

# Nazareth *to* Capernaum



The Gospel Trail

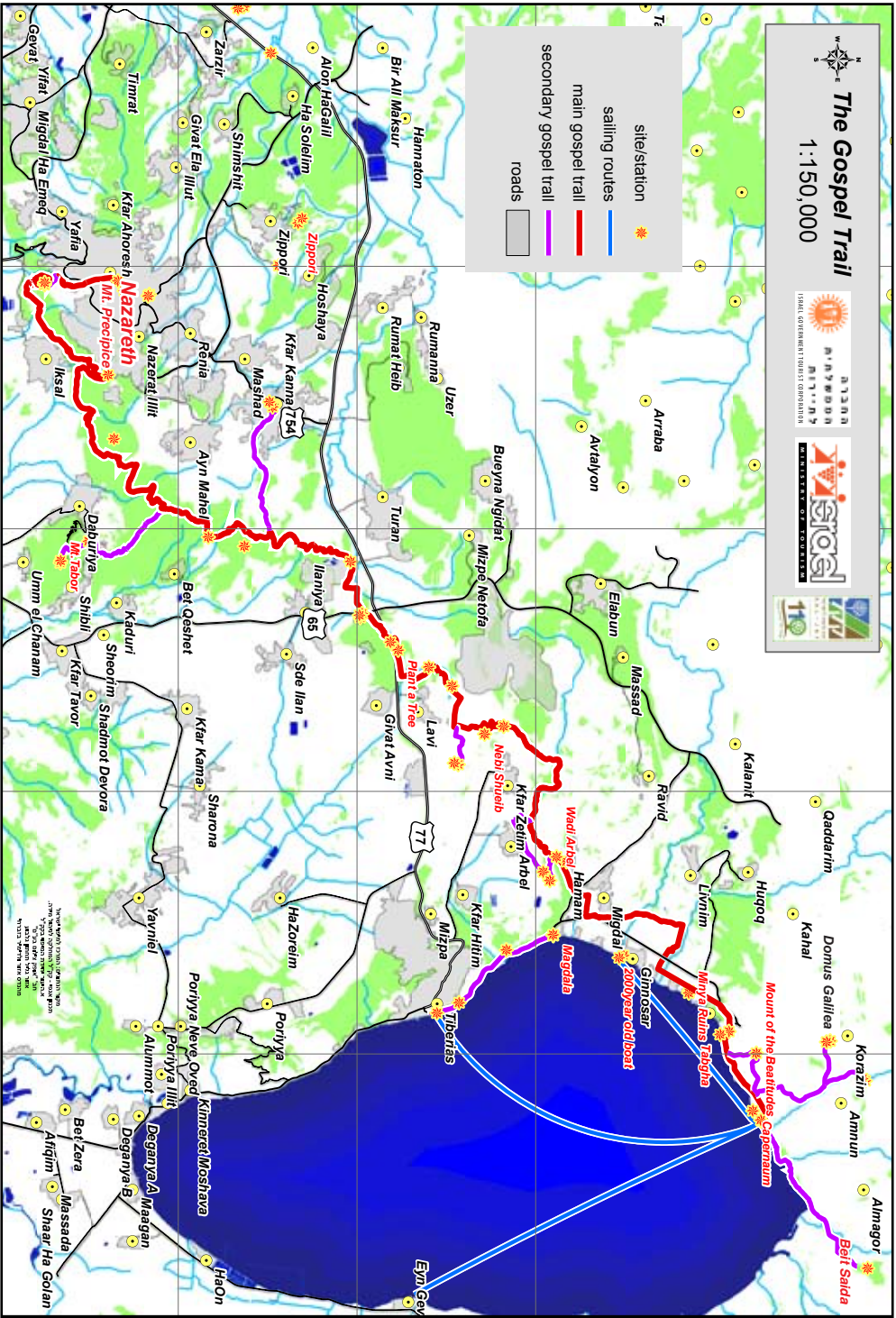


# The Gospel Trail

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- site/station
- sailing routes
- main gospel trail
- secondary gospel trail
- roads





*Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali — to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah...*

*Matthew 4:13-14*

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The Israel Ministry of Tourism is proud to announce the development of **the Gospel Trail**, a unique cultural trail that connects the holy and historic places of the Galilee associated with the life and ministry of Jesus into an integrated route that allows the visitor and pilgrim, hiker and mountain biker the opportunity to enjoy not only the nature and geography of modern Israel, but to experience the actual landscape of the Gospel narrative by following Jesus' journey from **Nazareth**, the town of his childhood and youth, to **Capernaum**, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where he began his ministry and called his disciples unto him (Matthew 4:18;21).



The Gospel Trail begins at Mount Precipice, on the southern outskirts of Nazareth, and follows a route, leading through limestone hills and fertile valleys, past ancient towns and modern villages, to the site of ancient Capernaum, on the shores of Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee). The route incorporates established trails and pathways that have been traveled since ancient times by shepherds and farmers; merchants and pilgrims; armies, kings and prophets. For the modern sojourner, it is a stroll into biblical history and faith.

**Mount Devorah** (named for the Prophetess Deborah) and the nearby, haystack-like Mount Tabor (both across the valley, east of Nazareth) recall Barak's defeat of the Canaanites (Judges 5:2-31). The summit of **Mount Tabor** is identified in Christian tradition as the place of the "Transfiguration" (Mark 9: 2-9).



From **Kibbutz Lavi**, the Gospel Trail follows the route north of an **ancient Roman road**, passing orchards and cultivated fields before reaching the rocky plateau of the extinct volcano Karnei Hattin (the **"Horns of Hattin"**), where in 1187, the Muslim forces of Salah-a-Din (Saladin) defeated the armies of the Crusader Kingdom. Nearby is the Druze Shrine of Nabi Shuaib, the traditional grave of the prophet Jethro (father-in-law of Moses).



The 380-meter-high **Mount Arbel cliffs**, overlooking the Sea of Galilee are today used as a base jumping site by extreme-sport enthusiasts. The caves in the cliff face have been used by Jewish defenders on at least three occasions, bracketing the life of Jesus: in 161 BCE by supporters of the Maccabees in their revolt against the Hellenist Antiochus IV Epiphanies (1 Maccabees 9:2); in 38 BCE by supporters of Antigonus in his revolt against Herod the Great (Josephus, *Antiquities* 14:423-6); and in 66 CE by Josephus himself as a supply depot in the defense of the Galilee during the Great Revolt against Rome (Josephus, *Life*, 37).

Along the northwestern shores of the Sea of Galilee are four sites relating directly to the ministry of Jesus: **Migdal/Magdala**, an important 1st-Century commercial port and fishing center that is identified in the Gospels as the home of Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2); **Tabgha** by tradition the site of the “Feeding of the Five Thousand” (Mark 15:32-38); the **Mount of Beatitudes** (Matthew 5-7); and **Capernaum**, the city of Jesus, “his own town” (Matthew 9:1).





## Flora

In spring, the hillsides of Galilee are a riot of color as wildflowers (the “lilies” of the field referred to in Matthew 6:28; Luke 12:27) burst into bloom: irises, anemones, rockrose, larkspur, thorny broom, narcissus and wild mustard (referred to by Jesus as a metaphor for faith: Matthew 13:31). And of course, the herald of spring, the wild almonds, are in blossom. (Curiously, the crocus [possibly the “rose of Sharon” mentioned in Song of Songs 2:1], which in most of the world is the first flower of spring, here blooms in November, after the first rains.) Fruit trees include the carob with its edible seed pods (Luke 15:16); the olive; and the fig (Mark 13:28). Though much of the wilderness areas of the Galilee are *maquis* (low brush and shrub), major forest areas have been reestablished as a result of reforestation efforts these past 100 years. Of special note on the Gospel Trail is the Mount Keshet Oak Tree Preserve. Covering some 6,000 acres, it protects one of the remaining stands of Mt. Tabor oak, a species that once covered vast areas of the north and coastal plain.



## Fauna

The observant walker can spot a variety of wild bird and animal species that would have been familiar to Jesus. As with the wildflowers, he used them as examples in his parables: foxes and birds (Luke 9:58); ravens (Luke 12:24); doves (Matthew 3:16) and even the lowly sparrow (Matthew 10:29, 31; Luke 12:6-7). Israel's location on a major bird migration route from Europe and Western Asia to Africa is partly responsible for the very large number of bird species in the country. The bulbul and songbirds such as sylvian warblers and goldcrests nest here year round; robins and blackcaps come south for the winter; and twice a year, in spring and autumn, one can witness the migrations of white storks and raptors (Matthew 24:28), the flyways passing over the eastern Galilee along the Jordan Valley (part of the Great Rift Valley).

Gazelles, rock hyraxes, hedgehogs, porcupines, tortoises, lizards and other reptiles are frequently seen, albeit at a distance; and golden jackals are often heard howling, even if they can't be seen. Foxes, badgers and wild boar are less often observed, tending to be nocturnal in their movements. There are also occasional reports of wolves (John 10:12).





#### Suggested itineraries for Day Trips and short excursions:

- By Car, Bus or Van (drive and walk): Start at Mount Precipice with a walk along the Nazareth ridge (3 Km); drive to Mount Arbel cliffs (40 Km); picnic at the Ein Nun spring; walk to Tel Kinrot (5.5 km); then drive or walk on to Capernaum (4 km).
- By Foot: for average walkers – from Wadi Hamam to Capernaum (14 km); for good walkers – Mount Arbel to Capernaum (20 km).
- By Bicycle (with stops along the way): from the Lavi Forest to Capernaum (30 km); or from the foot of Mount Precipice to the Horns of Hattin (32 km).

Most of the Trail is accessible to bicycle riders. Two sections are CLOSED to cyclists: (1) the descent from the summit of Mount Precipice (cyclists should start join the path from Road 60, lower down the hill); and (2) the alternative trail down the face of the Mount Arbel cliffs.

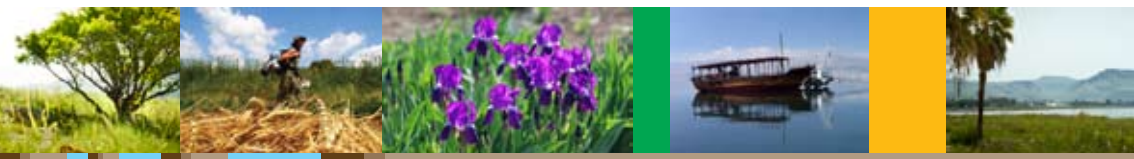
For more detailed information about access points, routes and trail specifics, please see the official Gospel Trail map.

The Gospel Trail includes a number of segments that are especially adapted to the needs of those requiring easy walking, or the use of wheelchairs or strollers.

- Mount Precipice / From the parking area to the mountain summit (300 meters)
- Beit Keshet forest / Beit Haya'aran parking lot (0.5 – 2 km.)
- Tabgha promenade – Capernaum (3 km.)



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