

# The John the Baptist Trail PILGRIM'S GUIDE



*Bethany Beyond the Jordan*

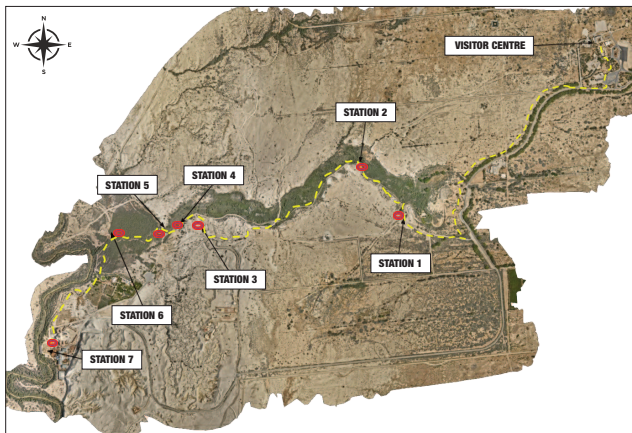


# MAP

## *The John the Baptist Trail*

The total length of the trail is 3km, 2 miles approx.

Starts at 340m below sea level, ends at 390m.



STATION 1 - ELIJAH'S HILL

STATION 2 - WADI EL-KHARRAR

STATION 3 - PILGRIM'S STATION

STATION 4 - LARGE POOL

STATION 5 - JOHN THE BAPTIST SPRING

STATION 6 - MEMORIAL CHURCHES

STATION 7 - ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL BY THE RIVER



# INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ, fulfilling the prophecy: “Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare the way before thee” (MATTHEW 11:10). Christ identifies him as “Elijah who is to come” (JOHN 10:15) because he came in the spirit and strength of Elijah (LUKE 1:17). John chose to live a simple life in the sacred wilderness, near the hill from which Elijah ascended to heaven. He resided in a humble cave, drank from a stream flowing on pebbles into the Jordan, baptized believers, and awaited the Messiah, dressed in a garment made of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, his food was locusts and wild honey (MATTHEW 3:4–5).

Entering the John the Baptist Trail as a pilgrim, it is possible to see the original wilderness where John the Baptist lived in near pristine condition. The Baptism Site Commission strives its utmost to maintain the wilderness as it would have appeared in the first-century. Visitors and pilgrims are kindly asked to do likewise, and not disturb or pollute the site in any way.

*“And as they still went on and talked, behold,  
a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the  
two of them. And Elijah went up by a  
whirlwind into heaven”*

(2 KINGS 2:11)

## STATION 1

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# ELIJAH’S HILL

At Elijah’s Hill, where Elijah ascended to heaven, Elisha received the prophecy, and John the Baptist initiated his ministry in the spirit and strength of Elijah, we are reminded of the divine call to live faithfully in accordance with God’s commandments.

### PRAYER

*O Lord our God, with Thy governing Spirit settle our unsettled minds, that we may be counted worthy to do Thy commandments. Strengthen us that we might not be deceived by the corruptible delights of this world, but that we might desire the enjoyment of the treasures to come, Amen.*



*“What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind?”*

(MATTHEW 11:7)

## STATION 2

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# WADI EL-KHARRAR

At this station as we hear the swaying reeds, rustling leaves and the whispering wind, the echo of John the Baptist’s words comes fresh to our minds, *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”* (LUKE 3:4–6)

### PRAYER

*O Lord, we intently entreat You to save us from self-deception, pride and error, Amen.*



*Top:* Wadi El-Kharrar.  
*Left:* The Station at Wadi  
El-Kharrar.



*“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”*

(MARK 8:34)

### STATION 3

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## PILGRIMAGE STATION/ CARAVANSERAI

At this Pilgrimage Station, a distant wooden cross atop a hill calls out to pilgrims seeking spiritual renewal and deepened faith. While the foundations of ancient caravanserais are barely visible, the true essence lies in *the living stones*—the faithful individuals walking this sacred path. Their lives embody a holy pilgrimage dedicated to fulfilling God’s will through love, mercy, and devoted service to humanity.

#### PRAYER

*O Lord, receive our prayers at this hour and guide our life toward Thy commandments. Make chaste our bodies, correct our thoughts, purify our intentions, and deliver us from sorrow, evil, and pain, Amen.*





*Top:* The stones at the Pilgrimage Station, situated between the Jordan River and Tell El-Kharrar.

*Left:* The Pilgrimage Station.



*“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”*

(MATTHEW 3:11)

## STATION 4

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# THE LARGE POOL

People from Jerusalem, Palestine, and around the Jordan flocked to be baptized by John the Baptist, who called them to repentance for the forgiveness of their sins. He identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (JOHN 1:34).

Since the early centuries, thousands were baptized at this large pool dating back to the Byzantine period in the lower area of Bethany beyond the Jordan.

### PRAYER

*O Lord, forgive us all who, by the bowing of our necks, set forth proof of our self-denial and humility, Amen.*



*Top:* The Large Pool.  
*Left:* The Station at the  
 Large Pool.



*“But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (JOHN 4:14)*

## STATION 5

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# JOHN THE BAPTIST SPRING

This spring originates next to John the Baptist Cave and flows down to the River Jordan, as described by Antoninus in the 6th century and Abbot Daniel in the 12th century.

Wash yourselves and be clean, says the Prophet Isaiah, and put away your evil doing from before the Lord's eyes.

### PRAYER

*O Lord, cleanse us of all our sins and faults, and grant us eternal life, Amen.*



*“This took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (JOHN 1:28–29)*

## STATION 6

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# THE FIVE MEMORIAL CHURCHES AT THE SITE OF THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST

In commemoration of the historic Baptism of Jesus Christ, five uniquely-designed churches were constructed between the 5th and 12th centuries, with a monumental cruciform baptistery.

Here, at the merging point of the River Jordan and the “John the Baptist Spring”, John encountered Christ face to face.

### **PRAYER**

*O Lord, may we encounter You face to face. Glory be to You, Amen.*





*Top:* The five Memorial Churches.  
*Left:* The Station at the site of the  
 Baptism of Jesus Christ.



*“And one of the scribes ... asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?”<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one;’<sup>30</sup> and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’<sup>31</sup> The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

(MARK 12:28–31)

## STATION 7

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# FINAL STATION AT THE CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL

Here we come to the conclusion of our pilgrimage on the Eastern Bank of the River Jordan. While stepping into the water, we proclaim the greatness of God’s wonders, saying, “Great art thou, O Lord and wondrous are Thy works, and no word sufficeth to hymn Thy wonders”.

### CONCLUDING PRAYER

*O Lord, sanctify all those who touch this holy water, anoint themselves therewith and partake thereof, Amen.*



*Top:* The Eastern Bank of the River Jordan.  
*Above:* The Station at the Catholic Cathedral.



*The official logo of the John the Baptist Trail*

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