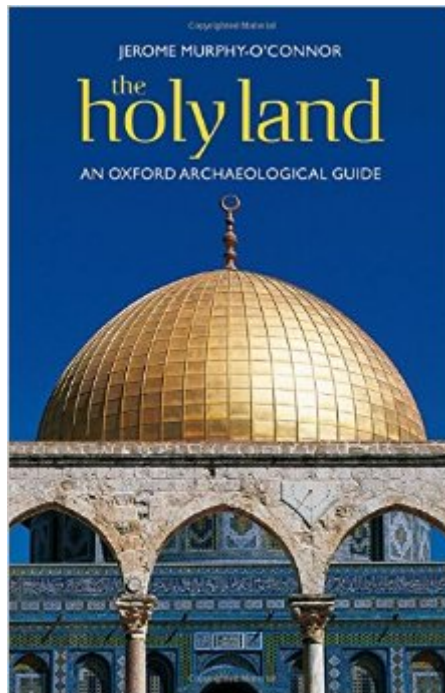


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The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide (Oxford Archaeological Guides)



Synopsis

The geographic heart and soul of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, the Holy Land has immense significance for the millions of visitors it has attracted since as early as the fifth century BC. Now in an exciting new edition, this popular handbook once again offers tourists an indispensable, illustrated guide to over 200 of the most important archeological and religious sites in the City of Jerusalem and the surrounding area. Fully updated with all the latest information, The Holy Land presupposes little knowledge of history or archaeology, giving clear directions on how to find sites and monuments of interest--both well-known locations and those less familiar. With entries including the Damascus Gate, the Via Dolorosa, Mount Sion, the Dead Sea, Hebron, and Jericho, this indispensable book includes detailed maps, plans, and illustrations that further illuminate these spectacular locales. Each entry explains the history and topography of a site as well as its function and significance. In his introduction, Father Jerome Murphy-O'Connor provides a brief historical outline of the Holy Land, from the Stone Age to the Modern Period, and lists sites accordingly. The Fifth Edition includes new information on the crucial recent developments at the Holy Sepulchre and on six completely new sites, including a Middle Bronze Age water system in Jerusalem and what may be the original Pool of Siloam. A marvelous Baedeker to both the city of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, brimming with practical advice and featuring more than 150 high quality site plans, maps, diagrams, and photographs, this book provides the ultimate visitor's guide to one of the richest archaeological regions in the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

We recently returned from two weeks in Israel where we traveled around on our own with this book and the Lonely Planet Guide. Our trip would have been much poorer without The Holy Land. The strength of the book is its description of almost every ancient site of interest in Israel with line maps of the present structures and historical descriptions of the sites. The author includes quotes from ancient historians and medieval pilgrims as well as citations to the Bible. He approaches all the sites with respect but does not hesitate to call the authenticity of some sites into question when the historical or archaeological evidence does not support it. He points out that greater faith can be placed in the Christian sites where there was evidence of pre-Constantinian veneration, before the questions of pilgrims "excited the imaginations of local guides." For me this makes the more credible sites such as the Holy Sepulchre and the house of Peter even more moving. For practical information on hotels, buses, etc. you should pick up the Lonely Planet Guide, but for information on the historical and religious sites this is the best book I have seen.

Unique guide for archaeology minded traveler
The little known Oxford Archaeological Guides series provides information that you cannot find elsewhere. This guide was written by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor in 1980 and was revised for the new Oxford Archaeological guides series in 1997 as the initial offering of the series. O'Connor provides a wealth of information here that you won't find in regular guidebooks. The topic of biblical archaeology is too large to be addressed by any one book. The author squeezes all he can into less than 500 pages. The section dealing with Jerusalem is most detailed. Outlying sites receive less attention. There is useful information about hours of operation and practical matters such as directions to remote sites. In addition to describing the various areas of interest, there are sections giving the history of the different peoples of the holy land, both historical and present day including sections on the Druze, the Philistines, the Samaritans, the Essenes and the Nabateans. There is a good attention here to changes over time with an emphasis on how the appearance of each site evolved over the years. Interesting comparisons are made with the condition of sites in the present day and their description in ancient texts including Josephus' "The Jewish War" and the Bible itself. This book would be inadequate as the only guidebook for a visit to Israel. I would recommend the Knopf Guide to the Holy Land and Baedeker Israel for routine tourist information. Some minor drawbacks: the drawings and maps are not as detailed as they could be and the few photographs that are provided are black and white and of poor quality. These complaints are not critical flaws; the book would still be invaluable even if it didn't contain a single illustration.

It is important that any potential reader understand that this is a scholarly examination of the archaeological treasures of Israel. If you want a tourist guide this isn't it. I was hoping for light reading about Israel when I ordered the book but as I travelled around Israel I found the book to be a good companion to me. It is a book that I will keep on my ministerial bookshelf as a resource!

This book was superb. Written by a top-notch Scripture scholar, and an archaeologist to boot. It sifts the probable from the likely from the possible, which means that when Murphy-O'Connor pronounces a site or a building authentic, you sit up and take notice. Next to the Bible, this was my bible in the Holy Land. I've recommended it to many people.

If you really want to separate the wheat from the chaff - this is the way to begin. In this book, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor will take you behind the hidden doors, under the altars, down secret stairways and forgotten streets on an amazing adventure. It's not a lesson in theology - you have to bring your own. It's a guide to what can be seen, what can be touched with your hand. With all the digging that's been going on since this book has been published, I'm eagerly looking forward to an updated edition.

I asked an Old Testament scholar which guide he recommended for people visiting Israel, and this was his pick. So a seminary-grad friend and I each bought copies. We kept it with us everywhere we went and found it a most useful resource. It includes both historical backgrounds and summaries of all the major attractions. But don't look for it to include places such as Yad Vashem (Holocaust Museum), even though that's the second most popular tourist site after the Western Wall in Jerusalem. This is an archaeological guide. It includes museums with collections relating to archaeology, but it is not intended to be a tourist's guide to every place in the Holy Land.

This is a superbly detailed archaeological guide to the Holy Land. I used it on a recent winter trip to Israel (for the first time) because it was recommended to me by a professor as the best guide for the kind of archaeological/historical trip that I wanted to undertake. Occasionally, the author waxes lyrical (he's a Catholic priest, after all) about the land and landscape in a way that non-Christians may find uncomfortable or endearing (or perhaps both). I found it useful to purchase this as a Kindle edition, and to supplement it with the Lonely Planet's excellent guide to Israel and the beautifully illustrated archaeological guide by Fabio Bourbon and Enrico Lavagno. Of these, Murphy-O'Connor

and the Lonely Planet are the most indispensable for those planning a visit focused on Israel's archaeological sites. A caveat to the traveller-buyer: none of these guides notes that you can purchase a "visit all the archaeological sites owned by the State of Israel" ticket for something like 100-120 shekels (so, basically, if you're going to be visiting at least 6 sites, you'll save money by getting the omni-card); and some of the opening times listed in the Lonely Planet and/or Murphy-O'Connor are not accurate--when in doubt, call ahead.

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