

NORWOOD ISRAEL BIKE RIDE

Israel from the other side

Itinerary

Massada – Dead Sea – Petra– Wadi Rum Desert – Eilat & The Red Sea

Day 1 (Saturday 6 November)

Overnight flight to Ben Gurion airport, Tel Aviv.

Day 2 (Sunday 7 November)

Massada

Arrive Tel Aviv and transfer to Arad (2 hours). Lunch and bike fitting followed by a tour of the historic fortress of Massada. The fortress was the last stronghold against the Romans who, over the course of 10 years, built a huge ramp on the western side. The chilling story of the 960 Jewish zealots who committed suicide from the top, rather than be captured alive by the Romans contributes to the special atmosphere of the site. The archaeological remains are well preserved and in 2001 Masada was declared to be an UNESCO World Heritage Site. We walk up the zig-zagging path to the fortress and enjoy the panoramic views from the top, with the desert to the west and the Dead Sea to the east. Massada is one of the most exciting and frequently-toured places in Israel, it is situated on the top of a mountain with steep sides and a plateau top. After our visit, transfer to our overnight at the hotel in Arad.

Day 3 (Monday 8 November)

Arad – Kalia

90km approx

We set off downhill to the lowest point on Earth, the Dead Sea. We then cycle on undulating roads for the rest of the day, with the unique landscape of the Dead Sea beside us. We stop for lunch at Ein Gedi, with a chance to float in the Dead Sea and finish the day at Kalia Kibbutz.

Day 4 (Tuesday 9 November)

Kalia – Dead Sea

40km approx

Cycle 20km to the Allenby Bridge (also known as the King Hussein Bridge). We cross into Jordan through normal international passport control. The border crossing will be time consuming, expect a long wait – it can take between 3-4 hours. Then cycle approximately 22km, much of which is along the shores of the Dead Sea.

Overnight: Dead Sea Spa Hotel

Day 5 (Wednesday 10 November)

Dead Sea – Kerak

60km (plus an optional 24km to

Kerak)

Transfer to Petra

Today is a real challenge. We start off south along the eastern shore of the Dead Sea where the road is mostly flat but we will encounter a few long undulations. The views are very special with the Dead Sea on our right and Israel's Judean Desert visible on the far shores, with wonderful views of the Massada mountain range where we started our Challenge. We can also see the

colourful hills of Moab, interspersed with clusters of palm trees and oases on our left. After 60km we turn east towards the mountains. Then a very steep and exceptionally challenging optional climb of over 1000 metres as we cycle some 24kms up the hills of Edom to the 12th century Crusader Castle of Kerak. There is an option to take the coach that follows us all the way. Late lunch at Kerak. After a short visit to the Castle (time permitting) there follows a 3 hour transfer to Petra.

Dinner and overnight in Petra.

Day 6 (Thursday 11 November)

Petra Visit (Morning)

Transfer to Wadi Rum (2 hours)

Cycle off-road (tandems not able to do this section)

15km Approx

Today is indeed rather special. We start with a morning visit to the famous ancient Nabatean city of Petra, hidden behind an almost impenetrable barrier of rugged mountains – a most wonderful experience. Walking through the rock carved city we suddenly come upon a natural square, dominated by Petra's most famous monument, the Khasneh (treasury). This ancient Nabatean capital built more than 2,000 years ago, stretches over several kilometers. Petra was the strategic centre for the old silk and spice routes. It prospered for many centuries, with a population of 25,000 at the height of its power, before its decline during the expansion of the Roman Empire. It was rediscovered in 1812 by the Anglo-Swiss explorer John Lewis Buchart. Following our visit we transfer by coach to Wadi Rum. The road is sand and rock off-road, a tough undulating with some climbs and some downhill but it is extremely beautiful, rewarding and good fun. At the end of the day we reach our Bedouin camp at Wadi Rum. We have a barbecue dinner around the campfire and spend the night gazing at the stars and sleeping in the Bedouin tent – large enough for 20 per tent.

Overnight: Wadi Rum Camp

Day 7 (Friday 12 November)

Wadi Rum – Arava border – Eilat

54km (26km off-road - not suitable for tandems)

We set off on the same tough but enchanting desert terrain as yesterday. After 26km we reach the road and continue for a further 20km to the Arava border. It will be another lengthy process crossing into Israel before we saddle up for the final 8km. Directly after the border there is a small incline and we continue cycling on busy flat tarmac roads to Eilat, a bustling Red Sea resort. Arrive at our hotel and enjoy lunch together.

Day 8 (Saturday 13 November)

Free time in the Red Sea resort of Eilat.

Tonight we enjoy a celebratory dinner.

Day 9 (Sunday 14 November)

Transfer to Tel Aviv Ben Gurion airport.

Evening arrival in London.

Please note this is a complex itinerary which is subject to change.

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