


# **ISRAELI OFFICE**

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**Important Information Before Traveling to**

**THE HOLY LAND**

**GETTING FIT**

Your tour of Israel is going to be a wonderful experience! However, it will require quite a bit of walking. I suggest that you begin a daily walking exercise routine to help prepare you for the trip. I suggest walking up to about 2 miles per day. Of course you should consult your doctor if you have any physical circumstances of concern.

**PACKING**

One suitcase is allowed. Keep things light. Avoid charges for overweight luggage. Please note that while on the tour, **only** **1 checked luggage per person** **(up to 23 kg or 50 lbs), is allowed, 1 carry on/trolly, & personal (small) item!**

Bring clothing that is easy to wash/line dry if necessary.

Keep in mind you will likely return with more than you left with due to purchases made on the trip.

Roll your clothes. This gives you more room and prevents wrinkles.

You will need a voltage converter/travel adapter to plug in your electrical appliances.

These can be easily purchased at department stores or online. (Israeli Voltage is 220!)

Keep large containers at home. Pack travel size containers of lotion, shampoo, etc.

Pack a lightweight collapsible nylon bag in your luggage.

En route, you can use it as a tote for water, purchases, maps, etc.

On the trip home, you can use it as your carry on for your purchases.

**SAFETY**

It’s strongly suggested that you purchase a money holder that is worn *inside* your clothing. As in any tourist area, there are those that would take advantage of travelers. Backpacks, purses over the shoulders, and back-pocket wallets are highly susceptible to pickpockets. You should keep your belongings close to you and concealed.

Many of the hotels have personal safes in your room closet in which you can place your valuables and extra cash. Those that don’t, have safety deposit boxes at the front desk. USE THEM!!!

**AIRPORT SECURITY**

Make a copy of your passport in case the original gets lost. Up until arrival at the first hotel in the land, you should keep your passport on you at all times. However, from the second day and onward, my suggestion to you is to keep the copy on you and put the original in the hotel safe or safety deposit box. NEVER PACK YOUR PASSPORT IN YOUR CHECKED IN LUGGAGE.

Keep your travel documents organized (boarding pass, ID, passport, license) & readily accessible.

You will often need to display these documents more than once.

A lanyard type holder is very convenient and will expedite you through airport security lines hands free.

Make sure your entry documents are completed and ready *before* you get to the airport.

Avoid wearing clothing or jewelry that contains metal.
Avoid wearing shoes that contain metal, have thick soles or heals.

It’s wise to leave your valuables at home. Never travel with any item that is irreplaceable.

Travel with minimal jewelry.

Use colorful luggage tags to easily identify your luggage.

Do NOT use luggage locks unless you have TSA (or equivalent) recognized locks.

Do not pack or bring prohibited items to the airport.

**FLYING**

Snacks for the journey are nice. Be sure to include water and some breathe mints. I highly recommend getting a travel pillow for the flight and bringing a pair of extra warm socks so that you can kick your shoes off. Eyeshades are nice as well. The international part of your flight is a little more than 10 hours long to Israel and more than 11 hours on the way back. If you have trouble sleeping on planes, then I suggest bringing some sleep aid or ibuprofen. Be sure to have stomach medication close at hand as well. I also highly recommend having access to a toothbrush and toothpaste. It is very refreshing to clean up a bit just prior to landing in Tel-Aviv and “dragon breath” is a sin in Israel… ☺

Earplugs will help you from painful ear popping on takeoffs and landings.

A small inflatable travel neck pillow is a wise purchase for long flights.

Motion sickness meds should be carried in your purse in case they are needed in flight.

**CLOTHING**

While traveling to/from your destination, wear *comfortable* clothes. Layers are a good choice.

Wearing a light raincoat/jacket *on* the flight lighten your luggage weight.

Your carry-on should include on clothing change, daily essentials, and toiletries in case there are delays with your luggage.

Once on the tour, there is no need for Sunday morning church clothes. “Casual” and “comfortable” are the key words. Regardless of when you are traveling to Israel, it is a good idea to have a light jacket or sweater for the evenings, especially while in Jerusalem. Even in the summer months it can get chilly in the evening. Sunglasses and a hat are also a must (cap hats and little back bags will be provided on arrival as a gift from “Tour Your Roots”). Sunscreen of at least 30 SPF is also recommended.

There will be days where you will be asked to avoid wearing sleeveless shirts and/or shorts as you will visit “holy sites” (i.e., sites maintained by orthodox Christians and/or Jews who consider shorts and sleeveless shirts as “un holy”/”disrespectful”).

**FOOD, DRINKS & WATER**

It is vitally important for you to drink lots of water while in Israel. Drink more than you think you need to drink. Most people do not get sick because of drinking the water in Israel; they get sick because they don’t drink enough water in Israel!!! Your water regimen should begin before you get on the international leg of your flight. Long airline flights can dehydrate you, so I recommend having at least one liter of bottled water with you for the flight. Of course the attendants will be glad to serve you, but sometimes it is more convenient to have your own. Please, be aware that while in Israel, drinks other than water or coffee have not been included in your meal price. If you desire a soft drink with your dinner it will be charged to your room bill and must be paid by you at the check-out time. It will be very important for you to drink lots of water each day while on the trip as well. Drink bottled water. Most tour busses will have mineral bottled water on board for purchase ($1 each).

Our trip includes 2 meals a day. Please be aware that we will be in Israel so the food will be yammee! ☺

You can bring non-perishable snacks with you (such as candy, gum, nuts, etc) but check online to be sure what’s allowed.

**MEDICATIONS**

Israel is a modern country and most people have no problem drinking the water or eating the food. However, the water and food will be different and this could upset a sensitive stomach. It would be wise to bring some antacids and other stomach medication. Your family doctor can prescribe a general daily antibiotic to ward off some problems if you so desire. Just tell them you will be traveling abroad and they will know exactly what to prescribe. Bottled water will be available almost everywhere we will be. Israel is NOT a third world country and has some of the finest medical facilities in the world. It would be wise to make someone in the group (including myself) aware of any medication(s) you are taking, or special medical needs that you might have.

**Make sure you do purchase a travel and health insurance before leaving on the tour!**

Moreover: Consider packing the following:

* chewable Tums/Rolaids/Imodium, etc
* purse size first aid kit
* disposable packets of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer or towelettes

**CASH AND CURRENCY**

Israelis (still) love the US dollar! You will be able to spend your dollars in most shops. However, they prefer not to have bills larger than a twenty ($20)! You will be able to change some money into shekels if you desire but it is generally not necessary. You will begin to collect shekels in the change you receive from your purchases. The exchange rate is usually somewhere around the 3.5 shekels (“NIS” – New Israeli Shekels) per one US Dollar. You should bring about $40 in one dollar bills for small purchases such as soft drinks or water. Shops prefer CASH to travelers’ checks. Many stores also accept American Visa Cards, American Express, MasterCard and alike. If you intend to use your Visa Card or other credit cards while in Israel, you must call the 800 number on the back of your card and inform your card company that you will be using your card overseas! This will help you avoid having your card rejected when making a purchase.

Many people ask, “How much money should I bring?” This is difficult question to answer… Every part of your tour is paid for, except for each day’s lunch. You should budget between $15-$18 per lunch. The average cost of a Falafel (Israeli Sandwich) and a Soft Drink is $15-18. If your group stops at a self-serve cafeteria, you may expect to pay between $18-$25. In an Israeli cafeteria each item has a price. Please, be sure that you know what the cost per item is before putting it on your plate!Many have ignored this only to find themselves being charged excessive amounts.

My personal recommendation is that each person has about $250-300 for the trip. If you plan to buy large quantities of souvenirs, then I suggest using your credit card for those purchases to minimize the amount of cash you will need to have on you while touring.

**SHOPPING IN GOD’S PROMISED LAND**

I’m sure you are all familiar with the phrase “Shop till you drop!” ☺ Well, there are many opportunities for this to be true during your visit to God’s Promised Land! You will have an abundance of opportunities to shop while on tour.

In principle, shopping on our tour will be divided into two categories: **tour-group shops** and **regular personal shopping opportunities**.

As a group, you will be brought to some high-quality shops, usually inside sites we will be visiting; these include shops such as **Olive Wood** in Bethlehem or on the Mount of Olives, different possible **"diamond factories”** for finding diamonds and jewelry, and the like…

As it is all over the Western world, tour guides and drivers get a certain percentage of these shopping trips in commissions; **this is a standard arrangement and an integral part of their income**. A direct outcome of this practice is that tour-group shops are usually more expensive than others.

Please never feel, on Tour Your Roots tours, that you are being pressured or are obliged to shop at these shops so as to help the guide and driver increase their income!!!

**FILM & PHOTOGRAPHY**

Many people ask if there is a tax or charge for bringing a video camera into the country. There is no fee for bringing your personal video/digital camera. Make sure that you purchase big enough memory cards (or tapes if you still use the ‘old fashion’ kinds) in the USA, as they will be quite expensive in Israel.

Replace your camera batteries before coming to Israel. Most groups will have a professional photographer take a group shot, which can be purchased for $10 (usually on the Mt. of Olives and at the Jordan River). You are not obligated to purchase these pictures.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

The best way is to use the Wi-fi which is available at almost everywhere you will be – this includes the tour bus! If you prefer to use the “traditional way” to communicate with your loved ones back home, one way to call abroad would be by pre-purchasing a ‘telephone card’ (“Calling Card”, which you can purchase even at shops like “Wall Mart”).

If you prefer to be more available throughout the tour days, international cell phones are needed; check with your local carrier or rent one for the trip.

For instructions on how to make international calls go to <http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/freetool.htm>

If you need to bring your laptop, make sure to carry an adapter to plug it in.

**THE DEAD SEA ‘FLOATING EXPERIENCE’**

We are going to take time to stop and float on the waters of the Dead Sea. It is impossible to sink in the water due to the high mineral and salt content. It is a fun experience. I’ll be giving you safety tips before entering the water. If you intend to enter the water, you will need a modest bathing suit and a pair of old tennis shoes or shower thongs. I recommend old shoes you can just throw away after taking your swim. WARNING: DO NOT WEAR ANY JEWELRY WHILE FLOATING ON THE WATER!!!

**TIPPING & ‘LOVE OFFERINGS’**

Basic tips for the hotel bellboys and waiters are not included in your tour price and will be collected by your tour host (Pastor, Rabbi, leader), in cash, and then will be distributed to different envelopes, to be given to the different services while on the tour. This includes the bus driver and the guide’s tips. If you feel that you have received outstanding service from someone in the hotel, then you can bless him or her more if you choose. It is just as important to make management aware of these stellar employees. Believe me; they will appreciate your comments to their bosses more if you will take the time to put in writing. If you wish to take up an extra ‘love offering’ at the end of the tour for your guide and bus driver, you are welcome to do so, yet, please remember: This extra love offering is OPTIONAL and you should feel NOT feel obliged to contribute!

**IS IT AT ALL SAFE TO GO TO THE HOLY LAND?**

As you are well aware, we live at a special time in human history. Day and night, we are exposed to “wars and rumors of wars” (Matthew 24:6) especially as concerned with Israel and the Middle East. As a result, many potential visitors to Israel ask themselves questions such as, *“Is it a good idea to go on a tour to Israel now?”* or, *“What if a war breaks out while I’m there?”* and, *“What about all these terror threats and attacks?” “How can I explain my decision to go on this tour to my family?”*

Due to a lack of knowledge and objective answers, especially in relation to the great importance of visiting God’s Holy Land and chosen people, *many tend to hastily cancel their tour when hearing of “wars and rumors of wars”.*

The purpose of this letter is to do the exact opposite: Encouraging you, dear brother and sister in the Lord, *NOT to cancel your upcoming planned tour to God’s Holy Land!* Here are two important questions and answers to consider:

**Question #1 - Is it really safe to come visit the Holy Land at this time?**

**Answer: “YES”!** ***It is not only safe, but a very worthy thing to do!***

Let me explain: On my tours, I take every measure needed to protect you and give you a safe and pleasant time while here in the Holy Land! As a married man and a father of four children, I would never put myself, or any tour participants in dangerous situations or potentially troubled places and sites. We *do NOT* visit places that have high risk/chance of being attacked by terrorists. Additionally, *terrorists do not target tour buses and tourist sites because they*, *as much as Jews living in the Land, are in great need of your business.*

*If (God forbid) a war does indeed break out while someone is here on a tour with me*, the Israeli government and infrastructure is very experienced in taking care of the specific needs of foreign citizens and you (along with all other tourists) would be taken care of immediately. *The Israeli officials, together with foreign officials (embassies and consulates officials) are instructed by clear rules, on how to quickly take you out of any dangerous place and situation as soon as possible and to safely get you back home.*

For those of us living here in Israel, we know full well that when a terror attack happens, it is *NOT* as described by the media. For example: When a suicide bomber attacks, the media (both international and domestic) keeps broadcasting the horrible scenes again and again throughout the day, giving the impression that what has happened in this one place is happening all over Israel. *The truth is that one or two hours after the sad incident, Israelis are fully back to ‘normal life’* (i.e., the area is cleaned, the shops which were not hurt, are reopened and people visit the market and board the public busses)! ***Moreover, wars in the Middle East, they are relatively very short.*** For example, the *Six DAY* war (not six months!), *Yom Kippur War* which *lasted a little over two weeks*, and in the summer of 2006, *the “second Lebanonian war” lasted one month.* *Life here in the Land goes back to normal* ***immediately*** *when the war is over!*

*The people of Israel (both Jews and Arabs) are positively affected by your visits.* I have heard many testimonies of tourists who could share the good news to both non-believing Jews and Muslims living in the Holy Land by showing them ***the LOVE OF CHRIST*** ***in a very******PRACTICAL*** ***way*** *and visiting them* ***at a time where they need them most!***

*In conclusion, when there is no full-scale war in the Middle East, it is not only VERY SAFE for a tourist to be here, but it is also VERY WORTHWHILE SPIRITUALLY to come and visit Israel.*

**Question #2 – Why bother? What is the importance in visiting Israel?**

**Answer #2** – Naturally, this is not the place to give you a full sermon on why is it so important to come at this season to the Holy Land (I will do more of this, Lord willing, while guiding and teaching you here in Israel). What I would like to do is to give you few points to meditate on:

1. ***The Holy Land – Israel - is the very cradle of our faith*.** Over 90% of His Holy Word was written here in the Land. When you come, the Bible literally becomes alive and Scripture will never look the same. (I did not invent this – it’s the testimony I hear from my tourists again and again)!
2. ***We ALL have the same father – Abraham*,** who was the first man called by God Almighty to come to the Holy Land and to ‘tour’ (Genesis 12 and on).
3. ***All followers of Yeshua/Jesus belong to the same body*.** Although called in different names (such as the Church, body of Christ, the bride, etc.), all are directly connected to Israel. (See Romans 11:13-32 and Ephesians 2:11-13).
4. ***Gentile believers are called to provoke Israel to jealousy*** (Romans 10:19, 11:11). All who bless Abraham’s descendants will be blessed (Genesis 12:3). What better way to bless than to come and show Christ’s love to the Jews, who are hated by so many?
5. ***Gentile believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them*.** It is your privilege to “breathe on these slain” (Ezekiel 37:1-14, particularly verses 9-10).

If you have further questions or if I can serve you as you prepare to come to Israel, please email me at rami@touryourroots.com

I promise I’ll do my very best to address all your questions in an honest and unbiased way.

In conclusion, ***I urge you again; do NOT cancel your upcoming tour to Israel just because you heard some “wars and rumors of war”!*** In doing so (unless you heard clearly from the Lord saying, you are not supposed to be on this tour) you are going to deprive yourself from great blessings - blessings of following God’s very heart in loving His Chosen ones, blessings of a life changing tour to the very cradle of your faith. ***After visiting Israel – God’s Holy Land - you will never be the same.***

**MORE THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**

ISRAEL TRAVEL FACTS:

<http://www.hotels-of-israel.com/faq.html#hair>

Currency Converter: <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

World Clock: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>

US Dept. of State:  <http://www.state.gov/>

US Transportation Security Administration: <http://www.tsa.gov/public/>

**Prepared for people who travel to the Promised Land with**

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