



## FOOTPRINTS OF GOD PILGRIMAGES

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Dear Pilgrims:

I have a question for you — is it safe to travel to Israel?

But wait! Before you answer that, let me ask you another question — is it safe to travel to New York, Washington DC, Detroit, or Okalahoma City?

The answer to both these questions is obvious — yes and no!

In New York over 3,000 people were killed on 9/11 and many more in cars, bars, and alleyways. Washington DC and Detroit vie for the infamous title of “Murder Capital of the World.” In the heartland of America, Okalahoma suffered a tragic terrorist bomb. Only a month ago my brother was robbed and carjacked at gunpoint near his home in Detroit.

But we all live in the USA in relative peace and security because we know where to go and what to avoid. We use common sense and have enough smarts to know that such disasters are not looming at every street corner. CNN emphasizes the sensational in our country: rapes, murders, accidents, gun violence and terror attacks. Many people in other parts of the world are understandably afraid to visit America. Americans are afraid to visit Israel for the same reasons.

Ever since I can remember there have been State Department warnings about visiting the Middle East, including Israel. Since the recent Intifada began in 2000, the State Department has understandably increased its concern. They have posted warnings and advice on their website at [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov), and we want to make our pilgrims aware of this service of the US government.

We do not want anyone joining our pilgrimages to be unaware of the State Department’s warnings. But most of the warnings issued by the State Department are basic common sense and relate to things far from our points of contact in Israel. We will always be cautious and will take no risks or chances.

Janet and I have been to Israel about 20 times in the last ten years —it is almost our “home away from home”. We have been in almost every corner of the country including many times to the West Bank. We have Israeli and Palestinian friends; Jewish, Muslim and Christian. We have traveled with groups, in our own car, with our film crew, and with a hired driver. We know where to go, what to avoid and how to be careful. Our guides and drivers are licensed and experienced Israelis who do this every day for a living.

And of course Corporate Travel has the most extensive insurance a travel agency can have. Just as if we were touring the USA, we cannot be responsible for things out of our control, especially if pilgrims don't stay with the group or fail to practice common sense or safe measures, but we will always do our best to keep everyone informed, in safe areas, and out of harm's way. No one will be asked to travel to an area where they feel hesitant.

Having said all of that, I will assure you that Israel is a modern country with all the conveniences and comforts of home. It is an industrial and technologically advance land with services that rival those in the USA. When you finally arrive you will be happy to see English everywhere, dollars, ATM machines and credit cards like in your home state, and every service you are accustomed to.

You will be especially happy when you see all the smiling, friendly faces that will be your daily fare — and all the beautiful and holy sites. You will meet many fellow Christians from Israel as well as from around the world. You will have a delightful time!

I have included a letter that I wrote a pilgrim early on. It gives a little further explanation of the safety in Israel. We are very excited to meet you all in Tel Aviv and to share with you our favorite places, foods, and people, and to walk in the footprints of God.

Your friends and guides,

Steve and Janet Ray

[www.JerusalemJones.com](http://www.JerusalemJones.com)

PS If you have any particular concerns, please feel free to give me a call at 734-480-1182. As the time gets closer, we will be sending out more helpful information about packing, sites we'll visit and more. Also, keep an eye on our Pilgrimage webpage located on our website under “Events.”