


Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Israel

1. **Passports:** You will need a valid passport to travel to Israel. Check that yours is valid, preferably until six months past your travel date and with blank pages so that officials can stamp entry/exit details. EU/US/Canadian/NZ/Australian citizens can enter Israel without special Visa's, others should check visa requirements online with the Israel embassy well in advance of your planned trip. When you pass through Israeli security, they will give you a small entry slip of paper instead of a stamp. Retain this slip of paper as you will need it to leave the country. Sloan Travel will obtain Visa's for each traveler for entry into Jordan.
2. **Walking & Access:** The tour participants have aged from 3.5 into their 80's. The walking varies from very rough with many steps and uneven ground and stone pathways. Some of the places we visit the bus stops right at the site and the walking is limited and on smooth asphalt. But you also must be able to climb the 5 steep steps onto the bus, as there is not a lift. At a few of the locations that have longer walks or the path is rougher, those not as able limited how far they wanted to go and waited for the group to return. My general recommendation is that you should be able to walk at least a mile without stopping on up and down slopes. if you are over 80 or not in good physical condition, this may not be a suitable tour for you. Please discuss this with Ed Sloan prior to making a reservation if you have mobility concerns.
3. **Electrical:** You will need to bring a 2 or 3-prong, round plug adapter to fit the wall sockets which are 220 volts. Normal chargers for cell phones and computers automatically convert the power 
4. **Dress:** Generally, the dress code for the tour is very comfortable and casual (even for Sunday and Wednesday meetings) with lightweight clothing. the temperatures will fluctuate from the low 70's to 90's with potential rain showers. The hotels have laundry services that can be used when we are in a hotel for 2 days or you can hand wash in the sink (bring laundry detergent). Consider packing the following items:
 - a. Comfortable walking/tennis style shoes
 - b. Light coat
 - c. Hat and sunscreen
 - d. Small umbrella
 - e. Comfortable non-wrinkle clothing
 - f. Bathing suit for the Dead Sea and other pool/beach opportunities
 - g. Ladies Scarf for the Western Wall visit (no scarves are required for any other churches)
 - h. Ladies' knees and shoulders should be covered
 - i. Men's Shorts are not to be worn in churches, so they can be worn after we leave Jerusalem
5. **Luggage:** You are permitted to carry one piece of luggage and one carry-on bag per person under 50 pounds. Portage between the coach and your hotel room is included if you desire.
6. **Backpack:** A small, 16" x 12" sling backpack will be provided for each guest. These are great for packing items you will be needing daily like water bottles, brochures, batteries, Etc. They are to be worn by all tour members at each tour site. This allows us to readily identify tour members and keep track of each other.
7. **Pre Reading:** One book I have just finished reading is titled "The Book. A History of the Bible, by Christopher De Hamel (Amazon \$15). Great book on the history of the Bible. It will help to explain some of the items we will see, like the Dead Sea Scrolls, and places we will visit. Another good historical book is The Source by James Michener about Israel. You will come back with a heightened understanding of the Bible and an appreciation for the region where Jesus lived and taught and where so many of the events of the Bible occurred.

8. **Trip Insurance:** Trip insurance is recommended! www.insuremytrip.com is a good place to start your search for a policy.
9. **Hearing aids:** Throughout the trip we use ear buds to hear the tour guide talk, this does not work for those with hearing aids. If you have hearing aids, please bring a head set so you can plug into the receiver and put them on over your aids and we will also have the hearing aid transmission cables for those that have hearing aids that pickup Bluetooth.
10. **Bible App:** During the tour, Vivian, our Tour guide, will be reading passages from the Bible, so it is very helpful if you want to follow along to have downloaded the King James Version App to your phone. It is free from the App store and can be used in meeting also.
11. **Hymns App:** During the Tour, we will also sing Hymns at some places along the way and in the bus as we go from place to place. So, it is helpful if you have downloaded the Hymns Old and New Digital Edition App from RL Allen and Son to your phone. Link: www.bibles-direct.com Go to the -HymnBooks tab, then -Hymns Old & New: Staff Music Editions, the -Password is allan. You then pay for the hymnbook, and they will send you an email in about a week with instruction on how to download the App.
12. **Tour Guide:** Vivian Naber Huzaineh is our wonderful tour guide licensed by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, which takes 2 years of study to obtain. She also has a master's degree in International Cooperation and Development and a diploma in Tour Guiding from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and studied in St Joseph school in the Christian Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Most importantly she is a Christian Palestinian, born, raised, in Bethlehem with her husband and two daughters. She has an extensive knowledge of the bible and shares it feely with us including reading passages from the bible at each site and discussing the background of the bible events based on the historical setting. She has guided our tours for the last five years and we have gotten to know her well and you will get to know her warm welcome.

The Christians who live in Israel makeup only 1% of the total population. It has not been easy for Christians and many Christians have decided to leave and immigrate elsewhere. As a Christian, she likes to accompany Christian groups and read the bible on the same spot where our Lord walked the earth.



Vivian and Ed- Sea of Galilee

13. **Tour Leader:** Ed Sloan is the Tour Leader and is overall responsible for the tour organization. He is a retired Engineer and Project Manager from Boise, Idaho who has lived overseas with his wife Susan in Singapore, Korea and Qatar managing very large, multiple Billion-dollar infrastructure projects. He is very used to managing large groups of people and the logistics needed for a successful tour.
14. **Overseas Travel Bureau:** OTB is the company the Tour Leader works with in Israel to organize the tour based on the tour leaders Itinerary. They are responsible for making the hotel, bus, Guide, and site visit reservations.

15. **Meetings:** We will have Wednesday evening and Sunday morning meetings in hotel meeting rooms (casual dress code). The workers may be able to meet us at the hotel in Tel Aviv and Haifa for a couple of hours at dinner.
16. **Security:** We have not seen any security incidents and have not felt unsecure at any time on our tours. We stay away from the Gaza area where the unrest has been (we can see Gaza from the freeway when we drive by), but please always be on the lookout for pick-pocket thieves or other security situations.
17. **Money:** As most of the components of your Israel tour have been prepaid, you will only need money for lunch each day (\$12-\$15 USD), souvenir shopping, bottled water, or other misc. purchases. You can exchange money at the airport into the local currency shekels, or USD which can be used everywhere. Use credit cards and ATMs to avoid carrying large sums of cash and they seem as safe to use as those here in the U.S. If you can locate an ATM at a bank, they seem to have lower fees and accept foreign cards more readily. Some small ATM's will not accept all cards. High denomination bills are not readily accepted for exchange, even in banks, so it is better to carry smaller denominations. Only use CC when we get to Jordan at Hotels or banks, but you can also use USD in Jordan.
18. **Delayed Flights:** If your flight is delayed and you can get to the hotel by the time the tour departs, please call the hotel or Ed Sloan's WhatsApp number send him and email as soon as possible, so we can make arrangements for you to catch up with the tour.
19. **Airport Taxi:** The taxi from the airport to the hotel should take about 35 minutes and cost about 300 Shekels or about \$80 USD. For the best rate, make sure they start the meter before you leave the airport. There is also a train that will get you close to the hotel from the airport and then you will have to take a taxi to the hotel. There are many car rental agencies just up the street from the Met. hotel if you are interested in renting a car. There is also a bus that goes from the airport to near the hotel that will only cost a few \$\$.
20. **Check-in time:** Is officially 3:00 pm at the Metropolitan Hotel where we start the tour. But depending on how soon guests move out they will try to get you into your room as soon as possible and that could be as early as 10 AM. If you arrive in the early part of the day, this could mean a wait in the hotel lobby. The hotel has a secure luggage storage area, so you may leave your luggage and enjoy this time by taking a walk, having a snack, or doing some exploring.
21. **Cell Phone cameras:** The buses have chargers and WIFI, and we have WiFi service most of the time. I recommend the App, WhatsApp, it is free to download and you can talk and send emails/photos for free, when you are on WIFI. You can call and send info from the bus or hotels if the people you are wanting to send info to also have WhatsApp. You can also set up a group and send to multiple people. I have used my time on the bus to send a few photos each day to my family group, with a summary of where we had been. I recommend that you also bring an external rechargeable battery for your camera. There are lots of pictures to take, and sometimes we are gone from the bus for hours. The bus WiFi capacity is limited, so watching long videos, news or other TV program feeds, or other data intensive programs is not allowed.
22. **Group Leaders:** During the Introduction and Orientation meeting at the Hotel on the first evening of the tour, we will divide up into groups of about 7 members each. We will then ask for a volunteer to be a group Leader in each group. The Group Leaders will help me track each of the groups and count their members each time we get back on the bus, so we make sure we have everyone aboard when we leave each site.

23. **Petra:** When we travel to Petra, we will drive to the Israel side of the boarder in Eilat and disembark from our bus, walk to the Israeli security checkpoint where they will process the Jordanian Visa documents provided as part of the tour. Then we will walk ahead to the second Israeli security check where they will check your passport and the small entry paper you received at the airport upon entry to the country. They will give you another exit slip (do not lose them). We will then walk about 100 meters to the Jordanian security control where they will stamp your passport. We will then load onto our Jordanian bus and proceed to Petra. At the end of the day we will return and reverse the process.
24. **Bus:** Vivian and Ed sit in the front seats of the bus and all other seats are open seating. If anyone gets car sick, please let me know so we can seat you in the front of the bus. We will rotate seats so if you want to sit up front let me know, but you really cannot see out the front any better than the side so it is not very important. I find that folks make friends quickly and start sitting in the same seats each day. The Bus is air conditioned. We stop about each hour but on a couple of days we will be on the bus for several hours, but we will stop a maximum of every 2 hours.
25. **Climate:** The weather should be in the 70's to low 80's, maybe a rain shower or two, when we get to the desert (Dead Sea and Jordan) it could get to high 80's+.
26. **Hotels:** The hotels are large 4+ star accommodation, with 2 single beds in each room that make a double bed. The beds are firm. The hotels all have huge, all you can eat, buffets for both breakfast and dinner. Breakfast starts at 6:30-7 AM and dinner usually at 6:00 PM. Please go on a diet for 2 weeks before the trip, so you can really enjoy the incredible spread of food provided!
27. **Tel Aviv hotel/car rental:** There are less expensive hotels just up the street from the Met Hotel where we are staying in Tel Aviv if you come in early and want another option. I stayed at the Best Western (2 blocks away) and it is good and the Muse TLV is right next to the Met. There are also car rental agencies just up the street from the Met if you want to rent a car.