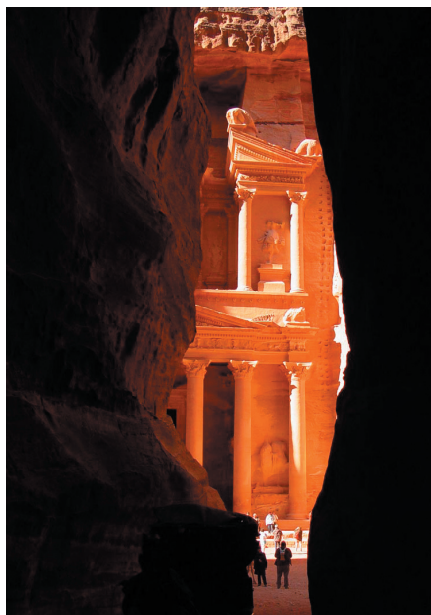


Syria and Jordan: in the footsteps of David Roberts



Guided and managed by Tarek Swelim, offered by Stephen Harby
November 7-23, 2008

Damascus, Baalback, Palmyra, Aleppo, Petra...If these exotic sounding places beckon as they did to renowned 19th century watercolorist David Roberts, then join us on this extraordinary adventure! Despite the troubled world we find ourselves in, Syria and Jordan remain relatively safe destinations today, and our advance party last year was astonished by the warm welcome received!

This trip has been organized by the renowned Egyptian scholar and tour leader, Tarek Swelim. He has led groups from many cultural institutions and universities, and we are lucky to have him to ourselves in our small group of friends.

Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Friday, November 7, 2008

Depart from home independently for next day arrival in Damascus.

Day 2, Saturday, November 8 arrival
Damascus

Arrival Damascus to be met, escorted through formalities and transferred to the Talisman Hotel. The Talisman is a small boutique hotel in the old city,





painstakingly converted from an old courtyard mansion. The rest of the day is free for acclimatization, independent exploring, and rest. Throughout the trip, meals will be included whether as a group, or if individuals choose to make their own arrangements.

Day 3, Sunday, November 9 Damascus
Orientation and Introductory Lecture
(1) by Tarek: “An Introduction to Damascus and it’s Umayyad Mosque”.

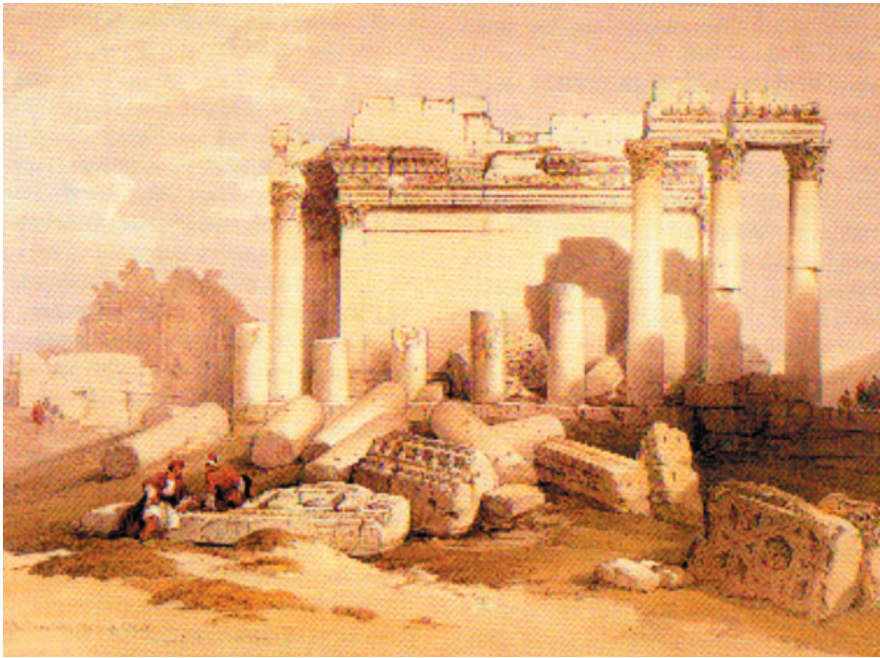
View of Damascus in the morning mist from the Four Seasons Hotel. The silhouette of the Umayyad Mosque with its minarets is visible.

The Umayyad Mosque forms an oasis and refuge of peace and serenity within the crowded old city of Damascus—one of the world’s oldest urban centers in continuous peaceful occupation. The mosque, also one of the holiest spots in the Islamic world was initially a Roman temple, later a Christian basilica and then finally was converted into a mosque. The form remains that of the earlier basilica. There was a time when the structure was used both for Christian worship and Muslim prayer. The tomb of St. John the Baptist remains and is even today a place revered by Muslims as well as Christians.



The courtyard shimmers in the evening sun





Baalbek by David Roberts

Initial tour of the Damascus including the Umayyad Mosque and the Tomb of Salah ad-Din (of the Crusaders) followed by lunch at the Umayyad Palace Restaurant. In the afternoon you will have free time to stroll and shop in Souq al-Hamidiyya. Tonight will be our welcome dinner at the Old Town Restaurant (Old City).

Baalbek

Day 4, Monday, November 10 day trip Baalbek

Today we will visit Baalbek in Lebanon with a stop for lunch at the French Chamsin Bakery just over the border. Baalbek is a spectacular site, that those who have seen many of the other Roman cities, feel is one of the most refined, grandiose and best preserved.



Crak des Chevaliers

Day 5, Tuesday, November 11 Damascus

We will visit the National Museum with its many great treasures, including one of the world's oldest synagogues, excavated and brought from Dura Europos.

Drive to Bab Sharqi

walk to the Shrine of St. Annanias

Lunch at Casablanca Restaurant

Walking tour partly, along the Via Recta – The Roman/Biblical Street

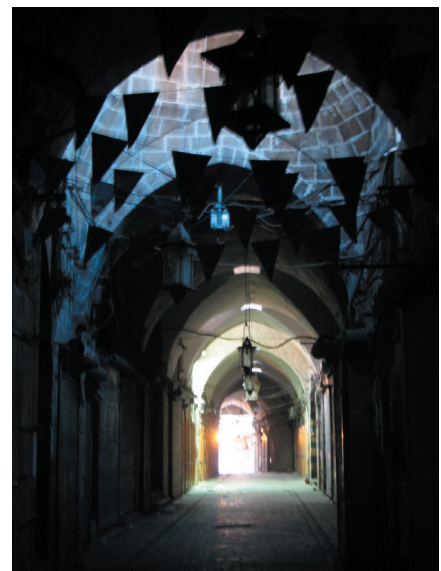
(whose name means straight) and

continue partly through the Christian Quarter – all the way back to Souq al-Hamidiyya.

Evening Lecture 2: “The Crusades & Crak des Chevaliers”



Aleppo, the souk





Aleppo, the Citadel

Day 6, Wednesday, November 12 Crak des Chevaliers to Aleppo

Drive north from Damascus to the village of Maa'loula where we will see the early Christian church of St. Sergius and Bacchus.

We'll continue on to Crak des Chevaliers where we will have lunch at Omran Restaurant overlooking the crusader castle. The rest of the afternoon will be spent exploring this complex and well preserved fort with its double enceintes and ingenious passageways to thwart the attacking enemy—it was never breached!

Continue to Aleppo where we stay at

San Simeon



Apamea, the colonnaded street

the Sheraton Hotel beside at the gates of the old city and beside the Ottoman clock tower.

Day 7, Thursday, November 13 Aleppo

Visit the Museum of Aleppo & Citadel with a picnic lunch in town. Then continue to the famous exotic souqs of Aleppo to stroll and immerse ourselves in the commerce that has been carried on uninterrupted longer than anywhere else in the world!

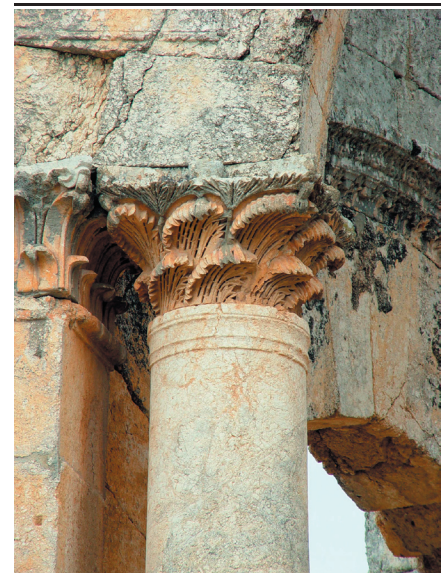
Lecture (3) by Tarek: "Islam: Beliefs & Early History".

Dinner at Sisi Restaurant which is in a converted courtyard mansion in the Armenian quarter (and not far from our hotel).

Day 8, Friday, November 14 Aleppo

Drive to visit St. Simeon's Monastery famous for the hermetic saint who retreated to his column, which became the center of a grand architectural composition later on. We'll continue on to the "lost" cities of Serjilla and Bara where we will have a picnic lunch at the site. The robust stone buildings are what remain of a prosperous farming

San Simeon, "windblown" capital





Palmyra: The colonnaded street with citadel (left); A terracotta figure in the museum (above); view of the site with the Temple of Bel (watercolor by Stephen Harby, below)

and olive producing area. We will see several old olive oil mills.

Return back to Aleppo with free time to explore in the area of the hotel or to rest.

Lecture (4) by Tarek: "The Ancient Site of Palmyra"

Dinner at the Martini Hotel, another large house in the Armenian quarter.

Day 9, Saturday, November 15 Aleppo to Palmyra via Apamea and Maaret

Drive to the site of Apamea, a Roman city with a long and grand colonnaded street (the first of several we will see) where we will visit and have a picnic lunch at the site, after which we will visit the Caravanserai/museum with mosaics. In the afternoon we will make a visit to Maaret al-Nu'man where

there is another museum of stunning mosaics. We will then continue on to Palmyra and check in to the historic Zenobia Hotel which has pride of place overlooking the ruined city in the desert. After dinner, we may be tempted to wander among the dramatically flood-lit ruins.

Day 10, Sunday, November 16 Palmyra
Visit Palmyra – all day



A picnic lunch will be arranged for us on an overlook above the site or up at the Castle. We'll dine at the hotel tonight on "Mansaf", a great steaming casserole.

Day 11, Monday, November 17 Palmyra to Damascus via Qasr Bin Warden

We will make our way back to Damascus with a stop at Qasr Bin Warden. This was a way-station built by the Byzantines, where we will have lunch. Continue on to Four Seasons (where we will be staying for the next two nights) with the balance of the afternoon free
Lecture by Tarek (5): "Jordan & The .Formation of the Middle East"

Day 12, Tuesday, November 18
Damascus

After a morning at leisure, we will drive to the Roman city of Bosra, where we will see the town and the theater. This theater is one of the most intact in the Roman world, in part thanks to the Byzantine fort that wraps around it.



Bosra, the Roman theater

Lecture by Tarek (6): "The Ancient Site of Jerash"

Day 13, Wednesday, November 19
Damascus to Petra via Jerash

We will retrace our route of the day before, crossing the border between Syria and Jordan and continuing the short distance to the Roman city of Jerash, with its unique oval colonnaded

Jerash, the oval colonnade



plaza. A special lunch of Mezes has been arranged at the Lebanese Restaurant near the site. We'll continue on to Petra where we will check into the Mövenpick Hotel situated opposite the entrance to the site.

Day 14, Thursday, November 20

Drive to Wadi Rum (2 hrs) to explore the area for the balance of the day with a packed lunch

Drive back to Petra, where we will stop to see "little" Petra which gives us a hint of what we'll see tomorrow.

Lecture by Tarek (8): "The Nabateans & Petra"

Day 15, Friday, November 21 Petra

Visit Petra all day

Lunch at the Basin Restaurant

Free time to wander at will on one's own after tour and lunch.

Day 16, Saturday, November 22 Petra to Dead Sea

Drive to the Dead Sea Kempinski Hotel

Wrap-up Session with Tarek

Petra, the "Monastery" (watercolor by Stephen Harby)



Petra by David Roberts

Use SPA facilities of the hotel (by prior reservations, to be facilitated)

Special Farewell Dinner on the Terrace, over looking the sparkling lights of the Dead Sea, the West Bank, Israel and Jerusalem

Day 17, Sunday, November 23 Petra to Queen Alia International Airport for flights home.

Transfer to QAIA – airport for final departure. Arrival in US later this day.

