



MYSTAKIDIS TOURS
ORTHODOX PILGRIMAGES SINCE 1959

Holy Fire Pascha Pilgrimage

The one pilgrimage no other can be: Holy Week kept hour by hour in the city where it happened, ending at the Holy Fire.

DURATION

8 Days · 7 Nights

ROUTE

Jerusalem, the Whole of Holy Week

SEASON

Holy Week, once each year

MYSTAKIDISTOURS.COM

WHY THIS PILGRIMAGE

Holy Week, kept where it happened

There is one week in the year when Jerusalem is not a destination but a liturgy, and this is the pilgrimage that keeps it whole: Lazarus Saturday to Pascha, hour by hour, in the city where each hour first happened. It runs once a year, on the dates of the Orthodox Paschalion, and it is the journey our own family holds dearest.

You will carry palms down the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday behind the Patriarchate's procession. You will keep the Bridegroom services in the crowded candlelight of the Holy City's churches, stand in the courtyard of the Holy Sepulchre as the Patriarch washes the feet of twelve hierarchs on Holy Thursday, and walk the Way of the Cross on Holy Friday in a river of pilgrims from every Orthodox nation on earth. And at midday on Holy Saturday you will be inside the great church when the Holy Fire comes from the sealed Tomb, passed hand to hand until the whole basilica is a single body of flame, the rite the Patriarchate of Jerusalem has kept on this day for centuries beyond counting.

Around the services, the pilgrimage still visits Bethlehem, the wilderness, and the holy places, so first-time pilgrims lose nothing. But the week belongs to the services, as it should.

WHO THIS PILGRIMAGE IS FOR

Pilgrims for whom Pascha is already the center of the year and who want to keep it once at its source; clergy on sabbatical; parish groups prepared for crowds, queues, and glory in equal measure. Good stamina is required; this is the most demanding and the most rewarded week we operate.

THE JOURNEY

- TEL AVIV
Arrival on Lazarus Saturday
- JERUSALEM
7 nights: the whole of Holy Week in one hotel
- BETHPHAGE & OLIVES
Palm Sunday procession
- BETHLEHEM
Holy Monday pilgrimage
- THE HOLY SEPULCHRE
Holy Fire, Holy Saturday
- TEL AVIV
Departure after Pascha

One city, one hotel, one week: the pilgrimage does not move because the week itself is the destination.

THE PILGRIMAGE, DAY BY DAY

Holy Fire Pascha: the days

DAY 1 Lazarus Saturday: Arrival in the Holy City

The pilgrimage begins on Lazarus Saturday, the hinge between the Fast and Holy Week, as the city fills with Orthodox pilgrims from every nation. Our director meets the group at Ben Gurion Airport and the coach climbs to Jerusalem, where the hotels, the shops of the Christian Quarter, and the courts of the Holy Sepulchre are already humming like a hive. After check-in, an orientation walk fixes the geography of the week: the routes to the great church, the meeting points, and the quiet ways home after midnight services. Those arriving early enough may join the afternoon procession to Bethany, where the Lord called Lazarus from the tomb on this very day; otherwise the evening is for rest, dinner, and the last full night of sleep the week will offer.

OVERNIGHT Jerusalem

MEALS D · 4-star hotel

DAY 2 Palm Sunday: the Procession from Bethphage

Palm Sunday in Jerusalem is the largest Christian procession on earth, and we walk in it. In the morning we attend the festal Divine Liturgy, and after midday the group joins the Patriarchate's procession at Bethphage, where the Lord mounted the colt, and follows the ancient road over the crest of the Mount of Olives and down toward Saint Stephen's Gate, palms and olive branches in hand, with scouts' drums, chanting in a dozen languages, and the whole Old City spread below in the afternoon light. It is a foretaste of the week: the Church of every nation walking one road. The evening brings the first Bridegroom Matins, Behold the Bridegroom comes at midnight, in the candlelit churches of the quarter. Dinner is kept flexible around the services throughout the week.

OVERNIGHT Jerusalem

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 3 Holy Monday: Bethlehem and the Grotto of the Nativity

The week's one journey out of the city, made deliberately on its quietest day. In Bethlehem we stoop through the Door of Humility into the Basilica of the Nativity and descend to the Grotto, where the fourteen-pointed star marks the place of the Lord's birth; to venerate the beginning of the economy of salvation in the same week one keeps its completion is a mercy pilgrims do not forget. We visit the Shepherds' Field cave chapel at Beit Sahour, then return to Jerusalem with the afternoon free for rest before the evening's Bridegroom Matins, with its hymn of the barren fig tree and the wise use of the remaining hours. Those with strength left may keep vigil awhile at the Holy Sepulchre, open late through Holy Week.

OVERNIGHT Jerusalem

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY BY DAY, CONTINUED

DAY 4 Holy Wednesday: the Wilderness and Holy Unction

In the morning we drive into the Judean wilderness, the Lord's own retreat, to the overlook above the Kidron gorge where the Great Lavra of Mar Saba has prayed without interruption since 483, and to the Jordan at Qasr al-Yahud, where pilgrims may renew their baptismal promises in the river of the Theophany; the wilderness in Holy Week, stripped and silent, preaches better than any guide. We return by early afternoon for rest, because the evening belongs to the Mystery of Holy Unction, the anointing of the faithful for healing of soul and body, celebrated in the churches of the Patriarchate as the Church's last preparation before the Three Days. Your director will place each pilgrim where the service can be followed, with texts in English provided.

OVERNIGHT Jerusalem

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 5 Holy Thursday: the Washing of the Feet, the Twelve Gospels

By early morning we are in the courtyard of the Holy Sepulchre for the Washing of the Feet: the Patriarch of Jerusalem, girded with a towel, washes the feet of twelve hierarchs on a platform before the great doors, as the crowds fill every cornice and stair, the Gospel acted before the church where its consequence stands. Afterward we visit the Upper Room on Mount Zion, where the Mystical Supper was given and the priesthood and Eucharist instituted, and rest through the afternoon. At night the city keeps the Service of the Twelve Passion Gospels; between the readings the lights die away until the church stands in darkness around the Crucified. The group walks home together through streets that have gone strangely quiet.

OVERNIGHT Jerusalem

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 6 Holy Friday: the Way of the Cross and the Lamentations

The Royal Hours are read in the morning, and at midday the group joins the Way of the Cross down the Via Dolorosa, a slow river of pilgrims of every tongue moving station by station toward Golgotha, where we venerate at the place of the Crucifixion in the hour the Church keeps for it. The afternoon is for rest, because the night is long: at the Lamentations before the Epitaphios, the flower-laden bier of Christ is censed and mourned and then carried in procession three times around the Aedicule of the Tomb, myrrh-bearers' hymns in Greek and Arabic and Slavonic overlapping under the great dome. Pilgrims regularly name this night, not Saturday, as the hour that undid them. We return together in the small hours.

OVERNIGHT Jerusalem

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY BY DAY, CONTINUED

DAY 7 Holy Saturday: the Holy Fire, the Paschal Vigil

The day of the Holy Fire. We enter the basilica in the early morning, before the police lines close the quarter, and wait within the great church as it fills beyond filling; the Tomb, sealed and inspected the night before, stands dark at the center. Near midday the Patriarch, searched and vested in white alone, enters the Aedicule, and the church holds its breath until the Fire comes, passed from the Tomb's window to the runners and then hand to hand, thirty-three candles in each bundle, until ten thousand flames move like a single living thing under the dome and the bells break loose. There are no adequate words; there is only being there. We return to the hotel to rest, and at midnight keep the Paschal Vigil and Liturgy, Christos Anesti sung where the words were first true.

OVERNIGHT Jerusalem**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel**DAY 8 Pascha: the Agape Vespers and Departure**

Christ is risen. In the late morning the group attends the Agape Vespers, where the Paschal Gospel is proclaimed in a cascade of languages, Greek, Arabic, Slavonic, Romanian, English, each reader standing in turn, the Church's whole family answering from one city. A festal meal follows, eggs cracked and the fast broken together, with time for last veneration at the Tomb, now surrounded by flowers and light rather than waiting crowds. In the afternoon we drive down to Ben Gurion Airport for evening departures, your director with the group through check-in. Pilgrims go home carrying the one thing this itinerary exists to give: a Pascha that will stand behind every Pascha of the rest of their lives, and the greeting of this city ringing in their ears: Christos Anesti. Alithos Anesti.

OVERNIGHT None, departure day**MEALS** B**PRACTICAL NOTES FOR PILGRIMS**

Holy Week in Jerusalem means crowds, police lines, and long hours on your feet, above all on Holy Friday and Holy Saturday; this pilgrimage asks more stamina and more patience than any other we operate, and it repays both beyond measure. It is not recommended for pilgrims with limited mobility.

Entry to the Holy Sepulchre for the Holy Fire is controlled by the Patriarchate and the police, and positions inside can never be guaranteed to any operator; we lodge our requests with the Patriarchate months ahead, and our groups have entered every year we have run the pilgrimage. Book a full year ahead: this departure closes earlier than any other in our catalog.

YOUR PILGRIMAGE, PLAINLY STATED

What is included, and what is not

INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- ◆ Seven nights in a 4-star hotel in Jerusalem, within walking distance of the Old City, twin or double share
- ◆ Half-board throughout: breakfast and dinner daily, timed around the services of Holy Week
- ◆ All land transportation in a modern air-conditioned coach
- ◆ Licensed English-speaking guide, briefed in the Orthodox tradition, throughout, as required by Israeli law
- ◆ Entry fees to every site named in the itinerary
- ◆ Holy Week service arrangements and Holy Fire entry requests lodged with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem
- ◆ English texts of the principal Holy Week services for every pilgrim
- ◆ Airport transfers on the group arrival and departure days

NOT INCLUDED

- ◆ International airfare to and from Tel Aviv; group air quoted separately on request
- ◆ Single room supplement, quoted on request
- ◆ Travel insurance, strongly advised
- ◆ Tips to guides and drivers; we suggest \$8 to \$10 per day for the guide and \$4 to \$5 per day for the driver
- ◆ Lunches, taken at leisure around the services
- ◆ Alcoholic beverages with dinner
- ◆ Passport fees; US citizens do not currently require a visa for Israel
- ◆ Items of a personal nature: laundry, telephone, minibar

This departure runs once a year on the dates of the Orthodox Paschalion and is capped below our usual maximum so the group can move through Holy Week crowds together. Prices are per person, twin share, land only, in US dollars.

BOOKING YOUR PILGRIMAGE

Terms, plainly stated

RESERVING YOUR PLACE

A deposit of \$400 per pilgrim confirms your reservation. Places are assigned in the order deposits are received, and each departure is limited to forty pilgrims.

BALANCE OF PAYMENT

The balance of the pilgrimage price is due 90 days before departure. Prices are per person in US dollars, sharing a twin or double room. A single room is available for a supplement, quoted on request.

CANCELLATION

More than 90 days before departure	Deposit only
89 to 60 days before departure	50% of the price
59 to 30 days before departure	75% of the price
Inside 30 days of departure	No refund

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is not included and is strongly advised. We recommend a policy covering trip cancellation, medical care abroad, and baggage, purchased within days of paying your deposit.

GROUP SIZE

A minimum of 15 pilgrims is required for the pilgrimage to operate. Maximum 40 pilgrims per departure, so that veneration at the holy places is never rushed.

A FAMILY COMPANY

Mystakidis Tours has led pilgrims to the holy places since 1959, a family company in its third generation. Your group travels with one experienced pilgrimage director from arrival to departure.



BY TELEPHONE

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BY EMAIL

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ON THE WEB

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Every itinerary can be adjusted for your parish. Ask us about preferred dates, group air from your nearest gateway, and a visit from our team to present the pilgrimage to your community.