

SHALOM AND THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING TO TRAVEL WITH "GATES TO ISRAEL"

We hope your travels with us will be enriching, fun and memorable. Here we include useful information and some travel tips to help you better prepare for your trip and make your stay in Israel easier:

ARRIVING IN ISRAEL / DEPARTING FROM ISRAEL

Upon your arrival at Tel Aviv Ben Gurion Airport, our representative will be waiting for you right after the passport control – restricted area. Our representative will assist you with your baggage claim and assist in case of lost luggage (Please do not leave without finding our representative carrying a sign with the group's name). You will then be conducted through customs to the arrival hall, where your guide will be waiting to welcome you in the country. Together you will walk to the bus parking lot where your luggage will be loaded into the bus and you will meet the driver that will be with you during the entire trip.

From that point, your trip starts according to your attached itinerary.

Upon departure, for international flights – tourists have to be at the airport for the security check 3 hours prior to departure. Tourists flying business or first class - 2 hours prior to departure. For national flights to/from Eilat – you have to be at the airport for the security check 1.5 hours prior to departure

Please be sure to retain your ticket copy/e-ticket receipt and boarding passes in the event you later need them for proof of your flights. We are unable to supply ticket copies after your return.

Please make sure to keep and not throw the Visa (blue piece of paper) you receive upon entering Israel until your departure.

SECURITY IN ISRAEL

Israel is one of the safest countries and you will experience it on your own. Anyway your attention to your personal belongings and pursue are requested at all times! At night time it is safe to walk around the streets, but always make sure to know where you walk to, it is highly recommended to ask your guide or hotel's concierge.

At the entrance of some sites, shopping malls, restaurants, etc, you could be requested to open your bags for security check. Do not be scared, this is customary in Israel and it is done for your safety.

You can find some pickpockets in Jerusalem area, for example at the Arab market in the Old City, at Mt. of Olives and around the Garden Tomb. It is recommended to leave your valuables in your hotel safe.

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

It's recommended to bring a photocopy of your passport in case of losing your original one. You'll need at least 2 blank pages in your passport, **which must be valid for at least 6 months from your departure date.** If you have dual nationality you can only use one passport (the same one) for entering and exiting.

American passport holders do not need entry visa to Israel.

MEALS

All breakfasts and dinners are included whilst on the tour. These meals will be served in your hotel's dining room. Meals are very rich (Israel buffet style meals), where you will be able to find a large and vary selection. Your tour also includes lunches. These will be served on route and will include mainly Israeli food, lots of salads and vegetables, chicken or beef etc. No pork or sea food (except fish) will be served since the meals are all Kosher. In addition, due to Kosher dietary laws meat products will not be served with dairy product at the same meal.

STAFF - CREW

Your guide and driver will be with you all along the tour unless any emergency would happen and they would usually stay with you in the different hotels. The guide is your main contact for any matter that would need special attention or care. Guides are in daily contact with "Gates to Israel" headquarters, directly with the tour operator of the group.

CONTACT FROM HOME – CELL PHONE - LANGUAGE - TIME

Email – By far the best way to receive news from friends and family is by email. You can pick up emails from anywhere in the world just by ‘logging on’ at any Internet café or anywhere that has access to the worldwide web. Most hotels offer internet connection with their computers (usually at the lobby). Most hotels have wireless connection you could use with your own computer and cell phones (mostly free, but some hotels charge for that services). Some restaurants and coffee places offer free wireless connection as well. The buses we will be using on your trip have free wireless connection for you to use while on the bus, featuring browsing only; downloading is NOT possible. In order to avoid expensive roaming costs, we recommend you disable the data roaming feature on your device.

International Cell Phone Packages - Most cell phone carriers today offer reasonably priced international travel packages which allow you to stay in touch with family and friends without changing your number or using special phone cards. International travel packages can be activated well before you leave and only get used when you travel. Please contact your cell phone carrier for up to-date information on their international travel packages.

Language - Hebrew is the official language in Israel. It is very useful to learn a few phrases and you will be pleasantly surprised at the reaction you will receive, and the satisfaction you will get, in being able to communicate with locals. English and Arab are the second and third most used languages in Israel.

Time - Israel is 7 hours behind the USA. That means: when it is 10:00 am in the US (East Coast), in Israel it is already 5:00 pm.

CURRENCY REQUIREMENTS AND PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

The local currency used in Israel is Shekels (NIS – New Israeli Shekel). 1 NEW ISRAELI SHEKEL (NIS) = 100 Agorot
The shekels have the following denominations: NIS 200 / NIS 100 / NIS 50 / NIS 20 in bank notes
10 shekel / 5 shekel / 2 shekel / 1 Shekel / ½ shekel / 10 agorot in coins

Money can be changed at post offices, banks, change places or hotels. If changing at hotels, exchange rate is usually lower than elsewhere. It is recommended to use post offices or change places if changing large amounts of foreign money as there are no commission charges.

Most banks are open between 8:30 am – 12:00 noon daily; a few banks open again in the afternoons from 4:00 -5:30 pm. On Fridays and Saturdays all banks are closed – this is the official weekend in Israel.

You will not need too many shekels while traveling – just small change for the soft drinks / mineral water at local kiosks. To help you budget: food and drink often costs more than at home. Approximate cost of soft drink/mineral water/ coffee NIS 8-10/US\$ 2.50-3.50; salad or sandwich with soda or water NIS 40 upwards/US\$ 8-12; dinner at mid-range restaurant with dessert and non-alcoholic beverage NIS 120 upwards/US\$ 17-30. US dollars are accepted almost everywhere, but taxi drivers for example prefer to be paid in shekels. Restaurants, hotels, stores and entertainment centers accept payment by credit cards (American Express, Visa and MasterCard). American credit cards are widely accepted for purchases and can be used for cash advances from ATMs. Local USA credit cards are not acceptable.

Sometimes a few coins in local currency will be needed for restroom comfort stops/public toilets (carry small denomination coins with you). Make sure you use up all local coins during your trip as you will not be able to exchange back any loose change upon returning home.

As of August 2019, the exchange rate is 1 US\$ = 3.5 shekels. It can change daily.

CLIMATE, RECOMMENDED CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Clothes

People (men and women as one) are requested to wear modest clothes at all religious places. Women need to cover their shoulders and cannot enter with short pants or skirts. Men cannot enter churches on short pants or sleeveless shirts. Men will also be asked to cover their heads at synagogues or religious Jewish places. No need for women to cover their heads. Dress is informal. Casual clothes recommended for touring and good walking shoes are a must. In the winter bring layers as it is the best way to dress in winter. For the summer time, bring light clothing. A light sweater is recommended for Jerusalem and high-elevation evenings, even in the springtime.

Weather: Average Low/High Temperatures

All public places are equipped with AC for your convenience; all public transportation, supermarkets, coffee shops, theaters etc . The motor coach used by your group is also provided with AC. See average temperatures below:

Month	Tel Aviv	Jerusalem
January	49/63°F	41/53°F
February	49/64°F	40/55°F
March	52/69°F	43/60°F
April	57/74°F	50/68°F

Month	Tel Aviv	Jerusalem
May	64/79°F	56/75°F
June	70/85°F	60/79°F
July	74/88°F	64/81°F
August	76/89°F	64/82°F

Month	Tel Aviv	Jerusalem
September	73/86°F	63/80°F
October	66/82°F	58/74°F
November	59/76°F	49/66°F
December	51/67°F	56/42°F

Electricity

Israeli currency is 220 vaults (USA is 110) - make sure to bring convertors and adaptors or ask the hotel reception if they have available – some hotels might ask for a deposit when handing out the convertors / adaptors / transformers. Most of the new electrical appliances (such as cell phones, laptops. Cameras etc) have internal convertors and you will only need an adaptor. Please check carefully before you plug anything in otherwise you will damage the device. Hotels do not permit use of travel irons, and curling irons are discouraged. Hairdryers are mostly provided, or they can be borrowed from hotel reception.

Adaptors



Israeli electric plug



MISCELLANEOUS

Hotels:

Israeli hotel rooms tend to be slightly smaller than rooms in the USA. Fixtures in bathrooms and bedrooms are not standardized; mini-bar items and access to pay-TV channels are at your expense (fridges may be on an automatic charge system) Not all hotels provide mini-bars in the rooms. Queen-size beds are rare.

Check-in at Israeli hotels is at 3:00 PM (if you arrive for check-in on Shabbat, Saturday, check-in might be later, around 2 hours after sunset due to religious laws of Shabbat) and check-out time is at 12:00 noon. If you arrive to the hotel before check-in time or have to leave after check-out time, you can usually ask the hotel to keep your luggage in their luggage room till you need it back.

Most hotels in Israel will ask you for your credit card upon check-in. They do so to keep a copy of your credit card, so you will be able to charge what you order to your room and pay it all at check-out time, instead of paying cash as you order. It is better to charge to your room, this way you will not have to pay the VAT when you check-out being a tourist who is exempt of paying VAT. If you pay cash for what you purchase at the hotel, you will be paying the VAT (currently 17%).

For safety reasons, most hotels have very sensitive triggers to electrical surges, so try to minimize the appliances used independently, as even basic items could overload the system and cause a black-out. Bathroom sockets are usually for razors only.

In some hotels, key cards operate room lighting and/or air conditioning, elevators etc. and the card may have to be inserted into a special slot/box by the bedroom door for lighting and air conditioning to function; in others, corridor and bathroom lighting may be automatic.

Liquid soap dispensers are often fitted in bathrooms and showers. Assist hotels by putting dirty towels on the floor for washing and leaving clean ones on racks; using showers instead of baths; reporting any dripping taps; minimizing lighting use and throwing away paper and plastic bottles in recycling bins if exist.

If you have any problem with a hotel room: please report the matter directly to Reception (politeness, a smile and a thank-you work wonders the world over!). If the matter is not resolved, advise your guide, who may be able to assist.

Laundry charges vary from hotel to hotel. To avoid any unpleasant surprises, ask to see the price list before using the service

Gratuities:

Gratuities are not obligatory in Israel, however it is customary to tip your Israeli guide and driver, as well as the hotel staff (i.e. porter, chamber maid and dining room staff). It is a nice way to say “thank you”. In restaurants, you are expected to tip between 12%-15%, better in cash and not on your credit card. Gratuities for your Israeli guide and driver and for the hotel staff are part of your tour package and will be taken care of.

Water:

Tap water in Israel is good to drink, but tourists usually prefer to drink filtered or mineral water. As a service, bus drivers always have bottles of mineral water in the fridge at the front of the bus. They sell the bottles for 1 US\$ a bottle (cheaper than what you would pay in a kiosk, normally around 2 US\$)

Taxis:

From Ben Gurion Airport – there is a taxi stand outside the arrival hall – these are licensed taxis. All licensed taxi drivers use white cars with a green “taxi sign” and have their name and license number inside the car. You should use only licensed taxis. Usually, there are set rates from the airport to a specific town (you can ask the person in charge of the taxis before you board). You can choose to ride with a fixed set price or with the meter on. If possible, pre-negotiate taxi fares to avoid unpleasant surprises at the end of your journey. Taxi tipping is not necessary

If taking taxis outside of Ben Gurion Airport, be sure to ask the driver to use the meter. If he/she does not want to do so, then look for another driver who will. Rate in the meter are always in Israeli shekels (NIS) and is per ride and not per person in the car.

Buses / trains:

All buses and trains stop operating an hour before sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday. This is SHABBAT (Saturday in Hebrew), the official resting day in Israel

Motorcoach Etiquette

- Everyone wants to make the most of the time available and see as much as possible - so it is important that every participant is punctual all the time
- Single travelers should be prepared to share a seat with other single passengers and take turns to sit by the window for picture taking.
- Be considerate of others by avoiding conversation while commentary is being given. Please refrain from using a cell phone on the motorcoach except in emergencies
- Heavy perfume or strong aftershave can inconvenience other passengers, please use sparingly
- As a courtesy to other passengers, we ask that food and drink (except bottled water) is not consumed on the coach as everyone prefers a clean, tidy and odor-free coach.
- In accordance with local regulations, there is no washroom (WC) on the motorcoach in Israel, but frequent rest stops are made.
- Owing to environmental concerns, it is generally not permitted to operate air conditioning when the motorcoach is stationary.
- Be careful when ascending or descending from the motorcoach; Watch out at stairs and overhead; always check for traffic when exiting and walking away from the motorcoach and when re-entering. Heavy items, bottles, etc. should not be stored overhead; hand luggage should be placed safely under your seat

Motorcoach Safety

- Entering and Existing: Always use the handrails and check for traffic when walking to and from the coach.
- Please remain seated, with seatbelt fastened (where fitted), at all times while the coach is in motion. Failure to do so may result in injury if the driver has to change speed, brake, or stop suddenly. If you must stand or move along the aisle, support yourself using the backs of the seats or the overhead support rail. Standing or moving while the coach is moving is at your own risk. Some countries have laws requiring seatbelt usage.
- Hand luggage should be safely stored in the overhead luggage racks or under your seat. Maximum dimensions are 12 x 11 x 6 in. (30 x 28 x 14 cm). Heavy items (bottles, etc.) should not be stored overhead. Coach aisles must be kept clear of all luggage and personal effects at all times. Wheeled luggage of any size must be stowed in the coach luggage hold for safety reasons. Airline overhead bins are much larger than the overhead bins on the coach. If your hand luggage does not fit overhead or under your seat, you may be asked to store it in the luggage hold for safety.
- Wi-Fi connectivity, where available, is provided by an independent third party with separate terms and conditions of usage and acceptance thereof.
- Passengers are not allowed to remain on the coach during comfort or other stops. Bus will be closed and AC will not run

Luggage:

Due to limited coach capacity and weight regulations, you are kindly requested to bring with you only one (1) bag per person 50lb (22kg) maximum (it should not exceed 30 x 21 x 11 in. or 76 x 53 x 28 cm), plus a carry on (should not exceed 12 x 11 x 6 in. or 30 x 28 x 14 cm) Don't forget to take out any liquids or unauthorized items from your carryon bags. Some airlines may have other restrictions. Pack lightly. We always recommend to also pack an extra soft bag in your luggage in case you will need more room after your shopping is done.

Make sure that all of your bags are properly tagged. You will receive "Gates to Israel" luggage tags, please attach them to your luggage. These will identify your luggage at hotels and while unloading/loading it to the bus. The tag will also indicate which bus you belong to, both in number and color

Below is a packing check list which we hope will assist you as you prepare for your trip:

- Passport, visa(s), travel protection/insurance, flight information and other necessary documents. Pocket calculator, pen. ATM/debit/credit cards/PIN codes.
- Bible for reference and a journal where you can write as you go.
- Money belt (to wear inside clothing for security). Jackets and slacks with plenty of pockets and inner pockets, so documents and money can be carried in separate places on you, reducing theft and loss risk, and inconvenience. Purses/handbags are best avoided, but if you wish to bring one, carry a small, very light bag with a strap that can be worn crosswise over your shoulder; wear it in front of you in crowded places and avoid leaving it anywhere. Please note large handbags and backpacks are often not allowed in museums.
- Sportswear/casual wear for daytime; smart casual outfits for evenings. Please no shorts or sweat suits when dining at your hotel. Enough underwear/socks to avoid frequent laundry. Warm sweater for evenings (depending on temperatures; see above in table). A dressier outfit/light jacket and dress shoes for special occasions.
- Comfortable, sturdy, tried-and-tested walking shoes (rubber soles help grip slippery/uneven surfaces). Sandals/ beach footwear and/or non-slip socks that double as slippers (pack a pair of flip flops in your hand luggage – rocky beaches at the Dead Sea get hot)
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, a very small folding umbrella may be useful to use as a sunshade or a sun hat with a wide brim, loose-fitting clothing (light cotton tops), swimwear, insect repellent and balm. Small battery-operated fan.
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo and soap (if you prefer to use your own brand), deodorant, razor, shaving cream, (small trial sizes of toiletries in sealed plastic bags reduce luggage weight and protect against leaks), tissues (also carry in hand luggage), female hygiene products (atmospheric changes can modify body rhythms), washcloths, preferably disposable (washcloths are considered a personal item like a toothbrush, so are rarely supplied in hotels), balm, band aids, aspirin, fever and diarrhea tablets (as a precaution), motion sickness pills, antibacterial wipes/small bottle of hand sanitizer gel.
- Medicines (carried in their original container) and copy of prescriptions, telephone/e-mail/fax number of your doctor. An adequate supply of medication packed in hand luggage as your suitcase may not easily be accessible while traveling/sightseeing (also to avoid problems in case of suitcase loss/delay or damage). Check with your airline for the latest hand luggage security restrictions. Remember that in Israel some medications will need an Israeli Doctor's prescription, so you might want to make sure you have enough of the medications you take regularly.
- Manicure set and mending kit. Travel alarm clock (to avoid relying on hotel automatic wake-up calls). Mini umbrella or fold-up poncho for the occasional shower.
- Glasses, plus extra pair and/or copy of prescription, eye drops for contact lenses. Spare batteries for hearing aids. Foam earplugs for sleeping. For archaeological sites: flashlight, and collapsible walking stick if you have mobility difficulties (some climbing involved). Small travel pillow. If you are taller than average, an inflatable lumbar support cushion may be useful.
- Electrical converter(s)/multi-plug international adapter (voltage is mostly 220, 50-cycle alternating current) - ensure your adapter is sufficiently powerful for appliances, and check if you need individual converters for different items. Most Israeli power sockets have 3-pin holes but many will also work with double-pin European plugs (see below).
- Camera/video equipment (ensure in working order), plenty of memory cards/spare batteries/USB stick for camera downloads. Label camera/camcorder and film bags with your name; should you lose them, there's a better chance of their being returned.
- Cellular phone with international calling plan. Roaming or global network-search options for cell phones can be very expensive abroad, so check tariffs prior to your trip. Long-distance calling cards are recommended. Hotels usually make connecting charges even to toll-free numbers. International long-distance calling cards or local phone cards may be available; ask your guide for information.

Packing Tips

- Due to increasing security measures, and more possibility of baggage being delayed, as a precaution place a couple of changes of underwear, socks, and a T-shirt, in the bottom of your hand luggage and pack items in your traveling companion's bag
- Roll up casual clothes to reduce wrinkles, or layer plastic bags between folded items
- Make a list of items in checked baggage, and keep this in your hand luggage, in case of need
- Put a label with your name, address, and number on the inside of your suitcase and hand luggage, in case it gets lost or delayed

- Divide and carry cash etc. between yourself and your traveling companion
- Hide a couple of \$50 bills on you as an emergency funds. We strongly advise against traveling with large amounts of cash; no responsibility is accepted for loss, neither will insurance companies reimburse lost or stolen monies. We advise too against traveling with expensive items; please do not carry anything with you that will create an emotional or financial hardship if lost or stolen. Leave keys, as well as valuable, sentimental, or favorite jewelry, at home. Also leave your address book; instead, carry a duplicate or brief list of important addresses and telephone numbers only. No responsibility is accepted for loss of or damage to baggage or any of the traveler's belongings throughout the duration of the trip; baggage insurance is highly recommended (see below).

Comfort on Airplanes & Avoiding Jet Lag

- To help the adjustment to new time zones, after take-off set your watch to the time zone of destination
- If your flight arrives in the morning, try to sleep on board
- If available, rub moisturizer on face and hands or spray your face with water from an atomizer to avoid dry skin and feel refreshed
- If you feel pressure in your ears due to change in altitude, swallow, yawn, block your nostrils blow your nose, or chew gum
- Loose-fitting clothing is recommended. Wear comfortable shoes and try not to take them off as feet occasionally swell during flights
- When possible, walk up and down the aisle to stretch limbs and get blood circulating, and to avoid having the seat press against the back of your legs for long periods (use compression socks)
- Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol, caffeine, and carbonated drinks. Eat light meals while traveling
- Avoid wearing contact lenses because cabin air tends to dry them out
- If you arrive at destination in the morning or afternoon, try to keep awake until evening; to help your body clock adjust more quickly.

Gifts:

There are lots of gifts and souvenirs to purchase in Israel; each area specializes in certain things: Dead Sea products in the Dead Sea area, Olive Wood products in Bethlehem etc. Ask your guide for the better places to purchase gifts.

In some shops, when you purchase over 125 shekels in one purchase and have one receipt for it, you will get a form called "VAT refund form" that allows you to claim the VAT (currently 17%) minus a commission back at the airport. Do not forget to save the VAT form so that you can get your refund before you leave the country.

See Customs websites for allowances and purchases you will be permitted to bring back from your trip: <https://www.cbp.gov> (for the US)

Health Insurance / Trip Insurance:

Make sure that you have health insurance which will take care of you while travelling abroad (preferably one which covers pre-existing conditions). Your guide can connect you, should the need arise, with the hotel doctor, private doctor or emergency room. Please be aware that service payment will be requested by the physician; most insurance companies work on reimburse method, you need to pay the physician visit, get the receipt for the payment and you will get the money back once back in your country. Contact your guide should you need to see a doctor.

It is recommended to purchase trip insurance for baggage and personal items as well as trip cancellation insurance, to cover yourself against any problem while you travel. We have made arrangements with SMS-Travel Insurance Center of Omaha, Nebraska. SMS has over 25 years of experience as worldwide insurance brokers and can help you choose the policy that best meets your needs.

Our contact is Yonah Engel, mention promo code: **GATESTOISRAEL**. email: yonah@travelinsuranceisrael.com ; USA phone [\(402\) 404-5205](tel:4024045205).

Important:

Sightseeing generally involves a fair amount of walking, and there are steps/steep inclines to climb; if you lead a sedentary life, enjoy a few pre-trip long walks to improve physical condition.

Please advise your credit card company or bank prior to your departure with your travel plans and let them know you will be in Israel and in Bethlehem (which is under Palestinian authorities) and specify the dates so they will authorize your transactions in both places.

For security reasons, PIN codes are now generally required in Israel for both ATMs and purchases with credit cards. If you do not know your PIN number(s), please contact your bank or credit card company to be issued with a 4-digit PIN code before departing to Israel. It is essential to know the 4-digit PIN code for each ATM/debit card and credit card you intend to use on your trip.

ENJOY YOUR TRIP WITH US !!