

Stepping Into the Jordan

Israel Study Trip June 2022

Trip Dates: June 6–17, 2021

Preliminary Itinerary:

June 6	2:30pm	Depart Austin (Westover Hills church) via Coach Bus to Houston IAH Airport
	5:30pm	Arrive at Houston Intercontinental Airport
	8:55pm	Depart on Turkish Airlines Flight 34 to Istanbul
June 7	4:55pm	Arrive in Istanbul
	6:20pm	Depart on Turkish Airlines Flight 788 to Tel Aviv
	8:20pm	Arrive in Tel Aviv. Overnight at Neve Ilan Hotel
June 8		Shephelah - Overnight at Isrotel Ganim Hotel, Dead Sea
June 9		Negev - Overnight at Isrotel Ganim Hotel, Dead Sea
June 10		Judean Wilderness - Overnight at Nof Ginosar Kibbutz, Galilee
June 11		Galilee - Overnight at Nof Ginosar Kibbutz, Galilee
June 12		Galilee - Overnight at Nof Ginosar Kibbutz, Galilee
June 13		Galilee – Jerusalem - Overnight at Dan Hotel, Jerusalem
June 14		Jerusalem - Overnight at Dan Hotel, Jerusalem
June 15		Jerusalem & Surrounding Area - Overnight at Dan Hotel, Jerusalem
June 16		Coastal Plain , Farewell Dinner - Overnight at Metropolitan Hotel, Tel Aviv
June 17	10:30am	Depart on Turkish Airlines Flight 785 to Istanbul
	12:50am	Arrive in Istanbul
	2:10pm	Depart on Turkish Airlines Flight 33 to Houston IAH
	7:10pm	Arrive in Houston
	9:00pm	Depart IAH via Coach Bus to Austin
	11:55pm	Arrive at Westover

What to Expect:

I've heard it said that the land of Israel is the 5th Gospel. By studying the land of the Bible, we can better read the story of the Bible and understand God's calling for His people.

This is a Biblical study tour. Our goal is to dive into God's word and the land He gave to His people, Israel. The overall theme is God's Calling for His People. We will engage with the story of how God has called His people throughout History—from Abraham to today.

The model I will use for this trip has been called a "rabbinic" style. In a sense, you will be experiencing the land as the disciple of a rabbi. You won't necessarily know where we are going (or why). Sometimes you might even be asked to do something that seems strange at the time. Yet, in time, it should all come together.

For this reason, the itinerary is purposefully vague. It has been my experience that you will get the most from a site if you don't know what is coming next. This enables you to shed any pre-conceived ideas and biases and simply experience the land and the Text with fresh eyes and an open heart.

Typical Day

As we will only be "on the ground" for 9 days, we will make sure that each day is packed with as much as we can reasonably accomplish. Our buffet breakfast will be served at 6:30 am. At 7:00 am, we will meet outside the bus for a brief devotional. By 7:15 am, we will be headed out on the bus to our first site of the day. The bus will drop us off, and we will hike to a site—often not through the front entrance.

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We will visit 4-6 sites each day. At each location, we will examine the physical surroundings before diving into the Biblical Text. We will walk roughly 4 miles each day, with plenty of stops and rest periods along the way. However, you need to remember that nowhere is really flat in Israel. Much of the walking will be either up or downhill. Some sites will have bathrooms—although sometimes toilet paper is lacking. At other times we will avail ourselves of the “wadi potty.” So, it’s a good idea to carry some wet wipes in your pack and a plastic bag to carry them out.

Lunch will be served in the field. It may come a little later than you are used to (12:30-1:30). As such, I recommend that you bring snacks to tide you over between meals.

We will return to our hotel each evening between 5:30 and 6:30. Our buffet dinner will be served around 7 pm. This will give you time each evening to shower, relax, reflect on the day, and get a good night’s sleep before we do it all again.

Weather

Compared to Texas, Israel may seem like a welcome relief. Average morning temperatures will start in the 60’s, climbing into the 80’s or 90’s by late afternoon. However, climate (temperature and humidity) varies significantly by region and elevation. For example, the Dead Sea sits at 1,200 ft below sea level. Temperatures there can be 10-20° F warmer than elsewhere. Places further north and at higher elevations (e.g., Mt. Carmel) may be slightly cooler. At this time of year, we are pretty much guaranteed sunny days with virtually no chance of rain.

COVID-19 Protocols

As of this writing, Israel is requiring proof of vaccination to enter the country. This may change in the future, but at present, they are required. If you are not vaccinated, you will be held to the full cancellation policy if you cancel because you are not vaccinated. All participants are responsible for any costs associated with tests or other requirements for entry into the country. If you have any questions about Israel’s entry requirements, GTI can answer any questions you may have.

In light of COVID-19, I strongly encourage you to purchase trip insurance. It is a low-cost means to protect your investment.

Is Travel to Israel Safe?

I have already had several people ask me how safe is travel in Israel. It’s an excellent question. Having lived there for nearly a year, I can personally confirm that it is very safe. While travel to any place (even within the USA) is not 100% safe, the risk in Israel is very low. I am partnering with GTI Tours for this trip. Since 1992 they have facilitated more than 500 tours to Israel, Turkey, Greece, Jordan, and Egypt. We will be accompanied by one of their local guides, who will act as my assistant and facilitator. He will always be aware of what is going on. I can assure you that we will not take risks. We will not go any place that I would not take my own family.

Trip Preparation:

The more preparation you do before the trip, the more you will get out of it. This preparation will include some physical conditioning, biblical study, and memorization. If you start early, it won’t be a substantial time commitment.

GTI has developed a series of short video lessons to help you prepare for the trip. These lessons also include several quizzes to test your familiarity with the material. After you have registered for the trip, they will send you a

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link to the lessons. I recommend them to introduce the basics of biblical geography, Hebrew, and other relevant topics.

Physical Fitness

I will do my best to adjust the rigor of the trip to the physical capabilities of the group. However, **Israel is a very hilly country**. We will walk roughly 4 miles each day, with multiple stops along the way. However, those will be hilly miles. If you do not walk or run regularly, I strongly encourage you to start a regular regimen at least 6 months before the trip. If you have access to stairs, I recommend getting some frequent practice climbing (and descending) them. Virtually everyone I know that has been to Israel was surprised by the significant changes in elevation. A little preparation goes a long way.

Reading

I have found that having familiarity with the biblical text is essential to get the most from your time in Israel. I also realize that everyone may have constraints that impact how much they can read, so I have broken this down into levels. Again, the more you can do, the better.

Required Reading:	
Hebrew Scriptures:	Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, Psalms 1, 2, 119–134
New Testament:	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts 1–12
Good to Read:	
Hebrew Scriptures:	Leviticus, Numbers, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah 40–66, Malachi
New Testament:	Acts 15 & 21–26, Hebrews
Apocrypha:	1 & 2 Maccabees
	<i>The Bible Among the Myths</i> by John Oswalt
Optional Reading:	
Hebrew Scriptures:	Jeremiah 30–31 and 46–52, Ezra, Nehemiah
	<i>The Source</i> by James Michener
	<i>Our Father Abraham</i> by Marvin Wilson (pp. 1–134)

Even if you regularly study your Bible, I would encourage you to reread these Texts so they are fresh in your mind for the trip.

Memorization

An essential element of Jewish liturgy for thousands of years has been the Shema. You might say that this is the foundational creed of Judaism. It is very likely that Jesus said the Shema every morning and evening of his teenage and adult life. In keeping with this tradition, we will recite an amended version at the start and end of each day in Hebrew and English (taken from Matthew 22:34–40). I encourage you to memorize the Hebrew and English versions below. As the trip departure date gets closer, I will e-mail all participants an audio file to help you better pronounce the Hebrew.

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The Shema

Hebrew

Shema Yisrael
Adonai Eloheinu
Adonai Echad
Ve Ahavta et Adonai Eloheikha
B'khol Le Vavkha
Uv'khol Nafshekha
Uv'khol Meodekha
Ve Ahavta Le Reakha Kamokha
Amin

English

Hear, O Israel
The LORD is our God,
The LORD alone.
Love the LORD, your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your might.
And love your neighbor as yourself.
Amen

What to Bring:

The [GTI Webpage](#) for the trip has detailed information about what you should pack. I encourage you to read that information carefully. I will mention a few specific things here that I think are especially important.

Hiking Shoes

The most important item for you to bring is a pair of good-fitting, well broken-in hiking shoes. I would recommend that they be well ventilated and **NOT** waterproof. There are times when we may need to walk through water. Having proper ventilation ensures that they will dry quickly, minimizing the risk of blisters.

If you already have a pair of hiking boots that you are comfortable with, that's great! If not, I strongly suggest that you go to a reputable store like REI to get professionally fit. Please make sure that you test them out walking **DOWN** an incline. It's the downhill walking where you really find out if they are a good fit.

I know some people like to hike in Chaco's (hiking sandals). I don't recommend it for this trip. There will be times when we will be off the beaten path. There are lots of thorns and prickly weeds. In certain parts of the country, there are scorpions and snakes. The best protection is a good pair of hiking boots. Anything that might injure your foot could ruin your trip.

Water Shoes

There will be some sites where you will want to have water shoes (**not** flip-flops). If you have a pair of Chaco's or Teva sandals, those will work fine. Please contact me if you have any questions about the suitability of a specific pair of shoes.

Modesty Kits

Although, in many ways, Israel is very Western, it is still a Middle Eastern country. As such, there are times when it will be important for us to respect the culture when it comes to dress. Many holy sites require modest dress. You will need to have a "Modesty Kit" to either wear all day or be able to change into before entering those sites.

Modesty Kit:

- Long pants or a skirt that covers your ankles
- A Shirt that covers your shoulders
- Scarf for head covering (women only)

A good option is a pair of zip-off hiking pants for those days where a modesty kit may be necessary.

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Trip Price:

A trip to Israel is an investment. For many people, it's a once-in-a-lifetime event. I have worked hard with GTI to minimize the price as best we can while also ensuring the quality of the experience. Demand for travel to Israel has increased dramatically. Airfares and hotel costs have risen sharply in response.

I will share something that was told to me on my first trip to Israel. Consider this trip as an investment that God is making in you. How will you take that investment and generate even greater returns for the Kingdom of God?

The all-inclusive price for this trip is \$4,490. The [GTI trip page](#) outlines the payment plan. This price includes the following:

- Round Trip Coach Bus Transportation between Austin & Houston IAH
- Round Trip Airfare from Houston to Tel Aviv
- Option to upgrade to Business Class for an additional fee, subject to availability
- Hotel Accommodations in Israel
- Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner each day
- Deluxe Coach Transportation in Israel
- All necessary entrance fees
- Porterage Fees and Taxes
- Tips for Guide and Bus Driver
- Study Guide, Bible, Flashlight, Plug Adapter & Journal
- Osprey Hydration Pack with Bottled Water on Tour

If you register before December 13, 2021, there is a \$100 discount off the list price.

Outside of any COVID vaccination or testing costs, it is not necessary to spend another dollar on this trip. However, some things people elect to spend money on that are not included in the price are:

- Trip/Travel insurance
- Drinks with meals (other than water)
- Souvenirs
- We will collect an optional "Love Offering" for our local Guide and Bus Driver above and beyond the tips included in the price.

How To Register:

To register for the trip, you can go to my website, www.SteppingIntoTheJordan.com. At the top right of the page, there is a link to the Study Trips page. The registration link is on that page.

Have Additional Questions?

I am excited to lead this trip and share my love for the land and the Bible with you. My prayer is that it will impact you as much as it has affected me.

Feel free to e-mail me at rob.kranz@steppingintothejordan.com with any other questions you might have.