



BRUCE LEY

A Villager's Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Your leader Aaron Leventhal with Bruce Ley, both of City Park Avenue



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By Aaron
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Photos
submitted by
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travel tales

This past November, I organized a 10-day Israel tour through ancient sites and contemporary attractions for a group of seven Ohio seniors, including my German Village neighbor and golf buddy, Bruce Ley.

What motivated you to go to Israel? Bruce: I love to travel. My father taught in our church Sunday School, and I listened to his Bible stories with sheer wonderment. He also conducted business in the Middle East and would return home with fascinating accounts of his travels. I studied history and political science at Ohio State and had investments in Israeli tech companies, so I was more than ready for a new adventure and spiritual renewal.

What captivated you during your trip? I expected to see a barren land with signs of a technological boom. This tiny country is only about the size of New Jersey, sandwiched between enemy lands and the sea, and I was amazed to discover how successful it is.

What are your most memorable experiences? Definitely Tel Aviv. It's reminiscent of Santa Monica, with its large marina, volleyball courts on sandy beaches, outdoor cafes and chic restaurants and boutiques. There are young and old people hiking and biking everywhere. The archeological extra-



An encounter with Hasidic students from Brooklyn, New York



Bread blessing the sacred shelter in an Akko shop



Brava and hachnas spell 'D-H-I-O' at the Dead Sea



Praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem

vations were unbelievable in Caesarea, Tel Sheva, Jerusalem and Masada, where I hiked a mile and a half to the top of the rocky mountain for a view of the Dead Sea. We visited mixed neighborhoods of Jews and Arab Israelis living and working together peacefully in Akko, Jaffa and Jerusalem. Other high points were Galilee, the nearby Golan Heights and Kibbutz Ginosar, where we celebrated a Sabbath dinner with new Israeli friends.

Personally, I loved the vibrancy of Israel's art scene. I'm taking art classes at the Cultural Arts Center, so this really impressed me. We saw world-class museums and numerous art galleries sprinkled everywhere through Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ein Hod Artist Village, Tiberias and Galilee's mystical city of Safed.

What do you recommend for first-time visitors? Definitely hire a professional Israeli guide. Our guide, Dany Bardi (dany.bardi@yahoo.com), provided substantive information that helped us enjoy our encounter with Israel's diverse people and their land and culture. We combined a great vacation with an appreciation of just how unique and important Israel is in the Middle East.

Travel writer Aaron Leventhal is organizing month-of-Israel tours for November 2011 (leventhal@2011-journal.com)



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The marina in Tel Aviv