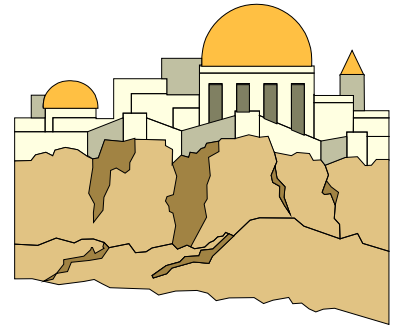


Holy Land Pilgrimage
Ellensburg Presbyterian Church
April 25 – May 8, 2023

Israel has been one of the most important crossroads of the world for 40 centuries and numerous cultures and civilizations have left their mark on this ancient land. But more than that, Israel is the birthplace of faiths that have enveloped the world. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam find their roots in this land. Moreover, for us Christians, Israel is the land where our Savior and Lord lived his earthly life.



A trip there is more than just a tour. It can make the pages of the Bible come alive for you as you walk the places where Jesus walked, gaze upon the vistas He would have seen, and come into contact with the land that touched His imagination - just as it will touch yours. In addition to seeing some of the greatest historic sites in world history, you will spend time in daily devotions, worship, and communion.

Some Basic Information:

-We are organizing this tour and will use tour providers who arrange for all transportation, hotels, tour bus and guides. Everything is handled for us. We are using Educational Opportunities Tours for the USA, as we have for past trips.

-Why 14 days long? You will see trips offered that range from 7 to 15 days. It basically takes 2 days to get to Israel, and one loooong day to get back. Most Christians will make only one trip to Israel in their life, so I think it best to spend the extra time and see as much as possible.

-Our hotel lodging includes a buffet breakfast and dinner. We'll stop for lunch each day at a restaurant and pay for our own lunch out of pocket. This usually costs \$10-15. Also, beverages other than what are on the table are usually an additional cost, typically \$1-2 (sometimes for a 8oz Coke!#\$@!). Tea and coffee are usually only served at breakfast, and cost extra at other times. Drip coffee (Filtered coffee) is sometimes an extra \$1 a cup outside of breakfast and espresso drinks are now becoming common.

-This trips will involve a fair amount of walking and many of the sites we'll visit are a bit difficult to get around. Some of the walking is optional, but if you don't do the walking there are things you will miss. None of the sites are handicapped accessible. You will be tired at the end of each day; especially as you adjust to the 10-hour time difference. You should be able to walk at a normal pace and be able to take walking tours that will come in 1-3 hour segments. If you have any questions about this, come in and talk with me before you sign up.

Cost: The cost for this trip is \$4498.

This included all airfares from Seattle, all hotels, breakfast and dinner each day, our own bus and tour guide, hotel tips, surcharges, and all admission fees to the

sites we'll see. Please note that the cost is 3.5% more if you use a credit card. You can use a credit card for the initial deposit, then send checks for the balance to keep the cost down.

Other costs may include:

-Passport If you don't have one, **get one now!** No visas are needed. You will need one that is **good for six months past May 2023** and if you don't have one, you will not be allowed of the plane. I suggest that you make two photocopies of the information page in your passport. Keep one in your carry on bag, and stash one in your checked baggage. If you lose your passport, this copy makes getting a replacement much easier.

-Travel Insurance (highly recommended), available from EO for about \$450. Pays for the trip if you can't go for almost any reason. \$449 may seem like a lot for this, but paying \$4500 for a trip you can't go on is expensive too. 10% is a normal fee for travel insurance.

You can buy this from EO as a part of the registration process. They have an unusual benefit, in that up until the day before the trip you can cancel for any reason. **BUT...your refund is in a future credit for travel with EO, not cash.**

You can buy this insurance from other agents for less (I often do) and the refund is in cash, but you will need a medical problem, verified by a doctor, that would prevent you from traveling. The devil is in the fine print details. It is also important to note that travel insurance covers things like delayed flights and baggage, medical emergencies, emergency flights back to the US, and more.

-Cancellation fees: If you have to cancel at any time, you lose at least \$100. This is where trip insurance is important! I had a guest cancel late on my last tour for medical reasons, but did NOT take out any insurance. She assumed she could cancel and get a refund, or that I could intervene for her. Did not happen and she lost all she had paid for the trip. I felt terrible, but she had been warned...as you are now.

In all fairness, the tour provider, in order to get lower prices, has to buy the plane tickets, book rooms, etc., well in advance and often can't get a refund if someone cancels. The timing and penalties for refunds are specific and enforced. Please be aware of them:

From day of registration to 105 days prior to departure, you will be charged the \$100 non-refundable administrative fee plus any airline fees.

Additionally, thereafter, you will be charged any airline penalties and a single room supplement if your cancellation forces your roommate into a single plus the following charges:

104-60 days = \$400;

59-45 days = \$600;

44-31 days = 40% of total cost;

30 days to the day of departure = 100% of total cost.

-Lunch for 11 days at about \$12-15 per day, plus \$3-4/day for drinks/water along the way (it's important to stay hydrated). Drink only bottled water outside of hotels. Two of our lunches are included.

-Souvenirs: You will buy stuff, more than you think you will. Plan on it and save room in your suitcase.

-Travel to Sea-Tac. We may try to arrange some shared transport to SEA-TAC.

-TIPS for our guide and bus driver are not required, but are appreciated and normal. Most people suggest \$5/day/person for the guide and \$2.50/day for the driver. If you get special service, an additional tip is warranted. This is a big piece of their income and I suggest you plan for it. All other tips are included.

Money:

Israel uses the shekel for their currency. Currently one USA dollar buys about 3.3 shekels (abbreviated "NIS"). The best way to get local currency is to use an ATM when we get there. You will often have to pay your bank a small fee and sometimes a currency conversion fee, but this is still the most cost effective way to get shekels. Be careful not to take out too much, it's not easy to convert shekels back to dollars.

USA dollars and Euros are accepted by most people who deal with tourists. I would recommend that you take with you about 50 \$1 dollar bills for tips and small purchases.

Credit cards are often accepted at hotels and larger stores for purchases. You will probably pay a 3% conversion fee to your bank to use them and you will find that the small stores in the marketplaces (some of the most fun shopping) will not accept them. Notify your bank and credit card in advance that you will be traveling to Israel and will be using your cards there. Otherwise, fraud protection procedures may freeze your cards when you try to use them. I do not recommend using credit at small shops in the souks.

When Do I sign Up?

-The short answer is ASAP

We are limiting this trip to 32 participants. Beyond that, the group starts to get too big to manage. When this trip was scheduled for 2019 we had 37 people signed up, the last five on a wait list. We anticipate this trip will be filled quickly, so: **Please sign up as soon as possible.**

See the sign up form on the back of the brochure and remember it is easy to sign up online.

Kids

-Some people have asked me about bringing children along. There are some concerns. The plane ride to Israel is loooooong; over 15 hours. That's a long time to sit still. This is a **not** a vacation trip, but a tour and we will spend our time visiting historic Biblical sites that younger children may have little interest in. There is also a fair amount of time in the tour bus and a fair amount of walking. Our meals will have a definite Middle Eastern flair, which some kids may not like. **Importantly, some of the places we will visit are truly the holiest places on the face of the earth and are revered by billions. Children will need to be respectful and subdued**

when they are in them. If you think your child can handle that environment, then they are welcome to come along, but they will need to be on their best behavior.

-In 1999, I took both my children to Israel with a tour group. They were 9 and 13 at the time. They still remember it was one of the greatest experiences of their lives, but they are good travelers.

Is It Safe?

As you know, Israel has been a troubled land for most of its history. In recent years the conflicts between Jews, Palestinians, and other Arabs in the area have ebbed and flowed. Often the troubles are somewhat isolated and look worse on CNN than they really are. Our local guide will know what is happening on the ground. I have read reports from other tour groups that have been visiting Israel in the past year and have found that they have had few problems and no danger. I had no problems as a solo traveler several times. Still, concern is reasonable, but most studies show that for tourists, Israel is safer than the USA.

WOW...this trip is Expensive. I've found other trips on the internet that cost much less.

-Costs for trips can be deceptive, because often the low price advertised doesn't include everything. It's easy to find a \$2500 trip advertised, but that doesn't include tax, tips, entrance fees, airline fuel surcharge, and usually originates in New York. Often, money is saved by staying in marginal hotels and running the trip for only 8 days (5 days of touring). I have decided to include all the extra fees and costs up front in the price for our trip and that makes it look more expensive than other tours that hide these costs in the small print.

Baggage: This is tough. You can bring one suitcase that weighs no more than 50 pounds, and one additional carry-on bag. Laundry and dry cleaning are usually available in hotels, but -just like here- it's very expensive. I hope to arrange for a local laundry service to pick up and deliver clothes for us in Jerusalem. Remember, that you will need to handle your own luggage, with a cart, in the airport as you go through customs.

I would suggest a few things. First, take with you a carry-on bag that has one change of clothes. Yes, baggage does get lost sometimes and this gives you an extra day of clothes while your baggage is being found. Second, do not take any expensive items that are optional. They can be lost, stolen, or present problems when coming through customs. Third, leave room in your suitcases for souvenirs.

Don't pack liquids in your carry-on luggage. If you want water on the flight, bring an empty bottle and fill it up after you pass security. Bring wash and wear clothes and some laundry soap and do a little wash in your hotel sinks. **Never pack in checked luggage anything you can't live without.**

Medication:

You should bring a full supply of any medication you need in their original containers and a copy of your prescriptions. **Carry your medication on your person, not in checked luggage.** You may wish to bring simple items like aspirin, anti-histamine, and an anti-diarrhea medication with you (see below).

Some special things to take:

-Travel pouch: I sometimes call these “tourist dork alert” pouches, because they immediately identify you as a tourist. But I use one on every trip I take, including the trip where my friend lost his wallet out of his zippered back pants pocket to a pickpocket in Rome.

You can buy one that hangs around your neck (the most secure), or one that goes around your waist and holds passport, cash, and cards. Either way, I highly suggest one.

-Poncho: It can rain and we won't stop touring. I suggest a rain poncho, which works better than an umbrella for extended times in the rain. I do take a small umbrella, for brief times in the rain or to use with a poncho. I don't mean those cheap, super thin ponchos that can never be folded up again. I suggest you buy a travel poncho like the FROGG TOGGS Ultra-lite2 Waterproof Breathable Poncho, again on Amazon. It's about \$15, but if we all buy them, it will guarantee us a rain free trip.

-**Hat and scarf**: Men will want to have a hat, because in a few places we will need to have our heads covered (like the Western Wall). We will also be outside much of our touring time. You may want a hat to keep the sun off your head and face.

Some of the churches we will go in will require that women have covered shoulders and upper arms. A short sleeve shirt is OK, but if you plan to wear sleeveless shirts, bring a scarf to cover up when needed (and one that is not see through). There will be places both men and women will need to have their knees covered as well.

Electricity:

Most electrical outlets in Israel are 230v and use an unusual three prong plug (NOT the European plug). I believe that some of our hotels will have a single 110v plug in each bathroom and a hair dryer. That said, I suggest you do not bring along anything that cannot run on 223 volts. Most all modern electronics can

But you can find the Israel type H plug, the European type C plug, or even the German type F. A little maddening. I suggest you bring a type H and a type C. they are cheap. They adopt our USA plugs (technically type A or B) to be used in hotel plugs, but they do not convert 230v to 110v. Plug a 100v anything into one of these and it will burn up.

Cell Phones:

Does your cell phone work in Israel? Maybe. Most newer phones can be set up for international coverage. I warn you, this can be very expensive – so check first before you use your phone. I use an ATT International Day pass, about \$15/day.

Also a tablet, computer, or smart phone on Airplane mode can use the Wi-Fi at our hotels to make Zoom, Apple, or Google meet calls. Set this up in advance with those you will want to call.

Here is EO's list of what to pack:

- 1) Pants and shorts: Bring two pair of pants. One should be of lightweight cotton and the other should be either heavier or lighter based on the season. Button-down wallet pockets are safest. In addition, bring a pair of Jeans. Shorts are optional as they are not allowed in religious sites. Woman may want to add a skirt to the mix.
- 2) Shirts: Bring three to four shirts (mix of short-sleeve and long-sleeve) in a cotton/polyester blend. Add one or two cotton long-sleeve turtle neck shirts layer under these.
- 3) Accessories: Take just a few colorful scarves/ties, belts and sweater/shawls or vests to liven up your outfits.
- 4) Sweater: Summer or winter, take a warm sweater in a dark color. It will serve as a coat, making you instantly dressed up, plus it won't show dirt! Even if you don't plan to use hotel pools, you will want a swimsuit for the Dead Sea float.
- 5) Jacket: Bring a light weight, water proof windbreaker. The kind with a hood is the best.
- 6) Shoes: Wear one pair of well broken in walking/hiking shoes. A second pair (hiking sandals or second pair of walking shoes) is optional in case the first pair gets wet.
- 7) Underwear and Socks: Five of each is enough if you plan to wash/drip-dry in your room. Otherwise, bring a pair for each day.
- 8) Money Belt: This is usually a belt-like bag that clips around your middle or hangs around your neck. Whatever style you select, it is essential to have one. Keep your money, passport, airline ticket and other irreplaceable documents in your money belt. You should basically live in your money belt!
- 9) Travel Alarm: For those days you want to get up earlier than the set wake-up call. Be sure to put new batteries in and try it out for a few days before your trip.
- 10) Camera: Be sure to put new batteries in and learn how to use it BEFORE your trip and bring at least one extra memory card.
- 11) Rain Gear: Bring a collapsible umbrella and a Rain Poncho.
- 12) Day Pack: Bring a small shoulder bag or back pack that you plan to carry each day. It should have room for a water of bottle and any items you might

need for the day, such as rain gear or a sweater, or medicines you need to take while out touring, etc. This could be your carry-on bag.

13) Medicines: Keep in the original containers with prescription labels. Put in your carry-on bag. Bring a list of the medicines with their generic equivalents (your pharmacist can give this to you) as the doctors in another country may not be familiar with the brand name. Bring a copy of the original prescription if you have it.

14) Eye Wear: Bring an extra pair of glasses, extra contact lenses, and your prescription if you have it.

15) Personal Kit: Try to keep this kit as small as possible... Remember, you are on a journey and want to pack light. Bring travel sizes of the following: Shampoo/conditioner, deodorant, shaving items, comb, hair brush.

Health Kit: (Note, I've edited their suggestions here)

- 1) Personal prescription medications (copies of all prescriptions, including the generic names for medications, and a note from the prescribing physician on letterhead stationary for controlled substances and injectable medications should be carried)
- 2) Antidiarrheal medication (e.g., bismuth subsalicylate, loperamide)
- 3) Antihistamine Decongestant, alone or in combination with antihistamine
- 4) Antimotion sickness medication (if you have any problems with this)
- 5) Acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, or other medication for pain or fever
- 6) Mild laxative (if you have any problems with this)
- 7) Cough suppressant/expectorant
- 8) Antacid
- 9) Antifungal and antibacterial ointments or creams 1% hydrocortisone cream
- 10) Epinephrine auto-injector (e.g., EpiPen) if history of severe allergic reaction.
- 11) Sunscreen (preferably SPF 15 or greater)
- 12) Basic first-aid items (adhesive bandages, gauze, ace wrap, antiseptic, tweezers, scissors, cotton-tipped applicators)
- 20) Antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- 21) **Moleskin** for blisters

• **Special Note: Hezekiah's Tunnel**

-We will have a chance to wade through Hezekiah's Tunnel. This tunnel was built in 700BC to bring the water of the Gihon Spring inside the city walls. The water level in the tunnel is normally about knee to mid-thigh deep. At one point, it is only 4'9" tall and the water level is about waist deep.

I've set up our schedule so that we'll do this at the end of the day, so we won't have to walk around wet for very long. But if you want to do this, I suggest you bring with you:

- Water shoes with a good sole or a disposable pair of old sneakers.
- A good flashlight that is at least a little water proof. A headlamp can work as well; I'm bringing both. Make sure the batteries are new and test it before you go.
- A plastic bag large enough to put wet shoes, socks, etc in when we are done.