8, Thursday, March 21, 2019: From Holiness to Hilarity: Aligning with the Divine**

- Dr. Melila Hellner-Eshed will join us early after breakfast to teach about the presence of the *Shechinah* on the Temple Mount. Melila is a research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute and a professor of Jewish mysticism and Zohar in the department of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Melila is on the faculty of the Institute of Jewish Spirituality and is active in the 'Sulha' - a reconciliation project that brings together Israelis and Palestinians.
- Then enter the Old City and ascend the Temple Mount/Al-Haram al-Sharif for a tour of the precinct. The Temple Mount was the site of the Ancient Temple of Jerusalem and the Presence of *Shechinah*, The Divine Feminine, resided there. Spend some time in the Old City.
- Spend some time within the “Feminine Energy” of the Kotel, The Western Wall
- Then tour the Jewish Quarter of the Old City and have lunch on your own with representatives of the **Original Women of the Wall**. Explore the Arab Shuk.

- We will cap off the day with a fun group photo in the Cardo with all of us dressed up in Biblical era garb in honor of Purim.
- We then will return to the hotel and have some free time before heading out for Purim.
- Dinner on our own at Jerusalem's First Station, restored train station and lively center of shops and restaurants
- We will join Kehilat Zion, Nava Tehillah or Kol Haneslama for a festive *Megilah* reading.

*Hotel:* Beit Shmuel, Jerusalem [B]

### **Day 9, Friday, March 22, 2019: Shushan Purim-Celebration of Her Majesty around the Holy City**

- We will spend the morning participating in Women of the Wall's Purim service at the Kotel. Afterwards, we will speak with some of their leaders.
- Have lunch on your own
- Go to the Unique Purim Happening on Ben Yehuda Street, produced by the students of the Betzalel Art School
- Discover the "Street of Prophetesses" on your own near Jerusalem's Prophets Street. Follow the footsteps of great Jerusalem women who worked, loved, and created including a Russian princess, an Ethiopian queen, a leader of laborers, a poet, a painter, and a physician.
- If time, go to Machane Yehuda, the bustling fruit and vegetable (bustling) marketplace in preparation for Shabbat
- We will return to the hotel and prepare for Shabbat.
- We then will join together for a spiritual *Kabbalat Shabbat* service at the hotel led Rabbi Rayzel Raphael and Juliet I. Spitzer
- We will have Shabbat dinner together at the hotel.

*Hotel:* Beit Shmuel, Jerusalem [B, D]

### **Day 10, Saturday, March 23, 2019: Shabbat and Integration Ritual: Reaping the Rewards of the Journey**

- We will check out of our rooms after breakfast and store our luggage.
- We will have a free morning to either explore the Old City on your own, attend Shabbat morning services, or visit the Israel Museum (taxis and entrance fee not included).
- Lunch will be available and included for those who are interested.
- We will end the tour with a closing ritual and a musical *Havdallah* led by Rabbi Ruth Gan Kagen, the spiritual leader of Nava Tehila, a Jewish Renewal Community.

[B, L]