Dormition Abbey

Perched atop Mount Zion, just outside the Old City walls, is one of Jerusalem’s most recognizable landmarks, the Dormition Abbey. This immense structure with its unique conical roof and looming bell tower, marks the traditional location where the Virgin Mary died. The name Dormition means sleep and references what is described as the “holy sleep” of the Virgin Mary, her departure from the earthly realm and ascension to heaven. In the crypt under the church, a shrine to the Virgin Mary depicts her peacefully in her final rest. The Dormition Abbey is administered by the German Benedictine order of the Catholic Church. The Dormition Abbey complex was one of the projects undertaken in Jerusalem by German Kaiser Wilhelm II at the end of the 19th century. During his historic visit to the Holy Land in 1898, the land was given to Kaiser Wilhem II by Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who presented it to the German Association of the Holy Land in order to build a Catholic church on the site. In 1900 the cornerstone of the Dormition Abbey was laid and construction was completed in 1910. Designed by architect Heinrich Renard, the complex includes the grand basilica, constructed in a Neo-Romanesque style, the free-standing bell tower, and other surrounding buildings. Although the Dormition Abbey is one of the younger churches in Jerusalem, Christian history in the area dates back centuries. During the Byzantine period, the site was the location of several churches, notably the Hagia Maria Sion built by Emperor Constantine. In the 12th century, the Crusaders constructed a church on the ruins of this site, which was then destroyed after their defeat. The site remained in ruins until the Dormition Abbey was built. Approaching the church, it is immediately obvious that the Dormition Abbey is unlike most churches in Jerusalem. The central building is round, unlike the more common angular structures, surrounded by four towers. The impressive bell tower is free standing, topped with a rooster, recalling the prophesy of Jesus that Peter would deny him ‘three times before the cock crows.’ Inside the church, light streams in the many windows illuminating the magnificent mosaics that adorn the apse, niches, and floor. These intricate mosaics depict scenes from scripture, and figures from the Bible and the Benedictine tradition. Notable are the circular floor mosaic decorated with a verse from Proverbs surrounding the names of the prophets and symbols of the zodiac and the golden mosaic of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus that sits in the central apse. Following the spiral staircase down into the crypt, a life-size sculpture of the Virgin Mary in her final slumber lays in the center of the room. The dome above her features a mosaic of prominent women from the Bible. Several chapels sit along the wall surrounding her, with alters designed and donated by different countries. A visit to the Dormition Abbey is an essential stop on any tour of Jerusalem and Mount Zion. The church welcomes visitors daily during opening hours in the morning and afternoon. It is easily accessible via Zion Gate and for those arriving by car, the Mount Zion parking lot is only steps away. Visitors can also enjoy a relaxing moment at the café in the courtyard of the abbey, serving drinks and snacks. Other significant sites in the area include the Cenacle and King David’s Tomb.

Site Religion & Type

- Christian Site
- Church

Target Group

- Organized Groups
  - Christian Groups

Denomination with high relevance

Benedictine Brothers , Catholic - Armenian , Catholic - Greek , Catholic - Roman , Coptic , Mennonite , Mormon , Orthodox - Armenian , Orthodox - Assyrian , Orthodox - Ethiopian , Orthodox - Greek , Orthodox - Russian , Protestant - Anglican , Protestant - Baptist , Protestant - Methodist , Protestant - Pentecost , Protestant -Lutheran , Salesian Brothers , Zion sisters

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  Websitehttps://www.dormitio.net

31.770923,35.228463
View in Google Maps

Closed on

Cafeteria closes 1700.

Best time of day to visit

AM

Best Time of Year to Visit

Year round

Estimated time of visit

1-2 hours

Weather Consideration

Avoid on
rainy
, bad weather days

Dress Code

Modest Clothes
, Trousers Allowed For Female Visitors

Entry Limitation

No limitations

Summer Times

Sunday: 11:30-17:30
Monday: 9:00-17:30
Tuesday: 9:00-17:30
Wednesday: 9:00-17:30
Thursday: 9:00-17:30
Holy Thursday
Friday: 9:00-17:30
Good Friday
Saturday: 9:00-17:30
Holy Saturday

Winter Times

Sunday: 11:30-17:30
Monday: 9:00-17:30
Tuesday: 9:00-17:30
Wednesday: 9:00-17:30
Thursday: 9:00-17:30
Holy Thursday
Friday: 9:00-17:30
Good Friday
Saturday: 9:00-17:30
Holy Saturday

Booking On Site

No

Booking Online

No

Booking via Phone

Yes

Advance booking required

No

Free For

Free (locals only) , Free for everyone

Bathrooms

Free , Group suitable , Handicap bathroom

Handicap bathroom

Yes

Food outlet

Café

Parking

Bus parking available on site
, Parking on street available

Stairs

No

Wheelchair Friendly

Yes

Wheelchair Access Level

Fully accessible

Stroller Friendly

Yes