



A Division of Gill Tours Travel, Inc.



VISAS:

Everyone entering Israel needs a passport valid for at least six months from the intended date of entering Israel.

Anyone traveling to Israel as a tourist must travel with a round-trip ticket.

US citizens traveling on a US Passport do not need to obtain a visa prior to traveling to Israel as long as they are traveling as a tourist and plan on staying in Israel for less than 3 months.

If you do not hold a US Passport, you should visit the Embassy of Israel website to identify the specific requirements, http://www.israelemb.org/consular_Visa.html

Bring along your Bible. It is Israel's best guidebook!

What Should I Pack?

In **Israel**, you should plan to dress casually. Select clothes that can be worn in layers if the weather changes. Choose comfort over fashion. Wearing expensive jewelry is a good way to attract unwanted attention. For the things you'll need to carry with you, you may wish to consider purchasing an inexpensive but light-weight **travel pouch** which attaches around your waist and is worn under your clothes. These will be available at most airport concession shops before you leave the US. Travelers have different opinions regarding carrying wallets and purses. Some people believe it's safer to put valuables in a pouch or conceal them, others opt to bring only minimal valuables or to leave them in hotel safes. Whichever you choose, just remember that attracting attention as a tourist is not normally the wisest course of action.

Do not over-pack ... you will be allowed one checked bag and one carry on. You definitely want to leave room in your suitcase for souvenirs. Keep in mind that you'll probably be moving around a good deal, packing and unpacking is less fun than relaxing and touring. "Travel light" is the rule of thumb. Another good idea, if you are traveling with a companion, is to cross-pack. (This means that you would put half of your items in your companion's luggage and vice-versa.) If you have to deal with any lost luggage, this makes it much easier.

It is highly recommend that you bring a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen. Women should bring a scarf , and be prepared to cover their head and shoulders at most holy sites.

Packing anything that is military green or camouflage is not prohibited, but is very strongly discouraged.

Pack a swimsuit for floating in the Dead Sea, which is one of the world's unique experiences. You will also want to pack a beach towel.

Purchase your film and batteries in the US.

It is a good idea to have some cash with you for emergencies, transportation and small purchases. Bring an ATM card and you can get more from **local banks** without having to worry about exchange rates and fees. If you go inside the bank, or to a post office, you'll have to pay a fee. Hotels and money exchangers usually have the worst rates and highest fees. **Beware of money changers on the street.**

Most businesses accept credit cards. Credit card companies usually give you good exchange rates.

Consider bringing a journal, even if you don't normally keep one. Your trip to Israel will be packed with many moving experiences. The time you invest in making some notes of your thoughts, feelings and impressions will serve you well.

Travel Insurance

Many seasoned travelers are not aware that their health insurance will not cover them outside of the country.

For a minimal amount of money, **travel** insurance is a strong consideration.

If you need to cancel your trip due to an unforeseen emergency or serious illness, most of your trip may be non-refundable. In the event you become ill during your travels, finding and receiving medical care may be very frustrating. **Travel** insurance also covers lost baggage, and worldwide emergency assistance coverage.

Our travel partner, Gil Travel, has arranged for an excellent travel insurance package. Call them at 1-800-223-3855 for details, or click <http://www.giltravel.com/insurance.html> for details.

Medications

Before you **travel to Israel**, ask your doctor to write a prescription for any medications you may be taking with you in the event they are lost. Keep all of your medications in their original bottles or packaging and be sure to pack them in your carry-on, not your checked luggage.

Final Preparations

Leave your **Israel travel** information with a family member or friend, include a copy of your passport, your flight itinerary, **travel** itinerary, hotel names and phone numbers. Bring a copy of your passport along with you, perhaps even exchange copies with another travel companion.

Most airlines restrict passengers to one piece of carry-on luggage (in addition to your purse, laptop, camera case). Sizes and weight of carry-on luggage are determined by airline, so be sure to check with airline on dimension requirements before you leave. Keep important items and documents with you at all times.

Do not keep travelers checks, money, valuables or travel documents in your luggage.

Make sure your luggage is clearly tagged on the inside as well as the outside.

Check-in time for international flights is normally two hours prior to departure. When checking in at the airport, a US passport (valid for six months after your return date) is needed as proof of identification to enter **Israel**. Do not leave your luggage unattended for any length of time (no matter how short) or accept packages from strangers to carry on to the plane for them.

Departure Day !!!!

You're at the gate, the group is excited and ready to begin the tour – and the anticipation mounts. The day you have been waiting for is **FINALLY** here. After taking off and checking out all the neat little amenities and freebies, the novelty wears off. Hours and miles across the Atlantic yawn ahead of you.

Here are some tips that will make the journey more fun for you

Dress comfortably for the flight. Wear comfortable clothes that allow freedom of movement as you will most likely be trying to sleep on the flight. Wear shoes that slip on and off easily, which will help out as you pass through security as well as on the aircraft.

You can minimize or even avoid jet-lag if you do not drink alcoholic, caffeinated or carbonated beverages. Choose natural fruit juices and water.

Before you leave, choose a good book that will keep you occupied for most of the flight. Before your return flight, buy another - not only will it pass the flight time quickly but it will become a souvenir of your trip.

Store your coat and anything you are not going to use in the overhead compartment. You'll be much more comfortable with a minimum of things to shift around.

Take off your shoes and make yourself as comfortable as possible right away.

Bring along a moisturizer as the air in the cabin is extremely dry.

Get up from time to time to stretch your arms and legs and facilitate circulation. Ten to twelve hours is a long time to remain seated!

Safety

Here is a little experiment that you (and your travel partner) may want to try. Watch a local news program for your community on television. Then ask yourself, based **only upon** what you have seen on the news, whether **your city** sounds like a safe place to visit! How would you answer someone with the concerns raised by what they saw on the news? You'd likely say, "This is really a very safe place. Of course there are **some places** you'd want to be careful, or avoid at night if you were alone; but overall – you'll really enjoy a visit here. Just come ahead, and plan on a having a marvelous time."

The same is true about Israel! Forget just about everything you have read in the newspapers or seen on TV; because the media tend to focus on the negative aspects of everything. Overall, Israel is a **very safe place to visit**. You are far more likely to run into trouble in any major U.S. city than anywhere in Israel. Behave in Israel the way you would in those cities. Be careful where you go at night and travel in groups when possible.

One of the first things you'll notice when you arrive in Israel is the number of people carrying guns. It can be disconcerting. Soldiers carry them on the streets, in cars and on buses. Soldiers are required to keep their weapons with them, and since so many Israelis are on duty, it is common to stand next to someone on the bus with an Uzi hanging around their neck. You'll quickly get used to it and realize it's a fact of life in Israel and nothing to fear.

Communications

If you have a need or desire to call back to the United States while in Israel, phone cards are readily available for purchase in hotels and a variety of stores. You can also use the standard international calling cards (AT&T, etc.) though you might find it less expensive to use phone cards purchased in Israel. Internet access is available in most hotels for a fee and internet cafes are found within the larger cities. Important numbers: US Embassy in Tel Aviv - (03) 519-74 57 or 75 75, US Consulate in Jerusalem - (02) 622 72 00. If for some reason you need assistance while in Israel, you may access emergency services by dialing 101.

Climate

Israel enjoys long, warm, dry summers (April-October) and generally mild winters (November-March), with somewhat drier, cooler weather in hilly regions, such as Jerusalem and Safed. Rainfall is relatively heavy in the north and center of the country with much less in the northern Negev and almost negligible amounts in the southern areas. Regional conditions vary considerably, with humid summers and mild winters on the coast; dry summers and moderately cold winters in the hill regions; hot dry summers and pleasant winters in the Jordan Valley and year-round semi-desert conditions in the Negev.

Thanks to our partner ***Gil Travel*** for the following climate guide

SUMMER (June/July/August/early September)

Temperatures usually in the high 80's (27C), 90's (32C). Tel Aviv, and Tiberias will be hot and humid (like New York or Miami). Jerusalem is dryer and cooler, particularly at night. Massada and Eilat are extremely hot (possibly above 110F (43C)...but dry. There won't be a drop of rain.

SPRING (late March/April/May) & AUTUMN (late September/October/November)

Daytime temperatures will be very pleasant: around 60-70F (15-21C) degrees in most of the country (still hot, though, around the Red Sea and Dead Sea). Jerusalem will be in the 40-50F (5-10C) in the evening. There'll be some rain - nothing torrential.

WINTER (Dec/January/February/early March)

Winter weather can fluctuate. Some winters are mild and sunny, some severe and overcast. There's often heavy rain and, in January and February, even snow sometimes in some parts of the country. It'll probably be in the 50-60F (10-15C) in most places, but in the 40's (5C) in Jerusalem and the Galilee hills - where it can be very cold at night.

Average Temperatures

		Jan.	Feb.	March	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Jerusalem	C	6-11	7-14	8-16	12-21	15-25	17-27	19-29	19-29	18-28	16-26	12-19	8-14
	F	43-53	44-57	47-61	53-69	60-77	63-81	66-84	66-86	65-82	60-78	54-67	47-56
Tel Aviv	C	9-18	9-19	10-20	12-22	17-25	19-28	21-30	22-30	20-31	15-28	12-25	9-19
	F	49-65	48-66	51-69	54-72	63-77	67-83	70-86	72-86	69-89	59-83	54-76	47-66
Haifa	C	8-17	9-18	8-21	13-26	15-25	18-28	20-30	21-30	20-30	16-27	13-23	9-18
	F	49-63	47-64	47-70	55-78	58-76	64-82	68-86	70-86	68-85	60-81	56-74	48-65
Tiberias	C	9-18	9-20	11-22	13-27	17-32	20-35	23-37	24-37	22-35	19-32	15-26	11-20
	F	48-65	49-67	51-72	56-80	62-89	68-95	73-98	75-99	71-95	65-89	59-78	53-68
Eilat	C	10-21	11-23	13-26	17-31	21-35	24-37	25-40	26-40	24-36	20-33	16-28	11-23
	F	49-70	51-73	56-79	63-87	69-95	75-99	77-103	79-104	75-98	69-92	61-83	51-74
Dead Sea	C	11.4-20	13.2-22	16.2-25.3	19.9-29.3	23.6-33.8	26.8-37.3	28.2-38.9	28.6-38.3	27.2-35.6	23.6-32	18.3-26.6	13.2-21.5
	F	53-68	56-72	61-78	68-85	75-93	80-99	83-102	83-101	81-96	75-90	65-80	56-71

Tipping

Knowing when to tip, how much to tip, how often to tip, etc. can quickly become a tedious chore. We avoid this by charging everyone a gratuity assessment as part of the overall tour price. Our experienced tour guides pay all tips out of the funds collected for that purpose.

While on tour with Waters Excursions, you will not need to be concerned about any tipping for group-related activities. Enjoy!

Shopping

Israel is a good place to buy souvenirs. All of the old towns in Israel have bazaars, but the ultimate is to be found in the Old City of Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv. Favorite times to purchase include leather goods, pottery, crafts, olive-wood carvings and hand blown glass.

Vendors are anxious to bargain. As in other Middle Eastern countries, haggling in Israel is a tradition. Keep the following points in mind when you're shopping:

- It is rare that you should ever have to pay the full price listed on an item or the first price quoted by a vendor. (Note this applies mostly to souvenirs, not everything in the markets and is not true of ordinary retail shops like department stores).
- Always be ready to walk out of a shop and don't be surprised if the sales person follows you out.
- Don't think you'll get any better deal from Jews than Arabs. Sometimes the opposite is true.
- The merchants in the market in the Old City, in particular, can be very aggressive. Don't be intimidated. Remember, you're the customer and it is their job to satisfy you.
- Keep in mind what you can afford and don't let yourself be talked into paying more. You'll see the same (or very similar) items in more than one store, so shop around before you decide.

- Be clear on the exchange rate before you buy.
- Haggling is an art, and involves some gamesmanship, **but it isn't polite to waste a merchant's time** if you have no intention of buying something.

Value Added Tax (VAT) Refund

Tourists who have purchased items with a value exceeding \$100 (including VAT) in stores that are registered with the Ministry of Tourism or in stores participating in the VAT-refund plan are entitled to a refund of VAT when they leave the country.

Stores that offer VAT refund service have a special sign.

To receive VAT refund, ensure that you get a receipt with a list of all the items you have purchased and details of the purchaser. The receipt and purchases must be put into a sealed bag.

Then, **at Ben Gurion airport you should go to the “Change Place.”** If you wish to send the items that you purchased with your luggage, you must declare the purchase at the security check, and present your passport, flight ticket, purchases and receipts at the counter. The attendant will open the bag, examine the contents, sign the receipt, and refund the VAT in any currency minus a commission. The VAT refund can also be sent to your address abroad for an additional charge.

There is no VAT refund for the following items: food, drinks, tobacco products, electrical appliances, cameras, film or other photography equipment.

Meals

Our tour package includes a full Israeli breakfast. If you have never been to Israel, prepare to be amazed. An Israeli breakfast buffet typically includes eggs served a variety of ways, cheeses of several kinds, rice, pastas, an assortment of breads, salads and fresh vegetables, a wide array of fish dishes, humus, a wide variety of olives, huge grapefruits and oranges, and much, much more. (It is not an exaggeration to say that you'll want to bring your camera to breakfast!) Once you see the breakfast – you'll understand why we do not include lunch!

We also provide for a full dinner each night we are in Israel. (A possible exception to this is that sometimes, depending upon flight times and travel arrangements, your final meal may be 'on your own' at the Ben Gurion airport.) Overall, you'll find the food in Israel to be excellent and extraordinary.

Electric Current

Most hotels in Israel will have 220 volts AC 50 Hz. You will need to bring along necessary converters and adapters to operate any 120 volts, 60 Hz appliances such as hair dryers, electric razors, etc.

Current Rate of Exchange

The currency in Israel is the shekel, sometimes called the new shekel. As the economy fluctuates, it is wise to keep an eye on rates of exchange as you approach your departure date. We recommend that you **withdraw money from ATM machines in Israel** in order to get the best exchange rates.

Departing Israel

Israel's airport security is probably the tightest in the world, so we will arrive in plenty of time to pass through security and have our bags examined.

Odds and Ends

Wear very comfortable shoes. The streets of Jerusalem can be hilly and uneven in places. You should **NOT** buy new shoes and bring them with you. Wear them first, break them in and **make certain** they are comfortable and sturdy. You do not want to realize when you are walking on the Mount of Olives that your new shoes are just a little too tight.

Sight-see with your hands free! No one wants to walk around the city holding a soaking wet umbrella and ten different shopping bags. A rain hat and poncho (or rain coat) are a lot easier to deal with than an umbrella. Keep your purchases in your day pack. You'll be less tempted to spend and spend as the pack gets heavier and heavier.

When entering a mosque, be sure to take your shoes off. Be sure to wear modest clothing when visiting any religious shrine.

Three languages are spoken in Israel: Hebrew, Arabic and English. Communications should not be a problem.

Israel meets western standards of sanitation and no special precautions need to be taken. **Both the water and food are safe to consume** and medical facilities, while not quite up to US levels, are more than adequate.

Illegal drug use in Israel is treated very, very harshly, with stiff fines and extremely severe penalties. Being an American citizen **will not** get you out of trouble for a drug-related offense. If you get caught in possession of or using illegal drugs, you will not be allowed to leave Israel, and you will spend many, many years in an Israeli prison. There is no Hebrew word for 'parole'.

ONLINE TOOLS & SITES

Gil Travel – Many excellent resources
eHow – How to Pack for a trip to Israel

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

http://www.ehow.com/how_13072_pack-trip-israel.html

Please feel free to phone me with any questions



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