



# Cheviot Hills

The greatest neighborhood in the world

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# A Real Trip

By Ben Lee

Israel is one of those places that has always existed in the back of my mind as a place to visit one day. There was always a compelling reason why not to go, though. Either it was too far or too hot or too tumultuous or the boys were too young for a flight that long- we always seemed to go somewhere else when it was time to plan a family vacation.

But all that changed this summer as we finally took a trip to visit this beautiful, complicated (and yes, very hot!) country in the middle of the Middle East. Temple Isaiah takes congregants every summer and we were initially hesitant to sign up because what would be the chances that in a group of 30-40 random people, we would like every one of them (and vice versa)? This trip was also promoted as intergenerational so the ages could span from 0-100. I kept imagining us stuck on a long bus ride through the desert with a screaming baby or complaining oldster. Luckily this scenario couldn't have been farther from the truth. I was struck by how easy it was for everyone to get along from the moment we met up on the shores of the Mediterranean. We all seemed so happy to be there, it felt more like summer camp- just with an emphasis on hummus over s'mores.

Speaking as someone who has never been to Israel before, the trip was expertly curated to present the proverbial greatest hits of this ancient land. I had always heard about places like Tel Aviv and Jerusalem but until you see them for yourself it's hard to really conceptualize. I've also never been to Miami, but Tel Aviv seems to be a pretty good comparison. The beaches were jam packed with attractive people all living their best lives, playing modified soccer on the sand and diving into the crystal-clear Mediterranean waters when the relentless sun became intolerable. We learned about the origins of this city, only slightly older than 100 years old, fashioned after New York and other modern European cities to include proper electricity, schools, artistic endeavors and working sewer systems. In 1909, 66 families stood with wheelbarrows amidst the sand dunes and parceled out land using seashells to determine who would build where. Today it's the financial and economic hub of the region, one of the most liberal and progressive cities in the Middle East, and it's as famous for its party-scene as it is for its storied past.

We saw the site of one of King Herod's palaces in Caesarea and the aqueducts that were constructed around 30 BCE to channel water into the land. There was also an architectural dig where we discovered artifacts that have been buried for centuries. It's hard to wrap one's head around how old a region you're in until you are crouching in a cave several feet underground searching for hidden treasure in the form of pottery shards that broke in someone else's kitchen thousands of years ago.

Jerusalem was truly a sight to behold and it's hard not to be impressed by the sheer weight and significance this city has in the hearts and minds of those belonging



to different religions all over the globe. I was struck by the beautiful uniformity of its architecture in that every building is constructed in that ivory-hued limestone known as Jerusalem Stone. It's an effect that makes the whole city glimmer and shine. As far as I know, the only building that doesn't adhere to this style code is Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial; because though it's in Jerusalem, its creators didn't want it to blend in or fade into the background. After visiting this museum, our whole group was emotionally gutted. However, despite this being one of the more meaningful sites, it was no doubt the saddest of tours and immediately following, our guide insisted we pivot to go straight to the most populous and bustling marketplaces in the city. The juxtaposition of the two experiences was meant to illustrate how life manages to go on despite unspeakable, unimaginable tragedy and it was indeed a lesson well learned.

Other highlights of our journey to Israel included seeing the Western (Wailing) Wall, the battleground of Masada and floating in the Dead Sea. We saw a secret ammunition museum, climbed atop enormous military tanks, visited the Golan Heights, Galilee and ate from a variety of buffets that dwarfed the average American salad bar by a mile.

Our journey really illustrates the difference between 'trip' and 'vacation,' as there was zero downtime or relaxation. However, we made up for lack of rest with riches of experience and I wouldn't have changed a thing. It also reiterates the beauty and importance of sharing the time with other people of various ages beyond just our family. Other than our rabbi, we didn't know anyone on the tour before embarking on this trip and now we feel bonded to one another in a way I wasn't expecting. One of my fondest memories is when our 13-year-old (understandably sick of being with his immediate family) had lunch instead with some of the elderly women in our group at a restaurant down the road. When one of the toddlers was having a rare fussy moment on the bus, a teen ten years his senior figured out a way to make him chuckle. I was asked to place a note in the Wall on behalf

of an older woman, significantly shorter than me, as she wanted her special note to be placed in the highest crevice as possible. Just doing this simple act on her behalf moved her to tears.

I suppose there's never a perfect time to cross an item off your bucket list. This was a country I have always wanted to visit and never found the ideal time to go until we just decided to jump in and do it. Yes, it was hot and the flight was long and the airlines lost my bag and there was no time to just hang back and relax. But, despite it all, I'm so glad we went. No matter your religious affiliation, should you ever have the opportunity to visit, I recommend it wholeheartedly. And, if you can find a great group of various ages to go with, even better!





# My featured listings

## Cheviot Hills – NEW LISTING!



**10542 Butterfield Rd -** \$2,295,000  
3 Beds/2.5 Bath 2,000 Sq. Ft., 5,753 Sq. Ft.

This idyllic Spanish Style, single story, recently remodeled home offers everything you could want! On a friendly street in the Overland Elementary School district, this picturesque home is brimming with style. Brand new hardwood floors, new interior/exterior paint, oversized plate glass windows, brick fireplace, traditional archway leading to the formal dining room with Crown moldings and dramatic Cathedral ceilings in the formal living room. Each of the bedrooms are generously sized, the Primary Bedroom especially large with enormous his/her closets and attached bathroom. The private yard, surrounded by trees, offers drought resistant grass covering as well as patio space for outside dining. Additional features include: side by side washer/dryer, mature Palm trees, an abundance of storage, security gate and a detached 2-car garage. Visit this delightful home today as it's not likely to be on the market for long.

## Santa Monica – REDUCED BY \$300K!



**1027 Ashland Ave -** \$2,695,000  
3 Beds/2 Bath 1,518 Sq. Ft., 8,528 Sq. Ft. R2 Lot

Stunning like-new remodel in a quaint pocket of Santa Monica's Sunset Park, mere blocks from the beach and moments from the shops and restaurants of Ocean Park Boulevard and Main Street. Exquisite 3 bedroom/2 bathroom, 1,518 sq ft home on a MASSIVE R2 8,528 sq ft lot! Beautifully designed and inspired by the sand and shore, the home boasts beachy hardwood floors, colorful blue accents, bright and airy bedrooms with large closets. French doors lead to the enormous backyard and allow natural light to flood the interior space. The open kitchen has Frigidaire stainless steel appliances, walk-in pantry, banquette seating and extensive storage. The primary suite features a large walk-in closet and beautiful bathroom with sunken tub. This lot is so large, and favorable zoning provides the rare opportunity to BUILD UNITS OR ADDITIONAL STRUCTURES behind the main house with the possibility to subdivide. A must see!

## Cheviot Hills – REDUCED BY \$300K!



**9825 Altman Ave -** \$3,695,000  
5 Beds/5.5 Bath 3,539 Sq. Ft., 6,677 Sq. Ft. Lot

Nestled within the natural beauty of a rustic, quiet cul-de-sac in Cheviot Hills, this brand new construction on Altman Avenue is a hidden neighborhood gem. Five bedrooms, five and a half bathrooms and exclusive in its luxury and craftsmanship, every detail of this beautiful home has been thoughtfully considered. Personal touches that include coffered ceilings and fireplace in the formal Living Room, colorful walls and classic finishes provide personality. The private, grand backyard is freshly landscaped, surrounded by trees and has both patio and grass areas, perfect for parties. Upstairs are four of the five bedrooms and each are en suite with large closets and far-reaching, beautiful views. Upstairs laundry room, landing lounge with built in desks, two-car attached garage, in-wall wine display and an abundance of smart storage solutions. Located in close proximity to the award winning Cheviot Hills Elementary School, come see this handsome home today.

## Crestview - FOR SALE!



**8920 Cadillac Avenue** \$2,049,000  
3 Beds/3 Bath - 1,816 Sq. Ft., 4,242 Sq. Ft. Lot  
with 1 Bed/1 Bath ADU

## Beverlywood - FOR LEASE OR FOR SALE!



**1153 S. Clark Drive** \$11,995.00 p/mo. or \$3,285,000  
4 Beds/4.5 Bath - 3,000 Sq. Ft., 6,249 Sq. Ft. Lot

## Beverlywood - FOR LEASE!



**9220 Monte Mar Drive** \$8,000.00 p/mo.  
3 Beds/4 Bath - 2,068 Sq. Ft., 6,649 Sq. Ft. Lot

## Cheviot Hills - LEASED! *Dream Home*



**10422 Lorenzo Pl** \$25,000 per/mo.  
6 Beds/6 Bath - 6,600 Sq. Ft., 8,100 Sq. Ft. Lot

## Westchester - SOLD!



**6404 W 85th St** \$1,199,000  
2 Beds/1 Bath - 1,153 Sq. Ft. Lot

## Manhattan Beach - SOLD!



**3528 Walnut Ave** \$3,195,000 - List Price  
5 Beds/3.5 Bath - 2,790 Sq. Ft., 4,645 Sq. Ft. Lot



# Cheviot Hills happenings

## Westside Stories - Garden Club

By Ben Lee

Did Before he passed away, my father-in-law Michael Harris wrote three books about the history, sites and remembrances of Los Angeles' Westside, specifically but not limited to his hometown of Cheviot Hills. In one excerpt from his first book, he recalled a time in the 1940s when neighborhood

women weren't as inclusive as they could've been. He wrote:

*The ladies of Cheviot often gathered in an association called the 'Cheviot Hills Garden Club.' It was intended to promote the beauty of the neighborhood and they did a credible job, but in that era the women self-segregated. This meant if one were not of the right background and religious*

*persuasion, one could not join even if she had a great home landscape. The Garden Club promoted uniformity and non-diversity of the neighborhood street trees, and in a similar manner refused to allow diversity in its membership.*

Today, ladies of all different persuasions (and presumably different garden landscapes) gather in a neighbor's home

for a casual evening of refreshments, conversation and community kinship- no membership required, and as opposed to the 1940s, everyone is welcome! The next "Wine Night," as it's called will be on August 2nd. If you would like to attend or offer to host an upcoming gathering, please reach out to my wife Lilli: [lillijlee@yahoo.com](mailto:lillijlee@yahoo.com) or 310-650-7735.

## The Barbie Connection

By Ben Lee

The new film BARBIE is arguably the talk of the summer, with throngs of fans dressed in pink flocking to the theaters all around the world. But did you know the strong connection between everyone's favorite doll and our very own neighborhood? The Barbie Doll was created in 1959 by Ruth Handler and produced at Mattel, the company founded by her husband Elliot and their friend Harold Matson. Barbie was based on a German sexy toy named Bild Lilli (oddly spelled the same as my wife's name which is a rarity) and Ruth used the German version to prove that American children were ready to play with dolls that weren't just fashioned after babies. Ruth recognized that her daughter Barbara preferred playing with paper dolls over plastic babies primarily because she enjoyed changing the characters' outfits. So, the Barbie Doll



was born: a womanly-figured doll that could change clothes and thereby inhabit a variety of different roles and careers beyond what generations of girls had been raised to believe was ever possible. Today it's arguably the most successful doll of all

time, bringing Mattel billions of dollars in sales annually. So, what is the connection to our community? It turns out not only are Ruth and Elliot Handler founding members of Temple Isaiah on Pico but Barbara Handler as well as her brother Ken

(the inspiration behind the Ken doll) both attended Hamilton High! Ken claimed he was opposite of his doll namesake, telling the LA Times back in 1989, "Ken doll is Malibu. He goes to the beach and surfs," but when he was a student at Hamilton, Ken said he "played the piano and went to movies with subtitles. I was a real nerd. All the girls thought I was a jerk." Barbara often bristled at being compared to her mother's invention, too. She was a 16 year old sophomore at Hamilton when the doll came out and said she didn't want "...the best clothes or drive the best cars... I'm tired of being Barbie doll." Sadly, Ken passed away in 1994 and Ruth in 2002. Barbara still lives in Los Angeles and has given her seal of approval to the film, telling TMZ that she liked Margot Robbie's interpretation and added that her mom Ruth would be proud to see her doll come to life on the big screen.

## Cheap(er) Eats

By Ben Lee

It's pretty tough to nab a Michelin star (let alone two or three!). In fact, only two restaurants in Southern California newly acquired a star this year (one in Long Beach and the other in Oceanside). You'd have to travel even farther to sample a 3-star dining experience- five out of six restaurants are in Northern California and the 6th on this exclusive list is in San Diego. A much more convenient dining experience can be had though, thanks to Michelin's "Bib Gourmands," a list of fabulous restaurants that offer exceptional food at ultra-reasonable prices. Four of these places can be found relatively locally and, according to Michelin, are definitely worth checking out: Villa's Tacos (Highland Park), Carne

Asada Poncho Lopez (Lincoln Heights), Cobi (Santa Monica) and Eat Joy Food (Rowland Heights). So, perhaps the next time you find yourself with an empty stomach and adventurous spirit, try one of these newly decorated dining experiences. I'll see you there!



## RAFFLE



By Ben Lee

Thank you to all those who entered to win the \*double\* prize this month to the 99 Cent store: 50 dollars to our raffle winner and an additional 99 dollars to the teacher of his/her choice to help with back-to-school supplies. Congratulations to Guilan Siassi! You are the lucky winner this month. We hope you'll enjoy a bunch of fun items from the store and thank you for making a teacher's day,

too! To all those who entered but didn't win, don't worry. There's always another chance around the corner. This month we're trying something slightly different! We'd like to hear from YOU and get your answers to the two following questions:

***What's the best thing about your neighborhood?***

***What needs improvement in your neighborhood?***

Send me an email with your answers to [ben@benleeproperties.com](mailto:ben@benleeproperties.com) and write NEIGHBORHOOD in the subject line. Kids are welcome to participate, too! Everyone who enters gets a prize and we will use a handful of answers in an upcoming newsletter! Thanks so much!