

# GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Please remember this is a pilgrimage and though we will try to make you as comfortable as possible at all times, a pilgrimage also may have some hardships such as early mornings, new foods, restrooms not up to American standards, etc. So please keep this in mind and offer any small difficulties up to God with a song and a prayer.

## **Passport**

A valid U.S. Passport is required of all passengers. Make sure to have it in your possession at all times while on tour. It must be valid for 6 months following the return date of the trip. Also, it is suggested that you make two copies of the information page. 1) Keep one copy in your carry-on luggage at all times and 2) leave a copy at home with a relative or friend. You will need to keep your passport with you as we may need them at hotels and checkpoints. Keep the copy of your passport separate from your actual passport. Your passport must be signed.

## **Entry Visa**

American citizens do not need a Visa to enter Israel. If you are traveling to Israel from outside the USA, please check with your government to see if a Visa is necessary.

## **Entry Forms**

On the plane you will be issued a simple two-part Entry Form to fill out before landing in Tel Aviv. The Israeli agent in Tel Aviv will keep one part and return the second part to you for safe keeping in your passport. You **MUST** have the second part of the form to leave the country—so take good care of it. Copies of Customs Forms for return to the United States can also be found online to view in advance..

## **U.S. Customs**

All luggage is subject to search and inspection by U.S. and Israeli Customs and Security officials. You are allowed a duty-free exemption of \$800 (U.S.) per person. It is recommended that you keep sales receipts for large ticket items handy for declaring your purchases upon returning to the U.S. Visit [www.customs.ustreas.gov](http://www.customs.ustreas.gov) website for specific questions. Be sure not to carry any forbidden objects on the plane or in your carry-on. No food, plants, animals, or other such things are allowed entrance into Israel or the USA.

## **Baggage**

Checked baggage is limited to two suitcases per person of no more than 50 lbs. each per airline regulations. The enclosed luggage tags should be securely fastened to your luggage before leaving home. You may also bring a small carry-on bag that fits under an airline seat and on the small parcel racks of the motorcoach, which average about 8 inches high by 18 inches deep. It is best if your carry-on is soft-sided.

Do not lock baggage you intend to check in at the airport. It is good to put a photocopy of your flight itinerary in your luggage, in an outside pocket if possible.

## **Medical Coverage**

Medical care in Israel is modern and advanced like in the United States. Optional "Travel Guard" insurance is available. This is to help protect your travel investment in the event of unforeseeable circumstances. You may want to purchase International Medical Insurance. Check with your insurance company to see if you are covered while out of the country. Mail the form directly to "Travel Guard" if you decide to buy coverage.

## **Smoking**

All flights are non-smoking. The Touring Coach is also non-smoking. Please be aware that smoking in Israel is still very popular. Even though there are non-smoking areas, it is common to see people smoking anyway.

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## **Restrooms**

Restrooms can usually be found near holy sites, in restaurants, gas stations, souvenir shops, large department stores, and other places of interest to visitors. Most churches do not have restrooms. Leave a small tip (1 Shekel) if there is an attendant, but many do not have attendants. Restrooms often are without toilet paper and not as clean as in America. So, carry a few Kleenex or a small roll of toilet paper with you at all times. A few places may not even have modern toilets—only stalls made for squatting. You may want to carry a small bottle of Hand Sanitizer in your purse or backpack. Restrooms in our hotels are modern and clean.

## **Calling Home**

If you plan to call home, check with your local long-distance company before you leave the U.S. to find out how to make the call. Also, calling cards are available from many retailers. Many cell phones can be set up for international calling through your carrier. To call the United States you need to dial 001-xxx-xxxx.

## **Dress**

Casual clothing is fine (including jeans). We have no occasions planned requiring formal clothes. Light or medium weight clothing with a light rain jacket is recommended. Dress conservatively and respectfully for holy sites. Churches do not accept halter-tops, sleeveless blouses, or shorts (no one wears shorts in Israel). Comfortable, worn-in walking shoes, sneakers, or sandals are recommended.

## **Head Covering and Hats**

Head coverings are not required for women anywhere but they are required for men at the Western Wall or Jewish holy sites. Men must remove hats in churches. Brimmed hats or visors are recommended to shade the sun.

## **Laundry**

We usually bring “travel gear clothing” which we can wash by hand in the sink in the evening. However, each hotel does have next-day laundry service for an additional charge.

## Climate

During October the average high temperature in Jerusalem is in the low 80s. The Trip Planner <http://www.wunderground.com/tripplanner/index.asp> helps you plan for your upcoming trip. Simply choose the start date and end date of your event or trip. The Trip Planner will search the historical database for the weather conditions during those dates in past years. The results will help you determine how hot, cold, wet, or windy it will be!

## Souvenirs

We encourage pilgrims to be very careful with their purchases. We will take you mostly to Christian shops with quality products—shops that we trust. Shopping in these recommended stores will help Christian families in the Holy Land at the same time they protect you. Olive wood products carved by local Christians are a classic souvenir. Diamonds and jewelry are also a specialty. Prices can range from inexpensive to very expensive.

Many people like to buy olive wood Rosaries early in the pilgrimage so they can touch them to all the holy sites. We will make sure we have a large supply on the day you arrive. Many books, jewelry, pictures, and religious items are available everywhere.

Be very careful if purchasing things in the Old City of Jerusalem or from street vendors. Things are not always what they appear. Prices are cheaper on the street and storefront shops, but the products can be very uncertain. Only buy cheap souvenirs (like t-shirts, postcards, etc.) from storefronts and vendors. Wait until we get to trusted shops to buy any major item. You may want to bring a little bubble wrap with you if you intend to buy something fragile.

Street vendors can be very aggressive. You may buy from them but do not feel pressured to buy from them. Jewish merchants do not negotiate prices, but with Arab vendors negotiation is the name of the game. Most Arab vendors ask for twice the price they expect to receive. Don't purchase at the asking price! Have fun negotiating!

## Language

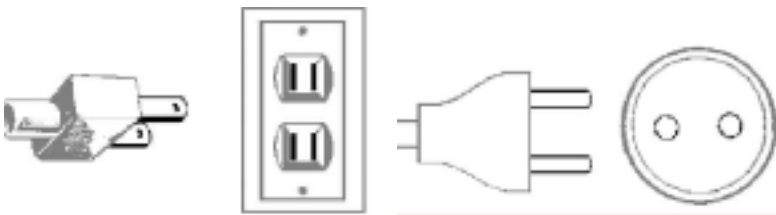
The main languages in Israel are Hebrew, Arabic, and English. English is spoken everywhere, especially at hotels, shops and restaurants. We will teach you some basic words like thank you, hello, yes, and no which will endear you to the locals.

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## Electricity

Israel's electric current is 220/240 V/50Hz. Most hotels provide 110-V outlets for shavers only. Dual voltage appliances are recommended. You will need a converter and an adapter plug if you plan to use electrical appliances. Most luggage stores carry converters and adaptors. A typical converter for Israel can be found by searching for the "Converter for Motorized Appliances" at [www.magellans.com](http://www.magellans.com).

American plugs have flat prongs; Israel and Europe have round prongs.



## Computers

You may bring your laptop if you wish. Both hotels should have computers where you can access your e-mail or the internet in your free time.

## Hair Dryers

It is best to bring your own hairdryers because some hotel rooms have them and some do not. If you need a hair dryer, dual-powered (that accommodate both 110 and 220 current) travel hair dryers are recommended.

## Money

US Dollars and Israeli Shekels are welcome everywhere in Israel. You will need cash for most street vendors and smaller shops, but most larger establishments accept major credit cards. One US Dollar (\$1) is equal to 3.51 Israeli Shekels as of April 11, 2018.

## **Credit Cards, ATM**

Your ATM and credit cards are a convenient means of payment with the best conversion rates. Since ATM machines are available, but not as easy to find as in the USA, it is recommended you bring cash or Travelers Checks too.

Most ATM machines dispense Shekels, though you can easily convert into Dollars. Check with your bank to see if your ATM and credit cards will work abroad. Many credit card companies add a 2% currency exchange fee.

## **Dining**

The meal choices are many. You can get Middle Eastern, European, and American foods almost anywhere. Beverages are the same as in the US but many other choices are available. Breakfast and dinners are provided.

## **Water**

Like any foreign country, not all stomachs easily adapt to the local water. It is best to drink bottled water, which is readily available. It is also recommended that you bring Imodium or other anti-diarrhea medicine just in case.

## **Time Difference**

Israel is 7 hours ahead of Eastern Time, 8 hours ahead of Central Time and 9 hours ahead of Mountain Time and 10 hours ahead of Pacific Time.

## **Religious Customs**

Friday is a holy day for Muslims, Saturday (starting after dark on Friday) is a holy day for Jews and Sunday is a holy day for Christians. In Israel most everything is open on Sunday. Men must wear head coverings in Jewish holy sites and must remove hats in Christian churches.

## Hotel Porters

Baggage handling to your room has been prepaid. No need to tip the porters.

## Tips

For all meals that are included for the group, the tip has already been paid. For meals on your own, waiters expect a 10% tip.

All tips for drivers, guides, porters and any other service is already covered on all our trips. You are not required to pay any tips anywhere along the way. It is one of the many benefits of traveling with Footprints of God Pilgrimages.

## Suggested Reading

Most of the following books can be found in your local bookstore or on the internet at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). They are all moderately priced and would be excellent to read beforehand and to have in your backpack.

*Fodor's Israel Travel Guide*, *Knopf Guide to the Holy Land*, *Lonely Planet*, and *Rough Guide* are all helpful. If you enter the words "Guide to the Holy Land" into the search engine at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) you will find many other helpful books.

If you want to learn more, especially the historical, archaeological, and biblical background to sites we will visit, I would recommend two books: *The Oxford Archaeological Guide to the Holy Land* by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor is excellent. Another book usually available as a used book is Eugene Hoade's *Guide to the Holy Land*, by Franciscan Printing Press.

## Helpful Websites

Steve Ray's Pilgrimage Page on his website  
[www.jerusalemjones.com](http://www.jerusalemjones.com)

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Travelmania Israel

<http://www.travelmania.com/facts.asp>

Israel Ministry of Tourism

<http://www.goisrael.com/planningyourtrip/index.asp>

LonelyPlanetTravelGuide

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/middle-east/israel-and-the-palestinian-territories>

Travel Gear and Info

<http://www.magellans.com>