

# Israel Trip Tips

*"Must" reading for your trip of a lifetime!*

**Please review these overseas travel tips now and 30 days prior to departure. Many require some pre-trip planning and shopping.**

## **Packing for the trip of a lifetime**

### *Extras To Bring*

It is always a good idea when traveling to bring along an extra pair of your prescription glasses and/or sunglasses and prescription medicines (with original prescription and generic name for drug). These items are available overseas, but are generally time-consuming to locate and may make you miss a day of sightseeing. Also, while items such as camera batteries and film are readily available, they are generally much less expensive in the U.S.

### **Helpful items to bring from home . . .**

- o Small binoculars
- o Kleenex
- o Packaged snacks
- o Hand sanitizer
- o Small calculator
- o Melatonin (sleep aid)
- o Travel blow dryer (low wattage, less than 500)
- o Travel umbrella
- o Cold medicine
- o Copies of all prescriptions
- o Nylon gym bag for return trip
- o Lots of digital memory!
- o Extra pair of glasses or contacts
- o Laptop for email and pic downloads

### *Fanny packs/Backpacks*

Many past tour attendees have found it convenient to wear a “fanny pack” or backpack for carrying such items as your camera, wallet, film, pen, sunscreen, fold-up umbrella, compact Bible, passport, binoculars, etc. Other people use camera or athletic-type bags. The buses in Israel are safe and locked when you get off at each stop, so leaving things on the seat is safe and ok. It is also a good idea to bring a few small packages of Kleenex for bathroom stops there is a good chance you will need them!

### *Clothing*

For the site tours comfort before fashion is the key! The weather varies from day to day at this time of the year in Israel. Generally, layered clothing works best as you may need a jacket early in the day and short sleeves in the afternoon. A jacket, sweaters, and shirts (long or short sleeved) seem to work the best. Wrinkle free clothes are a must! Check the weather forecast each evening for the next day's suggested clothing.

Women must cover their shoulders and knees for Holy sites-at Capernaum in Galilee and the Temple Mount area in Jerusalem. They've even banned very tight-fitting jeans and / or leggings in the past. Leggings or tight-fitting stretch pants are not allowed on the Holy sites unless knees are covered by a skirt. Specific dress requirements will be announced the night before touring.

Always wear comfortable walking shoes for the day tours. There is no reason to bring dress shoes or dress clothing. Think casual!

### *Quick Tip*

Many internet sites (Yahoo, Excite, etc.) have a section where you can look up international weather forecasts. We recommend bookmarking these pages and checking periodically before departure. This will give you a good idea of what to expect weather-wise and help with your packing decisions. Looking at a ten day forecast a couple of days prior to departure is incredibly valuable in determining your clothes selection! If you don't do Internet, ask a family member to give you the information.

## **Money** *Local Currency*

Dollars are widely accepted in Israel and it's easy to exchange currency if necessary. You will pay a small charge for conversion, which makes little difference in changing small amounts like \$20 dollar bills but you should always compare several exchange rates before converting large amounts of dollars, to be certain you are getting a fair rate of exchange.

Many tour participants find it's good to have 100 or so one-dollar bills and several five-dollar bills on their tour. They come in handy for small purchases and you can keep \$10 or \$20 in your pocket while leaving your wallet and/or purse in the bus. You can use larger bills, but if you want to get change for a \$100 bill, you will get local currency, not dollars. In Israel the currency is called the Shekel. It is currently trading at approximately four shekels to one dollar.

## **Credit Cards**

Many people prefer to charge purchases on a credit card rather than carry a large amount of cash. The benefit to this is that the conversion rate is the actual rate of exchange for that day (+ 2 % fee from the company). If, for instance, you purchase an item with your MasterCard in Israel for 125 shekels, the charge will come out in dollars on your statement-at the current international exchange rate, which is the best rate of exchange available. However, you generally will find the need to have a few dollars or shekels in your possession for small purchases like Cokes, newspapers, postcards, etc. Visa is the most accepted credit card, then MasterCard, American Express, and Diners Club. Others, such as Discover, are more difficult to use.

## **Travelers Checks and ATMs**

Travelers checks are encouraged over large amounts of cash, but when you cash your travelers checks, your change will be in local currency. ATM machines are available but not usually easy to find. They work like machines in the US, in English, but they dispense the local currency, not dollars.

## *Personal Checks*

Always bring a few preprinted personal checks from your local bank—a number of places accept them for merchandise, especially for large items like oriental rugs or nice jewelry. Apparently they figure that if you can afford the \$3,000 trip, your check will clear. Sometimes a check is accepted when a credit card isn't!

## *Passports*

### *Obtaining a Passport*

By now you should have a valid passport that is **good through six months past your date of return**. If you don't yet have a passport, you need to start the process as soon as possible. You can pick up an application at either the post office or county courthouse (varies by area). Applications can also be downloaded off internet ([http://travel.state.gov/download\\_applications.html](http://travel.state.gov/download_applications.html)). You will need a certified copy of your birth certificate (the one with the footprints doesn't qualify :-)) to submit with the application. If you don't have a certified copy, you can request one by calling the department of records at the capital of the state in which you were born. There is usually a fee for this and it can take several weeks to receive it.

### *Traveling with Your Passport*

Rule #1, always keep your passport with you (not in your luggage) while traveling unless it is locked in a secure place, such as the hotel's safe.

Before leaving home, make two photocopies of the main page of your passport. Leave one with someone you could easily contact while you are on your trip and take the other with you (keep it in a separate location than your original passport). Remember, you will need to be able to produce your original passport at all airports in the U.S. and abroad, along with your plane tickets.

Always keep your passport and plane tickets with you while traveling. Never pack them in a suitcase that will be checked. This means you will need to decide where to keep them on your

body. Some people purchase safety pockets that attach to your belt and hang inside your pants. Others simply keep them in their front or back pockets, or a well-guarded purse. If you lose your passport, it's impossible to leave a foreign country or get past customs in the U.S. until you get a new one.

## Flights

### *Sleep Aids*

We recommend that you consider purchasing some items that will help you sleep on the long flights to and from Israel, as well as through the night for the first few nights overseas. Ask your doctor if he thinks sleeping pills are appropriate.

A neck pillow that allows you to sleep sitting-up without hurting your neck. Some of the larger planes have them built in to the seat. Other suggestions are sleeping shades (cloth eye covers that block light) and ear plugs. Noise cancellation headphones and an iPod with some smooth music are excellent if you can afford them.

Blankets and small pillows are provided. Wear comfortable and loose shoes on the overseas plane ride (shoes that tie are best). Your feet will retain fluids over the course of the flight but will return to normal after landing. If you can locate them, "*No Jet Lag*" pills really help.

Many people believe that the less you eat, the better you sleep. And we encourage you to sleep as best you can. Even short naps are helpful. Bring a toothbrush, deodorant, wash cloth, make-up, etc., as well as a change of clothes, in your carryon bag to use on the plane the next morning.

## How You Can Beat Jet Lag

### Eating

1. Eat sparingly, less is better!
2. Eat cautiously if turbulence is predicted.
3. Minimize food intake to get maximum rest. You'll doze off faster & sleep more soundly if your stomach is not stuffed.
4. Avoid gas-forming foods, i.e. beans, cabbage, onions, raw apples, cucumber, melons, foods cooked in grease.
5. Try to match your eating time with your "stomach clock." For instance, if dinner on the plane is going to be significantly later than your regular time, eat something at the airport before boarding, then pass up the in-flight feast.

### Drink lots of water on the plane!

Dr. F. S. Preston of British Airways advises crew members to drink between 4-5 pints of fluid, preferably water, when they fly to prevent dehydration. The ventilation system tends to remove moisture from the cabin and body tissues, causing dehydration sufficient to cause fatigue and irritability. When passengers get dehydrated and feel thirsty, they tend to replenish their fluid deficits with the wrong fluids-liquor, soft drinks, coffee and tea.

### Remember:

- o Liquor is almost twice as potent at high altitude.
- o Soft drinks cause abdominal discomfort. At 35,000 feet, gases in the stomach and intestines increase approximately 20% because of the decrease in atmospheric pressure. Soft drinks worsen this condition.
- o Coffee and tea are mild diuretics and speed up the loss of liquids through the kidneys.
- o The best fluids to drink are water and fruit juices.

### Exercise

1. Get out of your seat and move around the cabin from time to time.
2. Try some isometric exercises while you are in your seat.
3. Do a few calisthenics and stretches in the aisle or lavatory to get your circulation going.

## Rest

1. Recline your seat back.
2. Put a pillow behind your head-it's a good psychological device.
3. Cover yourself with a blanket-it will trap body heat, keep you warm, and help you fall asleep faster.
4. When you arrive in Israel, don't go to bed (not even for a nap) until well after dinner. This will help you adjust to the time change much more quickly.

## Important Note!!!

You are provided luggage tags that must be attached to the handles of your luggage before you check your luggage in at your home airport. This insures that your luggage will be handled with our group at both airports and hotels. It also speeds up customs as identifying you as part of a tour group. An extra tag is given for purse or camera bag.

## Luggage

You must limit your luggage to one checked piece and one carryon per person - this is due to limited luggage space on the buses.

## Carry-ons

In addition to make-up, toiletries, medicine, and two good books (a gripping novel by Frank Peretti is suggested :-), pack at least one change of clothing and two changes of underwear in your carryon. In the unlikely event your luggage is lost or delayed, this can be a life saver. If your luggage is lost, you may not see it for a few days. Pray now that your luggage won't get lost!

## Carry-on Dimensions & Restrictions

Your carryon should not be larger than 45 inches in circumference and under 18 pounds. Because airlines are getting very sticky about this, we recommend that you accurately measure your carryon to make sure it does not exceed the limit-even if you have used it before without a problem.

## Customs

Going through customs into foreign countries is generally slow. When arriving in Israel, if you have lost a suitcase, tell a *Compass* staff member and they will show you where to go to fill out the forms. We usually have about one out of every 100 people that don't have all their luggage make it. Usually the lost luggage is back to you in two days to four days. Again, remember to pack an extra change of clothes and two changes of underwear in your carryon.

Always include necessities such as make-up, camera, valuables, medicine, etc. in your carryon. Before leaving, pray that the Lord will allow all of your bags to arrive with your flight, and, if God allows your bag to be delayed or lost, that you will have a Christ-centered response as the "chosen one."

You are allowed to bring back to the United States up to \$400.00 of foreign goods per person in most countries, but for Israel, it has "*Favored Nation*" status. So you have no limit as long as it's not for resale. You will receive a stamped form when you arrive in Israel regarding customs-keep it with your passport-you will need it when you leave the country.

Many times, going through customs will try your ability to be a Christian witness. Tip: Always remember that you are in a foreign country and things are not like the U.S. So, be flexible and pray a lot!

## First Day of Trip

The first day of your trip is a long one as most will depart a North American city and continue on to Israel. Since we are traveling against the time zone we will arrive in Tel Aviv the next day. With this in mind, it is important to be organized enough to get a good night's sleep the day before you depart. That way, as the little world travel problems crop up, you are rested and better able to properly respond to any situation that God allows.

Get to the airport two hours prior to departure for international flights. This insures you have time to deal with check-in and any problems that might crop up.

If for some reason you don't get seated next to your spouse or travel mate, ask the gate agent to try to find seats together. You can usually work it out before getting on the plane but once or twice we have had to do some seat trading after we boarded the plane.

## **Dietary Concerns**

### *Water*

The water in Israel is of the same quality as the U.S. and is unlikely to cause you any problems. However, it is always safer to drink bottled water whenever possible. Your bus will have an ample supply of bottled water at very reasonable prices, usually \$1 per bottle. The bus drivers sell them as a side business. Soft drinks are usually available at food stands at most sites.

### *Special diet requests*

Special meals are also available from the airlines. Once you have received your tickets, call the airline direct and they will help you with your request.

### *Meals*

Meals-breakfast, lunch and dinner-are included in the trip except for during your free day in Jerusalem or Eilat, and any airport layovers. Ice tea and water are provided at lunches and dinners, juices and coffee for breakfast. Soft drinks and wine may be purchased as well as bottled water for most meals.

### *Laundry*

Laundry service is available at most of the hotels. A few items are not too costly but before you send a large number of items to be cleaned, check the total costs (usually a laundry list is left in your room). The clothes are returned to your room.

## **Name Badges**

You will be sent a Compass tour name badge prior to your departure from home. You are required to wear your badge during all day trips for both security and admission to sites, as well as your meal ticket. If you lose your badge, see a *Compass* staff member for a replacement.

## **Electricity**

You will need to purchase a converter for shavers, hair dryers, curling irons, etc. These are usually available at any Radio Shack or Wal-Mart. Electricity in Israel and Jordan is 220 volts / 50 cycles.

## **Phone Calls**

Direct calls to the U.S. are simple and work best dialing direct from a pay phone using a calling card or prepaid phone card. You can call from the hotels using their system, but they charge extra-a lot extra. The time difference is ten hours for the West Coast, seven for the East Coast.

## **Internet**

Most hotels have Internet access. Some for a log-on fee, some free of charge. So you can bring a laptop and stay in touch by email.

## **Tipping**

Tips in Israel are prepaid. Your bus captain may collect an additional tip for your guide and driver at the end of the tour for a job well done.

## **Guides, Buses & Tours**

### ***Buses/Tours***

For larger groups, you will be assigned a bus number and a corresponding color (#1-Blue, #2-Red, #3 Green, etc.). This will be your bus assignment for all day trips. You will receive your bus assignment 2-3 weeks prior to departure. When you receive your assignment, if you are not assigned a bus with your travel mate(s) or group, please call Compass immediately.

## *Israeli Guides*

Your Israeli guide and bus driver usually work together as a team. They are Jewish, and rarely Christian, but will become like family to you by the time you leave Israel. In crowded places like the Old City of Jerusalem, always be aware of where your guide/flag is as it is very easy to get lost. You'll ride the same bus each day.

The guides also receive income, in the form of a small commission, from several gift shops at some of the sites that we will visit. This is part of the culture in Israel and is considered part of the guides' income. The gift shops know the guides can stop anywhere along the route and this encourages them to stop at their place. The souvenir prices at these "bathroom stops" are very similar to other shops and the guides usually choose the locations based on cleanliness of rest rooms, acceptance and security of credit cards, broadness of stock, price, etc. So you generally don't pay more even though the guide is getting a commission. For major purchases, always offer less!

## *A word to the wise . . .*

If you think you may want to purchase items from the many roving souvenir salesman at a site, put a few dollars in your pocket before you get off the bus so you don't have to open your wallet in front of them. Although rare, there have been instances of pick-pocketing.

## *Bus Etiquette*

Always be considerate of your fellow passengers while the guides are talking. If you are talking to your seat mate it makes it harder for those nearby to hear the guide clearly. Also, with the obvious exception of the guide, the seats toward the front with the best view should be rotated each day. When given a few minutes for bathroom stops, shopping or free time, please return to the bus promptly so we can continue without delay. The 5-10 minutes spent gathering stray passengers at a site can add up to shortened site time or Bible studies later.

**Most of all . . .**

> Pray for God's blessing on this trip and that He will use our interaction with the Jewish people to His glory.

Questions Compass (800) 977-2177