

Israel Tour Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Is it safe to visit Israel?

This is, without a doubt, the most frequently asked question that I receive. My first response is that Israel is a very safe place to visit. In all the years I have been visiting Israel I have never felt I was in any danger. Of course dangers can be found in any country, including our own. You could take a trip to our nation's capital and something could go very wrong. The same is true about Israel. But, on the whole, Israel is a very safe and secure nation. Their knowledge and practice of security is world-renowned. I have taken my wife and all four of my children to Israel and would readily take them again, given the opportunity.

2. What happens if a war breaks out?

There is very little chance during the two-week period of time we are in Israel that war should break out. Bear in mind that during the main touring season, thousands of tourists from all over the world are touring the land of Israel at any one time. Many, many thousands of people have visited Israel in the past (there were 3.45 million tourist arrivals in the year 2010 and 3.36 million in 2011!) and have returned home safely without ever having come close to war. In the unlikely event that a war should break out, our tour itinerary is listed with the US Embassy, and Maranatha Tours has evacuation plans. In addition, you may be interested to know that the hotel where we stay in Jerusalem (The Ambassador Hotel) is just a few blocks away from the U.S. Consul.

3. How will a trip to Israel benefit me as a Christian?

There are many different kinds of tours to Israel. Some are focused on politics, some focus on Judaism, some are entirely secular. But of the religious Christian tours there are still many different kinds of tours. Many religious tours are based on the medieval belief that the land of Israel itself is somehow mystically powerful and that holy sites, such as churches, tombs, and other places of significance can almost magically produce a state of heightened spirituality. These tours tend to spend a lot of time visiting many of the ornate church buildings that have been constructed over the many centuries since Christ was on earth. Our tour, however, is a study tour. It is designed to inform and edify through increasing your knowledge of the history and geography of Bible lands and customs. Now, to be sure, it is thrilling to "walk where Jesus walked." And visiting the holy land usually evokes a great emotional response. There is some value in that. However, our focus is on the benefit you will receive in your ability to understand the Bible better through a first-hand acquaintance with the land where so many Biblical events occurred.

4. Can I get college credit?

Since this tour is sponsored by Shasta Bible College, it is also offered in conjunction with our course in The History and Geography of Israel. All who are enrolled in this course receive 3 units of college credit. The course is offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The class, itself, is conducted during the 6-7 weeks preceding the tour. All tour members are invited to attend these classes, whether you are seeking college credit or not. If you would like to receive college credit, you must be accepted for admission to the college and be registered for the class.

5. Do I need shots?

There are no shots required for a visit to Israel.

6. Do I need a visa?

For U.S. citizens, all you need is a passport. There is no additional visa that needs to be applied for. The US passport must be valid for 6 months after your return date. If you have questions contact Maranatha Tours. Non-US passengers contact Maranatha Tours.

7. Will there be a language problem?

Israel is a multi-lingual country. The official language is Hebrew, the same language that was used in writing the Old Testament. School children in Israel also learn at least one other language, usually either English or French. Almost all shopkeepers speak English, and you are never far from those who can speak English. Our tour guide was born and raised in England. You should have no problem at all with the language.

8. How should I dress?

We will be doing a lot of walking on this tour, so you will want to dress comfortably and wear good walking shoes. The climate should be fairly mild during the time we are in Israel. Israel's latitude and climate are very much like northern California. And, since Israel is in the northern hemisphere, their seasons are the same as ours. We will be touring at the very end of the rainy season, so it is possible we may encounter a rain shower or two. You should bring some light rain gear for such a possibility. Some days will probably be quite warm, especially in the south. Mornings and evenings could be fairly cool. It is best if you plan on dressing in layers that you can put on and take off. Most of the time it is quite all right to wear shorts and t-shirts. However, there are days when we will be touring holy sites where arms and legs should be covered. Men are expected to wear hats in Jewish holy places; although hats are to be removed in Christian holy places. Out of respect for the religious population, both men and women should dress modestly at all times. Remember, you are a guest in their country, please conduct yourselves appropriately.

9. How much spending money should I bring?

The advertised tour price does not include tips or taxes, but these will be collected from you before we depart (read the fine print on the back of the brochure!). The tour includes two very substantial meals a day, all entry fees, housing, and transportation. We will stop somewhere every day for lunch (cost will vary between a few dollars to perhaps ten dollars). You will likely want to purchase bottles of water throughout the day. Of course, you will want to bring home some souvenirs. Only you know what your budget can support for purchase of souvenirs.

10. How much free time will there be?

Most days we will be on the go from early morning until dinner time. After dinner, you will have the evenings as free time (but remember that you might be tired out from a busy day of touring). Our first day will get off to a leisurely start with time to soak in the Dead Sea. There is also a free day planned for our last day of the tour. On our free day, any travel arrangements and tips are your own responsibility.