



TIME AND ORIENTATION



1. The time in is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time and seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time in North America.
2. Daylight Saving time lasts from approximately March to October.
3. Pilgrims and tourists from the southern hemisphere have an extra reason to be disoriented in the Holy Land: The sun is to the south, rather than to the north as they are used to. As one faces the sun, it rises on the left and sets on the right.

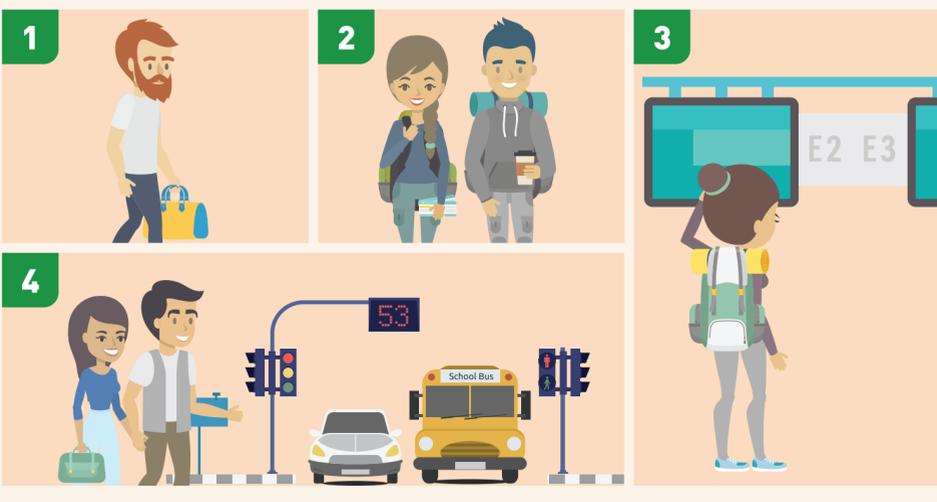
SECURITY: VALUABLES



1. Carry your valuables close to your person, in a money belt, pouch or inside pocket.
2. Keep cash and credit cards separate.
3. Keep your money, credit cards, traveler's cheques and passport on your person or in the hotel security box (though you will need your passport on you if you want to cash cheques during the day). Your outside pockets and handbags make easy pickings for pickpockets and bag snatchers, especially in crowds.
4. Remember to collect your valuables from the security box before you leave each hotel.
5. Do not wear conspicuous jewelry or flash large amounts of money.
6. Don't leave bags unattended in airports or other public places, and don't accept packages from strangers.

SAFETY

A few common-sense precautions can avoid risks to personal safety:



1. Keep a low profile; don't stand out in dress, speech or behavior; especially avoid wearing anything that identifies you with one side or the other in Middle East politics.
2. When exploring on your own, go in pairs or groups; stay away from public demonstrations and crowds.
3. Keep your eyes open; don't become so absorbed by the grandeur of the sites that you fail to keep track of what is happening around you. If you sense anything out of the ordinary, don't hesitate to express your concern to the tour guide or tour leader.
4. Take special care when crossing the street, especially if traffic drives on the opposite side to what you are used to. Be attentive of bad driving and reckless speeding.

PHOTOGRAPHY



1. If you use a digital camera, take several memory cards rather than one big one (then, if your camera is lost or stolen, you won't lose all your pictures).
2. If you use rechargeable batteries, you will also need a charger (and a transformer if the charger cannot handle 220 volts).
3. Photography (or the use of flashes) is prohibited in some sites, for copyright reasons or to protect art.
4. Use discretion in what you photograph. Taking pictures of military personnel or facilities is often forbidden. Don't take close-up photographs of Muslim women with covered faces or Orthodox Jewish men or women without first asking.

MONEY: WHAT TO TAKE



1. A mixture of cash, credit card and traveler's cheques is advisable for visiting the Middle East. It can be useful to take some local currency for each country, for use on arrival, but United States dollars are universally accepted.
2. How much should you take? That is very much related to personal spending habits. Prices in the Middle East are generally less than in Western countries, with the exception of Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Group pilgrimages may not include lunches. You may also want to buy incidental food items, bottled water, or drinks at dinner. Then there are holy items and souvenirs, camera memory cards or batteries. And there will always be a demand for tips; keeping a supply of US\$ 1 notes handy is useful for tips, bottled water and other small purchases.
3. Using a credit card reduces the need to carry large amounts of cash, or find somewhere to cash traveler's cheques. You simply load the card with cash before you leave home, then make cash withdrawals from ATMs as you need more money. It is wise to take more than one card and keep them in separate places. Your cards should have a PIN code and they should be valid for at least 30 days after your travel ends.
4. Changing currency and traveler's cheques is usually cheaper at official exchange offices (which charge on commission) than at banks.
5. For credit card use, it is important to check with your bank if you can use it abroad and also notify them beforehand where you intend to use it. Some banks tend to cancel creditcards used abroad if not notified that they were to be used accordingly.

MONEY: CURRENCY



1. The New Israeli Shekel (NIS) is divided into 100 Agorot.
2. Foreign currency (especially United States dollars or Euros) are usually accepted, though change will often be given in shekels. Paying in foreign currency on items such as accommodation and car rental avoids Value Added Tax of 18% (VAT).
3. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted, but sometimes pilgrims' hostels usually require payment in cash.
4. If you are visiting in a country where your national currency isn't widely used or accepted, make sure to change your notes before departing to that destination. Currency exchange always proves expensive when on tour.