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Walking in the Footsteps of Christ

Holy Land Newsletter





The Spirituality of Pilgrimage

From the opening books of the Scriptures, God calls his people to make pilgrimage. The Torah called for the men of Israel to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem for the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. While women were not required to make these pilgrimages, often families would make the pilgrimage together for at least one of the feasts each year. During their journey, and particularly as they made the ascent up Mount Zion, the pilgrims would sing the Psalms of Ascent (Ps 120–134), which share the theme of blessing (see also Num 6:24–26, which is the Aaronic blessing).

The physical ascent up Mount Zion to the Temple was a reminder of the spiritual ascent toward God that all God's people were to make during their lives. The New Testament recounts Jesus faithfully making pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem—with Mary and Joseph when he was twelve years old, and also with his apostles during his ministry. Jesus made his final pilgrimage at the time of the Passover when he celebrated the Last Supper and offered his life on a cross for our salvation. St. Paul was eager to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to bring a collection of money to help those in need. By the third and fourth centuries, Christians were already making pilgrimage to the land where Jesus lived and died. One of these Christian pilgrims was St. Helena, who built churches at many of the holy sites. Another early Christian, St. Jerome, made a pilgrimage and stayed in the Holy Land, living in Bethlehem where he translated the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures into Latin and wrote many commentaries on the Scriptures.

God calls his people to make pilgrimage as a reminder that our whole life is a pilgrimage. To go on a pilgrimage we have to say goodbye to loved ones, just as we will have to do one day at the end of our lives. We are not able to take everything with us on a pilgrimage, we have to “let go” of things, just as God calls us to be detached from earthly goods and to keep our focus on heavenly realities. To go on pilgrimage takes some work (getting a passport, packing, putting things in order at home before we leave, etc.), just as God calls us to struggle in the daily life of holiness and virtue here on earth with the purpose of obtaining heaven. A pilgrimage reminds us of St. Paul's words that, “here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (Heb 13:14).



Ottoman-built walls of the Old City, near Jaffa Gate

The “P’s” of Pilgrimage

PRAYER

While seeing new places and visiting the holy sites is a central part of a pilgrimage, the focus is one of prayer and deepening our relationship to Jesus Christ. Thus in the midst of all the temporal preparations now and the logistics while on the pilgrimage, it is important that prayer should have priority. St. Jerome referred to the Holy Land as “the fifth gospel.” A great way to prayerfully prepare for visiting the fifth gospel is to read through the first four gospels. If you can only make it through one gospel, start with the Gospel of St. Luke, since it records not only Jesus’ ministry and sacrifice on Calvary, but also his birth, and such early events as the birth of John the Baptist and the Annunciation.

PIETY

For many who have made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, they return with a deepened relationship with Christ, and a renewed piety for living out the faith in daily life. The land, sea, and hills, as well as the buildings and churches that mark the sites, are a clear reminder of the historical reality of our faith and the incredible truth that God loved us so much that he took on our human nature in the Incarnation. As we encounter the places where Jesus walked and taught and gave his life for our salvation, we are encouraged to “put on Christ” anew in our daily lives.

PENANCE

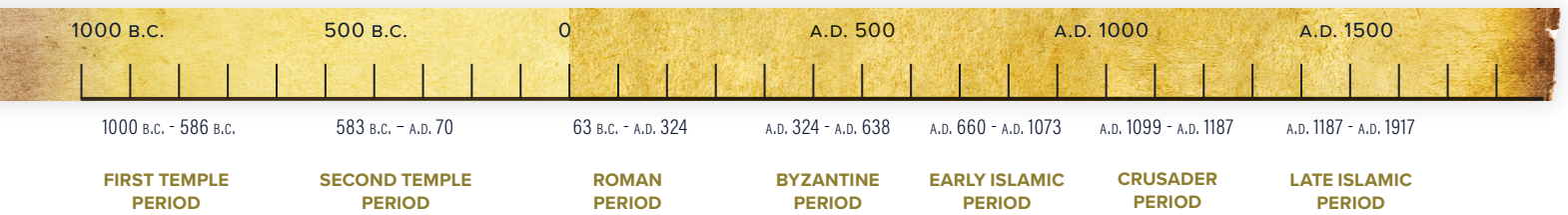
Pilgrimage provides a perfect opportunity for penance. There are monetary sacrifices to start out on a pilgrimage. Our journey itself, with its 10–12 hour flight to Tel Aviv can be tiring (but it’s good to recall the myriad of Christian pilgrims who made this trip centuries before us, and traveled for weeks or months to arrive in the Holy Land). As we travel the holy sites, there will be plenty of time to practice patience, whether it is due to lines, or weather/heat, or the personalities of others around us. All these will be opportunities to offer penance for our own sins, to conform ourselves more closely to Christ, and to join our sacrifices to Christ’s ultimate sacrifice made on the very ground upon which we will walk. When we would be tempted to turn away from these moments of grace, we should keep in mind St. Paul’s words “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content....I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:11–13).

*I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
Our feet have been standing within
your gates, O Jerusalem!*

Psalm 122:1–2

Archaeological Time Periods in the Holy Land

As we journey through the Holy Land, you will hear about the ruins of various churches and structures described as being “Byzantine,” or “Second Temple,” etc. The chart below will help put these terms in their historical timeframe.



FIRST TEMPLE PERIOD

- 1000 B.C. David conquers Jerusalem and makes it his capital. Solomon builds the Temple.
- 701 B.C. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, besieges Jerusalem. King Hezekiah prepares city for siege (broad city wall and tunnel connecting water supply).
- 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquers Jerusalem and destroys Solomon's Temple.

SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

- 538 B.C. Cyrus, king of Persia, permits exiles to return from Babylon and resettle in Jerusalem.
- 515 B.C. Completion of Second Temple by returnees.
- 332 B.C. Alexander the Great conquers Jerusalem.
- 200 B.C. Antiochus II conquers Jerusalem.
- 167 B.C. Persecution of Jews by Antiochus IV; Hasmonean revolt led by the Maccabees.
- 142 B.C. Establishment of independent Jewish kingdom under Hasmonean dynasty.

ROMAN PERIOD

- 63 B.C. Pompey conquers Jerusalem; beginning of Roman rule.
- 37 B.C. Herod the Great fortifies Jerusalem and builds public buildings.
- 18 B.C. Herod the Great enlarges the temple mount, and rebuilds the Second Temple.
- 0 -----
- A.D. 33 Jesus tried and crucified under order by Roman procurator Pontius Pilate.
- A.D. 70 Destruction of Jerusalem and Second Temple by Roman army under Titus' command.
- A.D. 135 Emperor Hadrian builds pagan temple over site of Christ's Tomb.

BYZANTINE PERIOD

- A.D. 313 Constantine and Licinius issue Edit of Milan.
- A.D. 324 Constantine defeats Licinius to become sole emperor.
- A.D. 335 Consecration of Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.
- A.D. 339 Consecration of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.
- A.D. 440 Byzantine Empress Eudocia fortifies the city.
- A.D. 565 Byzantine Emperor Justinian erects public buildings.
- A.D. 614 Jerusalem conquered by the Persians.
- A.D. 638 Jerusalem conquered by Umar ibn al-Khattab. Early Islamic Period

EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD

- A.D. 639 Jerusalem surrenders to Caliph Umar.
- A.D. 691 Extensive building by Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn al-Marwin and his son Al-Walid (including the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque on the temple mount).
- A.D. 1071 Seljuk Turks capture Jerusalem.

CRUSADER PERIOD

- A.D. 1099 Jerusalem conquered by the crusaders.

LATE ISLAMIC PERIOD

- A.D. 1187 Jerusalem conquered by Saladin.
- A.D. 1516 Jerusalem conquered by Sultan Selim I.
- A.D. 1538 Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent builds the current city walls surrounding the Old City.

PASSPORTS

Your passport is your single most important document when traveling. Be sure to make extra copies. Leave a copy at home with someone you can reach in case of an emergency. Take an extra copy with you in your suitcase. Also, you will want to make sure you have a secure way to carry your passport and money. Most days you will not need to carry your passport with you on the pilgrimage. The hotel rooms will have a small safe where passports can be stored on these days

GOOD MORNING! BOKER TOV!

Hebrew is the official language of Israel, which the majority of the population speaks. Arabic is the second most common language, with over 20% of Israel's population natively speaking Arabic. It is generally easy to communicate in English in Israel, since English is compulsory in Israeli schools. Many people you meet on the street will be able to communicate with you in English, although with noticeable accent and fluency issues. Many street and road signs have the English name alongside the Hebrew and Arabic names. Most tourists get along fine in Israel without speaking a word of Hebrew or Arabic.

WHAT'S THE WEATHER?

May temperatures in Jerusalem will likely be in the mid 70's to mid 80's, with no expectation of rain. In other locations such as the Dead Sea desert area and Galilee, temperatures can be 10 degrees warmer. Night time can be cooler in Jerusalem because of its elevation. It is always helpful to monitor [online weather sites](#) in the week prior to travel to obtain current forecasts.

SHOTS

There are no required immunizations for traveling to Israel. If you haven't had a Tetanus shot in the last ten years, it's a good idea to update this ahead of travel. Some doctors recommend a Hepatitis A immunization for some foreign travel ... talk to your doctor about this. Plan ahead as Hep A requires both an initial and a booster shot.

WHAT TIME IS IT?

During your trip in May the time in Israel will be 7 hours later than Eastern Standard Time (EST).



Door of Humility, entrance to the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem

WHAT ABOUT POWER?

The electric current in Israel is 220 volts single phase, 50 Hertz. The electric outlets used are Type H and Type C. Type H is a uniquely Israeli three-pronged standard, but Type H outlets accept Type C European two-pronged plugs. Given this, you will need a plug adapter (to adapt the flat two-prong plug on any electric devices you bring to fit into the wall outlets in the hotel room). Many chargers for cell phones and camera batteries can handle up to 240V electrical power (see small print on charger), so all you will need is the plug adapter for these items. For items that can only handle 110V, you will also need a converter (to convert 220V down to the standard 110V used by electric devices in the US). Kits that have both a voltage converter and several adapters for various countries are readily available at travel stores, large retailers, and online. Note that many voltage converters have a low and high power/wattage setting. The lower setting would be used for items such as a charger for a cell phone or camera battery; the higher setting would be required for an item such as a hair dryer. Read all instructions with the converter so that you use the correct settings with any device you are connecting to it. If your kit only has the Type C European adapters (which are more common), this will be fine because they will work in the Type H outlets at the hotels. If your kit has both the Type H and the Type C adapters, bring them both, because the Type H will "stay in" the outlet better. The following links have pictures of the [Type H](#) and [Type C](#) outlet and plug.



HEADPHONES / EAR-BUDS

A microphone will be used for teaching at the various sites. Each pilgrim will be provided a receiver and ear phones to pick up the voice of the guide/teacher so that you can easily hear what is being said, regardless of location or other passing pilgrimage groups. While ear phones will be provided, if you have a favorite set of ear phones/buds, you may wish to bring these for increased comfort. (Receivers currently do not have bluetooth capability for ear phones/buds.)

RESTROOM / WC

A quick introduction to public restrooms is in order either as a reminder to those who have traveled abroad or as new and important information if this is your first time traveling overseas. As is common in some European locations, public restrooms in Israel are referred to as “water closets” or simply “WC” (both when inquiring about the location and also on signs pointing to the WC location). In Israel the phrase “nothing is free” can be used to describe most public water closets, as there is often a 1 or 2 shekel charge (or requested donation) for using public restrooms. Given this, it is a good idea to carry spare shekels or dollars with you to have on hand. Some sites are not timely on restocking toilet tissue, so bringing a small travel size tissue and hand sanitizer is recommended.

BEGGERS

As in any large city in the US, and especially given the large number of pilgrims/tourists that visit the Holy Land every year, as well as the economic hardship that many in Israel face, it shouldn't be surprising to find a handful of children or adults begging for money or pushing their items for sale at various locations. This interaction can be

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

Psalm 23:1–2

awkward. You shouldn't feel that you “have” to hand out money, simply thank the individual for their offer and firmly say “no thank you” and continue on your way, remembering to treat others with respect even if declining their adept sales work. If you would like to offer a monetary gift, this is an instance where having a few shekels or dollars handy avoids a long stop to look through a bag, purse, or wallet.

TIPS

A tip fee for porters, driver, local guide, hotel housekeeping and dining staff, and other lunch/dinners was included on your sales invoice and collected ahead of the trip so that it can easily be paid out for the group as a whole. As a result, there is no need to tip the hotel staff for bringing and collecting luggage, or the restaurant staff for meals. If you received excellent service, you can leave an additional tip, but it is not required.

WHAT TO WEAR

Please plan to limit luggage/bags to one suitcase and one additional smaller bag per person (this count does not include a purse, camera case, small day pack, etc).

In packing for a pilgrimage, keep two things in mind: variety/versatility, and compact enough to fall within the airline luggage weight and size limitations on all domestic and international flights. Pack as lightly as possible—you will be happy you did when going through the airports and checking in and out of hotels. Consider purchasing travel size packets of detergent to wash some clothes and let them dry in the hotel room as a way to lighten your packing.

A Holy Land pilgrimage involves quite a bit of walking, so sport shoes, or other comfortable, sturdy shoes or sandals are a must. Otherwise, uncomfortable shoes and blisters will make for a long week! Given Israel's weather and climate, sunglasses, sunscreen, and a favorite hat are also important items to bring.

Appropriate and modest attire is required at churches and holy sites (some churches will turn away immodestly dressed visitors). This means:

- no shorts (shorts can be worn in evenings at the hotel, but shouldn't be worn during the day when touring holy sites)
- no short skirts (skirt length should be at or below the knee; not above the knee)

Joseph [of Arimathea] took [Jesus'] body, wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed.

Psalm 122:1–2

- no sleeveless shirts (unless you also carry an additional sweater or blouse to add at holy sites; short sleeve tops are fine)

The following suggested items should be adapted to your personal needs:

Men: Sport or casual slacks and shirts.

Women: Sport or casual slacks or capris, skirts or dresses (at or below the knee), blouses/tops (preferably not sleeveless; short sleeves are fine).

All: Walking or sport shoes/sandals. Swim suit (for hotel pool, if available). Light sweater/jacket for a possible cool evening. After being in the heat of the sun during the day, consider bringing some business casual items to use to freshen up for dinner.



CURRENCY

The Israeli unit of currency is the shekel (properly, the New Israeli Shekel, with the common symbols of NIS or ₪). Each shekel is divided into 100 agorot, with divisions of 10, 50 agorot, 1, 2, 5, 10 shekel coins, and 20, 50, 100 & 200 shekel notes. Current exchange rate is approximately \$1 USD to about 3.5 NIS.

ATMs are available in the major cities and towns and are connected to European and American banking systems. US dollars are widely accepted in tourist locations, particularly Jerusalem. Additionally, VISA, MasterCard, and American Express are accepted in Israel. While credit cards are widely accepted, at smaller shops (such as in the Old City of Jerusalem) cash will be easier. Prior to departing for Israel, it is recommended that you call your credit card company to let them know that you will be using your card overseas during the pilgrimage dates; this will help avoid purchase rejections by your credit card company, thinking that your card has been stolen. Also, note whether your credit card company charges foreign transaction fees for international purchases, as these can add up quickly.

Since US dollars are widely accepted, it is possible to travel to Israel without purchasing shekels (and if needed, hotels offer exchange services, but usually at high exchange rates). If you prefer to have a few shekels already in your pocket when you step off the plane, you can inquire about purchasing New Israeli Shekels at your local bank. Don't leave this to the last minute as it can take a few days to process.

Given all this, you may be asking *"Just how much money should I bring with me?"* The typical things that you will need money for include...

- Items/food at the airport traveling to/from Israel
- Alcoholic drinks at meals. (Pilgrimage pricing includes all breakfast, lunch and dinner meal costs in Israel, with exception of alcoholic drinks.)
- Offerings at daily Mass (this money helps the Franciscans to care for the holy sites)
- Bathroom "charges" at various sites (as noted earlier)
- Souvenirs and miscellaneous items (things purchased at the gift shop of the hotel if you forgot anything, or for snacks/ice cream/ etc, or money you might give to someone begging, etc.)

In addition to bringing credit and ATM card(s), it is helpful to have some cash in case there is a problem with your credit card. Bring some smaller bills (\$20 bills and smaller) for easier purchase of snacks and



Olive Trees in the Garden of Gethsemane

small items in local shops. Also, it is convenient to bring \$30-\$40 dollars in single dollar bills to have on hand for easy purchase of water, bathroom charges, etc. Please adjust these numbers as you feel necessary/comfortable, and based on what you expect to spend on souvenirs.

COVID-19

The following is the best website for up-to-date information on Israel's entry and other requirements regarding CoVid-19:

<https://israelsafe.com>

Since CoVid related requirements change, we will be in touch closer to the trip departure with reminders for requirements at the time of our pilgrimage. Currently Israel only requires travelers to have health insurance coverage for the treatment of CoVid.

DEPARTURE DAY ... BE ON TIME!

Plan to arrive at the airport at least two (2) hours ahead of your departure time (three (3) hours if your initial flight leg is the international flight). You will be checked all the way through to Tel Aviv when you check-in at your local airport. Being on time will help assure that your luggage arrives with you in Israel the same day you do. Flight time is long (10–12 hours) going across the Atlantic, so be sure to bring some things to pass the time. The airplane cabin is often cool on an overnight flight (easier to sleep), so keep a jacket or sweater handy in addition to the blanket provided by the airlines. Be sure to download the airline's app on your smart phone, as it may be used for entertainment options.

FLIGHTS INTO TEL AVIV

Flights into Tel Aviv often have additional security checks at the gate ahead of boarding. This can range from you and your luggage going through an additional scanner, to swab tests on carry-on luggage, to police dogs on the loading ramp of the plane, etc. During this final security check you may be asked to toss liquids/drinks over the 100ml/3oz limit, even if purchased in the airport. Additionally, 30–45 minutes before landing in Tel Aviv, Israeli security practice requires all air passengers to remain in their seats. These are Israeli security practices that have been in place for numerous years for flights into Tel Aviv.

ARRIVAL AT TEL AVIV AIRPORT

At the Tel Aviv airport, plan to follow the natural flow off the plane and continuing towards Passport Control, Customs, and Baggage Claim. Just ahead of Passport Control there are numerous automatic passport scanners. Insert your passport, it will be scanned and your picture taken. You will receive a printed blue-edged entry stamp (small, roughly 2" by 3" paper) with your picture, passport information, entry time, and a barcode. Keep this paper handy because you will need to show it at Passport Control and you will need to scan its barcode to enter Baggage Claim. In order to not lose this insert during your stay in Israel, consider putting a paper clip in your passport before leaving the US to keep this insert secure in your passport. At Passport Control, have your passport easily accessible and stand in line for one of the "Foreign Passport" booths. When it is your turn to go up to the agent booth, you may go up with your spouse/children, if traveling together. The agent may inquire why you are entering in to Israel. Tell him/her that you are part of a pilgrimage



Ruins over the synagogue where Jesus preached at Capernaum



Mosaic in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

group visiting the Christian holy sites. If they ask how long you will be visiting, you can tell them you will be in Israel for a week. Once in Baggage Claim, find the baggage carousel for your flight, and locate your luggage. Do not leave the Baggage Claim area until you have located your luggage, because unlike most US airports, at the Tel Aviv airport once you leave Baggage Claim you cannot reenter the area. There is a bathroom at the far corner of the Baggage Claim area, if needed. Once everyone has collected their luggage, exit Baggage Claim at the side opposite from where you entered, through Customs and into the "Meeters and Greeters" Hall to meet up with transportation to Jerusalem.

Note: Terminal 3 is the terminal that international flights arrive from and depart to the US.



Sea of Galilee

Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, [Jesus] asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

Luke 5:3–4

AVOIDING BAGGAGE PROBLEMS

Much can be done before the trip to help avoid baggage problems during the trip:

- Tag each piece of luggage with the luggage tags that you will be sent, including your name and address so that it is easy to identify your luggage. Inside each bag also include a note with your name, address, the name/address of your destination hotels, dates of your stay, and the name of the airlines and flight number on which you are traveling. Remove any old baggage tags, so that there is less chance of confusing baggage handlers.
- Make a list of the contents of each bag.
- Don't over-pack! If you have to force a bag shut, it's too full. (Not over-packing also leaves space for souvenirs.)
- Pack essentials and valuables (cash, eyeglasses, medicines, jewelry, business and travel papers, etc.) in carry-on luggage that you will carry with you on the plane. Also pack such things as cameras, laptops, and breakables in carry-on luggage, as these items are often not covered by airline insurance, and airlines will likely not reimburse you for these items if they are damaged.
- Don't forget 3-1-1 for carry-on luggage. Limit any liquid, gel, paste or aerosol container to three (3) oz. (or 100ml) or less. Put all these items into a single (1) one(l)- quart size, clear, zip-top bag. You may need to remove this bag at the security check-point.
- Pack a change of clothes in carry-on luggage, so that in case there is a problem with your checked luggage, you have at least one change of clothes along with you.
- Check with airlines to confirm size and weight restrictions on carry-on luggage, so that you are not forced to check a piece of luggage you intended to carry on with you.
- Check in early at the airport. If you rush in late, you may make your flight, but your luggage may not.
- Double check the destination and flight number on your tagged luggage before it is out of sight.
- Typically on overseas flights airlines will allow you to check one bag at no fee. Additional checked bags can cost \$100 a piece. Contact the airlines to find out their baggage charges and for additional specific questions about baggage requirements and limitations.



Church of St. Anne

HELPFUL CHECKLIST OF IMPORTANT ITEMS

- ☐ **Passport.** Put a paper clip in your passport to secure the insert paper you will receive at Passport Control in Israel.
- ☐ **Small day pack** (back pack, shoulder bag, etc.) to take with on daily travels to hold such things as a bottle of water, Bible, journal, camera, etc. Remember, this bag should be as small as possible for ease of transport.
- ☐ **Bible. Rosary.** Just before departing for the pilgrimage, you will be sent a **Journal** and a copy of the **Stations of the Cross**, please bring these items.
- ☐ **Cash, credit card, ATM card.**
- ☐ **Sunglasses, sunscreen lotion, hat.**
- ☐ **Camera** and **extra digital card(s).**
- ☐ **International plug adapter** and **electrical converter.**
- ☐ **Travel hair dryer**, if desired (most hotels have hair dryers, but some are more like a box with an air hose, so they work for drying, but not much use in styling).
- ☐ **Medicines or prescriptions** you must take, preferably in their original bottles. Keep any necessary medication with your carry-on luggage.
- ☐ **Some additional medicines** that you might consider bringing along include medicine for headaches, medicine for upset stomach or heartburn, medicine for diarrhea, bandaids (in case of a blister), etc.

OTHER

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