



Friendly Travel Tips: ISRAEL

Appropriate Dress

Appropriate Dress in Israel is casual and comfortable. For the holy places, even in the summer, one must cover his or her knees (i.e. no shorts) and upper arms (i.e. no sleeveless, particularly for women). If you want to dress in shorts and/or sleeveless, always have a “modest” alternative to cover yourself when necessary. Hats are essential from April through September. Don't forget sunglasses!

Banks and Currency

In Israel Banks are generally open from Sunday to Thursday between 8.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. and on Sundays, Tuesday and Thursdays between 4 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. Most of the city banks have ATM machines where you can withdraw cash. Usually the cash is in Israeli shekels, not US dollars. Each shekles equals 100 agorth. Shekel coins are 10, 5, 1 and one half. You can use US dollars nearly everywhere (except local buses and grocery stores)

Credit Cards and Cash

Credit cards can be used for major shopping items and at some lunch cafeteria places. Cash (US dollars) is very useful -- very often you can reduce the price of a souvenir by paying cash. It's worthwhile to bring a stash of \$1 bills to stick in your pocket for buying small items from the Egypt, Jordan and Israel street vendors. **If you open your wallet next to a peddler, you are in danger of losing both your credit cards and your cash.**

Passports

A passport valid for at least six months past your scheduled return date is required for travel to Israel. If your passport will expire within this period, you should apply for a new passport a couple of months prior to your trip.

If you lose your passport, you will need to go to your consulate or embassy (which closes on the weekends). It's a very big hassle, so keeps your passport in a safe place on your person, or locked in your hotel safe. Also recommended is to keep a photocopy.

Electrical Appliances

The Israeli power supply is single phase 220 volts at 50 Hertz. Some hotels provide 110V adapters, but it is best to bring your own.

Floating in the Dead Sea

Floating in the Dead Sea is not to be missed; no matter what season you come. Be sure to bring a bathing suit and water shoes.

Gifts

Gifts are a lot of fun to shop for and great moments of the tour. Jerusalem and Bethlehem specialize in olive wood figures, and leather gifts. The Dead Sea area boasts the world-famous Ahava moisturizers and mud – guaranteed to keep you young-looking!! Both in the Galilee and in Jerusalem you can find unique-looking jewelry with your favorite Bible verses or decorated with ancient Roman glass. Throughout Israel you will find beautiful works of art and hand-made jewelry.

Travel Insurance

Gospel Travel recommends you have travel insurance. You can purchase it from us or get it on your own, but we recommend all travelers have it.

Medicines

Be sure you bring all the medicines you need with you. All prescriptions need to be kept in their original bottles. Also please keep over the counter medicines in their original packing. You may also like to bring Tylenol, Peptobismol, anti-diarrheal, hydrocortisone cream, Emergen-C, sunscreen, ear plugs, hand sanitizers, and chap stick.

Hydration

During the summer, especially, it is important to drink lots of water. Although tap water in Israel is of good quality and safe to drink, you may not be used to the high mineral content. Bottled natural spring water is available everywhere and the main point is to drink!

Internet Access

Many of the hotels provide **internet stations for a fee \$\$**. Some provide **WI FI in the lobby area.** There are also Internet Cafes in the major cities.

Kosher dietary laws

Most of the hotels you will be staying in will be observing the laws of Kashrut – which means they do not serve meat when they are serving dairy products. For example, they will not be serving butter or cheese when they are serving you beef. It also means that you are not allowed to bring your own food into the hotel dining room.

Language

Hebrew and Arabic are Israel's official languages. However, English is also widely spoken and you will see most highway, street and storefront signs in English as well as Hebrew and Arabic

Open Attitude

You'll encounter unfamiliar cuisine, customs and cultural norms. Experiment! An open mind and an open heart will enhance your experience.

Phones

Direct dialing from your hotel room overseas is not cheap. Prepaid phone cards are cheaper. You may access AT&T, MCI and Sprint for overseas calls from pay phones by dialing a 177 (toll-free) number. It's best to check for your service's number before you leave home.

Safety

Contrary to news reports, Israel is a very safe country. Your Gospel Travel guide and driver will always have the latest information on what's happening. They carry cell phones and are in touch with the land operators who will be certain not to take you into any apparent danger. There is virtually no street crime in Israel and, generally speaking, Israel is much safer than all major American cities. The main point is: use common sense.

Taxis

Local and intercity taxi service is available to and from any point in the country. Fares within the cities are charged according to the meter. The fares for intercity taxi service are standard fares that are set by the Ministry of Transportation. It is recommended to verify what the fare will be before boarding the taxi.

Taxis can be ordered by telephone from a local taxi station, or stopped by waving your hand at one on the street. Drivers must operate the meter for trips within the city. Do not let the driver convince you to agree on a price ahead of time if you are not familiar with the rates!

Tipping

It is accepted practice to tip hotel staff, your tour guide and tour bus driver.

Gospel Travel chooses tour guides who are extremely knowledgeable, friendly, and flexible. They are well-versed in Jewish roots and updated on what's happening in Israel and the Middle East. Israeli tour bus drivers are not only careful bus drivers, with your safety always in mind, but always courteous and patient.

Value Added Tax

There is a 15.5% value added tax (VAT) on most goods and services in Israel. This is Israel's equivalent to the U.S. sales tax. Upon making a purchase of \$100.00 or more at a gift shop that has an agreement with the VAT authorities, you should fill out a form at the shop and have it stamped there. When you get to the airport, prior to departure, you will be eligible, upon presenting the form and the item, for a refund of 15.5% minus transaction charges. Do not pack these gift items in your check-through luggage. They should be kept in your hand luggage along with the special VAT form that you receive from the merchant.

Exchange Rates

Exchange Rates vary from day to day. You can change money at your hotel which will give you virtually the same rate you will receive at the bank. There are ATMs in the cities, but not always walking distance from your hotel. You can pay with your credit card for major purposes. Many enterprises accept the U.S. dollar, but often you will receive change in Israeli currency. So it's important to be aware of the exchange rate and count your change.

Zone

Israel time is seven hours ahead of EST and ten hours ahead of PST. When it is 10 a.m. in Los Angeles, it is 8 p.m. in Jerusalem and throughout Israel. Israel switches to daylight savings time at the end of March which usually lasts until the High Holidays in late September.