

SYRIA 11th – 20th MARCH 2011

Proposed Itinerary

Day 1 Friday 11th – bmi flight 947 dep. 16.00 from Heathrow Terminal 1, arrive Damascus 23.10. We will be met by our guide, Hussein Hannawi, who will accompany us throughout the trip. He will taken us to the Four Seasons Hotel in Damascus where we will be staying for the next three nights.

Day 2 Saturday 12th – Coach to the old city to visit the **Azem Palace**, built in 1750, now the Museum of Arts & Popular Traditions. We then walk along 'Suq al-Hamediyeh' the covered bazaar on the way to the **Umayyad Mosque** – one of the great monuments of early Islam. After lunch, visit National Museum of Damascus before returning to the Four Season's Hotel. Dinner and transport included at my favourite restaurant in the old city.

Day 3 Sunday 13th – Drive up to Mount Qassioun for a wonderful view of Damascus followed by returning to the old city to visit the Street called '**Straight**', the Roman 'Via Recta' which leads to the **Chapel of St. Ananias**. Ananias restored the sight of Saul of Tarsus, the future St. Paul. Time for shopping before returning to the Four Season's Hotel. Own dinner arrangements.

Day 4 Monday 14th – Leave Damascus for Latakia. Visit **Maloula**, the small village where Aramaic is still spoken. Visit the **Convent of St. Thecla**. Continue to the famous crusader castle **Crac des Chevaliers**. Visit followed by Lunch overlooking the castle. After lunch we head towards the Mediterranean coast via Tartus to

Latakia. Overnight in Hotel Rotana Afamia. Dinner in hotel included.

Day 5 Tuesday 15th – Check out of hotel. Coach to **Ugarit**, visit the remains of the city state dating to the Bronze Age and where the first alphabet was found. We continue to **Saladin's Castle** (Qala'at Salah ad-Din), the former crusader 'Château de Saône', built by Byzantine troops in 10th c. and rebuilt and expanded by the Crusaders. Visit followed by lunch. Continue on to **Serjella**, the most eerie and evocative of the so-called Dead Cities, before driving on to Aleppo for dinner and the next three nights at the Sheriton Hotel. Dinners at hotel are included.

Day 6 Wednesday 16th - All day visit of the ancient city of **Aleppo**. Visit the Arabic **Citadel** which dominates Aleppo. Visit the **Archeological Museum**. After lunch visit the great **Umayyad Mosque** and explore the old city by walking around the most ancient covered bazaar in the orient with its caravanserai (khan), Turkish bathhouses (Hammam) and quoranic schools (madrassa). On to the Christian quarter with traditional Arabic houses (bait) and churches from 17th c.

Day 7 Thursday 17th – Drive to the ruined Cathedral at **Qalaat Samaan**, dedicated to St. Simeon the Stylite, a shepherd from northern Syria who became a monk after a revelation in a dream. He spent nearly 40 years on top of a pillar. After his death in 459 the Emperor Zenon ordered that a cathedral be built there – a magical place. After a picnic lunch return to Aleppo – time for shopping.

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Day 8 Friday 18th – Leave for **Palmyra**. On the way visit We stop in **Hama** where we will walk through the old town and see some of the ancient wooden norias - water wheels – before driving on to Palmyra.

Day 9 Saturday 19th - Visit the **Ruins of Palmyra** dating back to 2nd c Roman rule, including the Valley of the Tombs, Temple of Bel, Great Colonnade, Diocletians Bath, the Theatre, the Tetracylon etc.

Drive up to the **Fort Qala'at ibn Maan** for a panoramic view of Palmyra. After lunch return to Damascus for our last night at the Four Seasons Hotel. Dinner in old city as before.

Day 10 Sunday 20th – Return to London on bmi flight 948 from Damascus leaving 08.15 a.m. arriving Heathrow 12.00 noon.

Direct bmi Flights from Heathrow Terminal 1

Friday 11th March flight No. BD 947 16.00 arr. Damascus 23.00
Thursday 20th March flight No. BD 948 10.10 arr. Heathrow 14.00

Price of Trips	£2.600.00
Single Supplement	£ 650.00
If required only outside Damascus	£ 185.00

Included in the tour price:

Our own coach and driver. 9 nights bed and breakfast at the following hotels: four nights at the Damascus 'Four Seasons Hotel', one night at the new 'Rotana Afamia' in Latakia, three nights at the Aleppo 'Sheraton' and one night at the 'Dedeman Hotel Palmyra'. Porterage in all the hotels. All lunches with beer (when available), water, coffee and tips. Two dinners in Damascus and five dinners with wine (1/2 bottle per person) water and coffee while out of Damascus. Services of a local guide throughout the trip who speaks excellent English and entries to all the museums and sights on the itinerary. Syrian Visa which will be obtained on arrival. Before departure: folder with a list of names of everybody on the trip, final itinerary, list of restaurants in Damascus, historical introduction, maps and list of dates.

Not included in the price:

Cost of Flights, travel insurance, one dinner in Damascus, Items of personal expenditure and gratuities for guide and coach driver. Fuel surcharges and Government levies or taxes introduced after booking.

A reading list will be provided on booking.

There will be time for shopping.