

Dead Sea and Masada

Contributed by Keith Rhoades
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Well, last night after I wrote I rested from about 6 pm until 9 and drifted off to sleep reading my Steinbeck novel. It was so nice to sleep for 10 hours! This morning I met my tour bus which held 50 but only had about 12 people on it. It was a fascinating trip today. We left Jerusalem and again headed to the west bank ...though security in this area wasn't as tight. We then drove through Jericho and on down to the Dead Sea. We stopped momentarily at Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in like 1947. We meandered down the west coast of the Dead Sea toward Masada. Along the way we passed the supposed place of Sodom and Gomorrah. A lot of these place...including the crucifixion, nativity, prophets of the Old Testament, the test of Abraham are alleged sites. | They are not authenticated...but it is nice to see these sites that are so often talked about. In fact, there are two tombs of Jesus..The Protestant one in the garden and the Catholic one in the Church of the Sepulcher. Which is the right one...if either...who knows..but it is fascinating to learn all the history. Masada was great! I had known the stories for years and it was very moving to be there. They had an excellent movie about the history. After Romans conquered Jerusalem...900 Zealot Jews rebelled and escaped the mesa of Masada. 8,000 Roman Troops tried to capture the 900 Jews for 7 months. As the Romans finally got close...the Jews decided to kill each other off and the last one would commit suicide. In addition they burned all their provisions and food but left a plate of food out so that the Romans would know they didn't kill themselves off by starvation. Plus when the Romans would get into the walls there would be no food, no money, nothing for them to steal or take. There was an alleged speech by the leader of the Zealots who ended by saying "It is better to die Free...than to live in slavery". I've always been fascinated with this story and it was very moving for me to visit it. I can see why it is so strong in the Israeli Psyche. After touring around the top of Masada (and yes, I cheated...I took the tram I did not walk this)...we went to the Dead Sea at En Gadi National Park. The ocean is 3.2 % salt..but the Dead sea is 32% salt and nothing lives in it. Everything floats and it has a lot of bromide, magnesium, sodium.. I did jump in the water...any cuts and scrapes..burns like hell. When you get out of the water you are covered with salt/saline. Cleopatra used this as her private resort. It was beautiful scenery around the Dead Sea. We then drove back to Jerusalem where I decided I better do some shopping...I've picked up stuff along the way and I don't know how I am going to get all this back. Things are starting to wind down now...tomorrow I will head to my last stop..Tel Aviv for two days and I will be coming home Saturday morning...though I don't get home until very late Saturday. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving there....nothing over here...kind of sad not being home for the holiday...but was trying to get every last bit out of my three weeks! Take care my friends and family.Peace,Keith