



Living Stones Pilgrimage

Study Tour in Palestine and Israel

April 7-19, 2024

\$3,500 (or only \$3,000 with a \$500 Early Bird Discount if deposit paid by Dec 15 2023)

West Bank Tour Guide - Usama Nicola

Pilgrims U.S. Coordinators - Brenda Mehos, Board, and Essrea Cherin, ED

Tour Instructor - Dr. Celene Lillie, early Christian Historian

A unique tour of witness and pilgrimage in the service of peace in the region a third of humanity call "The Holy Land"

This alternative travel study tour is an opportunity to escape the mass tourism experience of typical trips to the Holy Land. It is educational and cultural with a focus on the people ('Living Stones') who are working in this region for a just peace. This trip will encourage deep thinking, open minds, curiosity, and sensitivity to people living in this region.

During our tour we will visit many holy sites with the benefit of having an engaging early Christian History instructor with us. Our West Bank guide will introduce us to a wide range of Palestinians and Israelis who are working to make a difference and work for a peace that is sustainable and fair. You will have the opportunity to meet Christians, Jews, and Muslims who have incredible faith and are creating hope.

If you are curious, enjoy learning about culture, history, politics, human and environmental rights, and want to meet and engage with the people who live where you travel - this trip is for you!

Overnight accommodations are clean, comfortable, and modest with considerations to place us in areas where we can explore and meet locals and keep the trip affordable. This trip is designed for 15 travelers to maximize the experience. We will stay in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Ibillin in the Mar Elias Educational Institution (MEEI) guest house.



Before Travel

- Participants will have an opportunity to meet and engage with Dr. Lillie and each other in a Zoom classroom setting to enrich our experience.
- Participants will meet at least once by zoom to meet each other, Usama Nicola and Brenda Mehos, and to go over trip particulars including packing list and travel instructions.
- Travelers will be encouraged to read several books including Archbishop Elias Chacour's *Blood Brothers* (we will meet with the author at MEEI in Ibillin).

What to Expect During Trip

- We will have active and full days with some free time built in.
- We will have debriefings daily whenever possible.

Comments from Previous Pilgrimage Participants

"I highly recommend a Pilgrims of Ibillin tour! It gives a better understanding of a situation that is not well covered in our usual news feeds. For a better understanding of the individuals and communities involved and the "peacemaker" groups. This pilgrimage is a mix of seeing important historical and biblical places, and meeting people who live there today."

"Broadly, there is a universal need for American Christians to gain a broader perspective on Israel and Palestine, and a number of good and worthy agencies that can do so very well. Specifically, I appreciate Pilgrims of Ibillin's connection to the Mar Elias Educational Institution and the unique and powerful witness of Elias Chacour. Pilgrims of Ibillin is to be commended as well for their excellent networking among other agents of peace and justice."

"I was very impressed with the organization of the trip, as well as the able flexibility needed when arrangements changed. I especially appreciated the personal caring and efforts of both US and Palestinian personnel."



Living Stones Pilgrimages

Father Chacour says, *“We invite visitors to see the ruins of holy sites but also engage with the “living stones”, the people that live and make homes there.*

With this as inspiration, since 1995 Pilgrims of Ibillin has taken nearly 400 individuals on two-week pilgrimages to meet peacemakers in Israel and Palestine working to make a difference.

Led by Pilgrims staff, board members, and local partners in the West Bank and the Galilee, we visit Christians, Muslims, and Jews who are working creatively to plant and nourish the seeds of a “Just Peace”.

Our tours include visits to various holy sites and explore social, cultural, historical, and theological perspectives to the current realities for people living in Israel and Palestine today.

Itinerary for April 2024 Living Stones Pilgrimage

April 7-19, 2024

Be aware that conditions on the ground may dictate changes

Sunday, April 7 - Fly to Tel Aviv on late night flight

Monday, April 8 - Bethlehem

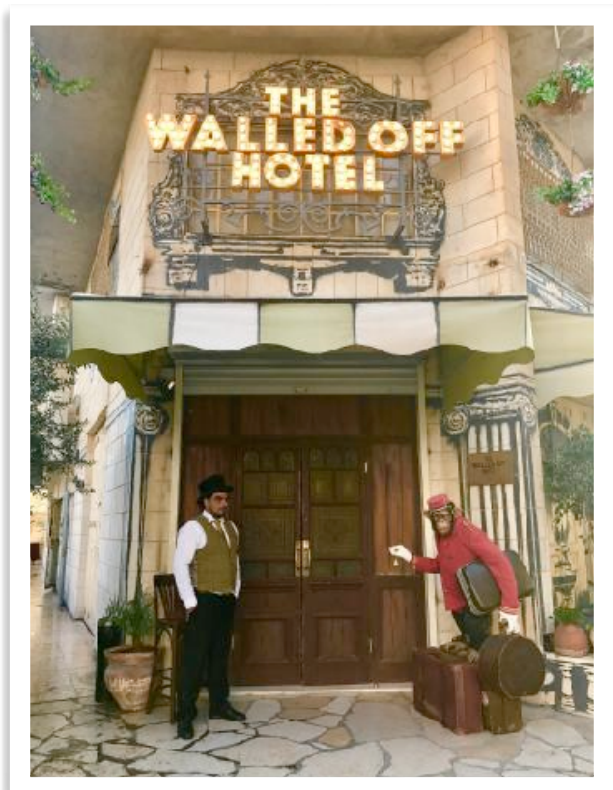
- Arrive (afternoon) and transfer to Bethlehem Guesthouse
- Dinner at Guesthouse

Day 1 — Tuesday, April 9 — Bethlehem

- Breakfast at Guesthouse
- Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center for orientation
- Tour Aida Refugee Camp
- Seraj Library in camp
- Al-Rowad Center
- Separation Wall
- Walled Off Hotel and museum
- BBQ Dinner at Wi'am including conversation with locals
- Debrief at Guesthouse

Day 2 — Wednesday, April 10 — Nablus

- Breakfast at the Guesthouse
- Travel to Nablus and visit Jacob's Well
- Visit Mt. Gerizim and Samaritan Museum
- Tour of old town Nablus and 500-year-old Souk (outdoor market)



Day 3 — Thursday, April 11 — Jericho

- Breakfast at Guesthouse
- Khan al-Ahmar Bedouin Community
- Lunch in Jericho
- Baptism Site on Jordan River
- Explore and float in the Dead Sea
- Dinner at the Guesthouse and debrief

**Day 4 — Friday, April 12 — Battir and Bethlehem**

- Breakfast at the Guesthouse
- Morning hike to Battir, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (5 miles) *[Those unable to walk may be bused there and meet us for lunch]*
- Hope School
- Church of Nativity
- Free time until dinner
- Dinner at the Guesthouse and debrief

Day 5 — Saturday, April 13 — Ramallah

- Breakfast at the Guesthouse
- Visit Sam Bahour
- Arafat Museum
- Seraj Library and Cultural Center
- Defense for Children
- Dinner at the Guesthouse and debrief



Day 6 — Sunday, April 14 — Bethlehem and Hebron



- Breakfast at Guesthouse, checkout
- Morning visit to Wadi Foquin
- Travel to Hebron to visit Abraham Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs
- Walk through Souq (market) and Shouhada St.
- Meet with Community Peacemaker Team and lunch
- Visit Kaffiyeh factory and glass/ceramics factories
- Meet with Parents' Circle/

Bereaved Families back at Guesthouse

- Travel to Jerusalem
- Check into Ecce Homo Dinner and debrief

Day 7 — Monday, April 15 — Jerusalem

- Breakfast at Ecce Homo
- Tour Dome of the Rock, El-Marwani and Al Aqsa Mosques, and Solomon's Stables
- Western Wall
- Church of Holy Sepulcher
- Mt of Olives - Garden of Gethsemane
- Meet with Jerusalem Chorus Director
- Dinner at Ecce Homo and debrief



Day 8 — Tuesday, April 16 — Jerusalem

- Breakfast at Ecce Homo
- Tour of East Jerusalem in morning including areas threatened (Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah and Issawiya)
- Travel to I'billin
- Check into the Mar Elias (MEEI) Guesthouse and Dinner

**Day 9 — Wednesday, April 17 — I'billin**

- Breakfast at the MEEI Guesthouse
- Meet with Principal Elias AG and English students
- Tour destroyed village of Bi'ram
- Dinner at MEEI Guesthouse with Archbishop Elias Chacour and discussion

Day 10 — Thursday, April 18 — Galilee

- Breakfast at the MEEI Guesthouse
- Travel to Sea of Galilee
- Visit sites important in Jesus' ministry including Migdal, Capernum, Tabgha, Mount of Beatitudes, Primacy of Peter
- Boat ride on Sea of Galilee
- Dinner and overnight at MEEI Guesthouse



Day 11 — Friday, April 19 — Nazareth

- Breakfast at the MEEI Guesthouse and checkout
- Sepphoris Archeologic Park
- Travel to Nazareth
- Ghada's Corner for lunch
- Walk through souk
- Basilica of the Annunciation
- Final dinner in Ramle at Samirs
- Travel to Tel Aviv Airport for late evening flights or transfer to hotel if planning to remain in the region



“The Pilgrims of Ibillin come to our minds as being the best ambassador of the United States. What the Pilgrims do is bring a factor of hope... We nurture the hope that soon you would be able to come and visit us and see for yourself what unity we have here within our diversity.”

— Abuna Elias Chacour



Tour Coordinators and Leaders

Instructor Dr. Celene Lillie, an historian of early Christian history, Lecturer at the University of CO Boulder, adjunct professor at The Seattle School of Theology Psychology, and Dean of the Westar Institute's online academy. She's the author of *The Rape of Eve: The Transformation of Roman Ideology in Three Early Christian Retellings of Genesis*, the director of translations for *A New New Testament*, and a co-author of *The Thunder Perfect Mind: A New Translation and Introduction*. She traveled to Palestine and Israel for the first time with Pilgrims of Ibillin in 2019.



Usama Nicola, our West Bank Tour guide, is the Citizens Diplomacy Project coordinator along with Zoughbi Al Zoughbi at Wi'am in Bethlehem (The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center). Since its inception, Wi'am has offered alternative tourist programs with opportunities for individuals and groups to visit Holy Places (Holy Stones), visit the people living there (Living Stones), and introduces the socio-economic and political conditions (Rolling Stones).



Brenda Mehos, Travel Coordinator, is a Pilgrims of Ibillin board director and served as an interim director fall 2020 through spring of 2021. Brenda has traveled to Palestine and Israel multiple times since 2013 including trips with Pilgrims of Ibillin and has participated in a delegation to Nablus Palestine with the Boulder Nablus Sister City Project (BNSCP) in 2017. She's is also a BNSCP board member.



Essrea Cherin, Executive Director of Pilgrims of Ibillin and the co-founder of the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project. She is a conflict resolution and restorative processes professional and has worked in the Middle East for almost 20 years beginning with Abraham's Path - establishing a hiking trail to retrace Abraham's footsteps. In addition, Essrea is an Adjunct Faculty member at Regis University and teaches courses such as intercultural communication and conflict management.



Additional Information and Considerations

Cost of the Pilgrimage

\$3,500 (or Early Bird rate: \$3,000) double occupancy with \$300 single room additional supplement. Price includes accommodations, meals, tips, entry fees, and honorariums for speakers. Price does not include airfare and travel insurance which is required (about \$100). See more on this below.

Payment

Deposit of \$500, payable to Pilgrims of Ibillin, is due immediately to secure participation. Mail check to Essrea Cherin at 4500 19th Street, #435, Boulder, CO 80304. Pay deposit **no later than Dec 15, 2023** to receive an **Early Bird discount of \$500 off** (or \$3,000 instead of \$3,500). After Dec 15 the total cost increases to \$3,500.

Not included

Passport fees, travel insurance, excess baggage, and items of a personal nature. Fee does not include airport transfers other than when with the group. There will be an additional fee of \$150 for airport transport if you are unable to meet group at airport by 5 pm on April 8.



Guarantee Your Spot

To guarantee your spot in the group, register soon with \$500 deposit. **Final payment of \$3,000 (or \$2,500 if received early bird discount) is due by March 1, 2024.** To offer this group cost, we request deposit and final payment by check. If paying with credit card ([at this webpage](#)), please add a 2.6% surcharge (you'll see this option on the payment form). After March 1 a \$200 late fee will be applied.

Flight Reservations: Arrange for a refundable flight through our Travel Agent Christina Boyer at All Aboard Travel at christina@allaboardtravelhillsdale.com or **(517) 437-4844** for airline reservations from your home airport to Tel Aviv and return.

Or, alternatively, if making your own plans please **arrive at Tel Aviv airport on April 8 before 5 pm Israel time and plan your return flight just before midnight on April 19** (leaving later will require additional hotel and transportation expense).

Christina is familiar with our tour and the need for these specific times.

Comprehensive Travel Insurance

Insurance covering baggage, health, and trip cancellation is available through All Aboard and is highly recommended. If you arrange your own flight we also suggest World Nomads www.worldnomads.com. A flight with refundable airfare is very strongly advised as is travel insurance.

Passports and Visas

U.S. citizens need a passport valid **at least six months after their date of return** to the US. Get passport applications at <http://www.travel.state.gov/>. You will receive your visa at passport control in Tel Aviv. You do not need to apply for it in advance.

Provide a photocopy of your passport to the tour coordinator before the trip begins. We will be watching Israel's travel requirements closely and will relay information as needed.



Refund Policy

If cancellation is received in writing before March 1, 2024, a \$200 fee applies plus unrecoverable deposits or land service payments. After March 1, a \$500 cancellation fee will be deducted from your refund, due to the special contracts for tour, obligations to other tour members, and the services rendered on behalf of all tour members.

Responsibility

Neither Pilgrims of Ibillin nor its employees or agents, nor any other person, party, or entity associated with it shall be liable for any injuries, damages, accidents, expenses, delays, schedule or itinerary changes, damage to person or property, or any other loss or inconvenience arising out of or in connection with any transportation, accommodation, meals, tours, or other services that relate to the travel program or are referred to herein, or that occur during free time the members may have on the tour.

Pilgrims of Ibillin reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to make changes in the itinerary whenever changes are warranted or deemed appropriate and withdraw participation of any tour member whose conduct is incompatible with the group. In the ever changing world situation, Pilgrims of Ibillin recommends personal monitoring of news about Israel/Palestine. For the latest country information and travel warning from the US Dept. of State, visit: [http:// www.travel.state.gov/travel](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel).

Health Agreement - Participants will practice responsible health protocols while on the trip, including following instructions from trip leaders about mask wearing and isolating if that should ever become an issue. While the world of COVID is behind us, issues raised by COVID pertain to symptoms for colds, flu, etc.

This pilgrimage is demanding. It includes long walks over often uneven ground and cobblestone, climbing long and steep staircases, and long days. **Be sure you are fit and able.**

Please do not hesitate to e-mail (essrea@pilgrimsofibilin.org) or call (303-928-0923) if you have questions.



By signing my registration application (page 15), I affirm that I have been advised and am aware of the U.S. State Department Travel Warning to Israel and the West Bank.

Reservation for Living Stones Pilgrimage to Palestine & Israel

April 7 - 19, 2024

To be assured of your place on this tour, please print and complete this form, and mail along with your registration deposit of \$500 check to Pilgrims of Ibillin ([or credit card at this link](#))

Mail to: **Essrea Cherin 4500 19th Street, #435, Boulder, CO 80304**

Registrations and complete fees due no later than March 1, 2024

1st Traveler

Name 1 (as it appears on passport) _____

Passport # _____

Expiration Date _____

Birth Date _____

Name as preferred for name tag _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Travel History? Have you traveled to Israel and/or Palestine before? If yes, when?



Why are you interested in this Pilgrimage?

Do you have any medical considerations or allergies?

2nd Traveler

Name 2 (as it appears on passport) _____

Passport # _____

Expiration Date _____

Birth Date _____

Name as preferred for name tag _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Travel History? Have you traveled to Israel and/or Palestine before? If yes, when?



Why are you interested in this Pilgrimage?

Do you have any medical considerations or allergies?

All Travelers

Passport copies

Please enclose a clear photocopy or pdf of the signature page of each traveler's passport

Address _____

City, State and Zip _____

Preferred home airport: _____

Room Type, Circle one: Double or Single (\$300 added for single supplement)

I have read the Notes and Conditions for this tour and agree to the terms listed therein.

Print name, Signature, and Date

Traveler # 1 _____

Traveler #2 _____

Date _____



Emergency Contact

Please provide contact information for at least one emergency contact at home here:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

e-mail _____

Thank you for completing this application! We are so excited for you to join this journey of a lifetime with us!