



## ISRAEL TOUR PLANNING GUIDE

BY

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*The journey begins in Israel – and continues for life!™*

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## ISRAEL TOUR PLANNING GUIDE



This Israel Tour Planning Guide is designed to help you plan, promote, and implement your tour. Covenant Journey Travel provides an unforgettable, life-changing Holy Land tour to create a unique experience that will strengthen your faith and inspire you to be a goodwill ambassador for Israel.

### **What Makes Covenant Journey Travel Different?**

We are committed to providing you the best spiritual and educational tour. Your experience will be directly related to the provider you select. The best analogy for comparison of tour providers is the 12 spies who entered the Promised Land. All 12 saw the same land, but only two experienced God. We want you to experience God. We focus on the details, so you can focus on our Lord as you tour the land.

### **What Does the Tour Cost Include?**

The tour costs cover round-trip flights from the designated departure point in the United States to Tel Aviv, beautiful hotel accommodations, three meals each day, travel via a luxury bus, an experienced local guide, and all site entrance fees.

It is customary to provide a cash gratuity for the local tour guide and bus driver. The recommended amount is \$15.00 per person each day in Israel. This gratuity covers both the guide and driver. It will be collected before departure and given to them to divide at end of the trip.

When considering prices of other tours, be sure to compare apples to apples. Some tours of Israel appear to offer bargain prices, but a closer look often reveals time-consuming layovers resulting in less time in Israel, two meals a day rather than three, hotels that do not provide good service or food, low quality tour guides and bus transportation, an airline fuel surcharge as you approach the departure date, fewer sites, half-day touring, and optional site fees that should be included in the base prices and other hidden costs.

Covenant Journey Travel has no hidden charges. We are committed to making your journey a life-changing experience.

### **Preliminary Considerations**

#### ***How far in advance should I begin planning?***

Due to hotel accommodations and flight schedules, we recommend you begin planning your tour one year in advance. The longer you wait the fewer options you will have for hotels and flights and the less time you will have to promote your tour.

### ***What is the best time of year to visit Israel?***

The temperature and climate conditions vary throughout the year and from region to region in Israel. Due to its elevation, Jerusalem is several degrees cooler than Tiberius, in the north. The Dead Sea region, southeast of Jerusalem, registers the warmest temperatures year-round.

Winter in Israel is from late October to mid-March and is also the rainy season. Summer is April to October, which is nearly rain-free. The coldest months are December and January. The hottest months are July and August. Except for the rare occasion of snow from the northern to the central part of Jerusalem in December or January and the heat in the north and Dead Sea region during July and August, the temperatures and climate are generally suitable for touring throughout the year. Consult with us and check the weather forecast.

### ***Is Israel safe to visit?***

This is one of the most common questions asked about Israel. We have never felt unsafe anywhere in Israel. Israel has one of the lowest crime rates in the world. As you would exercise judgment when visiting any place and avoid certain areas, we do the same when planning your tour. For example, we do not enter Gaza or Ramallah. Moreover, our tour guides are highly experienced and receive current updates to make your experience safe and enjoyable.

## **Planning and Promoting**



### ***Establish a leadership team***

The leadership team can help you promote the tour to your group or church. You should designate a responsible person to be your contact with Covenant Journey Travel. We will be in regular communication with your designated contact to answer questions and finalize details. You will also want a designated person who is not traveling with the group and is easily reachable at all times to be a point of contact during the trip. Ideally, one person would fill both roles. If, however, your designee is traveling with you to Israel, make sure your local point of contact during the trip is knowledgeable about the group and the itinerary.

### ***Time of travel and estimated number of travelers***

When you contact us to book a tour, we will need (1) the general time frame you are considering for the tour; and (2) an estimate of the number of people you plan to bring with you. Both are essential for booking hotels and flights. We will check your preferred dates and let you know what arrangements are available. Each bus generally accommodates up to 50 people, which includes two seats for the local tour guide. Multiple buses can be used for larger groups. Each bus will have its own local tour guide and driver.

### ***Airline seat deposits***

Flights can be booked no more than 11 months in advance of your departure date. To hold a block of seats, the airlines require a small deposit for each person. The airline seat deposits are refundable until a time specified by the airlines. You should make your best estimate of the number of travelers to reserve a block of airline seats. If you overestimate, you can lower the number as you get closer to the departure date. The amount of the deposit and the deadlines for adjusting the estimated number of seats will be provided to you by Covenant Journey Travel.

### ***Promoting your tour before departure***

Announce your tour and promote it via your website, social media, and other communication channels. Prepare an announcement to show your church or group. Covenant Journey Travel can provide you with a slide or graphic usable in promotional materials that will allow you to brand the tour under your group or church name.

Consider an informational meeting with your group or church to discuss the tour and answer any questions. Generate excitement about the tour by sharing Israel pictures and information on biblical history and ancient sites with group. Israel is unlike any other place on Earth.

### ***Preparing your people***

Covenant Journey Travel will provide a *Covenant Journal* with detailed information, Scripture references for the sites you will visit, and space for note taking. Each traveler will also receive a detailed itinerary that contains Scripture references for each site. Encourage your people to read these Scriptures and to at least read the Gospels of Matthew and John.

Most importantly, pray for the tour and those who will journey with you. Prepare them spiritually for this life-changing experience. We recommend you assemble a team to pray for the journey long before you depart and keep them praying during your time in Israel.

### ***Promoting your tour while in Israel***

Let your group or church know that you will be posting pictures of your tour as you journey through Israel. This helps keep people back home in touch with you and will build excitement for future tours.

### **Registration, Individual Deposit, and Cancellation**

Encourage people to register online at [CovenantJourneyTravel.org/GroupTours](http://CovenantJourneyTravel.org/GroupTours). If someone is unable to register online, you may need your designee to help with the registration process. The registration form can be printed and completed in hard copy. However, the information will have



to be entered online by your designee or a representative of Covenant Journey Travel. If you have any issues registering, please contact us for assistance.

A deposit of \$500 is due at registration for each traveler, which is credited to the total payment cost. Fifty percent of payment is due 120 days prior to departure. Payment in full is due no later than 60 days prior to the departure date. If a traveler cancels prior to 60 days before departure, their tour cost will be refunded, less \$300 of their deposit and any non-refundable airline deposit (subject to the discretion of the airline). No refunds will be given if a traveler cancels within 60 days of departure.



### **Double Occupancy and Single Supplement**

The tour prices are per person, double occupancy. Hotels charge a supplement fee for single occupancy. Unless someone wants to room alone, your leadership team can pair up people to avoid the single supplement fee. Your designee will provide us with the rooming list, so we can provide that information to the hotels.

### **Trip Cancellation and Interruption Insurance**

Travel cancellation insurance covers any non-refundable cost of the trip should the covered person cancel prior to departure. Trip interruption insurance begins after departure in the event the covered person must return early or is delayed upon return and must incur additional costs. Both types of insurance are recommended but not required. Covenant Journey Travel will provide coverage options.

### **Medical Insurance**

Check with your medical insurance company to see if you are insured for travel abroad. If you need medical coverage, Covenant Journey Travel will provide a list of insurance companies that cover short-term travel abroad.

## **Tour Leader Tips and Recommendations**

### ***Icebreaker***

If many in your group do not know each other, it is good to begin the journey with an icebreaker. This can be done on the bus during the first day in Israel if the bus is equipped with a wireless mic. If the icebreaker is not possible on the bus, it can be done at the hotel. One option is to break up people in pairs and have each share information about themselves with the other. After allowing enough time, have each person share what they learned about the other person. The other option is to have each person share something about themselves. The point of this exercise is to get the group to open up and bond with each other, which will enhance their trip.



### ***Role of guide and tour leader***

Each tour bus will have its own local tour guide. The tour guides used by Covenant Journey Travel are highly experienced and knowledgeable about the Bible and the land. The guide can provide as much or as little instruction and teaching as the tour leader desires. Remember, this is your tour. The guide is there to assist and guide you.

Communicate at the end of each day with the guide about the itinerary for the next day and again prior to departure each morning. Maintain regular communication with the guide during the day to discuss (1) how much time you have for each site; (2) if, what, and how long you want to teach at a site; and (3) any other relevant matter to make the site meaningful.

### ***Preparing for each site***

There are many sites to visit during your time in Israel. Plan your teaching accordingly to bring out the spiritual significance of each site.

Plan ahead to allow your group time to pray, have personal time, read, and have praise and worship. Sites we recommend where you should spend additional time for praise and worship and individual prayer and meditation include: (1) Mount of Beatitudes; (2) the chapel in Magdala; (3) the boat ride on the Sea of Galilee; (4) Caesarea Philippi; (5) Garden of Gethsemane; (6) the pit in the House of Caiaphas; (7) Ecce Homo or Praetorium; and (8) Garden Tomb.

### ***The importance of prayer and praise***

Prayer, praise, and worship enhance the spiritual experience in Israel. We recommend that you bring a praise and worship leader. A guitar is the perfect instrument to take to certain sites and to use in the hotel for an evening gathering. You can also bring a small Bluetooth speaker to stream downloaded music from a smart phone or other device.

In addition to certain sites, the bus and the hotels serve as optional venues for teaching, debriefing with the group, prayer, praise, and worship.

We recommend beginning each day on the bus with the tour leader or someone else reading a Scripture to set the mood or theme for that day's journey. Suggested Scriptures are listed in the itinerary.

Following the Scripture reading with prayer and ending with a praise and worship song played over the bus speaker system enhances the spiritual experience and helps prepare each person for the day.



### **Travel Checklist**

The following travel checklist is provided to answer questions and help you plan. A modified version of the travel checklist is provided online for each person to help them prepare and pack for the tour.

#### ***Pre-Departure***

1. Passport must be valid for six (6) months or more from last day in Israel (make a copy of the photo page to carry with you).
2. Schedule your flight so that it arrives at the point of departure in the U.S. no later than three (3) hours before departure. This will allow sufficient time to meet as a group at a designated location for an important pre-flight briefing. Schedule your return flight home so that departure is no earlier than three (3) hours after landing in the U.S.
3. Provide flight itinerary to and from the point of departure to your tour designee.
4. Necessary items for trip: (a) electrical plug adapter from U.S. to Israel outlets, (b) converter if needed, and (c) supply of prescription medications.
5. Suggested items for trip: (a) comfortable walking shoes, (b) outdoor clothing (Columbia or Ex-Officio are good examples of light hiking clothes for warmer weather).
6. Notify credit card company of travel dates to Israel.
7. Check cell phone calling/texting/data packages for Israel (if desired).



### ***Packing***

1. Check weather and pack accordingly.
2. Undergarments.
3. Socks.
4. Long pants/slacks/jeans/capris.
5. Shorts.
6. Shirts/blouses/shoulder cover or wrap.
7. Walking shoes.
8. Other shoes (if desired).
9. Hat (Covenant Journey Travel will provide baseball-style caps for every person).
10. Swimsuit (preferably one-piece for women but modest for all).
11. Flip-flops or water shoes.
12. Sunglasses.
13. Sunscreen.
14. Toiletries.
15. Prescription medications.
16. Over-the-counter stomach or nausea medications (if necessary).
17. Electronics and chargers.
18. Electrical adapter and converter (if electronics require conversion).
19. Jacket/coat/sweater (depending on weather and seasonal temperatures).
20. Gloves and scarf (depending on weather and seasonal temperatures).
21. Cash in dollars for water and some personal purchases.
22. Pack a change of clothes and some personal items to carry on the flight.
23. Checked luggage may not exceed 50 pounds, depending on the airline.
24. Passport and copy of photo page.

### ***Departure***

1. Book flights to arrive in plenty of time in case of flight delay.
2. Make sure you or your designee is notified of any delayed or changed flights.
3. Rechecking baggage at the point of departure is recommended to minimize transfer problems.
4. Arrive in time for a pre-flight briefing at the point of departure.
5. Go through security together as a group.
6. Assemble at departure gate (after security) at least 1 ½ hours prior to take-off.

### ***Arrival***

1. Turn off cellular roaming data when not using Wi-Fi.

2. Do not change dollars to shekels.
3. To best adjust to the time change, get as much sleep as possible on the flight to Israel. Upon landing, stay awake until after dinner in Israel. On your return to the U.S., get as much sleep as possible on the flight back and then stay up until near your normal bed time in your time zone.



## **Suggested Timeline Leading Up to Departure and Return**

### ***1 year or more***

The more you can plan the tour in advance of your departure date the better. Select a couple date range options generally counting ten days from departure to return. The best days for departure are Sunday through Tuesday. If EL AL is the airline for the tour, remember that EL AL does not fly anywhere on Shabbat (Friday night sundown to Saturday night sundown). EL AL does have flight options departing late Saturday night. Consult with Covenant Journey Travel to discuss your proposed dates and we will schedule your tour with the ground operator, book the hotels, and the guide. Many hotels and guides are booked a year in advance and thus the reason to begin early.

Estimate the number of people traveling with your tour group and how many will be in the same room. This is required for booking the ground operators, hotels, and the airline.

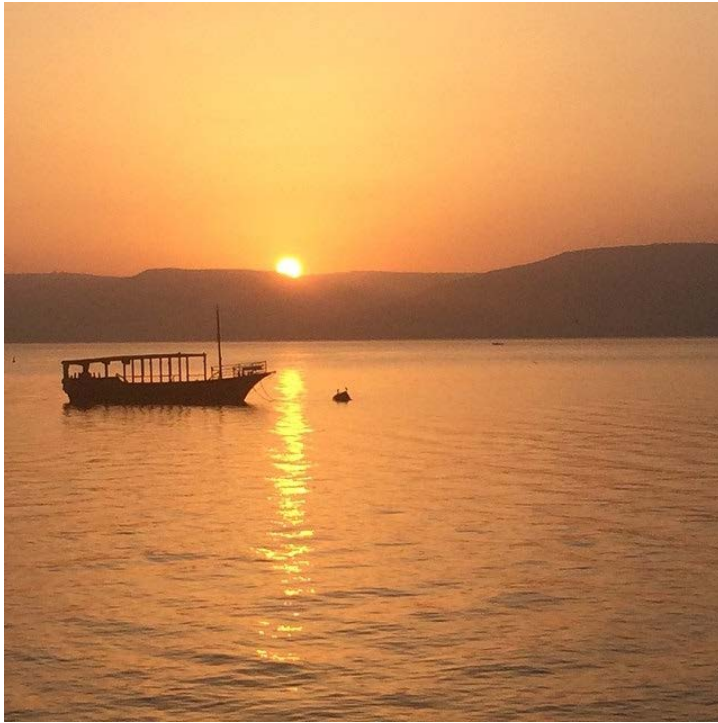
Establish your leadership team to promote and market the tour.

Establish a prayer team to begin praying for the tour and for each person who will register. We recommend that the prayer team begin praying now and continue praying during your time in the Holy Land.

Select your designee who will act as the primary contact person with Covenant Journey Travel.

### ***11 months***

Covenant Journey Travel will book the airline. Airlines do not release their schedules until 11 months prior to departure dates. This practice is followed by the industry in order to avoid overlapping airline schedules.



Within a short time after Covenant Journey Travel reserves a block of seats, the airline will require a deposit for each reserved seat. The deposit ranges from \$100 to \$200 per seat depending on the airline. The number of reserved seats can be adjusted downward for a period of time set by each airline without any refund penalty. Once that time set by the airline expires, the seat deposit will be forfeited for any unfilled seats. The seats may be adjusted upward if there are available seats, but the cost of the ticket may increase, and that cost is passed on to the traveler at the time of registration.

Announce your tour and begin marketing it to your group or church. Covenant Journey Travel can provide a PowerPoint

slide and other graphics that you can modify to help you promote the tour.

Communicate your tour by email, social media, and mail.

Conduct an informational meeting, preferably in person where you can generate excitement and answer questions.

Encourage online registration and designate your group at [CovenantJourney.org/GroupTours](http://CovenantJourney.org/GroupTours).

Remind your group or church to make sure their passports are valid for at least six months after the return date. There is plenty of time to renew passports. For late registrants, a passport application or renewal can be expedited upon request with payment for the expedited service.

#### ***10-4 months***

Continue promoting your tour and remind those who have registered but have not yet paid in full that they must do so no later than 120 days prior to departure. You should also remind them that confirmed status will be given to those who are paid in full by order of sequence.

#### ***4 months***

All registrants must pay in full no later than 120 days prior to departure. New registrants during these last four months must pay in full upon registration.

#### ***4-3 months***

This is generally the time frame when you should consider whether to decrease or increase the number of confirmed seats. Depending on the airline, seats may be reduced up to this point without a refund penalty. Check with Covenant Journey Travel for the specific rules and time frames of the airline.

Continue promoting the tour up to near the time of departure. Check with Covenant Journey Travel to determine whether airline seats and hotel rooms remain available.

## ***2 months***

Conduct an informational meeting in person. If your group is scattered throughout the country, conduct a telephone conference. During this meeting you can begin to prepare the group for the spiritual journey they are about to experience. You can answer questions and discuss the climate, packing, and other details outlined in the Covenant Journey Travel Checklist.

Encourage people to begin reading the Gospels of Matthew and John.

Covenant Journey Travel will provide the itinerary, which has many Scripture references for each site. Each traveler will also receive a Covenant Journal, which includes a description of each site along with Scripture references and a place to journal. Encourage people to read these resources before departing.

The spiritual leader should prepare for teaching at the various sites. In addition to the spiritual leader, we encourage you to bring someone to lead in praise and worship. We highly recommend portable musical instruments or a Bluetooth speaker synced to a device that has your favorite downloaded praise and worship music. Now is the time to review the itinerary and begin preparing for the journey.

### ***Begin the Journey***

Enjoy the journey in the Holy Land!

### ***During the Journey***

Post on social media so your friends can follow your journey. You may want to designate someone to post updates.

Take lots of photos and create a photo album of your journey.

### ***After the Journey***

If possible, get the group together in person for fellowship to discuss the journey. Elicit feedback from your group. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation to share highlights of your journey with your church, Sunday School, or Bible study group. Begin planning your next journey to Israel!



[Download this document at: CovenantJourney.org/PlanningGuide](http://CovenantJourney.org/PlanningGuide)