

10 Tips for First-Time Travelers to the Holy Land

1. Walking shoes are a must! Give up fashion for comfort. Two pairs are even better in case one gets wet. It's a good idea to pack a pair of slippers for the long flight.
2. Rain is a blessing! Remember that rain is usually scarce in the Middle East and is a good thing to the locals. It is more precious than oil! So, come prepared for rain. SMALL umbrellas are a good idea, and/or a jacket with a hood.
3. Layers – layers – layers. Bring clothing that can be layered. Throughout the day and the region, the temperatures may vary widely. In the Golan, it may be quite cool. Depending on the time of year, you may be at the foot of a snow-capped mountain in the morning. By mid-day you'll be dining on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and it will be a good ten degrees warmer. When the group is further south at Masada, it will be very warm and sunny. You will be ready for a swim in the Dead Sea! Remember that the group goes from 1,150 above sea level at Caesarea Philippi to 2,500 feet above sea level at Jerusalem to -1,400 feet below sea level at the Dead Sea. All of this within 100 miles!
4. Plan to wear your clothes multiple times and keep your wardrobe casual. Jeans, loose-fitting sweatpants, and capris are acceptable. Knee-length shorts are fine in many places but may not be allowed in some of the holy places. Women will generally want to avoid sleeveless tops as they may also be frowned upon. Modesty in dress is important in the Middle East. If you choose to wear shorts and/or a sleeveless top, a good rule of thumb is to always be prepared to cover your shoulders/upper arms and knees as needed.
5. We discourage group members from using debit cards. One good reason to instead use a credit card is that you will get the current exchange rate without an exchange fee. Your guide will tell you which shops are trustworthy with credit cards. If you bring cash, you can lock it in the safe in your room with a pin number of your choosing. A good idea is to keep extra cash and passport in the room safe most of the time. Most restaurants and vendors will accept U.S. dollars. One problem, however, is they will probably give you change in shekels so having a supply of \$1 and \$5 bills in order to pay with exact change is handy. More than likely, we will do most of our shopping at a store in Bethlehem and your cards are safe there. It is a very reputable Palestinian-Christian family-owned store.

6. Make sure you have enough prescription drugs with you to cover you for extra days if the group is delayed on either end. Do not pack your drugs in your luggage. Always put them in your carry-on.
7. The group will be served a huge buffet breakfast and dinner every day. A lunch or two may also be included. The tour will stop for a quick lunch most days—usually a delicious shawarma or falafel sandwich!! The food is amazing! But you may want to pack cheese crackers, peanuts, etc. for mid-afternoon snacks on the bus. The group will burn quite a few calories—always on the move! You can usually take an apple or orange from the breakfast buffet to take with you on the bus for the day.
8. It is a good idea to bring a small backpack or day bag with you on the bus during the day. It keeps your Bible, sweater, scarf, souvenirs, and snacks all together. Pack something light and collapsible.
9. As is always the case when traveling, awareness of who is around you is important. The people of the Middle East are wonderful. They are friendly and helpful. You will enjoy them! But always be aware and keep your personal belongings secure. Make sure your phone, wallet, and other valuables are enclosed in a zippered pocket or pouch of your bag, jacket, clothing, etc. and not visible in a place that a pickpocket could easily access them.
10. Bring a Bible with good maps and your Holy Land Pilgrim's Guidebook provided by Dehoney Travel. You will want to make notes in your Bible and/or guidebook with thoughts or memories of the locations we will be in.

The most important thing is to leave your fears and misgivings at home. The minute you touch down at Ben Gurion Airport, you will feel very comfortable. This is a beautiful and amazing part of the world. You will come home with a whole new understanding of your faith and the world which gave it birth! The Dehoney Travel Team looks forward to sending you to the Holy Land soon.



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