

THE CITY OF DAVID:

As per written biblical literature, the **City of David** is the place where Jerusalem appeared first, the urban core of the continuous living civilization that existed at the time of the Prophets, over four millennia ago; the travellers feel and touch the **Old City's history** live through **audio-visual night show** held every night in the **Tower of David**. Once the mind-blowing light show starts, one travels with the history of Jerusalem as it passed through time - each era was quite different from the last and what is left is a mix of cultures you won't find anywhere else in the world – unbelievable & fantastic.

It appears that Nabi David AS makes comeback to his own city. The show is projected on the walls of the citadel after sunset and promises a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Using cutting-edge technology, the show creates an unprecedented artistic attraction suitable for all ages. The show features powerful laser projectors, a computerized system operating 20 projectors, 10 audio players, 14 computers, 14 speakers and amplifiers, and 10 kms of advanced cable infrastructure. It becomes a multi-sensory celebration that ties the past, the present, and the future, using state-of-the-art technology. The show tells the full life story of King & Nabi David AS.

The experience begins with a virtual tour of famous works by the greatest artists of all times: Chagall, Matisse, Michelangelo, and more - the citadel walls display beautiful images of them. As the night goes on, you are exposed to more and more imagery and events related to the exciting and thrilling life story of King [Nabi] David AS – all based on biblical, historical and archaeological sources – BUT coupled with psalm songs attributed to Nabi David AS.

Once the show is over, the Jewish tourists prefer to dine in nearby **Agada Restaurant** located on Mamilla Avenue. Interesting about **Agada** is that here **Theodor Herzl** - the great-grandfather of Zionism - stayed during his visit to Israel thus

it is known as the **Herzl House**. If one is lucky enough to find place in the main event hall to dine – he literally feels being served a feast articulate for kings and princes.

David's Tower lies just inside **Jaffa Gate**; and the **Tower Museum** takes the tourists through 4000 years of ancient Jerusalem and Old City's history. There's a great view of city from the tower; it is also known as the **David Citadel**. The foundations of this structure are about 2,000 years old – built by the priests and kings of 167-37 BC.

After the **Fall of Jerusalem** in 70 CE, this is where the Roman Army's 10th platoon was stationed. In the 4th century, it was a monastery. The Crusaders built the moat around it and used to protect pilgrims. For 400 years it remained a Turkish garrison. **It was here in December 1917, the Ottoman Empire formally surrendered Jerusalem to the British General** – and the Muslim rule of 1200 years was over.

General Allenby stood on the steps that take you up to the [now] museum door when he formally declared Jerusalem to be under British rule. The British were the first to use the premises as a cultural centre – but then a quiet period – in 1967 the cultural centre revived again – and now a museum dedicated to the **past of Jerusalem**.

KING DAVID'S TOMB:

Mount Zion [Jabel Sahyoun in Arabic] is a hill in Jerusalem just outside the walls of the Old City – the name originally used in the Hebrew Bible's four books. In ending Roman period, a synagogue was built near the **David's Tomb**; the place went more sacred till the beginning of 12th century – and continued to be so even today. It is located in an old period building on Mount Zion on or near remains of the former **Hagia Zion**, a Byzantine church.

David's Tomb also remained a mosque for c.400 years during Ottoman Empire and was

converted into a synagogue in 1948. From then onwards it is country's primary religious site - Jewish prayer was established authentically. Once a phrase "**David King of Israel Lives and Endures**" was written over the niche above the tomb-stone – BUT with the passage of time it disappeared. Now the niche is all white painted. During years 1948-67, **Nabi David's Tomb** remained the holiest Jewish site in Israel but later the **Western [Wailing] Wall** got priority in the Jewish community – **now more Muslims visit Nabi David's Tomb than the Jews**. Then it was a designated no-man's land between Israel and Jordan. The Jews used to climb on roof of the tomb and keeping their direction towards the Golden Dome; they offered their prayers. It was the closest accessible site to the Jewish Temple place.

In December 2012, unknown persons completely destroyed a large number of 17th century Islamic-era tiles in **Nabi David's Tomb**; still those tiles are seen missing. Today the area is pitted with archaeological digs. The excavations attracted controversy but also got massive **stepped stone structures** - dating from the 10th century BC and being claimed as the retaining wall of Nabi David's Palace or the Canaanite fortress of even more earlier times.

THE LAST SUPPER-ROOM:

The **Last Supper** is the final meal that, in the Gospel accounts, Jesus shared with his Apostles in Jerusalem before his crucifixion –it is commemorated by Christians especially on Holy Thursday before the Easter day. The Last Supper-room, also called **Cenacle**, is said to be the upper floor of the building where Nabi David's Tomb lies. Recent years have seen rising tensions between Jewish activists and Christian worshippers at the site – but no worry because both sides respect Nabi David AS evenly and equally. Above this **Cenacle**, the tourists also see the minaret of a Muslim mosque.

Surprisingly, this **Cenacle** is not universally accepted as the site of the "Supper room" mentioned in the bibles of **Mark** [14:15] and

Luke [22:12]. The only competing site is the Syrian Orthodox **Church of St Mark** in Jewish Quarter of the old city which also claims to possess the 'Supper-Room'.

This Mount Zion's Gothic-arched Cenacle is a restoration of a **Crusader** chapel built in the 12th century. Among the architectural details of the Crusader period is a slender marble column supporting a stone canopy in the south-west corner. Carved into the capital at top of the column are **two young pelicans feeding on the blood their mother has drawn from her breast** — symbolising Christ giving his blood for the salvation of humankind.

In the 16th century, after the Turks took over Jerusalem, the room was transformed into a mosque in memory of the prophet David AS. Its *mihrab* [a niche indicating the direction of Makkah] and stained-glass windows with Arabic inscriptions remained in tact and are still visible.

GIHON SPRING & POOL:

The **King [Nabi] David AS** had captured the fortress of a Canaanite tribe, the *Jebusites*, 1050 years BC AND established his capital - that pitched tent later developed as the **City of David** - the oldest settlement on around the Jerusalem Hills.

Gihon Spring, the only source of water for that city, is mentioned many times in the Bible with its location in the valley. The travellers can also walk from Spring through the 530 metre [King] **Hezekiah's Tunnel** which was dug in 7th century BC to bring water to the **Pool of Siloam** inside the city to avoid siege by the Assyrians. Much later, it was also named **Fountain of the Virgin** because of the legend that here the holy **Mary** used to wash the swaddling clothes of holy Jesus.

Gihon Spring is one of the world's major intermittent springs — and a reliable water source that made human settlement possible in

ancient Jerusalem. The spring rises in a cave 7x20 ft; irregularly flowing from 3-5 times daily in winter, twice daily in summer, and only once daily in autumn in the form of a siphon. The system worked successfully in years 1050 BC, the **1st Temple** periods at least. Now the visitors see the same water system as **Warren's Shaft**; a British engineer named it so in 1867 AD who had re-framed the scheme for Ottomans.

Amongst the tourists, the youngsters choose its '**wet tour**' - the tunnels where spring water still flows – in total darkness, with nothing but a flashlight to guide their path. Water level depends on the season - can be up to waist deep. The tunnel route from the **Gihon Spring** to the **Pool of Siloam** is still a work of art which winds its way underground for 513m. The tunnel was built with the **technology available 2700 years ago** - realizing just what an accomplishment it was when there was no civilization – walking through it is a life time event.

Pool of Siloam mentioned above is a rock-cut pool on southern slope was first built by King Hezekiah [715–687 BC], to provide water supply inside the City. During Nehemiah [445 BC]'s reign it was named as the King's Pool [Nehemiah 2:14]. Around the Second Temple era [103-76 BC], the pool was reconstructed – later also visited by Nabi Jesus AS; 'a man blind since birth' was made normal by him here – a miracle all religions believe. Pool the tourists see today was rebuilt again during Byzantine Period.

During excavation in 2009, the workers uncovered some stone steps on three sides of a 225 feet wide pool – but then had to quit the site because the land above was owned by the nearby **Greek Orthodox Church**. This pool was probably destroyed by the Romans during Roman-Jewish War of 70 AD, later filled with silt layers and sedimentations.

The Christians and certain sects of Jewish pilgrims and tourists assign much priority to visit this pool and tunnels to refresh their biblical

history – as the stories of various prophets are linked with this particular place. During an **archaeological dig in 2009**, a fragment of stone inscription securely dated to the 8th century BC was discovered - proving that the city had monumental public building(s) in the 8th century BC around Jerusalem [then City of David].

ABBEY OF DORMITION:

It is an abbey on Mt. Zion just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. Originally there was a Byzantine basilica **Hagia Sion** - built in 415 AD but was destroyed during 614 AD's siege of Jerusalem by Sasanian King Khosrau II. Its foundations were recovered in 1899 AD by the Turkish architects. Later, a church was built here on the ruins of those earlier Byzantine foundations – now called Abbey of Dormition.

According to [another] local tradition, it was on this spot where the Virgin Mary died – religiously called **falling asleep**, and this gave the original monastery its name. However, two cities, Jerusalem and Ephesus [in Turkey], claim as to be the place where the Virgin Mary died; the **Ephesus** claim is based on Gospel account, too BUT the earliest traditions all locate the end of holy Mary's life in Jerusalem, where the **Tomb of Mary** is venerated at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

The fact remains that during his visit to Jerusalem in 1898 AD, the German Kaiser Wilhelm II bought this land on Mount Zion from Turkish Sultan [Abdul Hamid II] and presented it to a Protestant Charity called the **German Union**. Thereafter, foundation stone of the church was laid on 7th October 1900; construction was completed in ten years and its doors were opened on 10th April 1910. Presently, there are two spiral staircases leading to the crypt - the site ascribed to the **Dormition of Virgin Mary**.

After Arab-Israeli war of 1948, the abbey came under the Israeli control - though was badly **damaged** by military bombardment too. In

1951, the abbey's supervision was taken over by religious authorities of Rome. The Abbey has been the target of occasional vandalism and **Price Tag Attacks** by extremist youths. More cases were reported during years 2011-14 and the last case was reported in January 2016 but then no odd news heard.

The **fortress-like** building, with a conical roof and four corner towers, stands south of the Old City's Zion Gate. Like the Crusader church that preceded it, the basilica is built on **two levels** with the high altar and the crypt with its Marian shrine. In lower chambers, there rests a life-size statue of holy Mary, fallen asleep in death. The statue is made of cherry wood and ivory.

RAMPARTS WALK:

When youngster tourists enter the Old City through **Jaffa Gate**, they normally prefer for a self-guided walk on the ramparts [parapets of the wall] of this fortified old city. There are informational plaques in English every several hundred feet to give you an idea of what you are seeing. The views of both the Old City and the city outside the walls are magnificent. One path goes from **Jaffa Gate to Dung Gate** and the other from **Jaffa Gate to Lions Gate**. In fact, the **Ramparts walk** is a fun way to get an overview of this part of Jerusalem.

One has to be strong as the walk requires a lot of stair climbing and descending; and that a tourist must have enough water with him – **once you're on the ramparts, there's no getting off until the end and no refreshment kiosk or bathroom along the way**. It's not a suitable activity for small children, mid-aged ladies and older people whatsoever.

HOLOCAUST CHAMBER:

In the nearby building is a small **Chamber** of the **Holocaust Museum** located on the Mt Zion - Israel's first Holocaust museum founded in

1948. Same year, Israeli government oversaw the on-site burial of ashes of victims from the **Oranienburg Camp** [*one of the first detention facilities established by the Nazis in the state of Prussia when they gained power in 1933*] together with desecrated **Torah scrolls** recovered from Nazi Europe.

Another place; the Catholic cemetery where **Oskar Schindler**, who saved the lives of 1,200 Jews in the Holocaust, is buried along with 91 persons who were killed in bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on **22nd July 1946**; explosion done by the militant **right-wing Zionist organization 'the Irgun'** on the British HQ for Palestine, which was housed in the said hotel then.