

My Top Ten Spots in the Holy Land - Tom Govern

I have been blessed twice with the opportunity to visit the Holy Land. I went with a premier Catholic guide (Steve Ray) who has made over 100 trips. If you go, make sure you have a Catholic guide and ground crew. I believe that everyone's reaction to the experience is a bit different. There are so many sites and experiences. What I want to share with you are what I consider to be the "top ten" sites.

10. Church of the Nativity

It is a wonderful site but very crowded because it is so popular. This is the oldest standing Church in the Holy Land, built over the cave where our Savior was born. You can visit the cave (usually with a long wait). Obviously this is a must see.

9. Shepherd's Field outside Bethlehem

This is where our Saviors birth was announced to shepherds tending their sheep. I actually got more of a feeling of Christmas here than at the Church. This is also where a young shepherd wrote some of the 73 Psalms before he became the great King David. Having Mass in one of the caves is special.

8. The Upper Room

The "Cenacle", located in Jerusalem on Mount Zion, is where Jesus instituted our greatest Sacraments. It is the site of the Last Supper and the Eucharist, Reconciliation and the Priesthood. It is the site of Pentecost and the birth of our Church on that day.

7. Jordan River at Yardenit, Site of Our Lord's Baptism

This is where our Lord began his ministry and revealed the Trinity. The site was recently opened after being closed following the 1967 war. Israel and Jordan are separated by only 100 feet of the flowing river. You can wade into the river and repeat your baptismal vows.

6. Banias (Caesarea Philippi)

This very northern site is at the headwaters of the Jordan River that come from Mount Hermon. Jesus took his disciples here (at least a two day walk) to invest Peter with the "Keys to the Kingdom". You can really feel the power of the event here.

5. Walls of Jerusalem

When I see the walls of Jerusalem I get a chill. The city is ancient and so important to our faith. It is hard to describe the feeling. There is something about Jerusalem that gets in your blood.

4. Calvary

Located in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, it is where our Lord gave his life for us. A very ornate altar is located over the top of Calvary Hill which was just outside the old city at the time of Our Savior.

3. Sea of Galilee, Capernaum

There are so many sites located on the Sea of Galilee. This is where Jesus spent his time teaching. You can feel his presence near the "Sea" which is really a fresh water lake. Capernaum is where Jesus lived while in Galilee. He lived in Peter's house and you can see the foundations and walls of the house. Also very special in Capernaum is the synagogue where Jesus preached the "Bread of Life" sermon (John 6). The synagogue is only a few hundred feet from Peter's house.



Sea of Galilee



Peter's House

2. The Tomb of Our Lord

Located in the Holy Sepulchre Church below Calvary, it is where Jesus was laid to rest and from where He arose! You can enter and touch the slab where He lay!



The Tomb



The Word became flesh

1. Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth

The current Church is built over an older Church which was built over the site where God sent Gabriel to Mary. What more can be said. This is where the "Word became flesh". *God became one of us at this site.* What love! He did not have to do this. What a very special place and life experience to visit. *To me this is the Holiest of Holies!*

God willing, I plan to return for a third time in April of 2014. Please consider visiting the Holy Land, come with me if you can. It is a life changing experience. It is also safe so don't use that as an excuse!