

ISRAEL STUDY TRIP INFORMATION

Basic information

- A passport is required for all with an expiry date that is at least 6 months beyond the end of the trip.
- Citizens of the USA and Canada need not apply for visas. Please verify other countries as needed.
- All major credit cards are accepted in Israel. We recommend that you advise your credit card company of your travel plans in order to avoid potential problems.
- Israeli currency is in Shekels and is abbreviated ILS or NIS. The best place to exchange money will be at the Tel Aviv airport. We will take time upon arrival to do this before leaving the airport. The best option is to bring cash ready to exchange. The exchange rate is currently around 3.8 NIS for \$1 USD.
- Power in Israel is rated at 220 volts instead of 110 volts as in North America. Most computers, cameras, Apple products, and razors will run on 220 with no difficulty but will require a physical adapter (not a converter). Check the rating on the device itself or the power pack to verify that it will handle up to 220 volts. Physical adapters can easily be purchased on Amazon. Search for "[VCT VP-5 Israel Adapter Plug](#)". Most hairdryers will NOT run on 220 volts and so will require a converter to actually convert the voltage. Make sure to get one that is rated at a higher wattage than what you intend to use. See an example [here](#).
- Most cell phones will work in Israel but we recommend checking with your provider as adjustments to your plan may be required. Payphones are scarce and generally unreliable.
- WiFi wireless internet will be available at all hotels and hostels where we will be staying.
- Average temperatures in Israel will be 60-75 degrees Fahrenheit (17-25 Celsius) during the day. The Dead Sea will be warmer and Jerusalem and Galilee about average. Be sure to be prepared for rain! Also, it can sometimes get a bit windy in the Judean hills where Jerusalem is located.
- Factoring in the change to Daylight Savings Time, Israel will be 6 hours ahead of the USA at first and then 7 hours ahead starting March 25, 2017.
- Hebrew is the spoken language in Israel but most vendors can handle English fine.
- Public restrooms sometimes cost 2 shekels to use. Something to keep in mind! ☺

Seeing the sites

- We begin each day with a 30 minute teaching session which includes helpful PowerPoint and video presentations that provide context for what we will see.
- We travel on comfortable coach buses. We provide a lot of commentary while travelling from one place to another so nothing is missed enroute and so everyone is cued up and ready for what they see when we arrive at a site. Few people like to stand and listen for great lengths of time once we're on a tel (get to know this word)!
- The trip involves quite a bit of walking, some of which is over rocky terrain. There is some climbing of fairly steep but short inclines. It also includes a few tunnels and caves but these are optional (in fact, every site is optional if someone prefers to pass on something). The most celebrated underground experience is the walk through the water tunnel carved by King Hezekiah. It's an unforgettable, 30-minute trek in running water through an unlit, rock-carved passage that's about 3 feet wide and from 4 to 25 feet high. Flashlights are essential. We will also take a boat excursion on the Sea of Galilee.
- We will be visiting many ancient sites. Please be respectful and don't climb on the historic buildings. This can result in the entire group being asked to leave the site!
- Our best opportunity for souvenir shopping will be in Jerusalem which is where you'll find the best prices as well. Be careful what you purchase. Knives may not be allowed even in carry-on luggage when leaving the country. Here is a list of typical souvenirs and approximate prices:
 - \$1-5: postcards, kippahs, old coins, rough gemstones.
 - \$5-10: small wood carvings, simple jewelry, T-shirts, prayer shawls, coffee cups, small books.
 - \$10-25: Dead Sea products, larger carvings, art prints, ball caps, turbans, coffee table books, small menorahs, flags.
 - \$25-50: basic artwork, nice jewelry, rams horns, medium-sized menorahs.
 - \$50-500: nice artwork, olive wood carvings of Mark & Laurie Strout! ☺

Housing and meals

- Our greatest strategy to keep costs down is to stay conservative in the area of housing. We will not be using 5-star hotels since the purpose of the trip is to visit the land of the Bible, not to lounge around by pools and saunas! We will be staying the longest within the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. We will also use one hostel along the way. Though basic, these are very neat and clean. We've been using hostels for years with young and old alike, including married couples and families, and have always been satisfied. Visit the websites listed on the itinerary to get an idea of what our housing locations look like.
- When it comes to food, our big meals will be breakfast and supper which are served buffet style. The menu is varied, with something for every taste. Lunches are done "on the fly" so as to maximize our time to visit sites and to keep costs down. These generally are a combination of pita bread with spreads, granola bars, crackers, cookies, and fruit purchased as we travel. Most find that they don't need a big lunch if they eat well at breakfast.

Safety and security

Israel is a wonderful, safe place to visit. We have travelled there many times leading groups of all sizes and ages, including children, and have never encountered a threatening situation with our team. We avoid areas of concern and comply with local travel advisories. Though you will see many military personnel as a matter of course almost every day, you will be pleasantly surprised to discover that your experience does not match the impression one can get when watching the news! Come enjoy one of the most intriguing countries in the world! Though smaller than the state of New Jersey, it boasts such an amazingly varied topography that, in the space of a single day, one can visit beaches, prairies, mountains, deserts, and canyons. But the best part of all is the spiritual impact of a visit to the Land where Jesus lived, died, and rose again for us. You will never read your Bible quite the same again!

Baggage limits

- One 50 pound suitcase. Maximum sum of the three dimensions (h+w+l): 62 inches.
- One 17 pound carry-on. Maximum dimensions: 9x16x21 inches.

What to bring

- Passport!**
- Student ID card!**
- International students:** I-20 and Student Visa (if applicable).
- Camera.
- Comfortable walking shoes suitable for moderate climbing.
- Warm, waterproof jacket/coat. This is better than an umbrella because of potential high winds.
- Pants are essential at some religiously sensitive sites that don't allow visitors to wear shorts. At some other sites, shorts are allowed but they must totally cover your knees. They take this very seriously! Since the weather is cooler in March, pants are usually best most days. Best option: zip-off convertible pants from Walmart [here!](#)
- Ladies: something non see-through to cover your shoulders and upper arms (sweater, jacket, shawl) at some religious sites where they do not allow women to enter if their arms are bare.
- A hat to shield from the sun. It can be very strong in the mountains and at the Dead Sea.
- Sunscreen. Aloe Vera is also a good idea if you have sensitive skin that may get sunburned.
- Medication as desired for headaches, nausea, and constipation!
- Moist hand wipes for cleaning up after meals on the bus! Example: "Wet Ones" from WalMart.
- Flashlight for Hezekiah's tunnel. The best ones are those you wear on your forehead.
- Water shoes or sandals for Hezekiah's tunnel and the Dead Sea. This is essential!
- Towel, modest bathing suit for the Dead Sea. Also a plastic bag for your wet items following the swim. You do not want the water getting on your other belongings.
- Washcloth (if desired) since hotels generally only provide towels.
- Water bottle, preferably with a built-in filter so you can get water just about anywhere.
- Power adapter or converter for 220 volts (see comments on the previous page).
- Snack items for your carry-on luggage. Meals on the plane are unpredictable!