

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is essential. Read the policy details so you know what to do in the event of ill health, injury or theft. Keep receipts for any expenses that you may wish to claim. Travel insurance policies may exclude coverage in countries (or regions of countries) that are deemed to pose more than the usual risks. If in doubt, check with your insurer before leaving home to confirm that you are covered. Practice can differ from company to company.

We have partnered with Travelex for essential travel protection. To enroll, call 800-228-9792. Location number 10-0158.

Local currency

The new Israeli shekel (NIS) is divided into 100 agorot. Foreign currency (especially United States dollars or euros) is usually accepted, though change will often be given in shekels. Paying in foreign currency on items such as accommodation and car rental avoids Value Added Tax of 17%. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted, but pilgrims' hostels usually require payment in cash.

Weather

Israel temperatures are usually in the high 70's (20C) mostly moderate temperatures with warm days and cool nights. Tel Aviv, and Tiberias is usually pleasant. Jerusalem is dryer and cooler, particularly at night. Short sleeves are fine during the day through November. On November nights, you will probably need a light sweater or jacket. The rainy season extends from October to early May. Elevation changes can also influence the weather.

What to wear

Wear comfortable clothing and walking shoes. Avoid anything that is tight or restrictive. Dressing and acting in a manner that shows respect for the host country's social and cultural values should be the pilgrim's aim. Women should carry an easy, packable scarf/shawl for covering up in Israel's holy places. You'll find the sunlight is stronger than what you're accustomed to, even in the winter, so we recommend sunglasses and a hat for all.

Food (meals are buffet)

Nutritious breakfasts and ample dinners are usual in tourist hotels in the Middle East, though pilgrim hostels offer simpler fare. Seasoned travelers usually eat a hearty breakfast, and perhaps take a piece of fruit or bread roll to eat at lunchtime. Falafel, a fried ball or patty made from chickpeas or fava beans, is common lunch fare.

Outdoor markets may be tempting, but avoid uncooked, undercooked or reheated food; raw fruit or vegetables (unless they can be peeled or you wash them first); ice cream (except for internationally packaged and labelled brands); dairy products; shellfish; food that has been exposed to flies; or dishes that require a lot of handling to prepare.

Tips

Tips have been included for your guide and driver and at the hotels. At lunches, tips are on your own. Tipping in varying degrees is expected in all Middle Eastern countries. Pay scales are much lower than in the West, so tipping or "baksheesh" is often necessary for waiters and hotel staff to gain a livable wage. A supply of small change (such as \$US1 notes) is handy for this purpose.

Other things to note

There are no bathrooms on the busses. At the sites you visit there will be bathrooms so we encourage you to use the facilities whenever they are available. You will have time for shopping. In Bethlehem, you will be taken to a souvenir shop owned by local Christians. In order to charge your electronics in Israel, you will want to purchase a Type H plug adapter.