

### **Preparation**

Your tour will be an intense learning experience. Those who prepare will get more out of their tour. Please take some time and read the following information.

In preparation for the trip, it is recommended that you walk, get some sun and drink extra water. Dehydration is a BIG concern—so start drinking extra water now. Dehydration begins on the plane, so consider eliminating caffeine 24 hours before you leave and stick to water and juices on the plane—this will also help with jet-lag.

### **What travel documents do I need?**

You must have a valid passport with expiration date not less than 6 months after your return date. No visas are necessary for individuals with U.S. or Canadian passports. Keep your passport with you at all times. Contact Morning Star Tours to verify a need for a visa if you are from any other country.

### **Passports**

We need a **photocopy** of the picture page of each tour member's passport. If you have not sent us this copy, please do so immediately.

DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOCOPIES. Do not pack your passport or airline ticket! Photocopies and a couple of passport-type photos can help you get replacements more quickly if the originals are lost or stolen. Carry photocopies separately in your luggage and keep the originals in your money belt.

### **Luggage & Airline regulations**

Your checked suitcase: The US restriction is not larger than 62 inches (height x width x depth) and 50 pounds. The airlines allow two checked suitcases but due to the bus size, you are only allowed to take one suitcase.

Your carry-on: Delta restricts that it not be larger than 45 inches (9" x 14" x 22") and may not weigh more than 40 pounds when combined with your personal item (ie: purse, camera bag, backpack, etc.).

Since lost luggage is always a possibility, pack essential toiletries, medicine, jewelry and enough clothes for a few days in your carry-on. If your luggage does not make it, you could be without luggage 1-2 days. Just keep this in mind when packing your carry-on. Another packing tip would be for couples and families traveling together to pack "half and half" suitcases. In the unlikely event that one suitcase goes astray, neither traveler finds him or herself totally without some changes of clothes for the day or two until the wayward bag catches up to them. On more than one occasion, couples who took this advice have been very glad they packed jointly.

Be sure to check current TSA regulations before packing; this information can be found at: [www.tsa.gov/travelers](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers)

Airline Seating Requests: If you have a specific request for seating or special meals, please alert us in writing at least 60 days in advance of your trip. Every effort will be made to secure the seats you have requested. However, the final decision on seat assignments rests solely with the airlines and, in some cases, with the gate agent. We recommend arriving early for check-in if you would like to ensure your seating requests.

### **Packing**

- **PACK LIGHT!** You are allowed one checked piece of luggage and one carry-on.
- Pack versatile, comfortable clothing that you can layer for warmth or coolness. It is wise to bring a light jacket or sweater. While daytime temperatures should be pleasant, evenings can be cool, especially at higher elevations such as Jerusalem.
- Most churches and Orthodox holy sites require respectful dress. This generally means shoulders and knees must be covered for both men and women, and men must cover their heads (a baseball cap is adequate). On days that we visit these sites, we will warn you to dress accordingly. Nylon pants or pants with zip-on/off legs provide an easy, quick cover-up. Women could also pull on a light skirt over shorts and use a scarf to cover the shoulders.
- Ziploc bags in a variety of sizes come in handy: to store snacks, a wet swim suit, rocks or pottery shards. Also larger ones can be used as "drawers for your suitcase" to hold socks, etc. It can also make it easier to repack should your suitcase be searched at customs.

### **Laundry**

Israel has plenty of laundromats, but *you* don't always have plenty of time. We will be keeping you busy everyday and you will not have time to do your own laundry except in your room. Laundry can be sent out, but you must make sure there is enough time to get it back before we pack up and leave. Bring clothing that can be washed in your hotel room and will dry quickly. You can purchase small packets of Woolite and/or laundry detergent (check with Wal-Mart, Target and/or the Container Store) for this purpose.

### **How much walking will we have to do?**

Israel is a land of beautiful hills and valleys, and we will be walking on several of them. The walks are not extremely strenuous, but please be prepared to do significant walking over uneven terrain. The best way to prepare is to begin walking on a daily basis in the shoes you will be wearing while in Israel.

### **Health & Other Concerns**

While we cannot take responsibility for those with special dietary needs or allergies, vegetarians and people with diet restrictions usually manage fine with a little flexibility and willingness to supplement meals as needed.

### **Are any shots or vaccinations required for travel to Israel?**

You do not need shots or vaccinations to visit Israel.

### **What is the food like in Israel?**

Breakfast and dinner are buffet-style with many selections of meat, fish, vegetables, fruits and desserts to choose from. The food is great!

### **Can we drink the water?**

Yes, the water in Israel is okay—especially at the hotels we stay at. And, for the most part, you don't have to worry about water or food. If you're not sure or want to play it safe, you can buy bottled water. Bottled water will be available on your bus for a \$1 per bottle (this is another good reason to bring cash along).

### **Will I get motion sickness on the bus?**

Most people have no problems on the buses we use. However, if you are prone to or get motion-sick easily you may want to bring along some Bonine or Dramamine (found over the counter at most pharmacies).

### **What should you bring on the bus?**

Bring your journal, Bible, water bottle, sunglasses, hat, etc. In most cases a fanny pack, shoulder bag or even just shorts with extra pockets should suffice. During the land tour, when we're on/off the bus all day, put what you need for the day into a backpack or tote and just leave it on the bus. While you are touring a site, the driver will either stay with the bus, or it will be locked and secured. The bus will be air-conditioned, so you may want a light sweater if you have a tendency to get cold.

### **Your Hotels**

Our accommodations are clean, comfortable hotels. Each room will have 2 twin beds that can be converted to 1 king size bed or left separate. Most hotels have hair dryers and washcloths in the room but it cannot be guaranteed; if you rely on either of these items, please be prepared to bring your own. Hint: packs of inexpensive washcloths can be purchased at Wal-Mart or Target and can be thrown away as you go.

### **Will my electric appliances work in Israel?**

The electric current in Israel is 220-volt A.C., single phase, 50 cycles which requires special adapter plugs (round two-prong *European* type for Israel; three prong for Jordan). If you take appliances (hair dryer, electric razor, etc.) that are suitable for both 110 and 220 volts, you will need a set of adapter plugs. If your appliance is for 110 volts only, you will also need a converter. Please check your appliance before going to verify its voltage. Don't assume that it will work unless it clearly indicates that it will run on 220 volt.

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

That is the key question someone considering this trip must ask—and answer—to his or her satisfaction. This sheet will detail what we are doing to minimize risk and to ensure the safety of our group.

For anyone who watches the news, Israel appears to be an extremely dangerous place. And, in some parts of the country, that might be true. However, the reports on television and in the newspapers focus so intensely on these isolated events that they make the problem seem more widespread than it really is. The vast majority of Israel is, statistically, safer than any urban area in the United States.

The violence and terrorism in Israel has been centered in very specific areas and often occurs at very specific times. These include:

- The public transportation system, especially the Egged Bus Line, bus stops, and some commuter trains.
- Discotheques, nightclubs, schools, malls, and other locations where Israeli teenagers and young adults congregate.
- Jewish residential areas, including Hadera, Netanya, and Haifa which are located on the coast near the West Bank.
- The Jewish commercial and social heart of Jerusalem, especially the area bounded by Jaffa Road, King George Street, and Ben Yehuda Street.
- The Gaza Strip and the West Bank, especially where Jewish settlements are in close proximity to Arab population centers (such as Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm, Hebron, and Ramallah).
- Jewish markets just prior to the beginning of the Sabbath (Friday afternoon), Jewish night spots and pedestrian malls just after the end of the Sabbath (Saturday night), and during Jewish religious holidays (Passover, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, etc.).

The following steps have been taken on this tour to avoid places and times where violence has occurred:

- We will use a private motorcoach, not public transportation, for the entire trip.
- We will not travel into the Gaza Strip. (We will not visit Hebron, Samaria, or Shechem/Nablus.)
- We will not visit Haifa or the other modern Jewish cities located on the coast near the West Bank. (They have no biblical significance.)
- When in Jerusalem, we will avoid malls, schools, and other modern sites
- We will remain in constant contact with the land operator throughout the trip. Should any potential problem arise, we will immediately change our itinerary to remain clear of any trouble spot.

We take the safety of the group very seriously, and we expect all participants to follow these precautions. Any individual who violates the safety rules established for the group will be asked to return home early at his or her own expense.

***What will airport security be like?***

Airport security for flights to Israel is among the most thorough in the world. Expect a complete check of your suitcase and hand luggage. This is often accompanied by a set of specific questions asked by a highly trained Israeli security specialist. Though you might feel intimidated, remain calm. The entire procedure is designed with your personal safety in mind. We can be thankful that Israel is so security conscious!

**Packing Hint:** Packing in Ziploc bags can make a search of your suitcase much easier!

### **Money**

While many people spend very little during the course of the tour and still have a great time, be prepared with reliable access to funds for your daily needs. These may include extra and non-included lunches, additional beverages at meal times, snacks, and souvenirs. You can plan to spend between **\$10-25** per person per day.

It's important to have an alternative in case one money method doesn't work. It's important to have an alternate cash source. We recommend bringing at least two of the following money options:

- **ATM card**
- **Credit card**
- **Cash**

A Visa or MasterCard **credit card** (American Express and Discover are NOT accepted most places in Israel) also offers excellent exchange rates, as well as important fraud protection. Use your credit card for hotel expenses, meals, souvenirs, and other major purchases. While many credit cards can also be used for "cash advances" at ATMs, steep interest rates and fees make this an option for emergencies only. Before you leave, get a 4-digit PIN code for your card just in case, and find out about fees and interest charges. As at home, save all receipts until you can verify your statement.

We strongly recommend that you bring at least one **ATM debit/cash machine card**. Using an ATM card is like writing a personal check: the money is withdrawn from your checking account. While they have Visa or MasterCard symbols on the front, ATM cards are *not* credit cards. Your card allows you to get cash from Israeli ATMs at a rate close to the excellent interbank/wholesale exchange rate. To use your card overseas, it must have a Cirrus or Plus symbol on the back. You also need to know your four-digit PIN code. Many machines do not accept longer codes and may not have alphabetical equivalents marked. Check with your bank for overseas transaction fees and daily withdrawal limits before you leave.

Although credit cards and ATMs are used throughout Europe and Israel, they are not always accessible. We recommend that you bring **cash** (in US dollars) for those times when your card is eaten, the computers are down, or

you simply can't find the right type of ATM. You will find that smaller bills (\$1 and \$5 bills) are handy in many instances. Our suggestion: bring (100) \$1 bills, in addition to any \$20 and \$50 bills you desire to bring. These small bills can be used to purchase water, snacks, etc. without receiving lots of shekels in return.

Finally, photocopy all of your cards and jot down the **emergency phone numbers**. Remember, 800 numbers generally do *not* work outside the US, so get a direct number with area code.

**Getting foreign currency before you go:** You are welcome to convert dollars to shekels before you go. However, most merchants accept the dollar and will give you change back in shekels. Keep in mind that exchange rates can fluctuate so just before you leave, go to [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com) and check the rate.

**Money Belt:** A money belt is essential for the peace of mind it brings and WE STRONGLY ENCOURAGE all participants use one. You could lose everything except your money belt, and the trip could still go on. (See the attached article by Rick Steves.)

**Money:** Bring your preferred mix of a credit or debit card, a couple of personal checks, and cash. Traveler's checks are an option, but they are often very difficult to use in most shops and stores in Israel. We do not recommend relying on traveler's checks as your main source of money.

**Tippling:** Your guide and driver are generously tipped by Morning Star Tours. Likewise, all hotel rooms and hotel staff are fully paid and tipped by MST. There is no need to tip beyond this. It is not necessary to tip the restaurant staff when group meals are provided, nor is it necessary to tip the hotel staff.

### **Pickpocket Warning**

Be careful in crowds. Watch for distraction tactics such as dropped coins, "accidental" spills, and cute little kids who seem too friendly! Thieves thrive on fresh-off-the-plane tourists. Keep your hands on your bags, sling your day pack across the front and **WEAR THAT MONEYBELT!**

### **Telephones**

To call ISRAEL from the US, dial 011 + 972 (Israel's country code) + local area code number (single digit number-delete 0 if it appears before a number such as 02 for Jerusalem would be just 2) + local number.

To call ISRAEL CELL PHONES from the US, dial 011 + 972 (Israel's country code) + cell area code number (2 digit number-delete 0 if it appears before a number such as 051 would be just 51) + local number.

**To call the US from Israel**, dial 00 + 1 (US country code) + area code + local number.

**Local phone cards:** If you'll be calling home a lot, or calling another European country, use local phone cards (purchased at post offices, convenience stores and newsstands), and dial direct. This will save you money and hassles. Be sure to get the access number you will need to call in order to use this card in Israel!

**US phone cards:** Another, possibly more expensive option, is to bring an international calling card from your long distance provider (Sprint, AT&T, MCI, etc). Be sure to ask for their best price option for calling from Israel to multiple US numbers. If you choose this option, use their toll-free access numbers and double-check for any hotel connection charges. There will be charges from your hotel room to dial a U.S. toll-free number; it may be less to call from a pay phone rather than from your hotel room.

### **Cell Phones**

Your cell phone will NOT work overseas unless it has a special international chip. AMIGO Cell Phone Rentals has made it possible to rent a cell phone for attractive daily rates. If you decide to rent a cell phone, they will deliver the phone to your home several days before your departure, and you will receive a phone number so that friends and family can reach you directly. Airtime rates from Israel to America range from 29 – 49 cents per minute. This is an easy and convenient way for you to stay in touch with friends, family, or the office. For more information, current rates, or to reserve a phone, call (888) 264-4687 or visit [www.amigo-us.com/morningstar](http://www.amigo-us.com/morningstar)

### **Receiving Messages**

You will receive a complete hotel list for your tour prior to departure. Leave a copy with family and friends so they can contact you if necessary. Although the hotels may have fax machines and e-mail, please do not rely on them for receiving personal messages. If family and friends need to reach you, please have them call. For those who have web-based e-mail accounts (such as Yahoo or Hotmail), Internet cafés are another convenient option.

### **Time Change**

Israel is 8 hours ahead of Central Standard Time (so when it is 10:00 PM in Dallas, it is 6:00 AM there). Included in your final documents you will find a hotel list with contact information to leave behind with friends and family (this will arrive approximately two weeks prior to your departure). The best time for anyone to reach you will be between 6:00 – 7:00 AM, but if they call you at 6:00 AM you may think it's your wake-up call!

### **Shopping / Mailing Packages**

On MST tours, we try to minimize the shopping focus that dominates other tours at the expense of sightseeing. But even with our tight security, shoppers manage to infiltrate our groups! BUYERS BEWARE: PLEASE consider your purchases VERY CAREFULLY!!! When buying overseas, purchases can be considered FINAL SALES due to the extreme difficulty of returns and/or refunds. It is important that you be a discerning shopper and do not be forced to buy something you are not comfortable with the cost of. For those who purchase items of any value, it is important that you obtain the merchant information so you may contact them directly in the event of a problem.

**Save money and hassles:** bring a collapsible bag and carry your purchases home. A Hide-Away Tote Bag can be purchased for around \$20 and is perfect for this. Also, please consider the fact that shipping items internationally can be risky for many reasons, such as: items not arriving in a timely manner, incorrect/altered items shipped by the merchant, items breaking in transit, and/or customs/border fees and shipping costs billed to you after the item arrives.

**Customs**

US residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth per person of duty-free goods. For more information, look in the front of your local phone book under "Federal (or US) Customs" or go to [www.customs.ustreas.gov](http://www.customs.ustreas.gov).

**Photography**

Your camera is the most likely thing to get lost, broken or stolen. Bring an expensive one only if you're a serious photographer. It's a good idea to label your camera with name, address, phone and travel e-mail (maybe a good Samaritan will send it back). Snapshots with postcards work fine for those doing scrapbooks. You will want to plan on a minimum of one roll of film each day. Also make sure you bring an extra battery for your camera.

**CAMERA:** For point-and-shoot snappers, put in a new battery before you go and bring another battery along, as well as a trip's worth of film. In addition, digital photographers will need plenty of memory storage or a plan for e-mailing images or burning CDs abroad, plus adequate batteries, chargers, voltage and/or plug converters.

Store everything in a low-profile nylon stuff bag, not an expensive-looking camera bag. Label your gear with your travel e-mail address in case a good Samaritan finds it before a thief.

**Weather**

Autumn weather is very stable with rain likely in November. Expect warm days and cool nights. Average high/low temperatures:

	<u>September</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>
Jerusalem	82 / 65	74 / 58	67 / 54
Tel Aviv	89 / 69	83 / 63	76 / 54
Sea of Galilee	95 / 71	84 / 61	78 / 59
Dead Sea	96 / 81	89 / 72	83 / 61

For more specific weather information, go to [www.weatherbase.com](http://www.weatherbase.com) or [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com).

**More information**

We have compiled lots of information about traveling to Israel on our website. If you have an opportunity and would like to learn more about Israel and other biblical destinations, visit: [www.morningstartours.com](http://www.morningstartours.com) and click on the "resources" tab.

**Most Importantly**

Have fun and enjoy your time preparing for and going to the Land of our Lord. It is our hope that He will give you the special gift of knowing Him better as a result of your time in Israel. We pray that all on your tour have an unforgettable experience and that your hearts will be open to the incredible journey ahead.

*Many blessings to you!*  
*The Staff of Morning Star Tours*