

THE ABCs OF AN IMAGINE PILGRIMAGE TOUR

This piece will not answer ALL of your questions, but it will certainly give you a good head start to understand how you can plan and be prepared for your pilgrimage. Although the focus is primarily ISRAEL, the principles apply to all tours. An APPENDIX is added specifically for those traveling to TURKEY.

AIRPORT ETIQUETTE. Airports recommend arriving at the terminal for check-in three hours before departure. It is most efficient if we can check in as a group. Wearing the lanyard, which Pilgrim Tours will mail to you 7-10 days before departure, is advised. Usually, the Tour Host checks in first to identify our group and answer security questions. The journey from the check-in counter to the departing gate will likely require multiple levels of security screenings. It is also likely that one or more in the group will be questioned privately about our itinerary, hotels and if we have friends in Israel. All of this is normal!

Seats are assigned at the check-in counter. It is best to check-in with your spouse or travel partner so you can be seated together. Do not leave your luggage or carry-on bag unattended at any time in the terminal. Have your passport in hand as you approach the counter. And, do not accept any gifts from anyone to place in your suitcase. Expect to be asked: "Did you pack your own bag?"

NEVER joke about bombs, guns or terrorism unless you want to visit an interrogation room.

ALL INCLUSIVE. When you visit www.jamesayers.org , click on the IMAGINE PILGRIMAGE tab on the home page. Review the details of what this all-inclusive tour does and does not include.

BACKPACK. Many travelers, including myself, like the diversity of a backpack. It is suitable for carry-on luggage, has many zippered compartments for easy organization, and keeps your hands/arms free. It is also large enough for you to include a change of clothes with you on the plane, snacks, book/notebook...you get the idea.

While touring, it is also handy to carry daily essentials like a "modesty kit" for the ladies (see CLOTHING), tissues, hand sanitizer, lunch snacks, water bottle, etc.

One word of caution: if you take your backpack off, ask someone else to guard it or keep it tucked securely between your feet. Watch each other's backs AND backpacks!

BAGGAGE/CARRY-ONS. Pilgrim Tours provides these guidelines regarding baggage allowance: Due to the size of the baggage compartments in touring coaches, each passenger is restricted to ONE suitcase and ONE carry-on bag (in addition to your purse, camera case or video camera). A total dimension of the bag to be checked on the airline is not to exceed 62 inches (length+width+height) and should not weigh more than 50 lbs. Carry-on luggage should not weigh more than 20 lbs. and is not to exceed the following dimensions: 22" length + 14" width + 9" depth. It must fit under the seat in front of you or in the overhead compartment. Be sure your luggage is clearly marked on the inside and outside. If you are traveling with a tour group, you must use the luggage tags provided along with your own.

PLEASE NOTE: Due to recent changes in baggage allowance in the industry, we advise checking with your airlines before you depart to see if there has been a change in their regulations.

Just a few more personal recommendations: [1] Check the downloadable PACKING LIST on my website, [2] Lock your checked suitcase with a TSA security lock, [3] Cross-pack with your roommate in the event of lost or delayed luggage arrival, and [4] Attach the Pilgrim Tours ID tag, your own personal luggage tag and something to quickly identify your suitcase on the conveyor belt in baggage claim. I put strips of bright yellow duct tape on all sides! It is amazing how many suitcases look alike when hundreds of them are riding that conveyor belt in baggage claim.

Liquids/gels in your carry-on bags must be in the miniature travel-size bottles, no larger than 3.4 ounces. I also suggest you place them in a sealable clear plastic bag. In fact, pack all bottles of liquids in your suitcase in sealed plastic bags in case of leakage. Extra plastic bags also come in handy for wet swimsuits, washcloths, dirty laundry, etc.

BAPTISM. Many pilgrims to ancient Palestine choose to be baptized in the same river where John the Baptist baptized Jesus- the Jordan River. You will have that same opportunity! A modern facility just south of the Sea of Galilee, Yardenit, was created for this purpose. If anyone on our tour desires to make a public declaration of their faith in Jesus by being baptized in Jordan River, it would be my privilege to baptize them. The cost to use the changing facility and showers is minimal.

BARTERING. When it comes to shopping, you will encounter two kinds of experiences. The first is what you are well acquainted with in the U.S. stores you typically frequent; items are priced as marked. However, in the Old City of Jerusalem, bartering is the norm in many shops in the Souq/market/bazaar. Vendors will invite you into their shops- and in good Palestinian hospitality offer you a beverage while you look, barter and buy their wares. One rule of thumb prevails: do not barter for something you do not intend to ever purchase! Have fun.

Popular gifts and souvenirs include scarves, jewelry (especially the Eilat gemstone, Roman glass, ancient coins), spices, Hebron glassware, ceramics, Dead Sea skin

products, dates and date honey, wine, hand-carved olive wood products, pottery and coin artifacts from licensed dealers.

BATHROOMS. Most bathrooms at sites we travel to have modern toilets. But, not all bathrooms are created equal; some may be more “primitive” than others. Here are a few recommendations: [1] Whenever a site has a bathroom, use it, [2] Always carry a small pack of tissues or wipes with you in case there is no toilet paper and [3] Bring hand sanitizer with you! Better safe than sorry rings true! If there is an attendant at the bathroom, let me know and I will take care of an appropriate tip.

BIBLE. The Word of God is central to where we will travel throughout Israel and Palestine. At every biblical site, we will read a corresponding passage of Scripture to transport your imagination back in time to what happened in that place then and there. Of course, you can also download the BIBLE app on your phone.

BUS ETIQUETTE. We are creatures of habit and tend to sit in the same seats with the same people. Mix it up. Meet new people. Give others a chance of have a window seat or the coveted aisle seat. Most touring buses now have Wi-Fi and all of them are air-conditioned. The only seats off limits are both front seats. The Tour Guide and Host need access to the sound system on the bus, and the ability to interact with each other frequently.

CLAUSTROPHOBIA. Some of the archaeological sites have tunnels or tight places through which to squeeze. I will do my best to inform you if that might be a reason for concern when applicable.

CLOTHING. Knowing how to dress on any given day of our tour can be somewhat of a challenge because we are traveling in a land of three dominant faiths...Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Depending on where we are determines how to dress. The general answer is that we will end each day explaining where we “expect” to be touring the next day- but that may even change. Being flexible and prepared is imperative.

If we are visiting “holy sites,” **women** must be prepared to have shoulders, arms and legs fully covered. Carry a “modesty kit” in your backpack. If you do not want to wear a skirt or dress all day, simply keep a long skirt in your backpack to pull up over shorts. A lightweight long-sleeved shirt can be worn over a t-shirt. A large wrap-around scarf can serve the same purpose of covering your arms or head when necessary. The Temple Mount “modesty police” do not deem yoga pants acceptable, even though they are ankle length. **Men**, long pants are necessary in holy sites. You may want to bring some lightweight sweatpants to slip on over knee-length shorts. Short-sleeved shirts are acceptable. **Everyone is required to remove shoes when we visit a mosque.**

When visiting archaeological sites, casual dress is acceptable...shorts, t-shirts and tank tops are no problem. Casual dress is acceptable for dinner at the hotels. Be comfortable!

CREDIT/DEBIT CARDS. Notify your bank and credit card companies that you will be out of the country, where you are traveling (including flight layovers) and the length of your trip. Using your credit card in airports, hotels, modern stores and restaurants is safe. Think twice before you hand it over to someone in Jerusalem's Old City. When in doubt, feel free to ask for my opinion. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express cards are accepted.

If an item you are buying is in Israeli shekels, Europe's euros, or Turkish lira, your bank will convert the purchase to dollars according to the daily exchange rate for that given country.

ATM cards used in Israel and Turkey will dispense shekels or lira, not dollars! They will charge a small fee. There are plenty of places to exchange dollars for local currency. Even the front desk in hotels often exchange money, too.

CURRENCY. Israel's currency is the NIS, New Israeli Shekel. Each shekel = 100 agorot. Coins are minted in denominations of 10, 25 and 50 agorot; there are also 5 and 10-shekel coins. Bank notes come in denominations of 20, 50, 100 and 200 NIS. American dollars are widely accepted.

ELECTRICAL ADAPTERS. Both Israel and Turkey use a 220 volts electric system. You will need to purchase and bring an adapter plug, which has two round pins. These adapters are available in the travel displays of stores such as Target, Walmart, AAA, Staples, etc. IF you bring any 120-volt appliances with you, you will also need to purchase a converter. The most modern buses have USB ports to recharge phones. To be safe, you may want to bring a portable battery recharger.

FLEXIBILITY. This will be our key word throughout the tour! The proposed itinerary we publish is always subject to change on a moment's notice. Inevitably, our plans evolve based on the volume of tourism. Rather than just wasting time waiting in lines, we may modify the schedule to make the best use of our time. Please be patient with our Tour Guide and Host. We always have your safety and best interests in mind; but in reality, some issues are simply beyond our control.

FLIGHTS. I suspect most international travelers have already traveled domestically. Seats are a little larger as are overhead compartments. Several meals will be served in flight. Since flights are long, entertainment is available via personalized screens on the back of the seat in front of you. Movies, games, TV shows, news, etc., are available to help pass the time. Airlines generally supply pillows and blankets. Dress comfortably.

FOOD. The all-inclusive cost of this tour includes two buffet meals at our hotels- breakfast and dinner. I think you will be pleasantly surprised with the breadth of selections! Additionally, we will have periodic "treats" to enjoy cultural delicacies. My challenge to you is to try at least one cultural dish daily! Mediterranean foods prevail.

We must also take a lunch break for the benefit of our bus driver and guide. IF you choose to purchase lunches, expect to spend around \$15 daily unless it is a day when lunch will be provided for you. Many travelers prefer a light lunch and this is a great way to save some money. Just bring with you some protein bars, trail mix, nuts, peanut butter crackers, etc. You can always find a comfortable place to sit and enjoy your snack, an ice cream treat or espresso.

During evening meals, filtered water, coffee and tea are provided. If you desire a soft drink, bottled water, wine, etc., you are responsible for the cost.

Perhaps you did not realize that Jewish hotels observe religious laws for kosher foods. That means dairy products will not be served in the same meal as meat. Breakfast meats are not served. Pork and shellfish are not kosher and rarely served.

GLOSSARY. We will be in a new country, encountering new places, people groups, foods, landscapes and religions. The learning curve is immense and littered with new terminology that may be frustrating at times. That is why I created another resource for you, which can also found at www.jamesayers.org . Click on the TOURING RESOURCES tab and download the GLOSSARY OF TOURING TERMINOLGY. If you hear a new word during a lecture, there is a good chance you can find a simple working definition for it in that glossary.

GUIDES. Israel and Turkey require by law that tour groups have a licensed guide accompany them. Their knowledge of the country's laws, culture and current events is invaluable. We will depend heavily on his/her counsel. However, they frequently have strong personalities because they are the resident "experts." As the organizer and Hour host, I will work in tandem with the guide making decisions in the moment as necessary to ensure smooth transitions throughout each day.

It should be noted that most tour guides are moderately religious. Do not assume they are Christians because they read from the Bible! It was part of their education to become a licensed tour guide- and they are well versed in historical biblical knowledge. Do not hesitate to interact with them and ask any questions you want; just keep in mind they are responding as strong Zionists or Muslims, and plenty of well-meaning Christians have tried to "convert" them.

HEALTH. Your health is one of my paramount concerns. The single most repetitive health issue is dehydration! You will tire of me saying, "Drink plenty of water." In an arid climate, you may not realize how much you perspire. Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink water. I also strongly suggest that you bring with you a powdered electrolyte (e.g., Pedialyte) to add to a bottle of water daily. In the event that someone is feeling ill, please let the tour host know sooner rather than later. Bring your own OTC "over the counter" medications of preference. You may also want to bring a Covid test kit and N95 masks.

If necessary, I can arrange for a doctor's appointment. I will always have a first aid kit with me as well as some generic over the counter medicines.

The busy touring schedule may cause excessive fatigue. Perhaps a day's rest from touring would be wise. The choice will always be yours to skip a site to catch your breath.

HOTELS. Checking in and out of hotels can be time-consuming and chaotic. That is one of the major reasons we keep hotel transfers to a minimum. Porters will unload luggage from the bus and deliver it to your room after you tag it with your room number. Hotels are safe and good quality, but not as large as most hotels in the states. They become our hub of travel for day trips. Once we leave a hotel in the morning, we generally do not return until our touring for the day is completed.

Most hotels have a safe in your room's closet to secure valuables. They do NOT provide wash cloths in their bathrooms.

The personnel at the front desk are fluent in English and will be glad to assist you in any way possible. If personal charges are made to your room, accounts must be settled before checking out.

You will notice that every hotel has a Shabbat elevator. This is for the convenience of Jewish guests. The elevator will automatically stop at EVERY floor on Shabbat so religious Jews do not need to "work" by pushing the button for their floor of preference! Tourists beware; getting on that elevator during Shabbat will be a LONG ride if you are on an upper floor!

INSURANCE. You will notice on the brochure and Registration Form that an option for travel insurance is available. Before you make that decision, ask yourself a few questions. Does my health insurance provider cover any medical coverage outside of the U.S.? If not, can you purchase a rider for your policy to provide emergency coverage? Does your credit card company offer medical insurance for international travel? If you are a member of AAA or AARP, are travel insurance packages available? Can I "shop" online for short-term insurance bargains [e.g., Travel Guard – www.travelguard.com ; Brotherhood Mutual/Faith Ventures]? Lost luggage and personal effects can usually be replaced for a few hundred dollars with relatively minor inconvenience. Serious injury or medical complications with hospitalization abroad can be a nightmare.

ISLAM. Approximately 20% of Israel's population are Palestinian, and the majority of them are Muslim. You will find they are among the most hospitable people you will ever meet! The Muslim call to prayer will be heard loudly from mosque minarets five times a day. Friday is their holy day.

JET LAG. Caffeine, alcohol, and lack of sleep contribute to jet lag. Drink a lot of water during flights.

JEWELRY. Leave your expensive jewelry at home! If you wish to purchase jewelry, allow me to “protect you” from buying cheap imitations. As a seasoned traveler to Israel/Palestine, I can introduce you to people I know and trust who will tempt you with quality pieces you will treasure for a lifetime.

JOURNAL/NOTEBOOK. A guidebook will be given to participants which highlights biblical, historical, geographical, and archaeological points for every site we visit. Blank pages are also included for journaling, lecture notes and devotional thoughts. Bring your own pen!

LANGUAGE. Many signs in Israel are in three languages: Hebrew for Jews, Arabic for Palestinians and English for most visitors. Many people who live in the land are bilingual or trilingual! Here are a few Hebrew words to get you started:

Shalom (shah-lom) – Peace/Hello/Goodbye

B’vakashah (buh-vah-kuh-shah) – Please/You’re Welcome

Todah (to-dah) – Thank you

Slicha (slee-khah) – Excuse me/I’m Sorry

Boker Tov (bo-ker tov) – Good Morning

Ken – Yes; Lo – No

Kulam po – Is everyone here?

Here are a few Arabic words:

Na’am – Yes; Laa – No

As sa laa mu’a lay kum – Hello

Ma-a is-alaama – Goodbye

`af wan – Excuse me

Shukran – Thank you

Yella – Hurry up!

LAUNDRY. Hotels do provide laundry service- but it is not cheap! Since I am (cheap), I pack a wash line, clothespins and a small bottle of detergent to do laundry in my sink or bathtub. Pack less; save room for your souvenirs!

LIVING STONES. Throughout the tour we will meet several living stones (1 Peter 2:4-5), that is, Christians who live in the land and are passionate about sharing their love for Jesus with others.

MEDICINES. It would be wise to bring some OTC (over the counter) medicines with you. Allergies, colds, sore muscles, upset stomach, motion sickness, and diarrhea are common inconveniences. A Covid test kit and N95 masks are a good idea.

Some of us also have prescription medications. Make sure you have a sufficient supply and place them in your carry-on luggage, so you are sure you have them with you! If your family physician is willing, request a paper prescription of meds for emergencies.

I always carry a first-aid kit in my backpack with Band-Aids and such for minor cuts, scrapes and blisters.

MILITARY. It may be unsettling to see a heavy military presence during our travels. Everyone in the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) must carry side arms and automatic rifle- on and off duty. Military service is mandatory for all men and women after they graduate from high school, the exception being religious Jews. Additionally, there is also a strong police presence.

Multiple military checkpoints are located on highways as we crisscross the country through Israel and Palestine.

MONEY. It is not necessary to exchange your America dollars into Israeli currency- but it is fun to engage their culture. When people ask how much spending money they should bring, I am at a loss to make a recommendation. For the most part, it is a matter of how much you want to spend on souvenirs, snacks, gifts and keepsakes. Popular purchases include olive woodcarvings, blown glass, artwork, clothing, leather goods, jewelry, antiquities, and pottery.

Because I will be relentless about drinking water, I would recommend that you bring about 20-dollar bills to buy bottled water. Our bus driver will keep the cooler on the bus stocked with bottled water for \$1 each.

ORTHODOX JEWS. Orthodox or religious male Jews are easily identified because of their attire. Black hats, coats, pants and shoes with prayer shawls and yarmulkes (skullcaps) are the norm. Women wear very conservative dresses or skirts, dark stockings and often cover their heads with a scarf.

PALESTINIANS. In short, Arab Palestinians and Jewish people coexisted in the land peacefully before the British Mandate ended in May 1948, and the State of Israel was formally established. Wars ensued and skirmishes continue regarding ownership of the land and the relegation of the Palestinians into restricted territories as their land is confiscated to develop Israeli settlements.

PASSPORT. United States citizens need a valid passport to travel outside U.S. borders. The expiration date of your passport must be at least six months **after** the return of your trip! Make multiple copies of your passport to bring with you and one to leave at home.

If you do not have a passport, visit www.travel.state.gov , or better yet for faster service, local post offices, libraries, AAA offices, UPS Stores, FedEx Stores, etc., will help guide you through the process more efficiently.

Keep your passport with you at all times unless our guide or tour host instruct you otherwise. When not needed, lock your passport in the safe located in your hotel room's closet. NEVER leave it unattended in your room or locked in a suitcase.

PILGRIMAGE. What exactly is a pilgrimage and how does it differ from other tours to holy lands? The answer begins with more than 60 biblical sites (Israel), which I have intentionally selected to customize this tour. Most tours will take you to commercialized traditional sites. A pilgrimage only has a strong spiritual impact when intellect, emotion and will are integrated with our five senses!

Yes, this makes for longer days; but it is important to "hit the pause button" at appropriate times in specific places to allow deeper spiritual insights to emerge. Allowing sacred spaces for silence, meditating on new scriptural insights and journaling personal applications are the DNA of an Imagine Tour. Tourists go home with souvenirs...pilgrims go home with transformed hearts! Make the most of every evening by perusing the information in the guidebook about sites we plan to visit the next day.

PHONES. Determine what is your most cost-effective way to call/text the U.S.-international calling plans, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc. Protect yourself from coming home to an outrageous phone bill!

PHOTOGRAPHS. It probably goes without saying what you will take dozens if not hundreds of pictures throughout the tour. Help yourself by taking a picture of the ID sign at the beginning of each site to remember where you were when you review your pictures. Be discreet when taking pictures of people. Do not be surprised if they willingly pose and then want to be paid for their picture. If you want to take a photo of yourself with police or military, they are likely to oblige; taking photos of military installations is discouraged.

PRE-TRIP CHECKLIST.

- 🍏 Be certain you have your passport and Visa (if necessary). Place copies of it inside your suitcase, your carry-on bag, purse, etc.
- 🍏 Bring an official ID such as a driver's license, credit/debit card and insurance cards. Make photocopies of all these important cards in case they are lost or

stolen. Leave one copy at home and bring another copy with you to secure in the hotel safe.

- 🍏 Leave a copy of your passport, the tour itinerary, flight schedule and list of hotels with the person listed as your Emergency Contact on your Registration Form.
- 🍏 Pack all prescription medications in their original bottles in your carry-on bag.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. Under NO circumstances should you use a bus for public transportation!

QUESTIONS. There is no such thing as a “dumb question.” Our guide, your host, and guest lecturers will be eager to answer them to the best of their ability.

RAIN. The chances of a rainy day are negligible. Even showers in the summer season are scarce. Having said that, I still carry a small umbrella in my backpack.

READING. If you want to get a head start on making the most of this pilgrimage, here is a list of books worth reading before an Israel pilgrimage:

Belmaker, Genevieve. Israel & The West Bank. 2nd ed., Moon Guides, 2019.

Isaac, Munther. The Other Side of the Wall. InterVarsity Press, 2020.

Martin, James, John Beck & David Hansen. A Visual Guide to Gospel Events. Baker Books, 2010.

Walker, Peter. In the Steps of Jesus. Zondervan, 2006.

RESPECT. To be honest, Americans have a reputation of being rude tourists. Kindly show respect to our tour guide and listen while he is speaking- both at sites and on the bus. S/he will use the intercom on the bus, and we will utilize a “whisper listening headset” so that everyone can hear regardless of where you are standing. Let us do everything we can to be a godly example in word and deed.

SAFETY. Your health and safety are my priorities. I realize you are adults but pardon the cliché: Better safe than sorry! Here are my recommendations: [1] Travel in groups if you are going out in the evenings, [2] After dark, women are safer when traveling with a man in their group, [3] Ignore any rude or sexist remarks, and [4] Always let your host let know when and where you are going if you are leaving the group or hotel.

SHABBAT. Shabbat begins at sundown on Friday and ends one hour after sundown on Saturday. Meals after Shabbat are often simple.

SINGLE ROOM SUPPLEMENT. Anyone requesting a private room is charged a “Single Room Supplement.” The published price is always based on double occupancy.

SWIMMING. When the schedule permits, options include the Mediterranean Sea, Sea of Galilee, Dead Sea and seasonally, the hotel pools. NOTE: If you plan to swim in Israel's Dead Sea, do not shave 24 hours before.

TAXIS. Taxi service is plentiful. Most Palestinian drivers speak good English. When possible, allow your host to negotiate a price before you get into the car. If traveling privately, agree of a price before getting into a car clearly marked as a taxi. If the driver is using a meter, pay whatever you read on the meter. Do not take a taxi alone!

TEMPERATURES. November through March is Israel's rainy season. Temperatures vary in regions throughout the land. Highs/lows in April/May/June range from 53-84 degrees Fahrenheit. September/October's range is from 60-80 degrees.

TEMPLE MOUNT EXPECTATIONS. Jerusalem's Temple Mount is under Muslim control and supervision. Their dress code is extremely conservative for men and women (See section on CLOTHING). Do not wear anything bearing Christian symbols or sayings. You cannot carry a Bible. No physical affection or holding hands is permitted. Backpacks or purses are permitted- but only after a thorough search. Conduct and conversation must be quiet. We want to be very respectful of the Muslims who gather there to pray. There will be many eyes watching and monitoring you!

TIME. Time is our most precious commodity during the trip. It is a non-renewable resource! It is imperative that we show up on time for daily departures and return to the bus when instructions are given. Sometimes we forget that one late prodigal delays an entire group of people. Most sites have predetermined hours of operation. Being tardy may mean we will miss the opportunity to see a scheduled site. Be ready to enter and exit the bus when the doors open.

Keep in mind the differential in Time Zones. Israel and Turkey are seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. And, FYI, air travel time from the East Coast is about eleven hours for direct flights to Tel Aviv or Istanbul.

TIPPING. The very nature of an all-inclusive tour means that you do not need to worry about incurring any hidden expenses. Tour guides, bus drivers, hotel staff, restaurant waiters, hotel porters, etc., will be cared for by your tour's host. Even bathroom attendants expect to be tipped. If you venture out on your own to a restaurant or order room service, then tipping is your responsibility. In that case, 10-15 % is customary for a tip- even for taxi drivers.

VACCINATIONS. No vaccinations are required to enter Israel or Turkey. However, I do recommend that you check with your family doctor to be certain that Tetanus booster shots are up to date in case you incur any cuts or scrapes.

V.A.T. TAX REFUND. The Israeli taxing system of uses what they call a Value Added Tax of more than 16% for the purchase of goods and services. IF you purchase a

more expensive item as a gift or souvenir while in the country (minimum 400 NIS), ask for tax refund forms. You will be eligible to get the V.A.T. back when going through customs at the airport.

VISA. If you are a citizen of the United States, no visa is necessary to enter Israel. Non-citizens will need to contact their embassy or consulate to determine how to obtain a Visa.

WALKING. We will be doing a lot of walking during tours- especially in Israel. Walking 3-5 miles every touring day is normal. The exercise is good for us but it is extremely important to know that nearly everything in the land requires walking uphill or downhill! There are paths, sidewalks, roads, plazas- **and many stairways.** The terrain is varied. My point is you must be prepared for some rigorous activity. Comfortable sturdy shoes and some pre-trip walking will help prepare you. Walking around the block a few times a week is not sufficient preparation. If you are tired, you will always have the choice to opt out of touring a site.

WATER. I will torment you with this reminder many times a day. It is safe to drink the filtered water in the hotels. If you are bringing your own water bottle, fill it at the hotel every morning. Bottled water will always be available for purchase on the bus. Some national parks even have stations to refill water bottles. When in doubt, just ask.

WEST BANK. The patchwork of West Bank Areas is complicated to explain. Also known as Palestinian territories, Occupied Territories, Areas A, B, and C, make travel complicated at times. Checkpoints, fences, and gates may give you a twinge of discomfort, but do not be alarmed. You are in good hands as you travel. The Palestinian Authority (PA) controls area A. Area B is under joint control by the PA and Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Area C is controlled by the IDF.

WHISPERS. Portable listening devices are utilized so everyone can hear in crowded or noisy areas. The device hangs on a cord around your neck and wired to an earbud. If you lose or misplace yours, it is your responsibility to pay for a replacement.

XENOPHOBIA. Fear or hatred of foreigners defines "xenophobia." Do not allow personal biases or assumptions to hamper your ability to think critically.

ZZZs. Get plenty of rest! Take a power nap on the bus between sites.

APPENDIX FOR TURKEY TRAVELERS

BATHROOMS. Hotels and restaurants we frequent have modern bathroom facilities. Travel in remote parts of the country may have more primitive "pit" toilets- often without toilet paper provided. Be prepared!

CURRENCY. Their monetary unit is Turkish Lira (TL). Coins are 1 Lira, .5, and .25. Banknotes are 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 TL. **Because Turkey is labeled a high fraud country, I recommend using official bank ATMs or using the TL currency as much as possible for your purchases/transactions.**

LANGUAGE. Turkish is the official language. English, French and German are widely spoken in larger cities.

MEASURES. Depending of what you want or need to measure, remember that Turkey uses the metric system. That means 1 kilometer (km) = .6 mile and 1 mile = 1.6 km. One kilogram (kg) = 2.2 pounds and 1 pound = .45 kg.

RECOMMENDED READING.

1. Bandy, Alan S. An Illustrated Guide to the Apostle Paul. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021.
2. Cimok, Fatih. A Guide to the Seven Churches. Istanbul: A Turizm Yayinlari, 2011.
3. DK Eye Witness Travel Turkey. New York: DK Publishing, 2012.
4. Fant, Clyde E., and Mitchell G. Reddish. A Guide to Biblical Sites in Greece and Turkey. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
5. Walker, Peter. In the Steps of Paul. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

SPAS. Several of our hotels have spa facilities for your use. Enjoy- and don't forget your swimsuits!

TEMPERATURES & WEATHER. Average temperatures in September for western Turkey range from a high of 80 to a low of 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Average rainfall is less than 2". Temperatures will vary slightly from region to region.

VISA REQUIREMENT. In addition to your passport, United States citizens also need a visa to enter Turkey. It is imperative that you obtain your visa before boarding the plane. Use the **E-Visa System** at this website: www.evisa.gov.tr/en/tour .

WATER. Tap water in Turkey is chlorinated and may have a strong taste. Bottled water is recommended- even for brushing your teeth. It is available on the bus for \$1/bottle, so bring some extra dollar bills. Larger bottles are cheaper and can be purchased in convenience or grocery stores. Drinking water **will be** provided at dinner.

Wi-Fi. All of our 4-5 star hotels will have Wi-Fi. Some of the more modern buses also have USB ports. Remote areas in central Turkey are less dependable reception.