

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 receive a free 90-day tourist visa upon arrival. Please verify other countries as needed.
- 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 3.3 NIS for \$1 USD.
- All souvenir shops accept New Israeli Shekels or US dollars. Some also accept major credit cards except Discover. We recommend that you advise your credit card company of your travel plans in order to avoid potential problems. ATMs are available at the airport, at the Ein Gev Holiday Resort, and in Old City Jerusalem.
- 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. See a good example [here](#). 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 good examples [here](#) (single plug) and [here](#) (multiplug including USB).
- 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 where we will be staying and possibly on the bus as well. Please note that internet access can be sporadic in Israel.
- 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.
- 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 50-minute teaching session which includes helpful PowerPoint and video presentations that provide biblical, historical, and archaeological context for what we will see. We also supply a daily Bible reading plan that corresponds with the places we will visit each day.
- 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 site!
- 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 sit it out). 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.
- 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. That said, the places we stay are very nice. Visit the websites listed on the itinerary to get an idea of what they look like.
- When it comes to food, our big meals will be breakfast and supper which are served unlimited buffet style. The menu is varied, with something for every taste. Lunches are done "on the go" 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.

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 left by media reports.

Luggage limits

- One 50-pound checked suitcase. Maximum sum of the three dimensions (h+w+l): 62 inches.
- One 17-pound carry-on to put in luggage racks. Maximum dimensions: 9 x 16 x 21 inches.
- One personal item that can fit under the seat: purse, small backpack, computer/tablet, etc.

What to bring

- Passport!**
- Student ID card!**
- International students:** I-20 and Student Visa (if applicable).
- Small to medium backpack or sling bag, with a pocket for holding a water bottle. Large backpacks are not permitted in certain locations like the Temple Mount. See examples [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- Comfortable walking or hiking shoes suitable for moderate, uphill climbing.
- Warm, waterproof jacket/coat. This is better than an umbrella because of potential high winds.
- No military/hunting camouflage type clothing.
- 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. See examples [here](#)!
- Ladies: something non see-through to cover your shoulders and arms/elbows (sweater, jacket, shawl) at some religiously sensitive sites.
- 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!
- Flashlight or headlamp for Hezekiah's tunnel.
- Essential:** water shoes or flip-flops with back strap for Hezekiah's tunnel and the Dead Sea.
- Towel and modest bathing suit for the Dead Sea. Also a plastic bag for your wet items following the swim. You do not want the salty water getting on your other belongings.
- Washcloth (if desired) since hotels generally only provide towels.
- Small amount of laundry detergent for hand washing clothes if needed. Note: laundry service is available for a fee at Ein-Gev Holiday Resort and at the Gloria Hotel.
- Water bottle with at least a basic taste/particulates filter like [this](#). Even better is one that also filters out bacteria like [this](#) which makes it possible to get safe drinking 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!
- Hand wipes for lunches "on the go" like [this](#).