



## ISRAEL TRAVEL GUIDE

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### WELCOME

Bible Land Passages (BLP) welcomes you to this journey of faith and devotion. We hope our program of study and edification will enhance your understanding of the Bible and provide a spiritual renewal as you enter into the physical stage upon which God's revelation took place. Contained in this travel guide is basic information for your program.

#### PROGRAM EMPHASIS

The Bible story and its message of salvation are rooted in a historic and geographic setting – a *real* time and a *real* place in history. To better understand that setting is to better understand the Biblical story.

Bible Land Passages is dedicated to helping others to better understand and appreciate the Bible, and thereby deepen their faith in the sacred text and in the God who gave us the Bible. We want everyone to know that when they read about places like Beersheba, Jericho, Jerusalem, Caesarea, and cities surrounding the Sea of Galilee, that those places exist just as the Bible describes.

But Bible Land Passages is more than just about defending Christianity and its historical roots, we are also dedicated to examining and showcasing the lands of the Bible and its environs because they provide for us a window into the ancient past. By sifting through the archaeological data, by traveling down the pathways of the Bible lands and by traversing through the passages of its ancient cities, trade routes, and caves we come to not only better understand and appreciate the challenges of life faced by our religious forbearers, but we also come to see how God *used* the historical and geographic setting of the Bible lands to refine and develop their faith.

Those same real places and same real settings - when examined in our modern era - can likewise become a passage for us in developing greater faith and devotion for God. Bible Land Passages is therefore all about helping connect people to God and encouraging others in their own personal walk of faith.

#### ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

Bible Land Passage Tours believes that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God and our teaching and devotions reflect our conviction that the Word of God is all sufficient for instruction in righteousness. As we are followers of Christ and of His message of redemption, it is our mission to reach lost souls through His word and present the many evidences (archaeological/historical) for the verity of the Christian faith that we will encounter on our trip to Israel. Furthermore, it is vitally important that Bible Land Passage

tours maintain an environment of learning, unity, peace and respect for our environment while we travel together. Thus, though we welcome with open arms any Christian who wants to join us on this amazing journey, we do reserve the right to refuse application, request a background check, or letter of reference to ensure the safety and enjoyment of the entire group. In addition, consider the following rules for eligibility:

1. Be 12 years of age or older.
2. Those under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult family member, legal guardian, or have special permission from the Tour Directors to attend. For a minor under the age of 18, to travel outside of the United States without either both parents or legal guardians, a notarized affidavit must be obtained and presented to airport or governmental officials upon departure and return to the US.
3. Must have a valid passport not expiring within six months of departure date.
4. Must agree to the terms and conditions as outlined on the registration documents.
5. Must agree to abide by the principles of conduct as outlined in the New Testament.
6. Meet the health and physical disabilities criteria outlined below:  
Travelers must be medically and physically fit for this tour. This tour requires significant walking, as motor coaches are not permitted to pick up and drop off in front of major sites. The tour is not wheelchair-accessible in most places. Any special medical conditions or equipment must be advised in writing for evaluation of feasibility at the time of making your reservation.

### **PASSPORT**

You must have a valid passport from your country. Further, it must not expire until at least six months after your departure from Israel. Be sure to check your passport and make any application for passport well in advance of your program. Remember to sign your passport and keep it with you at all times. Also keep a record of your passport number, and credit card numbers in a safe place.

### **VISA**

North American citizens are NOT required to obtain any special visa before travelling to Israel.

### **IMMUNIZATIONS**

North American participants do NOT require any special immunizations or proof of prior immunizations. Students from countries other than Canada and the United States should check with their own consulates and the Israeli consulate in their country to determine immunization requirements for entrance into Israel.

All prescription medications must be in their original containers. Obtain extra medication for the length of your stay in Israel. Consult your doctor.

## **IS IT SAFE TO TRAVEL IN ISRAEL?**

We are aware that news coverage about the Middle East is sometimes portrayed as a dangerous and unsafe place to live or visit. Such news coverage seldom matches the scene that is witnessed on a daily basis in Israel. Israel is a modern country and highly advanced with excellent security. Nevertheless, we are aware as in our own country for the potential of areas that are prone to violence or crime. Thus we actively pay attention to the political situation and will rearrange field studies so as to avoid any potentially hazardous area. It is true that the US Embassy frequently issues advisories for US citizens to avoid the public places and bus stops. However, these advisories are typically issued for legal liability reasons as much as, if not more than, for safety reasons. The embassy takes a most cautious stance in order to protect itself from legal action, so that its advisories frequently have little bearing on the true safety of travelers.

Almost everyone who returns from our trips remarks, "I never once felt unsafe." Each time we have traveled within Israel, including the two months Carla and I lived there this past summer, we have been very impressed with the level of security and safety. We've traveled with groups before during a time when the United States had issued a travel warning, and we witnessed no issues whatsoever. Tourism is a huge industry in Israel for all Israeli citizens (both Arab and Jew) and for both Palestinians and Jews living in the West Bank and as a result we have always been treated with kindness and respect.

We are highly confident in the Israeli government's stance on security and concern for its citizens and visitors. If any protests or incidents happen to arise within the country, our guide will be alerted. Just as in the United States, of course we could not say we would never encounter some sort of incident, but I *can* say that we have the utmost confidence in the company organizing all of the logistics for the tour. Lindy Lazarow, who arranges our transportation, lodging, and guides, has been organizing tours in Israel for over 30 years. Safety and health has always been top priority with her, as with us. Our Israeli guides and bus drivers are knowledgeable and experienced group leaders, and are fully aware each day of any possible issues or concerns.

## **WEATHER:**

We will be in some 3 -4 different climate regions. The temperatures in Jerusalem will likely be the coolest of the trip with the Dead Sea area the warmest. These temperatures apply to springtime tours. Summer will be much hotter, winter will be cooler.

Jerusalem: 66/48

Tel Aviv: 72/54

Dead Sea: 78/61

Tiberias : 72/51

## **CLOTHING AND "MODESTY KITS"**

Casual dress is recommended, such as lightweight pants and t-shirts (*shoulders must be covered at all times-men and women*). A lightweight hat is recommended, preferably one with a brim that covers the neck and ears.

If you hear your guide referring to “modesty kits” he will be referring to pieces of clothing (*for both men and women*), which allow participants to make sure that their shoulders and knees are covered. For women: long pants, skirts, or capris and shirts that cover shoulders. For men: long pants and shirts that cover shoulders. “Slip-over” or “wrap-around” clothing is best for such occasions. You will not be allowed to enter selected “holy” sites if shorts are worn above the knee, or if your shoulders are uncovered or clothes are too revealing or tight.

### **TYPICAL DAY**

Most days begin with a wake-up call at 6:15 a.m., breakfast starting at 6:30, everyone seated on the bus by 7:45, and leaving promptly at 8:00 (some days will be earlier). The group will travel to the sites by bus, where participants will begin their hikes and visits of the sites. Most days will involve moderate hiking. Lunch usually falls between 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. We will return to the hotel at around 5:30 PM. Optional orientation and preparation sessions for the next day’s activities will be available each evening (meeting times will generally commence immediately after dinner).

It is highly recommended that you carry snacks with you during the day. Eating small snacks throughout the day is best for keeping energy stored up in the body. We recommend snacks like trail mix, granola bars, nuts, dried fruit, crackers, or protein/energy bars be taken along with you. At the end of the day, we will arrive at our hotel for a satisfying dinner and needed sleep. The hotels serve excellent breakfast and dinner buffets and the rooms are quite comfortable.

### **TIMELINESS**

Being prompt is a must. For this type of program to be successful and to maximize the limited time in the land, participants must all move as a group. A ten-minute delay here and there of one kind or another can actually require the group to eliminate a site planned for visitation. The schedule is full and requires everyone to be punctual at departure times and to follow their leader and/or guide with diligence and closeness. Participants should not wander off. The clock is always ticking and the last thing anyone wants is to spend valuable instruction time looking for individuals that stray too far from the group when everyone else is ready to go.

### **DISCLAIMER:**

The program itinerary is subject to change. In the event of an unforeseen change in the schedule, we promise you every effort will be taken to provide you with the same goals and objectives as outlined in the published itinerary. The published program price is subject to change should circumstances warrant. This would include (but not be limited to) changes in airfares, airport taxes, visa fees, airline fuel surcharges, rate changes by agents and their suppliers and changes in international exchange rates. This is highly unlikely and we have never had a rate change to date.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

**HOTELS:** A separate document with the names of the hotels where lodging will be distributed to you under separate cover. Our travel agent is constantly seeking the opportunity for an upgrade in hotel accommodations and locations. Occasionally, a better situation will arise, thus this information is subject to change. On most BLP programs, participants enjoy 3 or 4 star accommodations. These hotels are not only comfortable, but also provide a relaxing environment after a full day of site-seeing. Breakfast and dinner at the hotels are included in the overall program price. The programs are priced at double occupancy; however, single rooms are available upon request for an additional charge.

Unless otherwise stated, all hotels are air-conditioned and provide clean sheets, towels, shampoo, and body soap. Hair dryers and coffee makers are in each room as well. Occasionally, rooms will contain a small refrigerator.

## **GUEST SERVICES**

Most, if not all, hotels where we will stay will provide concierge services, exercise rooms, laundry services, internet Wi-Fi, restaurant facilities, and a private security safe. Please remember that laundry and guest room services are very expensive. Each traveler is responsible for any and all expenses incurred with the use of these services.

## **FOOD BUFFETS**

Unless otherwise stated, all hotel accommodations include an all you can eat breakfast and dinner buffet with plenty of local and international choices. Water, juice and coffee accompany each meal. Soft drinks and specialty coffees are usually extra.

## **TRAVEL TIPS**

### **PHYSICAL DEMANDS AND PREPARATION**

BLP programs are not your typical "tourist" tour of the Bible Lands. Participants will have the opportunity to visit both traditional sites as well as sites not on typical tours. BLP endeavors to maximize the participants' time in the land providing them with a most unique and rewarding journey. At times, the pace is demanding and daily activities often go for a full 8 - 10 hours. There is limited free time. Most BLP travel locations are not flat, nor are they smooth under foot; therefore, BLP strongly recommends that participants begin preparing for the physical demands of the program long before the departure date. If participants are physically prepared, the program will be far more enjoyable, educational, and meaningful.

**This trip includes a lot of walking. It is important that you begin a daily routine of walking and exercise. Begin this regimen at least 6 weeks prior to the trip. Being in shape will also make your travel experience on the plane much more tolerable.**

## **HEAT AND HYDRATION**

The heat in parts of this region is a very real concern. Even during the rainy season (*mid-October to mid-April*), it can still become hot. The daily temperatures from May to October in Israel and Jordan typically range from the 80's up to 115 degrees. The evenings can cool off into the 60's. **Staying hydrated is extremely important.** Busses will always have a sufficient supply of water on the bus for a minimal cost (usually \$1 US dollar per bottle); however, it is not always available to participants during onsite hiking and touring.

Dehydration occurs from excessive loss of water from the body brought on by heat, humidity, a lack of wind, etc. It is critical to stay hydrated before, during, and after the daily tours. A steady intake of fluid is most beneficial; consuming a large amount of fluid in a short period of time does not prevent dehydration and is stressful on the body. Some participants bring powdered electrolyte replenishment mix, such as Gatorade, Powerade, Propel, etc. Also, BLP recommends that participants limit their caffeine intake during the program, which may be wise to begin a week or two before the program.

It is advisable to bring with you from home a reusable water bottle with an insulated jacket/sleeve. Or, you may prefer a reusable water container insert (hydration pack) for a small back pack.

## **DOCTOR VISIT**

While it is not required it is nevertheless recommended that you visit your family physician before embarking upon this trip. Tell your Doctor where you will be traveling and ask for a prescription of travel medications (e.g. a regiment of antibiotics, something for stomach and intestinal issues, and perhaps a sleeping med if you prefer for air travel).

## **JET LAG**

Upon arrival in Israel, the initial excitement may cause you not to notice the strain on your body from the long flight and the crossing of time zones. It is highly recommended that you immediately begin to follow the sleeping patterns of the country. If you arrive during the day, try your best not to fall asleep until bed time. If you arrive late at night try to rise in the morning with everyone else. In this way the effects of jet lag will be overcome quickly.

## **USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

The electric current in Israel is 220 volts, C, single phase, 50 Hertz, the same as in Europe.

Most Israeli sockets are three-pronged but most accept European two-pronged plugs. **If your appliance does not work on 220 volts, you will need an adaptor.**

## WHAT TO TAKE ON DAILY OUTINGS

It is recommended that participants bring along a small backpack or knapsack for the purpose of carrying the following items: (1) Bible; (2) Geobasics in the Land of the Bible Mapbook (approximately \$15 per copy); (3) Small notebook or notepad and pen; (4) water bottle; (5) hand cleanser and/or wet wipes; (6) small flashlight; (7) needed medications; (8) camera (9) Passport if desired; (10) an electronic version of the Passages Guidepost. Couples or families may find it helpful to share supplies and a backpack.

## LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS AND PACKING

PLEASE PACK LIGHT (you will be so glad you did). See Rick Steves Packing Tips on the web for packing tips and for some ideas about packing light. As of January 2018 most United Airline flights will only allow one personal item and one checked item free of charge with the Basic economy. We will advise you as to final restrictions and rules if anything changes.

The following rules and restrictions have applied in the past:

For ease of travel, and to expedite moving from place to place with land transportation, we need to limit our packing to one suitcase per person, and one small personal item.

Baggage handling for one standard size suitcase per person is included in the price. Due to limited motor coach capacity, this bag should have dimensions not exceeding 62 linear inches (length + width + height; including wheels and handles) and weight not exceeding 50 lbs.

Carry-on bags are the responsibility of the passengers. In the past one carry-on and one personal item are allowed on most International flights for economy class. However, guidelines are changing and heavy restrictions are beginning to apply. Once we receive the final ticketing information from the air carrier we will pass the final information along to you. Here is what we know so far:

- Maximum dimensions for your **personal item**, such as a shoulder bag, backpack, laptop bag or other small item, are 9 inches x 10 inches x 17 inches (22 cm x 25 cm x 43 cm)
- If you have purchased Basic Economy, you will only be allowed one small personal item, such as a shoulder bag, purse or laptop bag, unless you are a Premier® member or a primary card member of a qualifying MileagePlus credit card\* or Star Alliance Gold member. Everyone else who is traveling on a Basic Economy ticket and brings a full-sized carry-on bag to the gate will be required to check their bag and pay the applicable checked bag fee plus a \$25 gate handling charge. Payment is by credit card only.
- For select card members - Maximum dimensions for a carry-on bag are 9 inches x 14 inches x 22 inches (22 cm x 35 cm x 56 cm), including handles and wheels

### AND.....

Everyone else who is traveling on a Basic Economy ticket and brings a full-sized carry-on bag to the gate will be required to check their bag and pay the applicable checked bag fee plus a \$25 gate handling charge. Payment is by credit card only.

A single checked bag fee (meeting airline specifications) to Tel Aviv only is included in the price of the trip. All other costs incurred for baggage on domestic flights are the responsibility of the passengers and to be paid by passenger directly to the airline at the time of check-in. Baggage Insurance is recommended. BLP is not responsible for loss or damage to passenger's baggage or other belongings.

## **PACKING**

Customarily, most people over pack for international travel. A good rule of thumb is for participants to pack their bags and then eliminate at least 25% – 33% of their items. This will reduce the amount of the packed contents and provide needed space for purchases made during their travel. There is limited space available on the bus for luggage. Participants should keep their luggage size and contents to a minimum.

## **ADJUSTING TO A DIFFERENT CULTURE**

Life and people outside your country can be quite different from your expectations. Coming to Israel, you will definitely experience change while visiting a land with a wealth of history and a complexity of cultures and communities. It can be an exciting, deepening, and broadening experience. With this experience comes the need for adaptation, for you are a guest in the country. Although Israel is one of the more developed countries in the Middle East, the Orthodox Jewish people and the Arabs (both Christian and Muslim) have very different lifestyles from that with which you are familiar. Therefore, as a guest in Israel, you are asked to be sensitive to this society's standards of dress and behavior. Modesty in dress and Christian decorum overall is crucial to our being the light of the world, and for your own safety. It also demonstrates your efforts not to offend our Arab and Jewish neighbors.

## **FINANCES AND CURRENCY**

### **DAILY EXPENSES**

In addition to your regular tourist-type purchases and your daily lunch expenses (\$8-\$12 per day), it is recommended you bring a total of about \$15-\$25 per day for incidental spending (snacks, water, soda, maps, taxis, tourist guide books, etc.).

### **FINANCIAL NOTE**

Bible Land Passages and its programs of study are designed to eliminate the numerous incidental financial responsibilities one often encounters on packaged tours. Tour agencies and their clients often publish a low base price giving the appearance that you have discovered a bargain. On such programs you are held financially responsible for any number of fees not accounted for in the published program cost. These "hidden" or "unannounced" fees can add up to a large amount by the end of your trip. In an effort to minimize your individual responsibilities for undeclared fees BLP has calculated such fees and included them into your overall program cost. Except for the daily lunch meal and items related to optional personal choices, your program cost covers all such incidental fees and tips. We do this in order for you to have a realistic cost of the program and to eliminate the hassle so often associated with "hidden" fees.

## CURRENCY

Israel's official currency is the shekel or NIS (New Israeli Shekel). It's formally called the New Shekel, having replaced the 'old' shekel in 1985. There are 100 agora in a shekel. There are 10 and 50 agora coins (the latter is known as a ½ shekel), as well as coins of 1, 2, 5 and 10 shekels. Coins worth 1 and 5 agora used to exist, but are no longer in circulation. NIS 20, 50, 100 and 200 notes are available. 50 and 100 are the most common. NIS 200 is a lot of cash - upwards of US\$ 50 - so it can be hard to get change on small purchases.

## PURCHASES

You might be able to pay in foreign currencies such as US dollars or euros, particularly in popular tourist spots. US dollars are the most welcome foreign currency. However, the exchange rate won't work in your favor. And in a restaurant or shop, you'll probably get your change in shekels regardless of what currency you've paid in. Best to stick to shekels if you can. Therefore, all purchases in Israel should be paid in NIS or with a credit card, however the bus driver will take US dollars for water purchases.

You will always want to have available at least a small amount of NIS available for small purchases. Credit cards are accepted in most places and in most instances are completely safe to use. You may find that regular use of your credit card is a convenient way to track your expenses and provides some level of security so as not to have to carry so much cash.

## CURRENCY EXCHANGE

You may convert your funds into local currency at the airport (time permitting), at our hotels or at nearby banks, or at ATM machines. ATM's aren't easily accessible, and at times they are difficult to locate, during the program. and distribute only Israeli currency. Do not depend on ATM machines for your financial needs. Hotels provide opportunities to exchange money but the rate will typically be much better at official sites and banks. We will try to keep you apprised as to convenient money exchanging opportunities.

Currency exchange shops: If you're in a major city like Jerusalem, you'll find a lot of private exchange offices - small specialist shops that will exchange your money for you. Though they are advertised to be commission-free, the exchange rates offered can sometimes be surprisingly poor. Take a look at a few different places to compare rates before you pick one. If you already have cash in hand and need to exchange it, this is generally the best option. **Do NOT use your ATM cards at these Kiosk. A large service fee will show up on you card.**

Post offices advertise commission-free exchange too, though you still need to watch out for the poor exchange rates as it'll still cost you. Not to mention, you might be faced with long queues if you're in a busy area.

### **Withdrawing from ATMs**

Use of ATM's is perfectly acceptable and secure and you're likely to get a better exchange rate and better overall value if you withdraw money straight from an ATM. That also means you don't have to travel with large amounts of cash.

Whatever you end up doing, don't get too taken in by talk of commission-free exchange or zero fees. **There's only one real exchange rate**, so if you're not being offered the same rate you see on Google or on an online currency converter, the service is making money off you - whether they are upfront about it or not.

### **What should I know about using my debit and credit cards in Israel?**

You're unlikely to have trouble using your card in major places in Israel, although you're better off with cash at a street market. It's up to your bank whether you pay a foreign transaction fee on credit or debit card purchases and how much it is. Usually you do, so check this with your bank before you head out there.

Also, before you make it to Israel, make sure your PIN has only 4 digits - you could run into problems if it's any longer. Many card terminals only accept 4 numbers.

### **TOURISTS CAN CLAIM A TAX REFUND**

If you're a tourist, you can claim VAT back on things you buy when you leave Israel. There are various caveats - you'll need to have spent over NIS 400, it doesn't include food or drink except alcohol bought in certain places, and you can't open packaging before getting the refund. However, if you fit the profile, make sure to find one of the registered VAT refund offices at major airports, ports or border crossings when you're on your way out. VAT is 17%, so it's worth the effort if you're looking to save on costs.

### **RESOURCES**

#### **USEFUL BOOKS FOR ISRAEL:**

Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley, *Carta's New Century Handbook and Atlas of the Bible*

(Jerusalem: Carta, 2007)

Carl G. Rasmussen, *NIV Atlas of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999)

Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *The Holy Land* (5th edition; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

#### **USEFUL ISRAEL WEB SITES: (Some sites may have revised their web address)**

<http://www.biblelandpictures.com/>

<http://www.bibleplaces.com/> <http://unbound.biola.edu/index.cfm?lang=English>

<http://www.holylandphotos.org/index.asp> <http://faculty.smu.edu/dbinder/archaeol.html>

<http://www.otgateway.com/> <http://www.ancientsandals.com/> <http://www.thevirtualbible.com/>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishbook.html> <http://www.ntgateway.com/>

<http://www.en-gedi.org> <http://www.iTanakh.org>

<http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH00wf0> <http://www.jerusalemerspective.com/>  
<http://www.bib-arch.org/>

<http://www.msn.fullfeed.com/~scribe/artifax.htm> <http://www.historian.net/newindex.html>

<http://www.info.gov.il/eng/mainpage.asp>

<http://www.israel-tourist-information.com/visainformation.htm>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/subwwway/links.cfm?categoryID=1>

<http://www.biblewalks.com>

### **ITEMS TO BRING:**

- Passport!
- Bible, pens, notebook
- Geobasics in the Land of the Bible Map Book
- Comfortable walking shoes with tread - Merrell, Dansko, Keen footwear is recommended. Sturdy sandals may be worn as long as they allow for rough terrain (Chaco performs well.)
- Flip-flops are NOT recommended. Water shoes will be needed if you enter the wet side of Hezekiah's tunnel.
- Women: Some personal products are available at the hotels and nearby stores. HOWEVER, PLEASE CONTACT CARLA MOORE FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THIS. SOME PRODUCTS MAY BE DIFFICULT TO FIND.
- Sturdy backpack for daily use; "Fanny packs" are also useful
- Camera (You can't beat the camera on the new I-Phone unless you are a real camera expert)
- Washcloths - Most hotels do not provide these, so you may want to bring your own
- Plug adaptors (you will want several;  
[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00DTRHBOS?psc=1&redirect=true&ref\\_=oh\\_aui\\_detailpage\\_o06\\_s00](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00DTRHBOS?psc=1&redirect=true&ref_=oh_aui_detailpage_o06_s00))
- Check your cell-phone provider if you plan to use your telephone while in Israel.
- Credit cards are accepted nearly everywhere. You might want to look into a new card with the new chip technology which is reported to be more secure.
- It will benefit you to pack as lightly as possible for ease of transport, especially since we will be changing locations so frequently. Three pairs of jeans/pants, five-six shirts, lightweight jacket, undergarments and socks (invest in several pairs that will easily wash and dry overnight), pajamas. Plan on layers that can be added or removed as temperatures change.
- Medications from your doctor - ask his or her opinion. Suggested: traveler's diarrhea (prescription Lomotil or over-the-counter Imodium), anti-nausea (prescription Promethazine or over-the-counter Pepto Bismol), sleep aids (there are several different prescription sleep aids...Tylenol PM or Melatonin also work well), and general pain relievers such as Tylenol, Advil, or Aleve.
- While credit cards are accepted widely, you will also want some cash (which can be exchanged at the airport or hotel and in numerous places in Jerusalem) for purchase of daily water bottles, your daily lunches (as breakfast and dinner are the only meals provided, but we will be stopping for lunch,) snacks and other small needs.

- Melatonin or Tylenol PM to help regulate sleeping patterns (drinking a lot of water on the flights will significantly decrease the symptoms of jet lag) Powerade, Gatorade, Propel powder, or something for electrolyte replenishment (if desired)
- Hand sanitizer (small bottles are recommended)
- Sunscreen
- Inflatable pillow for airplane and bus (if desired)
- Tissue packs (potentially 1-2 per day) as some of the bathrooms do not supply toilet paper.
- Small backpack

## **INSURANCE**

Overseas medical coverage is required by BLP; however, travel insurance is only recommended. BLP does not issue such insurance policies and any need to secure such a policy is the participant's personal responsibility. Program participants may have to pay for medical services upfront but will be reimbursed by their insurance company.

### **OPTIONAL TRAVEL INSURANCE**

If participants wish to protect their travel investment against an unforeseen cancellation or a needed emergency return flight home, it is recommended that they purchase a travel insurance policy. If a participant desires to purchase such a policy, he/she should be aware that most insurance companies will restrict certain coverage unless he/she submits for coverage within 14 days of registering for the program. Consequently, the participant should not delay in purchasing this insurance.

### **INSURANCE ASSISTANCE**

If participants need to purchase either medical or travel insurance, they should refer to the list of providers below. Please note that CHLS is not involved in securing travel insurance or the medical insurance offered by these companies and is not under any contract with the companies listed below.

- Insurance: Medjet Assist at [www.medjetassist.com](http://www.medjetassist.com)
- IMG (International Medical Group) Patriot International at [www.imglobal.com](http://www.imglobal.com)
- Brotherhood Mutual – 1-800-333-3735 ext. 5680 (<http://brotherhoodmutual.com>)
- Access America – 1-866-807-3982 (<http://accessamerica.com>)
- Insure My Trip – 1-800-487-4722 (<http://insuremytrip.com>)
- Travel Guard – 1-800-826-4919 (<http://travelguard.com>)
- Travelex – 1-800-504-7883 (<http://travelex-insurance.com>)
- AAA – 1-800-463-8646 (<http://aaa.com>)

### **RECOMMENDATION FROM BROTHER ROY GREENWAY**

Regarding trip insurance, I continue to have experiences others may benefit from. -- I used the web site <https://www.insuremytrip.com/> to compare various coverages and costs from a variety of companies. I picked a specific company's policy, but I really wanted higher medical coverages than it offered. I then went to that company's web site and found that I could get more coverage for less money

(significantly in some cases) if I bought directly from the insurance company and not use the <https://www.insuremytrip.com/> site. This may be because buying this way avoids much of the mark-up costs, etc. Thus, I used the insuremytrip.com site to identify the companies offering coverages and the basic policies offered and then bought from the company directly.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Do you recommend that we carry on our suitcase rather than checking?**

No, check your suitcase, unless you are able to pack like Rick Steves suggests.

### **Will all of our hotels have hair dryers?**

Yes, hotels have hair dryers but they are quite ineffective so you might want to bring your own small hair dryer.

### **Will I need an adapter for my appliances in Israel?**

The electric current in Israel is 220 volts, C, single phase, 50 Hertz, the same as in Europe.

Most Israeli sockets are three-pronged but most accept European two-pronged plugs. If your appliance does not work on 220 volts, you will need an adaptor.

### **Do I need to receive any special vaccination before my trip to Israel?**

Not at all. Israel is an entirely western country with an advanced level of hygiene, health care, diagnosis and medicine that is the envy of much of the world and on a par with the best of North America and Western Europe.

### **Can you drink tap water in Israel?**

Absolutely: tap water in Israel is safe and delicious. But, you will also find bottled mineral water everywhere. (It's important to make sure you drink a lot, especially if you are walking, hiking or exercising during hot weather.)

### **Is it safe to travel to Israel?**

Israel is an extremely safe country to visit and tour. In 2012, close to four million tourists came to Israel, an all-time record, and all of them went back home again safe and sound.

### **Are tourists allowed to enter areas outside of the Israeli responsibility (Palestinian areas)?**

Crossing from Jerusalem to Bethlehem is direct, easy and no prior authorization is required. Hundreds of tourists make the crossing in both directions every day. As always, it's wise to check on the political situation before entering the Palestinian Authority.

Please note to take your passport with you, you'll need to present it to re-enter Israeli-controlled territory.

### **Do I need a visa to travel to Israel?**

Americans, Canadians and citizens of most western countries need just a passport to come to Israel: no visa is required. Your passport must be valid for at least six months from the date you enter the country.

**Can I choose not to have an Israel stamp in my passport in case I travel to some countries that don't recognize Israel?**

Sure. Israel no longer stamps tourists' passports. Records are now kept electronically.

**What are the distances between major cities?**

Tel Aviv to Jerusalem 37 miles, 50 minutes  
 Tel Aviv to Tiberias/Galilee 81 miles, 100 minutes  
 Tel Aviv to Masada 63 miles, 90 minutes  
 Tel Aviv to Haifa 90 miles, 70 minutes  
 Jerusalem to Tiberias 109 miles, 120 minutes  
 Jerusalem to Masada 56 miles, 90 minutes

**Will I have easy internet access?**

Most hotels in Israel have free Wi-Fi available for hotel guests. Many cafes and restaurants offer a complementary Wi-Fi service.

Since September 2013, Tel Aviv offers a citywide free Wi-Fi network which provides 80 free Internet "hot spots" across the city.

**Will I be able to use my cell phone in Israel?**

If you have an international plan, your cell phone may work in Israel, please check with your local provider. It can be very expensive to use your cell phone without an international plan.

**Can I rent a cellular phone in Israel?**

Yes. You can rent a phone when you arrive at any time during your visit. Read about renting a cellular phone by doing a google search on line.

**What is the country code to dial to Israel?**

+ 972

**What is the weather like in Israel, when is the best time to visit?**

Israel is a year round destination.

Israel enjoys long, warm, dry summers and generally mild winters with somewhat drier, cooler weather in hilly regions, such as Jerusalem and Safed. Temperatures can vary widely so just pack for the "right" weather and you'll be fine.

**What kind of clothing should I pack?**

In Summer, lightweight T-shirts, sleeveless shirts (although at some religious sites you will be required to cover your shoulders.) Pack a sweater or a jacket for nights in the mountains or the desert.

**What is the currency in Israel?**

The Shekel; you'll find it abbreviated as NIS (New Israeli Shekel). Exchange rates of the Shekel to all foreign currencies as well as other information can be found [here](#).

**What credit cards are accepted?**

You can use your ATM card to obtain Shekels at ATM's throughout Israel. You can also use American Express, MasterCard and Visa cards at most Israeli hotels, restaurants and stores. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO NOTIFY YOUR CREDIT CARD COMPANY THAT YOU WILL BE TRAVELING IN ISRAEL so that they will not suspect that someone has stolen your card, and decline your charges.

**Is everything closed on the Sabbath (Shabbat) in Israel?**

Shabbat (the Sabbath) is the Jewish holy day of the week observed every Saturday. Shabbat starts at sunset on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday evening. All public offices are closed on Shabbat, as are banks, most stores and businesses; throughout Israel there is a growing number of shops open on Shabbat. In most cities, public transportation (trains and buses) do not operate on Shabbat. Most non-kosher restaurants are open on Shabbat.

**PLEASE SEE ARTICLES BELOW**

**APPENDICES A & B**

## APPENDIX A

### *How to Prepare for a Bible Land's Trip*

By Wayne Stiles

## How to Prepare for a Holy Land Tour

### *4 Ways to Get Ready Will Make All the Difference*

By Wayne Stiles at [www.waynestiles.com](http://www.waynestiles.com)

**Y**ou've finally decided to take a spiritual [journey to the Holy Land](#)—to the land of the Bible. I can promise you, you won't come home from Israel the same! But there's something else you need to know.



(Photo: the aqueduct at Caesarea)

You already realize you are investing a lot of money this trip, and you want to make the most of your time. But you will get twice as much out of your Holy Land tour if you'll also *invest some time preparing for it*.

Here are some ways that will help you maximize your trip—by preparing mentally, practically, physically, and spiritually.

### **Mental Preparation for a Holy Land Tour: Learn Some Basic Geography**

This may seem academic and even unnecessary, but believe me; it will make a *huge* difference.

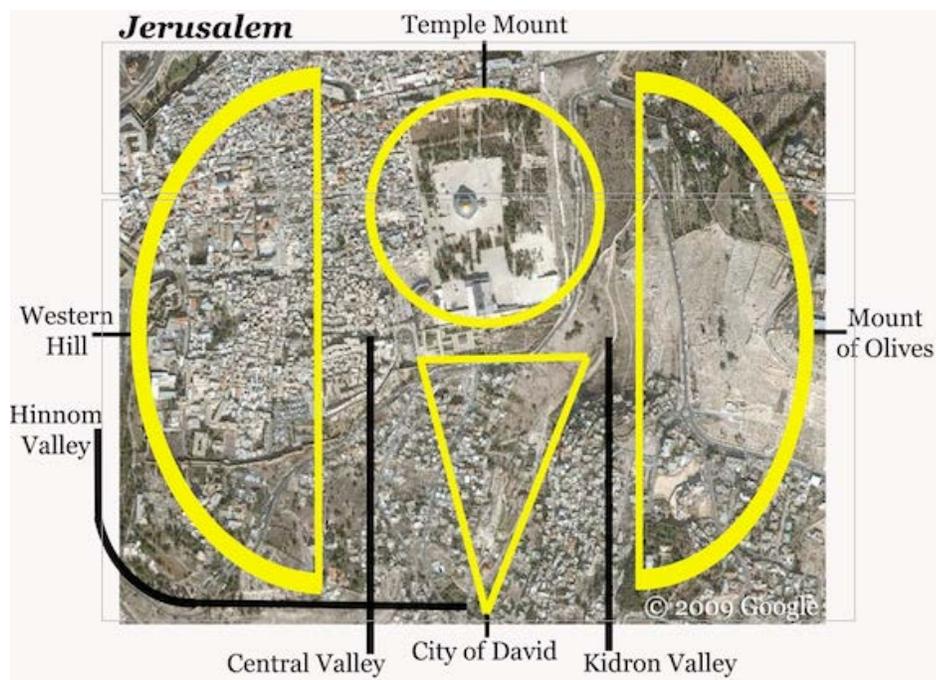
- If you determine to know where you are, you will better appreciate (and remember) the sites and their biblical significance.
- Not only that, but your Bible reading will make more sense for the rest of your life.

**Basic Israel Geography.** If you don't have one already, *buy a good Bible atlas*. (See [my recommendations](#).) Before your trip, use your atlas and learn the names of Israel's geographic areas as well as their locations:

- Galilee (including the Golan Heights)
- Samaria (Including the Jezreel Valley)
- Judea (including the Shephelah)
- Negev and Wilderness

**Basic Jerusalem Geography.** You can learn the basic geography of Jerusalem in about 5 minutes. Dr. Charlie Dyer taught me to *visualize Jerusalem as an ice cream cone inside two hamburger buns*. (See my graphic below.)

- The ice cream and cone are the Temple Mount and the City of David.
- The two buns represent the Western Hill and the Mount of Olives.
- The three major valleys of Jerusalem lie in between the cone and the buns.



(Visualize Jerusalem as an ice cream cone inside two hamburger buns.)

Get a road map of Israel and follow along your journey. Once I even highlighted the roads we took. If your bus has Wi-Fi, and you have a Smart Phone, you can use the [Google Maps app](#) to find your location. I love doing this. (Just make sure you're only accessing the Web via Wi-Fi and not over an expensive overseas network.)

## Practical Preparation for a Holy Land Tour

**Take a Small Bible or a Digital Tablet.** You probably don't want to take your three-pound study Bible to Israel. For one thing, it's too heavy for the suitcase and for your daily journey. But you also don't want it to suffer any damage from travel.

- Get a smaller Bible you can easily carry. In years past, I bought [a smaller Bible](#) that allows me to conveniently read on site.
- For future trips, I plan to use my [iPad mini](#). Not only does it have my whole Bible on it as well as my teaching notes, it also allows me to journal in the mornings, take pictures, and Skype with family back home. If you do take a digital tablet, you might consider applying [amate film](#) to the screen. It's great not only for protection, but it cuts down on the glare from the bright sunlight.



(Photo: Studying the life of Christ, overlooking the Jezreel Valley)

**Don't Forget the Basics.** Hopefully, you've thought of these. But just in case:

- **Hat and Sunscreen:** You'll be in the sun a lot, and you'll need protection. Especially down by the Dead Sea.
- **Good Shoes:** Be sure and get some comfortable walking shoes and (important:) break them in before you get there.

- **Modest clothing:** I don't mean you'll ever be immodest, but some holy sites require "modest" clothing—which includes pants or skirt that cover the knees and shirts that cover the shoulders. Without these items, you may not enter the sites.
- **220 Adaptors and/or Converters.** You'll want to charge your camera battery, so be sure and look into this carefully before you go. Most nice hotels provide a hairdryer in your room. (For what it's worth, I've never seen a 110 hairdryer survive a trip. Even with converters, somehow they just struggle.)

## Physical Preparation for a Holy Land Tour

**Get in Shape.** Every tour I lead has stragglers. Some lag behind because they're physically unable to climb stairs, walk briskly, or navigate uneven terrain. You'll enjoy the trip much better if you'll get used to walking a lot before you go.

**Prepare for Jet Lag.** It will take your body a couple of days to adjust to the new time zone. You can really help yourself if you'll follow the advice in [Overcoming Jet Lag](#), by Charles F. Ehret and Lynne Waller Scanlon. You can probably also find some good advice [on the Internet](#). Staying hydrated on the flight over will help as well.



(Photo: Reading the Word of God in the Capernaum Synagogue)

**Come with me!** Journey to the amazing Holy Land on my upcoming trip to Israel. [See the details](#), browse the tour itinerary, and [download a FREE brochure!](#) After your journey to Israel, *you will never be the same!*

## Spiritual Preparation for a Holy Land Tour

A tour to Israel is far more than a vacation. It's a spiritual journey. I interviewed hundreds of people for my doctoral research, and I discovered that 99% of those who participate in a Holy Land tour will have their spiritual lives affected.

Here are a couple of ways to prepare for your trip spiritually.

1. **Pray.** Ask God to make you sensitive to what He will teach you and to help you retain it. Pray for your guide, driver, and Bible teacher. Pray for your group to be free of injury, to have no lost luggage, and to have a spirit of unity. Also for good weather.
2. **Use Your Itinerary as Your Quiet Times.** Before your trip, devote some weeks to connecting the sites you'll visit with their biblical significance. Here's how:
  - Look over the sites for each day, and make a list of them. Get a good devotional book with a site index and read a devotional about each site. (I designed [my books](#) this way for this reason.) Jot notes and Scriptures down on the list you're making.
  - You can also use the search field in my blog and search for a site. The search field is in the right sidebar.
  - Make this list and its devotions your quiet times before your trip—and each day on the trip. Live in expectation of the truths you will re-experience each day.

Wow! We've covered a lot of ground.

## Appendix B

# 8 Tips to Maximize Your Holy Land Tour

## *How to make your journey magnificent*

By Wayne Stiles at [www.waynestiles.com](http://www.waynestiles.com)

In my previous post, I offered some suggestions for [how to prepare for a Holy Land Tour](#). After all, you're investing a lot of money and significant time for this journey. It makes sense to prepare yourself beforehand so that you get the most from your experience in Israel. But after you arrive in Israel, there are a number of ways you can ensure you get the most from your Holy Land tour. The following 8 tips include both practical and spiritual ways to maximize your experience every single day you're there.

**1. Take Pictures of People, not Just Places** - Going to Israel is about places, to be sure. After all, there's nothing like learning the Word of God right where it happened. But the trip is more than places.

- **Get people pictures.** Each time the motor coach stops, you'll be tempted simply to snap pictures of the places you see. That's fine, but [you can buy those kinds of pictures](#) (and they'll be much better than those you'll take). What kind of pictures can't you buy? Pictures of YOU in the Holy Land. Ask someone to take pictures of YOU and of those traveling with you. People also give scale to pictures.
- **Create a system to label your photos.** You think you'll remember the place names and stops, but you won't. You will take hundreds of pictures. I suggest you read two great posts by Mark Hoffman about [how to take pictures in the Holy Land](#). Great advice.
- **GeoTag your photos.** If your bus has Wi-Fi, and you have a Smart Phone, be sure to make your last picture at each site one you snap on the bus—connected to Wi-Fi. That way your final photo GeoTags the site. On the go, you can use the [Google Maps app](#) to find your location. I love doing this. (Just make sure you're only accessing the Web via Wi-Fi and not over an expensive overseas network.)
- **Enjoy the folks you meet.** Some of my family's dearest friends are those we have met on tours and stayed in contact with through the years. We've even stayed in each other's homes. You will meet people on your tour who may end up being friends for life. Stay open to that. God may have more for you in Israel than pictures and places.

**2. Take Pictures with Your Heart** - I've gone on tours with pilgrims who saw the whole tour through their lens. One guy I think literally videoed the WHOLE experience. Yes, take pictures. But not just with your camera.

- **Be sure to stop and drink in the wonder.** On your tour, time is always measured, of course. But your guide and Bible teacher should leave some time after their teaching/devotional for you to take a deep breath and ponder the significance of the place.
- When you stay **at the Sea of Galilee**, get up before everyone else and watch the sunrise over the Golan Heights.
- **In Jerusalem**, keep in mind you're in the city where the universe was redeemed. Where YOU were redeemed. Be sure you remember to stand for a few full minutes of silence and just gaze on the panorama of the city. Drink it in with your heart. Pray with your eyes wide open.
- **Make it happen if it's not scheduled.** If for some reason, you find you're not getting time at these stops to drink it in, try this. Ask your tour leader if he or she minds if at the next stop or two you walk off by yourself during the teaching time (but don't wander too far). Taking pictures with the heart is an essential part of your Holy Land tour.

### 3. Remember, You're More than a Tourist (You're a Christian)

Remember you're still a Christian, even though you've paid a lot to be there. Go with the expectation to receive a wonderful experience, yes—but don't go with a spirit of entitlement. Remember:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. . . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. —Galatians 5:22–25. These are God's expectations of you—even in the Holy Land.

- Think of each of these qualities in connection with being a good traveler—especially patience and kindness.
- Determine each day that you will be an encourager, not a complainer. (Remember what happened to those who grumbled in the wilderness wanderings? See Numbers 14:27 and 1 Peter 4:9.)
- Remain a servant. Let others go first. Be nice, even if others aren't.

**4. Stay Sensitive and Strategic about Evangelism** - You're a Christian, not just a tourist—that is true. Your compassion naturally will go out to your Israeli guide and bus driver, if they are unbelievers.

- **Stay sensitive.** You may know ahead of time who your Israeli guide and bus driver are. Sometimes you do; sometimes you don't. Obviously, they will be polite and listen to you

(think: tips). But don't take advantage of their good nature. I'm not saying don't share the gospel with them. (In fact, Cathy and I had the privilege to lead our bus driver to Christ one time.)

- **Surprise them by modeling Christianity.** Realize they have probably heard the gospel many times from many tourists. What they likely *haven't* experienced is genuine Christianity: servanthood, love, kindness, patience, etc. One guide I have worked with came to Christ because of the LOVE he experienced from pilgrims.
- **Be strategic.** Show them the gospel before you ever speak it. Remember, you're more than a tourist—you're a Christian.

## 5. Determine to Keep Up (and Stay Hydrated)

The sun doesn't stand still over Gibeon any longer. When a group moves slowly, and time runs out, you have to start dropping sites from the itinerary.

Every tour has stragglers. I've seen two types.

1. Some lag behind because they're physically unable to climb stairs, walk briskly, or navigate uneven terrain. If that's you, it would be a good idea to connect with your leader at the beginning of your Holy Land tour and ask what sites are physically demanding. For those places, it would be courteous of you to remain with the bus.
2. Other people straggle because it's a personality trait or they're simply self-absorbed. They simply don't realize keeping up boils down to common courtesy.

The tour can only move as fast as its slowest person. *Don't be that person.*

Also, in a land where water is life, you will need to drink a lot. It will keep you healthy and give you energy. Get your body used to being hydrated *before* the trip.

- On the tour each day, carry a fistful of dollars on the bus and make it a habit to buy water from your driver every time you get on and off the bus. He will keep his refrigerator stocked full. To me, this is more convenient than carrying a water bottle, though some prefer to do that.
- Israel is very tourist-savvy and restrooms are at (most) every stop. You'll have more energy and stay healthier if you drink lots of water.
- Did I mention you should drink a lot of water?

**6. Review the Itinerary for the Day Beforehand** - In my previous post, I mentioned how to prepare spiritually for your Holy Land tour. One of these tips suggested that you use your daily itinerary as your quiet times—both before the trip and on it.

- As I mentioned, get a good devotional book with an index where you can look up the sites, read a devotional about them, and look forward to the truths you'll experience that day.
- Because you know your itinerary, you can plan your quiet times ahead of time. If you look over the day's sites, you'll have a greater expectation of them. You can pray about them.

**7. Ask Questions** - Your guide and Bible teacher love questions. They know their stuff. Ask them questions!

- **Ask about the sites.** Likely, you'll hear this anyway. But if something doesn't click, ask about a site's history and geography—and record your thoughts in a journal.
- **Ask about insights.** Ask your Bible teacher for a devotional insight and for the site's biblical significance. Write it down.

Hopefully, you've chosen a Holy Land tour that connects the Bible and its lands to life! But even then, you may have questions.

Be sure and get the most from your trip—and ask questions.

**8. Journal Every Day** - You will glean many spiritual insights from your Holy Land tour—more than you can imagine beforehand. You will process it better if you'll journal daily.

Every single day.

- **Carry your journal with you.** Many people carry a notepad with them for the day and jot down thoughts at each site. This is a great idea. Include the date.
- **What to journal?** Write your expectations, surprises, lessons, and disappointments. Write what God is teaching you. Write your prayers down. Don't write to be read by others. Write for you.
- **Make journaling part of your routine.** Like brushing your teeth. You could do it first thing in the morning, or perhaps, each night before you turn out the light. I did this on one of my first trips to the Holy Land, and it proved very beneficial.

- If you determine you will prepare ahead of time for your Holy Land tour—and also apply these 8 tips while you're there—you will maximize your experience. You are in for a tremendous journey. You will never be the same!



