Word of Life Bible Institute

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.
- **New:** all travelers are required to obtain an ETA-IL (Electronic Travel Authorization) prior to arrival in Israel. This can be obtained here and the current cost is 25 NIS (about $7) per person. This cost is not included in the price of the trip.
- Citizens of the USA and Canada receive a free 90-day **tourist visa** upon arrival. Please verify other countries as needed.
- There are currently no medical restrictions or vaccination requirements to travel to Israel.
- 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. It's best 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. **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, tablets, cell phones, 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).
- **Cell phones** will work in Israel, but we recommend checking with your provider as adjustments to your plan may be required.
- **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 everyone is 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 2,700 years ago. It's an unforgettable, 25-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.
- 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.
  - $5-12: small olive wood carvings, simple jewelry, T-shirts, prayer shawls, coffee cups.
  - $12-25: Dead Sea products, larger carvings, ball caps, turbans, coffee table books, small menorahs, flags.
  - $25-50: art prints, nice jewelry, rams' horns, medium-sized menorahs.
  - $50-500: higher end prints and original artwork, tableware sets, large olive wood carvings.

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 and check them out.
- 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, including some limited dietary restrictions. However, highly specialized or severely restrictive diets cannot be accommodated on this type of trip. Lunches are done "on the go" in order to maximize our time to visit sites. We either have box lunches or enjoy a variety of local fruit and freshly baked pita bread. We highly recommend that participants bring along additional items such as protein/granola bars, trail mix, etc. to complement this. Many also choose to bring portable packages of peanut butter, Nutella, or hummus to spread on their pita.

Safety and security

Israel is a 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!**
- ☐ **ETA-IL (Electronic Travel Authorization)** – see previous page for details.
- ☐ **Student ID card!**
- ☐ **International students:** I-20 and Student Visa (if applicable).
- ☐ Small to medium sized backpack or sling bag, with a pocket for holding a water bottle. Large back-packs aren't permitted in some locations like the Temple Mount. See examples here and here and here.
- ☐ Comfortable walking or hiking shoes suitable for moderate, uphill climbing.
- ☐ Waterproof jacket/coat/poncho with hood as some rain and wind is likely.
- ☐ No military/hunting camouflage type clothing.
- ☐ Pants without holes in them 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, motion sickness, constipation, etc.
- ☐ 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 or this.
- ☐ 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!
- ☐ Snack items for "on the go" lunches in Israel (see *"Housing and Meals"* comments above).
- ☐ Hand wipes for "on the go" lunches like this.