

Title:

Jerusalem in just 3 days

Word Count:

677

Summary:

There is barely enough time to scratch the surface of the things to see and do in this ancient and modern city. If you overlook the blatant competition for tourist dollars and seek out quiet corners, you can still find the peace this city is meant to represent.

Unless you are passionate about crowds, avoid Christmas and Easter in Jerusalem.

Keywords:

israel hotels, jerusalem hotels

Article Body:

How to Get Around:

The best way to see the Old City of Jerusalem is by walking the narrow, ancient alleyways that twist and turns like a maze. Parts of the Old City like the Shouk (market) where the hustle and bustle crushes around you amid the presence of the past is pedestrianised.

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher

The Via Dolorosa ends here, at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Like most of the Old City, it is located within a small courtyard in front and the neighboring buildings built of Jerusalem stone. The dome of the church next to the spire of a minaret, the call to prayer echoing through the ancient alley ways. Inside the church, the place has been divided up among several Christian sects who jealously guard their piece of space.

This spot, the highest in the Old City, has been a sacred site since the Romans built their temple to Venus, and there have been several churches here, beginning with the one Constantine put up, followed by another constructed by the Crusaders. It's been added onto since then, but it remains a square Gothic creation with vast ceilings and huge columns supporting it.

The volume of tourists is almost the same as in the shouk. Here, Christ was

nailed to the cross. Herded down another set of stairs, past the slab of rock where his body was washed and, finally, a few feet away, the Holy Sepulcher itself. Everything is covered in gold and tapestries.

Towards the back of the church are cool, calm, softly lit corridors, open onto small chapels. You can sense the aroma from centuries gone by and the dampness in the air.

Dome of the Rock

The Dome of the Rock is located above the Wailing Wall on the old Temple Mount (Haram esh-Sharif, in Arabic).

There is no commercialism here. In fact, you leave all your belongings outside: shoes, purses, cameras, money, and passports.

Under the huge gold dome, is the quiet and peace of a place that exudes spiritualism. Men (and women, separately) quietly go about their devotions. People speak softly, nobody sells postcards or candles, and no one takes photographs. What light there is shines down from stained glass windows into the dome, onto a chunk of bare rock bordered by an elaborately carved wooden screen. It was here that Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son, and here Mohammed is said to have ascended to heaven on his horse. The horse's hoof prints are supposed to be visible in the stone.

No matter what your beliefs, this is a unique place and nobody should miss out on an opportunity to visit it.

Shrine of the Book

This is a must see. The Dead Sea Scrolls are housed here. You walk down a sloping tunnel into the underground building that could double as a movie set for a Sci-Fi flick. The long halls are lined with glass-fronted recesses. Inside are various ancient scrolls found in the caves around Ein Gedi and range from dispatches from Bar Kochba to his troops during his uprising against Rome in 132 C.E. to even earlier documents, including legal papers relating to lawsuits, property deeds and loans.

Not until you are underground do you see the Scrolls themselves. The room is round and bi-level with walls of stone slabs like so many of the ancient buildings in the city. Some are just fragments; some seem to be quite complete. Each is perfectly formed letter sits on faint lines drawn for the scribe to

follow.

In the deepest part of the Shrine is the spherical window holding the Isaiah scroll, wrapped around an oversized version of the wooden pole a Torah is wrapped around. You can slowly walk around it. What a miracle it is that these fragile pieces of papyrus and parchment have survived for so many thousands of years.

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