

W A N D E

LIVE WELL EAT WELL TRAVEL WELL



By Sandy Bornstein

In the aftermath of our recent trip to Israel, I am engulfed by an intense sense of joy and exhilaration. These positive emotions permeated into my consciousness shortly after landing at Ben Gurion International Airport and have yet to retreat.

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plane.

Our diverse itinerary included time in Jerusalem, the Galilee, Tel Aviv, and the Negev. Israel My Way created a private tour with “must-see” places previously visited in 1993, 2008 and 2012 along with a cross-section of other experiences.

My heightened sense of well-being remained enhanced throughout our 12-day journey as our guide, Eric, took us to historical sites and connected us with Israelis from a variety of backgrounds.

Jerusalem



As we approached the Western Wall, memories of our previous visits flooded my consciousness. So much had transpired in our lives since we brought our four sons to Israel in 1993 for our eldest son's bar mitzvah. Instead of introducing

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Sandy and Ira at the Western Wall

Simultaneously, we stood in our respective sections at the Western Wall. Quietly, we reflected on the moment as we placed our hand-written prayers into crevices between the enormous stones and stroked the wall. Our ability to pray and meditate at The Wall brought us as close as possible to God. Both of us were inspired and energized by our day in The Old City.

Hebron

While most people do not include Hebron in their Israel travel plans, we chose to visit this ancient city that is mentioned dozens of times in the Bible. Security checkpoints and cameras were evident as we entered this tightly controlled area where less than 100 Jewish families currently reside.

During our brief visit to the Cave of Machpelah, also known as the Tomb of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob— along with three of the Matriarchs— Sarah, Rebekah and Leah are buried, we felt a profound sense of calm.

The external tensions surrounding the ongoing conflict between the Jews and Palestinians did not adversely affect the serene feeling we continued to experience as we learned about the city's rich history at the Hebron Heritage Museum, walked into the renovated Avraham Avinu Synagogue, viewed the Tel Hebron Excavations, and talked with some Jews living in Hebron and the nearby community of Kiryat Arba.

Tzfat



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Cobbled Tzfat Street in the Galilee

Decades ago, my yearlong studies of Jewish mysticism with Dr. (Rabbi) Byron Sherwin at Spertus College in Chicago inspired an inseparable connection with the city of Tzfat in the Upper Galilee. All four of our trips have included a stay in this special place.

Along with Jerusalem, Hebron, and Tiberias, Tzfat is one of the four spiritual centers of Jewish life and is associated with the Kabbalah or Jewish mysticism. The main tourist attractions are the cobble streets, boutique shops, local cuisine, and panoramic views of the area.

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Golan



Friends Never Forget Friends Memorial at Tel as Saqi in the Golan Heights

Before leaving the Galilee, we stopped at Tel as-Saqi. While staring directly into Syria, Yaacov, a former IDF tank commander, provided interesting information about the Yom Kippur War as well as the current efforts to monitor this region.

We were deeply moved by the black and white images of 32 individuals who are remembered at this site by the Friends Never Forget Friends monument. This site, along with other Israeli war memorials, highlights the sacrifices made by

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ANU-Museum of the Jewish People

Unlike many other Jewish museums throughout the world that focus exclusively on negative aspects of Jewish history—anti-Semitism, the Inquisition, and the Holocaust—the recently updated ANU-Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv celebrates Jewish history and the diverse expressions of Jewish identity.

At our own pace, we explored the creative and engaging exhibits and displays and were impacted by the optimistic message presented in the museum. Even though these stories are rarely told, the world has benefited greatly by the contributions made by Jews living in diverse places throughout the centuries.

Sderot and Rockets into Roses

As an American citizen, it is hard to comprehend what it would be like to live in Sderot, a western Negev city that is less than a mile from the border with Gaza. Sderot residents have approximately 15 seconds to reach a shelter after rockets are launched from Gaza.

While I was still attempting to process this scenario of thousands of unprovoked rockets being launched within the last decade, we visited with Yaron Bob, an Israeli artist who handcrafts roses, candlesticks, menorahs, and other sculptures from these deadly weapons. Yaron's creative endeavours symbolize this segment of Jewish history along with the hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Makhtesh Ramon in the Negev



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Makhtesh Ramon in the Negev

After more than a week of travel through Israel, we relaxed at The Beresheet Resort which sits adjacent to Makhtesh Ramon. More than a decade ago, we passed through this region on the way to Eilat and were fascinated by the world's largest erosion crater and desert ecosystem.

Taking a private jeep tour into the crater opened the door to a greater understanding of the arid terrain, flora, fauna, and history. Early morning hikes along the edge offered spectacular views of this peaceful place inundated with ibex roaring freely. As the wind pelted our faces, we remained fixated on the desert landscape's muted colours and were grateful to observe Mother Nature's handiwork in the Negev.

When Ira made the request to return to Israel, I understood why it was his first choice. We have yet to travel to any location outside the United States where we feel our hearts and souls intertwined with the country's rich culture and remarkable history.

By trekking throughout Israel, we were given numerous opportunities to connect with our spiritual base—our Jewish identity, learn more about Israel and its people, and reflect on how travel provides meaningful and thought-provoking experiences.



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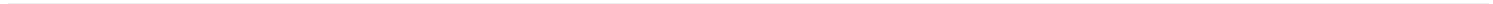
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In the fall of 2022, *100 Things to Do in Boulder Before You Die* will be published by Reedy Press. Connect with Sarah at thetravelingbornsteins.com.

All photos courtesy of the author.


Disclosure: Israel My Way provided a media rate for a private tour.




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