

Biblelands Cruise

Trip Tips

“Must” reading for your trip of a lifetime!

☆☆☆ Please review these overseas travel tips now and 30 days prior to departure. Many require some pre-trip planning and shopping. ☆☆☆

Packing for the trip of a lifetime

Extras To Bring

It is always a good idea when traveling to bring along an extra pair of your prescription glasses and/or sunglasses and prescription medicines (with original prescription and generic name for drug). These items are available overseas, but are generally time-consuming to locate and may make you miss a day of sightseeing. Check with your doctor before leaving if you think you may need motion sickness patches or wristbands. Also, while items such as camera batteries and film are readily available, they are generally much less expensive in the U.S.

Fannypacks/Backpacks

Many past tour attendees have found it convenient to wear a “fanny pack” or backpack for carrying such items as your camera, wallet, film, pen, sunscreen, fold-up umbrella, compact Bible, passport, binoculars, etc. Other people use camera or athletic-type bags to carry into port each day. The buses in Israel are safe and locked when you get off at each stop, so leaving things on the seat is safe and ok. Other ports are not as secure so use more discretion. Usually the guide will tell you whether or not it is safe to leave things on the bus. There is a safe in your cabin where you may also leave valuables if you wish. It is a good idea to bring a few small packages of Kleenex as well—at bathroom stops there is a one out of two chance you will need them!



Helpful items to bring from home . . .

- Small binoculars
- Hand sanitizer
- Travel umbrella
- Cold medicine
- Kleenex
- Small calculator
- Travel blow dryer (low wattage, less than 500)
- Copies of all prescriptions
- Packaged snacks
- Melatonin (sleep aid)

Clothes

For the site tours in Israel, Athens, Ephesus, etc., comfort before fashion is the key! The weather varies from day to day at this time of the year in Israel and Athens. Generally, layered clothing works best as you may need a jacket early in the day and short sleeves in the afternoon. A jacket, sweaters, and shirts (long or short sleeved) seem to work the best. Wrinkle free clothes are a must! Check the weather forecast each evening for the next day’s suggested clothing. Women must cover their shoulders and knees for Holy

sites—at Capernaum in Galilee and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. They've even banned tight-fitting jeans and/or leggings in the past. Leggings or tight-fitting stretch pants are not allowed on the Holy sites unless knees are covered by a skirt. Specific dress requirements will be announced the night before touring. Always wear comfortable walking shoes for the day tours. On the cruise, dress is casual. There will be one night when you will have your picture taken with the ship's captain—nice to impress your kids. The nights at sea are usually cool.



Quick Tip

Many internet sites (Google, Weather.com, etc.) have a section where you can look up international weather forecasts. We recommend bookmarking these pages and checking periodically before departure. This will give you a good idea of what to expect weather-wise and help with your packing decisions.

Money

Local Currency

Dollars are widely accepted in Israel, as well as Turkey and Egypt and it's easy to exchange currency if necessary. You will pay a small charge for conversion, which makes little difference in changing small amounts like \$20 dollar bills but you should always compare several exchange rates before converting large amounts of dollars, to be certain you are getting a fair rate of exchange. Euros are used in Athens and Rome and can be purchased at the hotels & airports.

Many tour participants find it's good to have 100 or so one-dollar bills and several five-dollar bills on their tour. They come in handy for small purchases. You can use larger bills, but if you want to get change for a \$100 bill, you will get local currency, not dollars. Also, if you are going to exchange dollars for local currency, decide ahead of time how much you are going to need for that country because you cannot use Turkish Lira anywhere but in Turkey.

The conversion rates below are as of October 2010.

In **Greece and Italy**, the currency is the **Euro** and the exchange rate is approximately .7€ to the dollar.

In **Israel**, the currency is called the **Shekel**. It is currently trading at approximately 3.6 shekels to the dollar.

In **Egypt**, the currency is the Egyptian **Pound**. The rate of exchange is approximately 5.7 pounds to one dollar.

In **Turkey**, the currency is the **Lira** and the rate of exchange is approximately 1,410,000 lira to the dollar. Both dollars & euros are widely accepted in Turkey.

In **Jordan**, the currency is **Dinars** and the exchange rate is approximately .7 dinars to one dollar.



Quick Tip

Many passengers find it helpful to carry a small calculator with them to quickly figure exchange rates and currency conversions.

Credit Cards

Many people prefer to charge purchases on a credit card rather than carry a large amount of cash. The benefit to this is that the conversion rate is the actual rate of exchange for that day (+ 2% fee from the company). If, for instance, you purchase an item with your MasterCard in Israel for 125 shekels, the charge will come out in dollars on your statement—at the current international exchange rate, which is the best rate of exchange available. However, you generally will find the need to have a few dollars, euros, or shekels in your possession for small purchases like Cokes, newspapers, postcards, etc. Visa is the most accepted credit card, then MasterCard, American Express, and Diners Club. Others, such as Discover, are more difficult to use.

Travelers Checks and ATMs

Travelers checks are encouraged over large amounts of cash, but when you cash your travelers checks, your change will be in local currency so be sure to use small denominations. ATM machines are available but not usually easy to find. They work like machines in the US, in English, but they dispense the local currency, not dollars.

Personal Checks

Always bring a few preprinted **personal checks** from your local bank—a number of places accept them for merchandise, especially for large items like oriental rugs or nice jewelry. Apparently they figure that if you can afford the \$3,000 trip, your check will clear. Sometimes a check is accepted when a credit card isn't!

Passports

Obtaining a Passport

By now you should have a valid passport that is good through **six months past your date of return**. If you don't yet have a passport, you need to start the process as soon as possible. You can pick up an application at either the post office or county courthouse (varies by area). Applications can also be downloaded off internet (http://travel.state.gov/passport/forms/forms_841.html). You will need a certified copy of your birth certificate (the one with the footprints doesn't qualify :-)) to submit with the application. If you don't have a certified copy, you can request one by calling the department of records at the capital of the state in which you were born. There is usually a fee for this and it can take several weeks to receive it so get started, ASAP!

Traveling with Your Passport

Rule #1, always keep your passport with you (not in your luggage) while travelling unless it is locked in a secure place, such as the ship's safe while onboard. Before leaving home, make **two photocopies** of the main page of your passport. Leave one with someone you could contact while you are on your trip and take the other with you (keep it in a separate location than your original passport). Remember, you will need to be able to produce your **original passport** at all airports in the U.S. and abroad, along with your plane tickets. Always keep your passport and plane tickets with you while traveling. Never pack them in a suitcase that will be checked. This means you will need to decide where to keep them on your body. Some people purchase safety pockets that attach to your belt and hang **inside** your pants. Others simply keep them in their front or back pockets, or a well-guarded purse. If you lose your passport, it's impossible to leave a foreign country or get past customs in the U.S. until you get a new one.

Usually the ship will collect all passports on arrival for safekeeping. When you leave the ship at the various ports, you will either be given your original passport or a certified photocopy as well as a "landing tag" which is all you will need to enter/exit most countries. The exception to this is Israel where all passengers are required to clear Israeli customs. The first morning the ship arrives, a customs delegation will board and process the passengers. Each passenger disembarking will be given a customs card along with their passport. You will need to keep this card with your passport at all times as they will be collected by customs agents when we depart.

Flights

Sleep Aids

We recommend that you consider purchasing some items that will help you sleep on the long flights to and from Athens. One suggestion is a neck pillow that allows you to sleep sitting-up without hurting your neck. Other suggestions are sleeping shades (cloth eye covers that block light) and ear plugs.

Blankets and small pillows are provided. You may also check with your family physician for some mild sleeping pills to assist you falling asleep. **It is very helpful to sleep on the overseas plane segment.** Wear comfortable and loose shoes on the overseas plane ride (shoes that tie are best). Your feet will retain fluids over the course of the flight but will return to normal after landing.

Many people believe that the less you eat, the better you sleep. And we encourage you to sleep as best you can. Even short naps are helpful. Bring a toothbrush, deodorant, wash cloth, make-up, etc. in your carry-on bag to use on the plane the next morning.

How You Can Beat Jet Lag

Eating

1. Eat sparingly, less is better!
2. Eat cautiously if turbulence is predicted.
3. Minimize food intake to get maximum rest. You'll doze off faster & sleep more soundly if your stomach is not stuffed.
4. Avoid gas-forming foods, *i.e.* beans, cabbage, onions, raw apples, cucumber, melons, foods cooked in grease.
5. Try to match your eating time with your "stomach clock." For instance, if dinner on the plane is going to be significantly later than your regular time, eat something at the airport before boarding, then pass up the in-flight feast.

Drinking

Dr. F. S. Preston of *British Airways* advises crew members to drink between 4-5 pints of fluid, preferably water, when they fly to prevent dehydration. The ventilation system tends to remove moisture from the cabin and body tissues, causing dehydration sufficient to cause fatigue and irritability. When passengers get dehydrated and feel thirsty, they tend to replenish their fluid deficits with the wrong fluids—liquor, soft drinks, coffee and tea. Remember:

- Liquor is almost twice as potent at high altitude.
- Soft drinks cause abdominal discomfort. At 35,000 feet, gases in the stomach and intestines increase approximately 20% because of the decrease in atmospheric pressure. Soft drinks worsen this condition.
- Coffee and tea are mild diuretics and speed up the loss of liquids through the kidneys.
- The best fluids to drink are **water** and **fruit juices**.

Exercise

1. Get out of your seat and move around the cabin from time to time.
2. Try some isometric exercises while you are in your seat.
3. Do a few calisthenics and stretches in the aisle or lavatory to get your circulation going.

Rest

1. Recline your seat back.
2. Put a pillow behind your head—it's a good psychological device.
3. Cover yourself with a blanket—it will trap body heat, keep you warm, and help you fall asleep faster.
4. When you arrive in Athens or Rome, **don't go to bed (not even for a nap) until after dinner.** This will help you adjust to the time change much more quickly.

Luggage

For those not participating in the Israel/Petra or Rome extension, please limit your luggage to **two checked pieces** of luggage and **one carry-on** per person. For those doing the Israel/Petra extension, you are limited to one piece of check luggage and one carry-on due to limited luggage space on the buses.



Important Note!!!

You are provided luggage tags that must be attached to the handles of your luggage **before** you check your luggage in the U.S. This insures that your luggage will be handled with our group. It also speeds up customs as identifying you as part of a tour group. If you lose any of your luggage tags, notify a Biblelands representative for replacements.

Carry-ons

In addition to make-up, toiletries, medicine, and two good books (a gripping novel by Frank Peretti is suggested :-), pack at least one change of clothing and two changes of underwear in your carry-on. In the unlikely event your luggage is lost or delayed, this can be a life saver. If your luggage is lost, you probably won't see it for four days. Pray now that your luggage won't get lost!

Carry-on Dimensions & Restrictions

Most airlines have now restricted carry-ons to 18 pounds and checked luggage to 50 pounds per piece. However, each airline's restrictions differ slightly, we will send you the specific information for your flight prior to departure.

Customs

Going through customs into foreign countries is generally slow. When arriving in Athens or Rome, if you have lost a suitcase, tell your Biblelands Cruise host and they will show you where to go to fill out the forms. We usually have about one out of every 100 people that don't have all their luggage make it. Usually the lost luggage is back to you in two days to four days. Again, remember to pack an extra change of clothes and two changes of underwear in your carry-on.

Always include necessities such as make-up, camera, valuables, medicine, etc. in your carry-on. Before leaving, pray that the Lord will allow all of your bags to arrive with your flight, and, if God allows your bag to be delayed or lost, that you will have a Christ-centered response.

You are allowed to bring back to the United States up to \$400.00 of foreign goods per person. Families may pool their goods. You will receive a stamped form when you arrive in Israel regarding customs—you keep it with your passport—you will need it when you leave each day.

Many times, going through customs will try your ability to be a Christian witness. **Tip: Always remember that you are in a foreign country and things are not like the U.S. So, be flexible and pray a lot!**

First Day of Trip

The first day of your trip is a long one as most will depart a U.S. city and continue on to Athens or Rome. Since we are traveling against the time zone you will arrive the next day. With this in mind, it

is important to be organized enough to get a good night's sleep the day before you depart. That way, as the little world travel problems crop up, you are rested and better able to properly respond to any situation that God allows.

If for some reason you don't get seated next to your spouse or travel mate (this seems to happen quite often for some reason), notify the Biblelands representative traveling with your group. We can usually work it out before getting on the plane but once or twice we have had to do some seat trading after we boarded the plane.

Dietary Concerns

Water

The water on the ship, in Israel, Rome, and Athens is of the same quality as the U.S. and is unlikely to cause you any problems. However, it is always safer to drink bottled water whenever possible. We recommend that you drink **ONLY** bottled beverages in Egypt and Turkey. In Israel, your bus will have an ample supply of bottled water at very reasonable prices, usually \$1 per bottle. The bus drivers sell them as a side business. Soft drinks are usually available at food stands at most sites.

Special diet requests

If you have special dietary needs (*i.e.* medical restrictions, vegetarian diet), please submit them in writing to *Compass* (P.O. Box 3747, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83816) **at least 6 weeks** prior to departure. The cruise line is happy to accommodate these requests with prior notice. **Note:** Special meals are also available from the airlines. Once you have received your tickets, **call the airline direct** and they will help you with your request.

Meals

Meals—breakfast, lunch and dinner—are included in the trip except for dinner in Athens before the cruise and any airport layovers. On the Rome extension, only breakfast is included in the package. The cruise ship has a European-style menu, with a few Greek dishes as well. Ice tea and water are provided on ship at lunches and dinners, juices and coffee for breakfast. Soft drinks and wine may be purchased (charged to your room), as well as bottled water. Water is provided at off-ship site lunches and soft drinks can be purchased from the waiter.

Upon arriving in Athens, after you have checked into the hotel, you will have free time until you depart for your tour of city the next morning (most flights, some arrive later than others). This means that you will have time to see the city on your own or shop. During this time, your food is on your own except for breakfast, which is included at the hotel. We recommend you **avoid** eating **any** unpackaged food from food stands. Remember to wash any fruit.

On the Ship

Smoking

This is a non-smoking cruise. Smoking is allowed only outside on decks and inside private cabins (**with the approval of all occupants**). Cigars and pipes are prohibited by the cruise line. In Greece, Turkey and Israel, large numbers of people still smoke. Non-smoking areas are non-existent in restaurants. We have no control over the ship's crew.

Onboard Accounts

Once you are onboard, you will need to obtain a "charge" card from the Purser's Office. The card

works like a debit card, you make a deposit on your shipboard account (cash, check, or credit card) and then use the card for all shipboard purchases (soft drinks, gift store, all services, etc.). On the last day of the cruise, you will settle your account with the Purser and any money remaining in your “account” will be refunded (credit cards are not charged until the end of the cruise so that they can be charged for the exact amount owed).

Laundry

Laundry service is available on the ship. A few items are not too costly but before you send a large number of items to be cleaned, check the total costs (usually a laundry list is left in your cabin or you can ask your cabin steward). The clothes are returned to your cabin. Pressing is also available but because of fire regulations, the ship is unable to carry dry cleaning equipment. You can charge the laundry to your cabin and pay the bill upon departure.

Name Badges

You will be sent a Compass tour name badge prior to your departure from home. **You are required to wear your badge during all off-board tours.** It also acts as your site pass and meal ticket during the day tours. We also ask that you wear your badge at all times on board the ship. If you lose your badge, see a Compass staff member for a replacement.

Party Nights!

There are several special event nights scheduled on the cruise:

- **Talent Night** Your chance to shine and discover the hidden talents of other cruise passengers. Whether you participate or cheer others on, it's always a fun evening.
- **Captain's Dinner** The crew goes out of their way to prepare a special meal and evening of entertainment. Also your chance to get your picture taken with the ship's captain. (Good way to impress your kids :-)
- **Greek Night** An evening of Greek food and culture. The crew presents a program of traditional dances and music.

Electricity

You will need to purchase a converter for shavers, hair dryers, curling irons, etc. These are usually available at any Radio Shack or Wal-Mart, you can also purchase them from us. Electricity in Israel, Greece, Rome, and on board the ship is **220 volts/50 cycles**. Standard hair dryers are difficult to use in the conversion therefore we recommend purchasing a smaller (in voltage/ watts) travel hair dryer that pulls less electricity (500 watts or less). It may take longer to dry your hair but is less likely to burn up or trip the breakers in your cabin. There are also european-style hair dryers in the cabins.

Phone Calls

Direct calls to the U.S. are simple and work best dialing direct from a land pay phone using a calling card or pre-paid phone card. You can call from the hotels in Athens and Israel using their system, but they charge extra—a **lot extra**. The time difference is ten hours for the West Coast, seven for the East Coast. Emergency calls are possible from the ship, but are **extremely expensive** (approximately \$100 per minute :-)

Speakers/Celebrities on Board

We have several different well-known people travelling with us on the *Biblelands Cruise*. Most of us are aware of the difficulties these people live with in public life and know the proper etiquette to be used when around them. But, for those that may not know, please consider the following as guidelines. Because these people are also on vacation, treat their private time and space with the utmost regard.

We request that you do not ask them for autographs or special pictures. For those who do want pictures, there will be a designated time when they will be available for photos with passengers.

Tipping

Individual tipping is not allowed during the cruise, in accordance with the guidelines of the Greek Stewards' Union. Rather, a group tip is made at the end of the cruise. The appropriate amount suggested by the cruise line is **\$8-9 per day per passenger**. The cruise line will explain to passengers how to tip. By pooling the tips, they can be fairly distributed between the waiters, cabin attendants, crew, kitchen workers, etc. Checks, cash (any kind of cash), travelers checks, and credit cards are accepted for tips.

Last Day of Cruise

You will need to settle your ship account on the last night. This would be for any items or services you charged to your room and your Smart Card (*i.e.* soft drinks/wine at dinner, laundry, gift shop charges, beauty parlor, etc.). If you are taking the Petra extension and departing the ship in Israel, you will need to settle your account the night before you leave the ship.

Guides, Buses & Tours

Buses/Tours

You will be assigned a bus number and a corresponding color (#1-Blue, #2-Red, #3 Green, etc.). This will be your bus assignment for all tours. You will receive your bus assignment 2-3 weeks prior to departure. When you receive your assignment, **if you are not assigned a bus with your travel mate(s) or group, please call Compass immediately** so we can move you to the correct bus.

The buses will be loaded from the ship each day in the order they are called or announced over the ship's PA system. The exact times of **departure will be published in the ship's daily program of events**. **You need to be ready to disembark the ship without delay** at the announced time. You will have the same guide and driver all three tour days in Israel. If you have a problem of any kind, talk to your bus captain or your guide.

Tipping Tour Guides

Tips for the guides in Athens, Egypt, Rome & Turkey are optional and given to the guide directly by the tour participants at the end of the tour day. \$2-\$5 per person is considered normal.

Israeli Tour Guides

Your Israeli guide and bus driver usually work together as a team. **They are Jewish, not Christian**, but will become like family to you by the time you leave Israel. In crowded places like the Old City of Jerusalem, always be aware of where your guide/flag is as it is very easy to get lost. You'll ride the same bus each day. At the end of the tour, they will be given their tips that were previously collected in the U.S. You may wish to give an additional tip for a job well done, which is usually the case, and your bus captain will pool the additional tips.

The guides also receive income, in the form of a small commission, from several gift shops at some of the sites that we will visit. This is part of the culture in Israel and is considered part of the guides' income. The gift shops know the guides can stop anywhere along the route and this encourages them to stop at their place. The souvenir prices at these "bathroom stops" are very similar to other shops and the guides usually choose the locations based on cleanliness of rest rooms, acceptance of credit cards, broadness of stock, price, etc. So you generally don't pay more even though the guide is getting a commission.



A word to the wise . . .

If you think you may want to purchase items from the many roving souvenir salesman at a site, put a few dollars in your pocket *before* you get off the bus so you don't have to open your wallet in front of them. Although rare, there have been instances of pick-pocketing.

Bus Etiquette

Always be considerate of your fellow passengers while the guides are talking. If you are talking to your seat mate it makes it harder

for those nearby to hear the guide clearly. Also, with the obvious exception of the guide, the front seats with the best view should be rotated each day. When given a few minutes for bathroom stops, shopping or free time, **please return to the bus promptly** so the tour can continue without delay. The 5-10 minutes spent gathering stray passengers at a site can add up to shortened touring time later.

Most of all . . .

- Pray for God's blessing on this cruise!
- Pray for calm seas!
- Pray that God will use your investment to His glory!

Questions?

Call: 1-800-977-2177

Email: staff@compass.org