

Israel

Traveler's Aid

Shalom, and welcome to the Israel Tour! This guide has important information and tips that will make your journey easier and more enjoyable. Happy travels and Blessings!

GETTING READY

- **Pray.** Ask God to do a powerful work in the lives of everyone on our tour—to experience Him and better understand His Word.
- **Get in shape.** Take frequent walks before you depart. When we're not relaxing in our touring coach, we'll be walking on lots of uneven terrain with many stairs and ramps. Though we usually arrive at our hotels by 5PM, we arise each day by 6AM. In other words, you won't get as much rest on the tour as you might expect.
- There are no vaccination requirements for visitors entering Israel or Jordan.

"Do's" & "Don'ts"

- Before leaving for the airport, **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR PASSPORT ON YOUR PERSON.** Never stow your passport in your luggage.
- Misplacing or losing your passport will cause serious delays and costs. Secure your passport, ID, credit cards and any large bills in a neck wallet, money belt or similar article. These are difficult to steal or lose and are easily accessible.
- Take a smartphone picture or photocopy of the first two pages of your passport, then hide your passport in your hand-luggage.
- Bring a second official photo ID and store it separate from your Passport.
- While touring, always stay with your group and watch where they're heading. You may see something interesting along the way, but you could become separated.
- Never leave the tour group for any reason without telling someone where you're going. If you go out after hours, tell someone in your group where you're going and when you will return. The streets in Israel are quite safe, but don't go off by yourself.
- Never leave jewelry, cash, cell phones, cameras, SD cards, documents, etc., in your hotel room, even if locked in your suitcase. Hotels provide a safe in your room (if it works) where items can be secured. Leave valuables at home to simplify your journey.

Packing your suitcase

- It's easy to over-pack. Lay out everything you plan to bring, pick up each item one at a time and ask yourself, "Will I use this enough to lug it around for twenty thousand miles?" Minimize by bringing less and washing more. As a wise traveler once said: "Pack the absolute minimum, then bring half of it."
- The maximum weight for your checked bag is 50 lbs., or the airline will charge you an extra fee. Airlines charge for all additional checked bags.
- Weather can range from warm and dry to cold and wet. Bring layers to add or remove as needed. Instead of a bulky coat, pack a lightweight windbreaker. It takes little space and keeps you warm and dry when worn over a sweater. Certain "holy sites" won't let you in if you wear shorts, short skirts or off-the-shoulder attire.
- Bring well broken-in walking shoes that you won't mind getting muddy.
- If you plan to visit Hezekiah's Tunnel, the shaft flows year-round with knee-deep water. You'll need shorts or quick-dry hiking trousers (zip-off legs are a plus), a flashlight and footwear that can get wet (no flip-flops).
- Check out Yosher Tour's information sheet for additional packing instructions.

Cameras

- Instead of bringing a large camera, use your smartphone or a pocket-sized digital camera that you can hang from a lanyard (easy to locate, hard to lose).
- Never hand your camera/phone to a stranger (of any age)—you may not get it back.
- Bring fresh batteries and/or a charger with a proper adaptor (see below).
- Bring a large enough storage card for all your photos and movies.
- If you take pictures of Arab children or someone's camel, expect to be asked for money.
- A camera can become a barrier between you and your experience. Don't miss out.

Electronics

- **Adaptors:** You need European-style *adaptor for Israel* (top) and a UK adaptor *for Jordan* (bottom). Individual adaptors are inexpensive (bring two or three), and universal adaptors, though more expensive, will give you the world. Most laptops, cell phones, tablets and chargers have built-in power converters that only require an adaptor. Check the fine print on your device (you may need a magnifying glass)—if you find a pair of numbers like "110—230V", you only need an *adaptor*.
- **Converters:** Curling irons and clothes irons require a power *converter* (different than an *adaptor*) that converts 240 voltage to 110. Without a *converter* you'll destroy your appliance. Leave the blow dryer home—our hotels provide them in your room.
- **WiFi:** Most hotels offer free WiFi services or a computer terminal (usually in the lobby). Our touring coaches have free onboard WiFi.



Money & Bank Cards

- Inform your Credit Card company or bank of your tour dates (lest they may think your card is stolen and deny your purchases). Foreign transaction fees vary depending on the bank. Small shops and food kiosks rarely accept cards of any kind.
- When changing dollars into Shekels (Israel) or Dinar (Jordan), use only official money changers. The best rate in foreign countries is usually found at their local ATM.

At the airports

- For international flights, **arrive at the airport at least 3 hours prior to departure.** Your tickets are electronic, so you won't receive a hard copy until you check in at the airport. Use the automated kiosks at ticketing to print your boarding passes, or an attendant will direct you to the proper queue. When your luggage is tagged, make sure it's checked straight through to Tel Aviv (TLV).
- Flights in and out of Israel maintain very high security—don't be intimidated by the security agent's questions—it's for your safety. Answer truthfully, and please, no jokes!
- Never turn your back on your hand-luggage—it can vanish quickly.
- **Use a "buddy-system".** While touring, we need to know the whereabouts of every traveler in case someone gets separated from the group. At the airport, make a friend with a fellow traveler who can know if you're running late, not on the bus, not with the group, etc. They will thank you.

On the plane

- Your flight time is about 14 hours each way. Take occasional walks around the aircraft, drink plenty of water and avoid caffeine.
- A "horseshoe collar" neck pillow, blindfold and earplugs can help you sleep a lot better. Sleeping pills and melatonin supplements can be useful. Tip: sleep when you're sleepy.
- For hand-luggage, *smaller is better.* Pack a toothbrush and towelettes (they'll make your flight a lot more tolerable) and extra undies (in case of lost luggage).
- Wear loose-fitting clothing on the plane—it will add comfort to your journey.

IN ISRAEL

Arrival at Ben Gurion Airport (IMPORTANT!)

When you land in Israel, you'll go through passport control, which is biometric. The kiosks are usually crowded, so stay with the group and your 'buddy' as you go through the process. The machine will give you a small slip of paper—**don't lose it**—this is your entry visa into Israel.

From passport control, follow the signs to baggage-claim. Before entering, you'll pass through turnstiles—**you'll need that slip of paper to enter.** Find the carousel for our flight and collect your luggage. We'll gather at that carousel to make sure everyone is

accounted for before exiting baggage claim together *as a group*. Once outside, we will meet our guide and go to our bus. This process can be chaotic and you'll be tired, so please be patient.

In the baggage claim area, please:

- Do not exchange money—this takes a long time, and the group needs to exit as quickly as possible
- Tell one of your leaders if you go off to use the restroom
- **DO NOT EXIT THE BAGGAGE CLAIM AREA APART FROM THE GROUP**—this could cause a serious delay

Hotels

- **Services:** Your hotels offer a variety of services. The tour pays for all hotel taxes, tips breakfasts and dinners. If you order additional services (room service, laundry, etc.), you'll be billed accordingly and must pay at the front desk when you check out. You're also responsible for any tips incurred by these services.
- **Laundry:** All our hotels offer laundry services for \$3-15 *per garment*. Many people do their own laundry in the sink or bathtub (bring your own detergent). Most hotel bathrooms have retractable clotheslines that extend across the tub.

Food

- Israeli food is excellent and the tap water is safe. We provide all breakfasts, dinners and five lunches. Soft drinks at hotels and lunches cost extra. When dining out, you can spend as little or as much as you want, but budget meals are often the best. Try the falafels, shawarmas and hummus—each is an entire meal.
- Don't order milk or dairy products with meat or poultry—it's not "kosher" and as a rule won't be served together. Other foods not served in Israel are pork and shellfish.

Shopping

- Jerusalem has the widest variety of souvenirs at the best prices, and most stores take U.S. dollars.
- If you buy an "antique", be sure to get a certificate of authenticity from the salesclerk. You will not receive certificates with Moslem or Christian Quarter purchases.
- There is a 17% Value Added Tax (VAT) on all merchandise costing more than \$100. This is refundable when you depart Israel. When you buy an item, you'll receive a VAT receipt (except in the Moslem and Christian quarters) verifying that you paid the tax. At the airport or border terminal, go to the booth marked "VAT Refunds" and show the clerk your receipt and the actual purchased item. They will stamp the receipt and direct you to a bank inside the terminal where you'll receive your refund in US dollars.

Calling home

- **TURN OFF "DATA ROAMING" ON YOUR SMART PHONE** or you'll incur *very* costly international data charges. When "data roaming" is off, your Wi-Fi and cell reception

still function normally. If you want to avoid expensive incoming calls, set your phone to “airplane” mode and keep the Wi-Fi on.

- Calling home from your hotel room phone costs more than \$5 *per minute*. You can download smartphone apps like WhatsApp that call over WiFi for *free*.
- Before you depart, you can buy an international calling/data plan from your mobile phone carrier (i.e., ATT charges \$10 per day for unlimited phone and data).

Getting Around After Hours

- Taxis are abundant in Jerusalem. The fare on the meter reads according to the distance traveled. Make sure the driver starts his meter—it’s the law.
- Street crime is a problem in every city, but visitors rarely become victims when exercising basic urban safety. Leave valuables and your passport in the hotel safe. Carry a photocopy or photo of your passport. Thieves consider women easy targets.

LOCAL MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

The People

- Israelis refer to themselves as the “Sabra”—the prickly pear of the cactus: rough and prickly on the outside, soft and sweet in the middle.
- A firm handshake is obligatory upon meeting and departing. Never remain seated when shaking a standing person's hand.
- When speaking to an Israeli, always look them in the eye.
- Police wear blue uniforms and usually speak English; border police and security forces wear dark green and usually do not speak English.
- Religiosity ranges from Ultra-Orthodox to Atheist (around 80% of Israelis consider themselves Atheist or agnostic).
- Not all Arabs are Muslims, and Christian Arabs are pro-Palestinian. Avoid making political or religious statements about Islam or Israel—it’s better to listen and learn.

Taboos

- Israelis can be very opinionated—be careful tackling subjects they might think you presumptuous to discuss—they will assume you lack knowledge or understanding of the subject, and they’ll tell you so. Subjects of caution: The Holocaust, the treatment of Palestinians, “military applications of nuclear energy”, religion and anti-Semitic jokes.
- Don’t leave ANY backpacks or hand luggage unattended—security will treat it as a potential threat and destroy it. Avoid any object that doesn’t seem to have an owner.

RETURNING HOME

- There are no duties or taxes to pay when leaving Israel or Jordan. At the airport, you'll pass through a rigorous security check and your carryon may be inspected. Our guide will see us through the process. US Customs is a different story...
- US Customs: On the return flight you may be given an I-94 Customs form to fill out. **MobilePass** is an app that speeds you through this process—download and follow the instructions. Because we're a tour, the answer to all questions should be *no*. MobilePass only works when you land in the US.
- Don't pack any liquids in your carry-on luggage or you'll have to surrender them when passing through airport security. The rule is anything that's *not* solid is a liquid.
- Leave any fresh fruit or vegetables in Israel—you can't bring them into the US.
- US citizens don't pay duty taxes when reentering the US from Israel. If you bought diamonds or expensive jewelry, you may be asked to show them to a customs inspector, but there are no fees involved.

GOOD TO KNOW

- **Read your Bible:** Hey—you're in Israel. Rather than lugging around a heavy study Bible, pack a small lightweight version. And don't forget a journal.
- **Baptism:** If you plan to get baptized, bring a change of clothes or swimsuit. We baptize in the Sea of Galilee, which is a wide-spot in the Jordan River. If we use an alternate location, you'll have to rent a baptismal robe (\$10-12) to wear over your swimwear.
- **Your belongings are safe on the bus**—drivers are trustworthy and responsible for the security of all items left on board while you're touring a site.
- **Rest Rooms** are often labeled "WC".
- **Use your Smartphone camera** to take photos of checked baggage, your Hotel (show a taxi driver where you want to go), your room number, travel documents, etc.
- **Good travel apps:** My TSA, Currency+, MobilePass, Google Translate, WhatsApp.
- **Consider bringing:**
 - Waterproof walking/hiking shoes and/or sandals (Keens, Teva, etc.)
 - Facemasks (just in case)
 - Extra toilet paper
 - Reusable insulated water bottle. Take the *empty* bottle through TSA and fill it inside security. Use it as a thermos on cold mornings for hot tea or coffee from the breakfast buffet
 - Convertible trousers with zip-off legs (sold at REI)
 - Cough drops—because you never know...
 - A good quality compact umbrella

- Mesh bags for loose items, toiletries, dirty laundry, etc.
- Headphones with 2-pronged airplane adaptors. Noise-canceling headphones are a big plus, but expensive
- Telescoping walking staff—great for bad knees and balance
- Spare eyeglasses
- Spot remover: “Shout” makes spot remover wipes that come in small packets
- “Downy Wrinkle-Free”, available in a small spray bottle
- Sewing kit—always handy
- Zip-lock bags: always useful for your collections of rocks and other loose items

GREAT ADVICE FROM EXTREME TRAVELERS

“Use a checklist. There are many endeavors in this world that would be much better executed if people kept checklists. I have one I refer to every time I travel. Think very hard about just what you need or what you must have with you, and to consider what you may be able to find at your destination. Both volume and weight are critical for travel. I make sure to pack lightly.” —*Astronaut Charles Walker*

“Successful travelers are those who are comfortable with all sorts of people and those who are willing to pitch in when needed. It’s amazing how much you don’t need. There’s no need to have any more than a carry-on suitcase. When you travel light, a burden is lifted. You don’t concern yourself about what you’re carrying; instead you can focus on your experience.” —*Astronaut Jay Honeycutt*

“You can go three miles down the road, go to the top of a building, get on a boat or on an airplane and get a new perspective on who you are. It’s important to be awake and experience the journey and to be surprised by what you see and feel along the way.” —*Astronaut Nicole Stott*

We recommend that you bring this information on your tour as a handy reference.

[Updated 1-13-23]

Your Free Day in Jerusalem

Here are some excellent suggestions for your free day in Jerusalem. Some you may have already seen but may wish to visit again. Remember—don't explore alone and keep your wallet out of the reach of pickpockets.

THE OLD CITY

Jewish Quarter

- Ophel Archeological Gardens (inside the Dung Gate, the site encompasses the southern approach to the Temple Mount, including the S. Temple Steps)
- The Burnt House (in the Jewish Quarter at 2 Tiferet Yisrael St., the ruin of an ancient house that burned when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD)
- The Western "Wailing" Wall
- The Cardo (ancient market bisecting the Jewish Quarter from north to south)
- Herodian Quarters (Wohl Archeological Museum—ruins of a huge 1st century mansion, home of a wealthy Sadducee or high priest; beneath the Yeshiva institute)

Christian Quarter

- Church of the Holy Sepulcher (in the center of the Christian Quarter)
- Church of Alexander Nevsky (E. of Holy Sepulcher, contains Hadrianic ruins and an authentic "needle's eye"), 5 Shekels
- Arab Bazaar (King David St., bisecting the Arminian and Christian Quarters. Enter through Jaffa Gate and head E. Check out Christian Quarter Rd. and Muristan, both running N. from King David St. further down)

Arminian Quarter

- The Tower of David Museum (AKA 'The Citadel', located immediately S of Jaffa Gate. Moderate price and worth every shekel)

Moslem Quarter (Places you'll visit later in the tour)

- St. Anne's Church / Pools of Bethesda
- Antonia Fortress
- Golgotha / Garden Tomb

Outside the Walls

- Zedekiah's Cave (exit the Old City through the Damascus gate and follow the wall to the right for 100m. to the entrance. Open daily 10am-4pm)
- City of David & Hezekiah's Tunnel (S of the Temple Mount, open daily 8:30 am-4pm)

ELSEWHERE IN JERUSALEM

- Israel Museum & Shrine of the Book (located at Gavat Ram, 2 mi. W of the Old City)
- Yad Vashem (Holocaust Memorial, located about 6 mi. SW of the Old City)
- Ben Yehuda and Jaffa Streets (outdoor mall located a half mile W of the Old City)
- Rockefeller Museum (NE of the Old City, 1 Suleiman St., corner of Jericho Rd.)

HOW TO BARGAIN IN THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

(From JerusalemShoppe.com, "Tips-for-Tourists" Copyright © 1999-2002-2003 All rights reserved)

Shopping in the Old City of Jerusalem is a fascinating experience because there are so many exotic sights to see and so many new and tantalizing fragrances to smell. As you walk the narrow lanes and alleyways you pass platters of mouth-watering Oriental foods and gaze hungrily at the unusual goods that line the shelves. Hand-carved wooden camels, silver jewelry, beautiful Oriental blouses and skirts, one striking crucifix after another, Armenian tiles and plates, even a decorative Star of David!

But how much should you give the shopkeeper? Should you pay what he asks, or should you try your hand at bargaining the merchant down? This is the Middle East, so of course you will want to haggle a bit. In order to bargain you need to know something about the culture here, the customs, and the way that people banter. Then—and only then—will you come away with really reduced prices. Ready to study the art of bargaining? Here we go!

First of all, remember that it is legitimate to bargain. You are not being discourteous if you do not agree to the price suggested by the merchant. Just politely make an offer.

Here is an example of a negotiation in which everyone comes out on top. Let's say you want to buy one of the beautiful chess sets you see in the stores. You ask the price. The shopkeeper says: "One hundred dollars." You can assume that he doubled the price because you look like a tourist, so you answer: "I can spend only fifty dollars on it, is that ok with you?" The merchant will then answer: "For you—seventy dollars!" Now it is your turn to give a little. Raise the price you have offered and tell him, for example, "How about fifty-five?" He then reduces his offer and suggests you pay sixty-five. Now it is your turn again. If you want to bring this to a successful conclusion, make a new offer. You might say sixty, or maybe fifty-six. (It is up to you to decide whether to raise your offer by one dollar or by five).

At the end of this long (and pleasurable) exchange, you meet somewhere in the middle, between his high offer of one hundred dollars and your low offer of fifty dollars. The final result depends on how patient and friendly you are. A long negotiation can take hours, with a lot of small talk in between suggestions. Meanwhile, the merchant might offer you a cup of coffee or tea, tell you about his family and ask about yours, and if you are in no hurry, this can be a real experience—giving you a taste of Oriental culture.

You may find bargaining so much fun that you try haggling outside of the Old City. However, in most parts of Jerusalem prices are fixed in advance and even displayed on each piece of merchandise. This is great for consumers who want to compare prices, but isn't much fun for tourists who like interactive shopping.

Beware of Tricks

I don't really think that there are more con artists in the Old City than there are in the New. On the contrary, perhaps modern marketing and advertising are just as "tricky"—taking advantage of our emotions, trying to convince us to buy products that we don't really want. But there are a few ploys common to the Old City that you should look out for as you wander through the streets:

1. **Someone asks for help.** You may be stopped and asked to write something down for him in English (or German, or Japanese) because he doesn't know the language. You are asked to accompany this person to his shop, which is usually off the main tourist track - not on the well-traveled streets of the Old City bazaar. There he hands you a pen and paper and asks you to write something out for him. While in the shop you are exposed to the merchandise on his shelves, and as a result of his "con" you spend more time there than in some other shop that you might have preferred. The merchant might try to make friends with you, by asking you personal questions and telling you something about himself. Before you become aware of this emotional manipulation, he'll be offering you his wares "for a special price" that he "only gives to personal friends". Only later will you discover that what you bought (or didn't buy) was definitely NOT a bargain, and that your help wasn't needed. Most people, including myself, may realize what has happened only after some time has passed, and then we feel cheated and misused.
2. **The "beautiful beggar".** On the steps leading from Mamilla Street to Jaffa Gate, you will probably pass a miserable woman sitting in the hot sun with an insect-ridden baby in her lap. Of course, you feel terribly sorry for these poor women and babies and offer them money. This may be especially true because the beggar-woman, in her Oriental clothes, looks so positively Biblical! We have all been taken in by these wretched-looking women and infants. I, too, have given them money, only to learn much later, on a television expose, that the women may have more money than the merchants in the bazaar! The babies are often not their own, instead they are hired out from other women. Of course, it isn't such a bad thing to give money to a beggar, but just think how these babies are being abused! This is a very real dilemma. On one hand, you may be giving money to someone who makes more than you do. And, at the same time, you are aiding and abetting child abuse. But perhaps the baby and the "beautiful beggar" are the only breadwinners in their families. They may be supporting two whole families!
3. **The folks with the red ribbons.** This particular trick usually takes place in the Jewish quarter of the Old City, or just outside of Dung Gate. A man with a bunch of red ribbons approaches you, and before you understand what is going on he ties a red ribbon on your wrist, murmurs some prayer, and asks you for a donation. If you hesitate and question him, he'll claim that the donation is for needy families. If you ask WHICH families, he may become really aggressive. This, of course, makes you doubt his motives. You might do best just to avoid anyone holding red ribbons (sometimes they look more like shoelaces, but they are definitely RED!)
4. **The boys who sell you postcards.** This trick is not unique to Jerusalem's Old City. Many people say that the kids selling postcards in the streets are pickpockets. I, myself, have not seen them picking anyone's pocket, but a little extra caution can't hurt!