

## PRE-ISRAEL ORIENTATION INFORMATION

Proper planning before departure will contribute to the educational benefit and personal enjoyment that one will gain from the trip. Please do not wait until the last week to prepare! The following guidelines should help in your preparation.

### Getting to Israel

#### Passports

You must have a passport to travel to Israel. Passport applications are available at local government offices and most area post offices. Please refer to the phone directory for the nearest passport authority in your area. It often takes months for issuance of a passport, so plan ahead and apply early. Passports are valid for ten years from date of issue (five years for applicants under eighteen).

If you have a passport already, make sure that it is **valid for six months after your stay in Israel ends**.

Be sure that you have your passport and airline ticket on your person before you leave home for the airport. It is wise to make two photocopies of your passport in case – perish the reprehensible thought – you misplace your passport during the trip. Put one copy in your luggage and the other in your backpack

If you are a foreign resident residing legally in the United States, you will be required to travel with your Alien Registration Card in addition to a valid passport from your native country for departure and re-entry into the United States.

#### Visas and Immunizations

A pre-arranged visa is not required of United States citizens traveling to Israel. You will receive your visa upon arrival at Ben-Gurion International Airport. Keep the small “Arrival Form” that you will be given to fill out just before arriving at Ben Gurion airport. Israel passport control will ask for it when you leave the country. Travelers with Arab country stamps in their passport can expect to receive many questions at passport control security checks, both entering and leaving the country. Travelers with entry/exit stamps from Arab countries that do not have peace agreements with Israel are advised to secure a new passport. There are no immunization requirements for entry into the State of Israel. However, travelers are advised to check status of immunizations and update any needed boosters before departure.

#### International Travel

The flight to Israel from America is long (flight time of 12-16 hours, not counting time in airports, etc.), and can be uncomfortable. To make the flight as comfortable as possible, the following may be helpful:

- Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes.
- Carry your toiletries in your carry-on backpack. Being able to shave, brush teeth, etc. can be a refreshment.
- Take advantage of stops by getting out and walking around but do not lose track of the local time. You don't want to miss your connecting flight.
- When you arrive in Israel you will experience jet lag, since Israel is 7-11 hours ahead of USA time. There is a general adrenaline rush that hits most first-timers for the first few days, so you may not realize how tired you actually are. Our concern is that you might get sick, as your body will be run down from international travel, changes in diet, and jet lag. You will probably be wide-awake at 4:00am for the first few days. Try to go to bed at a reasonable hour according to Israel time. Do not stay out all night and expect to be alert and ready to go in the morning.
- Bring some snacks for between meals. Contact the airline forty-eight hours in advance of departure if you have special dietary needs.
- Bring some disposable reading material for the flight.
- Some veterans of international flight recommend sleeping aids (such as Nytol), but we would advise against this unless you know how you respond to such medication. Neck pillows, earplugs, and eye covers are common among veteran travelers.
- If at all possible, don't plan on going back to work the day after you arrive home. You will feel jet lag once again upon return to the USA.
- If you wear contact lenses, avoid wearing them while airborne. Some people have noticed their lenses dry out in flight.

#### Arranging Air Travel

In many cases, your group leader will provide details on travel arrangements. For those who are part of a specific group or school flying together, but who are joining the program as individuals, it is recommended that you make flight arrangements for the same flight the group is on. On the other hand, if flight arrangements are not included for the trip you are joining, or if you are simply making your own flight arrangements and will arrive on a different flight, you will be responsible for making their own way from Ben Gurion airport to the hotel where the group is meeting for the first day/night of the program. That is very do-able (see below), but be careful to make your arrival day the same as the group, or to make arrangements for the hotel for the extra night(s) you will be there.

### Individual Transportation from Ben Gurion Airport to Jerusalem Hotel

To get from Ben Gurion airport to the hotel where you will meet the group with whom you are traveling, you will have to take a taxi. If a communal taxi service is available to the city to which you are going (a taxi known in Hebrew as a “sheroot”), it will be much cheaper. (Other passengers will ride in the same taxi/van with you.) The taxi/sheroot stand is well labeled just outside the airport arrival hall. You will be dropped off at the door of the location you request (make sure you know the name of the hotel where the group is at). Establish the cost of the trip before leaving the airport.

### Packing (also see below “Suggested Check List”)

**Travel light! You’re coming for only a few weeks!**

#### Clothes

##### **Summer - April to November**

The weather in late spring, summer, and early fall is warm-hot, but can also be chilly in the evenings. Daytime temperatures in the hill country can reach the nineties in mid-summer and can be much hotter in other parts of the country.

April and November are transition months. Daytime temperatures of 55-70 F are common, but it can also rain.

##### **Winter - December to March:**

Late fall, winter, and early spring can be **cold and rainy**. Many people don’t realize how **cold, windy and wet** it can be in Israel in the winter. Usually it will snow in Jerusalem at least once a year in the winter. Warm clothing is essential. Bring clothing that you can put on or take off in layers. Clothing should include long sleeve shirts, sweatshirt(s), heavier jacket (rain-proof if possible), thermal underwear, winter hat, and good warm shoes. Expect rain. A disposable rain poncho and/or an umbrella can be handy. Most buildings are not heated to the levels to which Americans are accustomed.

#### Clothes to Bring

Dress informally. There isn’t any time in Israel that you will need formal attire. The following items are recommended:

- Two pair of comfortable/durable slacks. Best if they are comfortable to walk in, easy to wash by hand, and dry quickly.
- Three or four sport shirts. These might include T-shirts, polo shirts, etc. Do not bring tank tops or muscle shirts.
- A sweater/sweatshirt and/or light jacket for the evenings in Jerusalem (even in summer).
- Undergarments, according to your personal needs. Thick comfortable socks for walking.
- A good pair of walking shoes. Rocksports or cross-trainer type athletic shoes are ideal. Sportiva-style river sandals are also popular if you are accustomed to wearing them. Thongs are not acceptable footwear. You should be comfortable in your footwear and shoes must be broken in before leaving for Israel. If you like boots, ultra-light hiking boots are acceptable. Be sure they are broken-in and avoid heavy hiking boots. Forget cowboy boots.
- An old pair of sneakers or sandals that could be left behind. These will be needed when we wade through Hezekiah's Tunnel or swim in the Dead Sea.
- Bring a modest (one-piece for gals and trunks for guys) swimsuit!

#### Modesty

The Middle Eastern cultures generally dress much more modestly than Western cultures. Muslims and Orthodox Jews have very stringent standards of modesty, which they will enforce or comment upon. A woman dressed immodestly (by their standards) is likely to be publicly rebuked by total strangers. Extremely tight or short shorts should not be worn at all. Modest shorts (such as Bermuda-type walking shorts) are appropriate on field trips and some parts of our Jerusalem walking tours. Tank tops, halter-tops or anything that exposes the shoulder should not be worn.

**Note:** Modest dress (which means shoulders, midriff and legs covered) will be required at certain sites (especially Catholic churches and sites). On some day trips you will be asked to carry a “modesty kit”, that is, skirt-wrap, sweat pants or warm-ups that can be carried in your backpack and put on as the need arises. Fashion isn’t the issue, modesty and ease of getting in and out of the outfit are the issues.

### Essential Items (also see below “Suggested Checklist”)

- Backpack: should be large enough to stash objects used on field trips and double as airline carry-on. Put luggage tags on all your bags for identification.
- Hat: in summer, a wide brim to shade from the brutal Israel sun. Winter requires a hat for warmth (“stocking cap” type).
- Sunglasses: the sun in Israel is very bright and intense. If you wear prescription glasses, a backup pair is highly recommended. Eye and contact lens care products are expensive in Israel.
- Sunblock (especially for summer): a high (above 18) SPF rating, waterproof is recommended.
- Canteen or water bottle: essential on all field trips. You will drink more water than normal due to the strenuous physical exercise and sometimes intense heat/sun. You can reuse purchased water bottles in Israel for this purpose; however, leak-proof ones are beneficial if you plan to carry them in your backpack.

- Flashlight: there are lots of dark places to crawl around in Israel, and for evening walks.
- Watch. Many times you will be given an exact time to meet back at the bus. You will want to be there.
- Battery-powered or watch alarm clock: electric clocks will not run on Israeli current.
- Beach towel and washcloth: the hotels provide each customer with one towel (sufficient for some but not for others). Summer travelers should bring a towel for travel (beach towel is recommended) as well as your own washcloth.
- Personal Care Items: you should bring an ample supply of personal hygiene and cosmetic items while in Israel. Toothpaste, shaving supplies, deodorant, contact lens solutions, Kleenex, feminine hygiene products, etc. are available, but more expensive. Essential toiletries should be packed in your carry-on backpack for the flight to Israel in the event your luggage temporarily decides to go elsewhere.
- Personal First Aid Kit: this may include Band-Aids, aspirin/Tylenol, antacid, cold/cough medicines, tweezers, moleskin, anti-bacterial ointment, anti-diarrhea medication, nail clippers, bug bite remedies.
- Medication: if you take any medication for a pre-existing condition, you must bring a supply for the total time away.
- Notebook, paper, pens, yellow high-lighter.

### Optional

- Power Transformer: Israel's electricity is 220 volts, which is twice that of the USA's 110 volts. Thus a step-down transformer is necessary for American electric appliances (including hair dryers, curling irons) so that the high voltage would not ruin the appliances. Try not to bring electrical items that can't operate on 220 volts!
- A good travel Bible – one which you can carry in your backpack, easily accessible and readable at all times on the trip.
- Books/texts – to be reading on the trip over and even at day's end, as well as appropriate resources.
- Recorder – mp3 or cassette: For preserving lectures, Hebrew songs, and the sounds of Israel. You will enjoy having some of your favorite music along; speakers for your mp3 device might be helpful.
- Compass & small binoculars: For those who want to spy out the land!
- Excavator Accessories: For those who will be participating in an excavation, gloves are essential, kneepads are helpful.

### What Not to Bring

- **Anything you don't absolutely need.**
- Clothes that are difficult to care for, easily ruined, require dry cleaning, are immodest or very formal.
- Quarters for laundry. Don't bring any American coins. No one will accept them.
- Expensive jewelry. You won't need it in Israel. Engagement and wedding bands are OK.
- Clothespins, hangers, sheets or blankets.
- Too much stuff. It's nice to have room to bring your souvenirs back. It is also wise to take clothes you don't mind leaving behind if everything won't fit back in your luggage.

## Other Concerns

### Physical Requirements

This study-trip will be more physically demanding than most trips to Israel. It will involve a great deal of walking/hiking, up hill, down hill, on uneven steps and sometimes over rocks. Depending on the time of year of the program, weather conditions can be very hot and dry. These physical difficulties are further complicated by the fact that North Americans arriving to Israel experience a change in time zones (lack of sleep, jet lag) and dietary conditions. There will usually be provision made for travelers to opt out of a given walk, which means waiting with the bus for the group to return. Therefore, if you are at all apprehensive about strenuous physical exertion, this may not be the best trip for you. There are many good tours to Israel available that are less physically demanding than this one will be. On the other hand, we will do what we can to make the trip work for you, if you are willing to accept this caveat concerning the rigor of the trip.

### Making Calls from Israel

Telephone and fax numbers of the hotels where you will be staying will be provided before your departure from the USA. Family and friends calling Israel should be aware of the 7-11 hour time differential. To call the USA from Israel one can: 1) use a USA long distance calling card, which must be obtained before leaving the USA (ATT, MCI, Sprint, etc.); 2) dial direct from hotels; 3) use Israeli public phones which operate with phone cards, easily obtained throughout the country. Depending on the time of day, the cheapest option is probably the latter.

Of course, the advent of cell technology has dramatically changed the business of calling to/from Israel to/from home. Most domestic services have international-calling plans available, and there are free-standing plans which can be purchased to make calling relatively inexpensive during your stay in Israel. It would be wise to research these, determine which will be best in your case, and notify your friends/family how to contact you during your trip.

### Mail/Stamps

Postcards and aerogrammes are available throughout the country. You will not be able to use USA stamps.

### Computers and Email

Because you will be moving from place to place during your stay in Israel, you won't always have access to electronic mail. On the other hand, internet cafes are common in Israel, and more and more hotels offer internet access. Travelers are advised to consider the pros and cons of bringing a laptop computer. They will mean a slight delay at customs and security checks, and there is the potential for damage with all the moving/traveling that will be done.

### Spending Money

How much spending money to bring? This will largely depend on personal taste. Your trip costs are completely covered except for lunches and any gifts or souvenirs; you should budget \$10 - \$15 for lunch. Snacks, cokes and ice cream generally cost \$1 - \$3. The largest portion of the traveler's additional money is usually spent on souvenirs/gifts. All together, travelers commonly bring between \$300 and \$600 in spending money. Use this as an indicator.

### Currency Exchange

You will be able to exchange American currency to Israeli shekels when you are in Israel. Care should be taken to be sure that you are getting the best possible exchange rate. We will recommend places to make the exchange when necessary, but normally the hotel desk is as good as any.

As to the money you will need in Israel, it is recommended that you carry with you a reasonable amount of cash (in small denominations), as well as a credit/debit card. (Traveler's checks may also be used, though they are expensive and it is not always easy to find someone who will cash them. There is a commission charge for changing travelers checks, as high as \$1.00 per check.) ATM's dispense Israeli shekels at the market rate with no exchange fee, so they are quite handy. On the other hand, there will be times when we have no access to an ATM for a day or two.

Credit cards (Visa or MasterCard only) can be used to get spending money while in Israel but it is often inconvenient and incurs a service charge. Bank hours are uncertain, and not all banks provide the service. A Personal Identification Number (PIN) is required to withdraw cash with a credit card.

Empty your wallet of unnecessary materials before you travel. We recommend that you bring a Driver's License for second identification, a credit card for emergencies, International Student ID card, and your health insurance documentation. Bring only what you might need while abroad. Leave the rest at home.

### Laundry

There are laundry facilities available with varying degree of access depending on where the group is staying. The laundry facilities in Israel are much more expensive than in America. To wash and dry an average sized load costs around \$6.00. It is recommended that travelers hand-wash their clothes. (Some of the quick-dry materials work remarkably well; they can be washed and hung out in the hotel room in the evening, and they will be dry in the morning.) In that connection, it is wise to bring a small supply of laundry detergent.

### Luggage

Most airlines allow two pieces of checked luggage, up to 50 pounds each; check with your carrier as to specific restrictions for your trip. Airlines can/will charge for overweight bags. **Note:** If you do not need all the bags allowed you by the airline on the trip to Israel, you might be wise to pack a collapsible duffel-bag for gifts and souvenirs you need to get back home.

### Health

In general, water is safe to drink in Israel. However, many travelers visiting for a few weeks prefer to be on the safe side and purchase bottled water. Bottled water is readily available in Israel, but can be expensive: \$1-1.50 for 1.5 liters.

If you are susceptible to traveler's diarrhea, and most travelers will have a bout of it during their stay, bring an over-the-counter anti-diarrhea medication with you. If you have a real problem with diarrhea, you might see a doctor for advice on anti-diarrhea procedures/drugs.

### Shopping

Upon arrival, your teacher/guide will give you tips for shopping in Israel.

## Photography

Taking pictures is one of the best ways of remembering your stay in Israel. We encourage you to bring a good camera and lots of film. Suggestions:

- If you will be using film (not likely any more), buy your film in the United States and bring it with you. Film is expensive and developing in Israel costs about double what you will pay at home. Buying film from hawkers is not recommended. It is often expired and been sitting in the sun for who knows how long. 100-400 ASA is sufficient for general use. Most of the pictures you take will be outdoors in good light.
- IMPORTANT: Bring a notebook in which you can take notes on the pictures you take, and be careful to work hard at those notes. (It might be good to team up with another traveler – one taking notes and one taking pictures.) Be sure that you have a workable way to match the notes to the pictures. One of the most valuable learning strategies available to you is taking careful notes on a lot of pictures, and then going back and reviewing, cataloging and preparing those notes for presenting to friends and family (whether they like it or not!).
- Due to the significant amount of haze that can exist at certain times of the year, a haze filter is recommended. Polarizing filters are also very valuable.
- If you have the option of bringing good lenses, the most helpful will be a standard zoom (28-80mm) and a telephoto. Flashes are necessary for indoors, caves, etc.
- A waterproof camera (even a disposable one) is good for taking pictures at the Red Sea or on hikes where everyone and everything gets wet. Some travelers recommend bringing a disposable panoramic camera.
- We lovingly discourage the use of video cameras. They tend to be a hassle and disturbance at field sites - you end up missing what your instructor was saying as you gaze through the viewfinder. Experience suggests that most self-shot videos of the Holy Land are ultimately not viewed.
- Military officials do not allow photographing of military installations. If a sign or your instructor says “no photography” please comply. Offenders may have their film and that of the entire group confiscated.
- PLEASE NOTE: While on bus field studies, participants should follow the instructor and gather at the location where instruction is to be given. After the instruction/discussion, students will be free to move about and take photos. Please wait to take your photos until after the instruction is given. You will know better what you are photographing, and it will save much time for the group.

## Security and Safety

Safety is a major concern for most tourists traveling to the Middle East. Your tour leaders have had years of experience organizing and teaching study programs in Israel. Safety is also our concern. You will probably find that Israel is safer than many places in the USA. Granted there are a few areas in Israel which are hot spots, just like in any major USA city. If you practice common sense and listen to instructors and course leaders you will not have any problems. If we advise you to stay out of a certain village or area, please take us seriously and do not go exploring.

Do not make jokes about bombs or guns. Do not leave a backpack or suitcase unattended. Security officials will cordon off and dispatch a bomb squad to an unaccompanied backpack or suitcase.

Merchants may ask what hotel you are staying at. Please keep our hotel location confidential for the privacy of all involved.

The Muslim and Orthodox Jewish communities have very strong standards of social and public conduct. Married and dating couples should avoid public displays of affection.

Dating locals is **strongly** discouraged. Many locals regard it as a significant conquest to develop a relationship with a tourist, particularly with a woman in the group. Due to the potential of both physical and verbal harassment of a sexual nature toward unaccompanied women, women should not travel alone during free time. It is best that women travel in groups of 2-3 **and** with a male companion from the group.

## Suggested Check List

See above for recommendations concerning the following items being either *required* or *optional*.

### Passport, Documentation, Finances

- Passport (including Alien Registration Card and student visa for international students)
- Airline ticket
- Xerox copies of passport
- Passport carrier (neck-type) and/or belt money pouch
- Travelers checks
- Hard currency (small to medium denominations)
- Driver's license
- Health insurance information
- Visa/MasterCard/American Express card
- International Student ID Card (where applicable)
- School ID card

### Clothing

- Two or three pairs of comfortable slacks, skirts, pants or sweats (easy wash/loose fitting/modest)
- Two or three shirts or blouses (Polo, T-shirts, etc.)
- Sweater or light jacket
- Undergarments
- Two or three pair of walking/swim shorts
- Four or five pair of comfortable walking socks
- One or two long-sleeve shirts (rugby, chamois, etc.)
- Towel
- Wash cloth
- Emergency sewing kit (thread, buttons, needles, etc.)
- Shoes (walking -Rockports, athletic cross-trainers, sportiva-type sandals, or ultra-light hiking boots)
- Old discardable shoes or sandals (NOT thong's) (for Hezekiah's Tunnel)

IN WINTER (see above):

- Additional warm clothes, heavier jacket
- Warm hat
- Rain poncho/umbrella

### Toiletries

- Toothbrush, paste, and dental floss
- Shaving supplies
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Chapstick (SPF 18)
- Sun block (SPF 18 and waterproof)
- Personal first aid kit
- Laundry detergent (small bottle or bag)
- Cold remedies
- Band-Aids
- Tylenol or Aspirin
- Anti-diarrhea medication (Imodium, etc.)
- Toilettes, alcohol wipes, or wet-wipes
- Nail clippers
- Tweezers
- Feminine hygiene products
- Anti-bacterial medication (Neosporin, Bactine, etc.)
- Prescription medications (enough for entire trip and a copy of your prescription)
- Contact lens solutions

### Luggage

- Medium/Large luggage with identification (2 pieces maximum)
- Carry-on day pack/backpack with identification. A backpack can be used for carry materials on field studies.

### Educational Materials

- Bible atlas
- Bible (not a paraphrase, both testaments, large enough to read & small enough to carry)
- Notebook/pad with extra paper
- Israel travel book
- Maps (Jerusalem & touring map)
- Pens, coloring markers, high lighter, and pencils

### Photography

- Film
- Airport lead film shield
- Camera
- Camera equipment (lenses, filters, etc.)
- Extra camera batteries
- Camera flash attachments (extra bulbs or batteries)
- One or two pocket-size notebooks for photography journal
- Disposable panorama camera
- Disposable waterproof camera

### Miscellaneous

- Sunglasses
- Prescription glasses, spare pair.
- Eye wear retainers (Chums, Croakies, etc.)
- Broad brim hat (wind tie-down)
- Small flashlight (plus extra batteries)
- Watch
- Water bottle or canteen
- Tape Recorder (including extra tapes and batteries)
- Travel alarm (battery-powered)
- Travel electrical transformer and power converter (220 volt, 50-Cycle, round prong)
- Binoculars
- Compass
- Addresses for postcards
- Diary or journal
- Large plastic garbage bag for dirty laundry
- Ear plugs for international flight and for sleeping with a noisy roommate
- Eye cover for international flight
- Small pocket calculator for money exchange
- Neck pillow for international flight
- Nintendo/Sega game boy for international flight
- Cards, Chess, Backgammon, Checkers, Games (travel size)
- Archaeology supplies:
  - Work gloves
  - Knee pads/kneeling pad
  - Extra band-aids