



CHRISTIAN LEADER'S TOUR PLANNING

Guide

visit
Israel
You'll never be the same.

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“VISIT ISRAEL – YOU’LL NEVER BE THE SAME!”

**A trip to Israel is more than exciting ...
It is life-changing!**

People’s single greatest expression when they return from a visit to Israel is, “I’ll never be the same.”

Something about sailing on the Sea of Galilee, walking the streets of Jerusalem, and viewing the empty tomb creates an eternal change of heart and spirit. Wherever you go, you can sense God’s presence.

When you visit Israel, God’s Word becomes clearer, your faith becomes deeper, and your passion for the Lord becomes stronger. We believe that, once you visit Israel, you’ll never be the same!

The adventure begins here, with this step-by-step guide, prepared especially for Christian pastors and ministry leaders like you.

Every detail you need to organize and host your own tour of Israel is included in this guide. You will find answers to the questions most often asked about leading a group to the land of the Bible. Most of all, you’ll discover how you can do your part to make sure your trip is one that leaves people saying, “I’ll never be the same!”



DISCOVER ISRAEL

There is only one Holy Land. For hundreds of years, people have continued to flock to Israel to visit the holy places. People want to walk where Jesus walked. It is often called the oldest tourist destination on earth. In Israel, you can experience the Mediterranean, the desert, mountains, green valleys, lakes, rivers, and cities and towns of every size. You can enjoy unique destinations like the Dead Sea and the Old City of Jerusalem. You can also find the very best in dining, accommodations, shopping, and entertainment.

While Israel certainly has its share of historical, cultural, and entertainment attractions, Christian tourists returning from the Holy Land invariably single out the spiritual transformation as the most memorable and important event of their journey. Truly, Israel is the only nation in the world that is the very cradle of the Jewish and Christian faiths. Christians in particular

can discover the land of both the Old and New Testaments, and can personally walk the ground that Jesus walked.

In Israel, you can retrace the life of Jesus as you visit Nazareth, Capernaum and Jerusalem. Stand at the shore of the Sea of Galilee, worship and pray at the Upper Room, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Garden Tomb.

You can also visit places from the ancient past that hold an important place in history, such as the site of Solomon's and Herod's Temples, the famous fortress of Masada.

Thousands of Christian ministers and leaders host tours of Israel each year, and you can too. A trip to Israel is much more than just a vacation. It will revolutionize your own life and ministry as you come to know the Land of the Bible. It will also change the lives of those who travel with you, giving them a deeper appreciation for the Word of

God and a greater understanding of Biblical truth. Visiting Israel is a transformational experience. Once you visit, you will never be the same.

Best of all, everything you need to organize a successful tour is readily available to you here. This booklet is prepared by the Israel Ministry of Tourism in North America to take you step-by-step through each stage in planning and organizing a group visit to the Holy Land.

You'll be surprised at how easy it is to organize a tour and travel with your group to Israel. The regional Israel Ministry of Tourism offices are ready to guide you through the process from beginning to end.

So as you read this booklet, imagine you and your people in the Holy Land and begin the journey of a lifetime. Come visit Israel. You'll never be the same! 🐦



GETTING STARTED

Where do I begin?

The most important factor in the success of your tour is your own unconditional decision that you are going to Israel, and that you are going to take a group of your congregants, ministry supporters, or other friends with you. Once you have taken this step of faith yourself, the rest is easy.

Experience shows that it is best not to make your decision conditional on others agreeing to go with you. If your commitment is conditional, people will tend to wait until the conditions are met – actually sabotaging the potential of the tour. No one wants to invest precious time and resource on a trip that may be canceled at the last minute.

However, once you make a firm decision to go to Israel, you will typically find your people will respond enthusiastically and want to join you. Your commitment to go is vital to the success of leading a trip to Israel!

Who can help me plan a trip to Israel?

The Israel Ministry of Tourism is here to help you every step of the way – beginning with the booklet you hold in your hands. At your request, your nearest Israel Ministry of Tourism office will send you an extensive listing of travel and tour organizers who specialize in tours of Israel.

The Israel Ministry of Tourism is noncommercial and does not sell trips to Israel. It is a service agency here to help you facilitate a successful and rewarding trip.

Your next step is to contact a travel or tour operator to begin scheduling your tour. Many of the operators available have decades of experience in leading tours of Israel (see Select Travel Organizer section).

<i>Month / Location</i>	Jerusalem	Tel Aviv	Haifa	Safed (Galilee)	Tiberias (Sea of Galilee)	Sodom (Dead Sea)
January	43-54°	48-66°	46-63°	37-50°	48-65°	53-69°
March	47-61°	51-68°	47-70°	43-55°	51-72°	60-78°
July	67-83°	70-87°	68-86°	65-84°	72-98°	83-102°
November	54-66°	55-75°	56-73°	54-66°	59-78°	65-80°

(Degrees Fahrenheit)

How far in advance should I begin planning a trip?

You should plan your specific departure date with your travel or tour organizer. If you are just getting started as a tour host, we suggest you allow yourself at least six to nine months before departure. A longer period is even better, since ample time is needed to promote the tour and sign people on. The rule is to plan far enough ahead that you and your travel organizer can set a definite departure date and carry out your planning steps with that deadline in mind.

When is the best time of year to visit?

It's up to you. Unless you specifically want to be in Israel for Christmas or Easter, you may want to schedule your trip at a time other than these busy holiday seasons. One of the most beautiful seasons is right after Easter, for example.

Many Christian groups prefer to travel when lower, off-season rates are available – usually November through mid-March (except Christmas). Weather conditions vary, as shown on the chart (above).

From November to March Israel has cool temperatures and some rain. From June to August temperatures are very warm, and the country is virtually rainless from April through October.

Your travel agent or tour operator can help you decide on the best time for you and your group.

How affordable is a trip to Israel?

One of the most exciting discoveries awaiting Christians who want to visit Israel is how surprisingly affordable the trip can be.

Also, many churches will agree to pay for their pastor's trip in light of the spiritual benefits of having a pastor or ministry leader on the journey. You can even discuss creating a pricing structure with your tour operator that allows for one free trip for every set number of paid trips. One for every ten paying participants or even one for every five is not uncommon.

This feature has enabled many tour hosts like yourself to make the journey of their dreams come true often at no cost to them or their church. Tour operators recognize the valuable service that the host provides, and your people will appreciate the work you put into the tour. Your trip is a well-earned benefit of hosting a tour.

Is it really safe to visit Israel?

Yes ... clearly and emphatically. This question is only asked by people who have not been to Israel. The fact that millions of people visit Israel every year and return safe, fulfilled, inspired and happy demonstrates how exaggerated news reports are about Israel.

Israel has one of the lowest crime rates in the world. This fact and the travel record of our many visitors speak for themselves. Ask someone who has been to Israel – then, come see for yourself.

How long should our trip be?

Many options are available, but most trips to Israel are typically ten days or more. Remember that once you have paid the airfare, extra days cost very little. See the Appendix for a sample ten-day itinerary that's a good place to start in planning your trip.

What are some of the flight options available?

Travelers from North America have never had more choices for direct flights to Tel Aviv. Currently, five airlines (Air Canada, Continental, Delta, El Al, and Isrir) offer nonstop travel from a variety of North American gateways, including Atlanta, Los Angeles, Miami, New York (both JFK and Newark-Liberty), and Toronto. In addition, nearly 20 European carriers fly from North America to Israel via Europe. Worldwide, more than 70 airlines fly into Israel's state-of-the-art Ben Gurion International Airport. Compare carriers by price, convenience of departure gateways, and overall time spent en route. Once again, your tour operator can assist you with this.

Who will be in Israel to meet and guide my group?

Travel agents and tour operators have representatives in Israel who will meet your group upon arrival and handle all of the arrangements in the country.

In addition, an English-speaking, government-licensed guide will accompany your group throughout your entire stay in the country. Your guide will not only lead your tour of historic sites, but will also help with all arrangements. Most Israelis speak English and are glad to assist visitors. Also, English signs are everywhere, so there's no language barrier.

Will our tour guide be well prepared?

All of the tour guides are specially licensed by the Israel government. After they show aptitude, ability, and fluency in English, the guides



A quiet corner in the ancient Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem

are required to complete a two-year training course. They must pass exams to show extensive knowledge of culture, geography, history, travel, and religion – and they participate in annual updates and refresher classes.

Their outstanding abilities add up to one very important benefit for you as tour host. You are free to relax and enjoy the tour and let the tour guide take care of the details. You'll have time to teach, conduct worship services, and offer insight along the way without having to coordinate logistics.

If you know of a particular guide you'd like to have on your tour, be sure to let your tour operator know.

I want to go! So, what's next?

Once you've committed to take the journey of a lifetime to Israel, it's time to start planning and promoting your tour. And, of course, the Ministry of Tourism will be ready to help you every step along the way! 🐦



**SO THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE DECLARED IN ZION AND HIS PRAISE IN JERUSALEM.
PSALM 102:21**





The Banias River, which rises on Mount Hermon and flows into the River Jordan

PLANNING AND PROMOTING YOUR TOUR

1. Establish a leadership team, set goals, and enlist support

ESTABLISH THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

The first essential step is to identify the individual or team in your ministry that will drive the overall process. While interpersonal skills and enthusiasm are a must, no other experience is required. Often, the pastor or ministry leader will select one or more people from his staff or congregation to help coordinate the details.

SET GOALS

Once a leadership team is in place, the individuals on the team should establish concrete goals for the trip being planned. For example, "Our church will send a group of at least 30 people on a trip to Israel this fall." For help in determining a realistic number of people for your group, you may want to contact a fellow minister who has gone to Israel before, or you can call the Israel Ministry of Tourism directly.

ENLIST SUPPORT

To attain your goal and make your efforts more effective, enlist the active support of anyone in your ministry who has been to Israel or who is passionate about going for the first time. You may want to establish an Israel tourism committee or promotion team. These may or may not be members of the leadership team, but they

will be active in getting the word out about the trip and doing whatever they can to help implement the plans of the leadership team.

A point person is also vital in getting ready for a successful trip. The point person will be available for fielding questions and providing information about the trip. This person may be the trip leader, a member of the leadership team, or someone from the committee/promo team. The point person is responsible for:

- Responding to trip inquiries via phone, email, or signup sheet
- Ensuring materials are sent to anyone expressing even a slight interest
- Creating and maintaining a list of all people who have expressed interest, and organizing the database by trip status (e.g., Going, Considering, Not Going, etc.). It is important to keep this list for future trips, as some who may not have gone the first time will consider going on another trip. Also, you will want to enlist the help of those who went in promoting future trips.

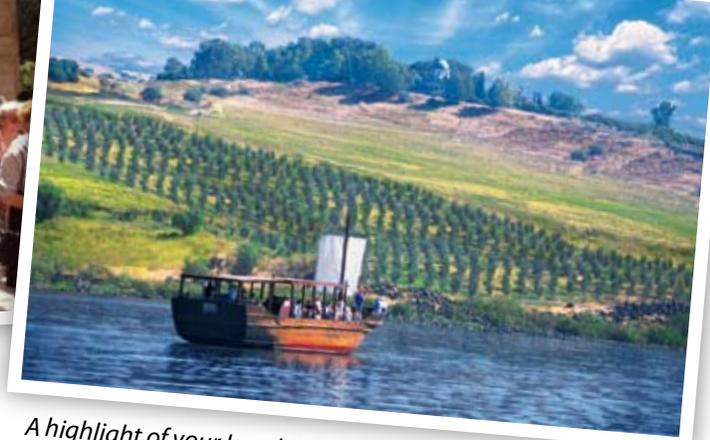
2. Select a tour operator and consider pricing options

As noted before, the Israel Ministry of Tourism is not commercially connected with the travel industry and neither rates nor endorses any particular airline or travel/tour organizer. A list of operators is provided for your information and convenience. You can find it at the Ministry's website: www.goisrael.com.

A travel or tour organizer is either a travel agent or a tour operator who assists you in planning and implementing your trip to Israel.



American visitors pause to pray on Jerusalem's Via Dolorosa



A highlight of your Israel visit will be to sail on the Sea of Galilee

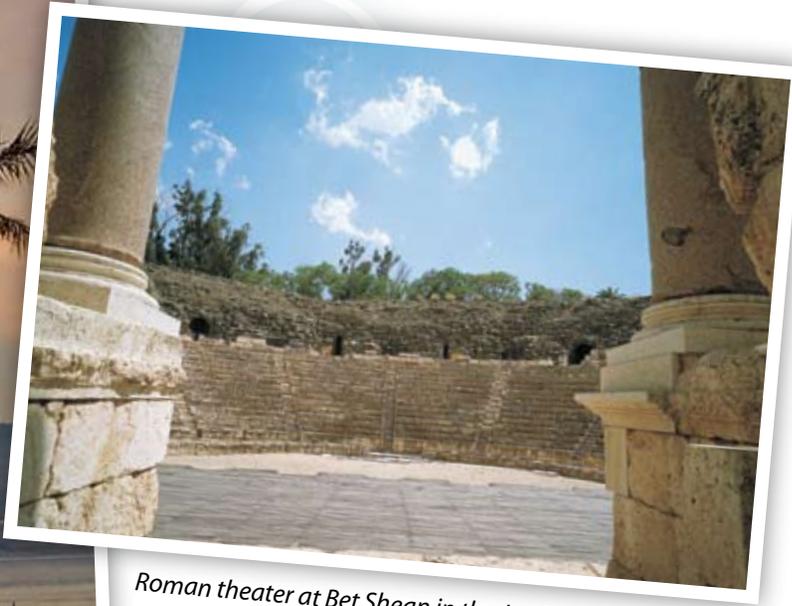
- A tour operator specializes in providing tourism services in Israel, and, as such, they have a staff in Israel to help run the tour from start to finish. By working with them directly, you often end up saving money. Take note, though, of the fact that most tour operators work nationally and not locally.
- A travel agent is usually locally based, and the office may or may not specialize in trips to Israel. Usually, an agent works as a middleman between you and the tour operator. As such, agents take a commission, which adds to the overall cost of the trip. However, since they are locally based and may work with several tour operators, you may benefit from convenience and selection.

When actually choosing between tour organizers, consider these hints in helping you make this important choice:

1. Get several proposals. Don't be hesitant to ask a variety of travel agents, tour organizers, or airlines for their programs, departure dates, and prices.
2. Compare the quotes for value as well as price:

Note the services. One tour program may be lower priced because it offers less! For instance, it may not include all meals on the trip, or it may offer fewer tours, more modest hotels, or even require add-ons to the basic price listed in the

Looking towards Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee



Roman theater at Bet Shean in the Jordan Valley

brochure. Choice of hotels can make a big difference on price – and a big difference in tour experience. Be sure your tour operator is choosing appropriate hotels for your group.

Count the “days at leisure” on your tour. They sound good, but since your time is precious, you may want to make more use of your time for tours and sightseeing. On the other hand, be careful not to over-schedule.

Note optional tours. Some tours – offered on days at leisure – are not included in your overall tour price and may add substantially to the cost of the trip. Make your group aware.

Note meal descriptions. Breakfast is usually included in the price of the tour, but the possibilities vary as to other meals. Remember that a “continental” breakfast is usually just rolls, jam, and tea or coffee, while an “Israeli” breakfast means a full and hearty buffet, for which Israel’s hotels are famous.

3. We suggest you ensure that all tips, taxes, transfers, etc., be included in the selling price. (The only exception may be freewill gratuities to the tour guide and bus driver.) Have it understood that your tour guide or land operator will take care of all tipping to restaurants, hotel, transfer porters, etc. You should also be certain that all passes into national parks, museums, galleries, and entrance fees are included in your package price.
4. Your tour operator is usually able to assist you with trip registration, billing and communication with the participants. Be sure to look at how this process is handled by the tour operators you are considering.
5. Get it all in writing. If you make any arrangements that differ from those in the tour brochure, make sure you have written confirmation of those agreements.

3. Create promotional schedule and prepare marketing materials

CREATE PROMOTIONAL SCHEDULE

Once you have the people and information in place from the previous steps, create a schedule that details when and how to best execute your promotional efforts. Work with your tour organizer to set key milestones and deadlines – for example, a deadline for receiving commitments or deposits. After setting these dates, plan backward to ensure you have enough time for planning and promoting your trip.

PREPARE MARKETING MATERIALS

In order to effectively promote your trip to Israel, you'll need effective marketing materials. Aside from the excellent promotional materials you can order for free from the Israel Ministry of Tourism, for best results it is also important to create simple and effective materials specific to your tour.

1. Order free promotional materials – For more details about the free materials you can request from the Israel Ministry of Tourism, call toll-free at 1-888-77-ISRAEL. Free ready-to-use materials include:
 - a. Promotional brochures and leaflets – Full-color, inspiring, and informative, these items range from booklets and magazines to simple essentials, such as country and city maps.
 - b. Promotional videos – Use promo videos to bring Israel alive to your congregants or ministry members.
 - c. Trip promotion shells and letterhead – Print your trip's key information and itinerary on these colorful shells that feature beautiful photographs of Israel.
2. Prepare additional promotional tools – There are many easy,

cost-efficient, and effective ways to enhance your promotion efforts.

- a. Promotional letters and email – Alter the promotional letters in the Appendix of this guide, or draft original letters to promote your trip.
- b. Press release – Using the sample in the Appendix, write a short press release covering the basic who, what, when, where, why, and how of the trip. Be sure to include quotes from key leaders who are making the trip. Send the release to local media outlets such as newspapers, magazines, and TV and radio stations.
- c. Talking points – Draft a list of key talking points for recruiting, using the sample in the Appendix. Tourism committee/promotion team members should have a copy of these. These talking points can also be used in weekly announcements.
- d. Promotional flyer/ad – Create a simple one-page flyer summarizing your pitch in a graphically pleasing way. Use photographs and provide key contact names and information. Print or photocopy and distribute appropriately.
- e. Promotional table – Prepare the components necessary for setting up a trip promotion table in high-traffic areas of your ministry. The table should remain up during the promotion period. The successful promotional table includes:
 - Trip flyers, information, the itinerary, official invitation letters, as well as leaflets and brochures
 - A TV with VCR or DVD player running a continuous loop of promotional video
 - Photographs from prior trips or another source

- Your PowerPoint presentation (see below), which could be played on a continuous loop if a computer is available, or you could burn the presentation onto a CD for use as a handout
 - Trip signup sheets and pens, with sheets asking for name, phone number, address, email address (these sheets should be collected regularly with follow-up made immediately)
 - Stories and articles highlighting travel to Israel
 - Israeli treats such as candy
- f. PowerPoint presentation – Create a simple PowerPoint presentation with images of the sites you plan to visit. This can be used on your promotional table, during announcements, etc. You can also burn the presentation to CD and use it as a handout, or as a mailer to anyone who shows interest in going to Israel. Photographs of Israel can be downloaded from the Israel photo gallery at www.goisrael.com.
- g. Dedicated website page – Create a simple web page with photographs and key information about the trip. You can also upload your PowerPoint presentation for online viewing. The page should be linked from your ministry's website. Make sure the information on the page is always up to date, and make sure your printed promotional materials feature the website address. Also, be sure to include contact email addresses or an online signup form for people to express interest. You can also post a downloadable commitment form for people who want to commit to join the trip.

4. Follow the 3 R's – Reach out, register, retain

Now that you have planned your promotion schedule and prepared the materials you need to promote the trip, it's time to implement the plan and use the materials. Although there are countless ways in which you and your team can market the trip and secure commitments, the three main points you want to remember are what we call the 3 R's:

- Reach out to potential participants
- Register travelers (i.e., turn interested people into committed travelers)
- Retain the participants until departure

REACHING OUT

This refers to getting the message out about your trip. Aside from spreading the word, it is essential to obtain the names and contact information of every person who shows even the slightest interest in going, whether or not they will actually travel. This list has the potential to become a long-term recruitment tool to make future trips much easier. With that in mind, here are the basics for reaching out:

1. Present your tour as an important aspect of your ministry and the participant's spiritual life. Your trip to Israel is an extension of your ministry, a spiritual highlight that will benefit you and those you serve for years to come. Present the tour as enthusiastically as you would any other part of your ministry.
2. Make frequent announcements. Begin announcing your departure date as soon as possible. Tell people when, where, how long, how much, and how to get their deposits to you. Remember, don't make your trip conditional by saying you are "thinking about" going or "may go." Be positive about the



A camel caravan near Caesarea on the Mediterranean



The Church of Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor



A group of anthias fish near a coral reef at Eilat

trip. Then, make repeated announcements from the pulpit, over the air, on the bulletin board, or in your church paper or worship program bulletin.

3. Invite everyone. Don't try to guess at or hand pick people you think will go. You will probably be surprised by who accepts and makes a deposit for the trip.
4. Distribute brochures. Many tour operators and travel agents will be happy to print a brochure with your photo, invitation to the tour, and itinerary. Caution: Don't rely on brochures alone to sell your tour. They are merely aids and should not be counted on to do the entire job.
5. Activate the promotional table. Set up your promotional table in a high-traffic area where people will be reminded of the trip and where they can sign up to go.
6. Approach key individuals. It is important to approach key individuals with a sincere and thoughtful invitation to join

you on the trip. Consider in advance why you believe these people would benefit from the trip and what you think their contributions would be to the travel group – and let them know about it.

7. Seek local media coverage. Send out your press release to local media outlets. Offer newspapers and radio and television stations details about your trip, and make yourself available for interviews.
8. Hold Israel orientation meetings. These will help you create excitement about the Holy Land in your congregation. As noted above, the Israel Ministry of Tourism will provide complimentary videos and literature for this program. We suggest that you give each family represented a map of the Holy Land to further connect them to the land of Israel and to deepen their vested interest in the trip. Be prepared to receive registrations and deposits at this event.

9. Make small group presentations. Encourage people who are planning to go to invite a few friends to their house for a video about Israel. The relaxed and informal atmosphere will help you build the one-on-one relationships you need to encourage participation on the tour.
10. Ask for a commitment. This commitment will be in the form of a deposit – a very important step that your tour operator or travel agent will help you take. Deposits are usually fully refundable up to about 30 days before departure, and beyond that date in unusual circumstances. Make sure you understand these and other “tour conditions” of your tour operator or travel agent.
11. Announce everyone who joins. Be enthusiastic about each person who joins your tour group. Announce their names informally from the pulpit, and note in your bulletin that “Mr. and Mrs. Smith have made their reservations to come with me to Israel.” Again, emphasize the incredible ministry value of the trip and the spiritual transformation that takes place.
12. Send letters/emails to tour group members and prospects. This is a must. Don’t send just one letter. Instead, send three or four – preferably once a month – keeping your guests informed about new plans for the trip. This will keep their interest and enthusiasm high as the weeks pass by between their initial decision and departure. You can include interesting items about sightseeing, travel tips, highlights about Israel, and even suggested reading material.

REGISTERING TRAVELERS

Registration is the stage in which people who have expressed interest now make a firm commitment to join the trip. This commitment usually involves a complete form and a trip deposit. Work with your travel organizer to determine the amount of the deposit, the deadline for payment, and deposit refund conditions.

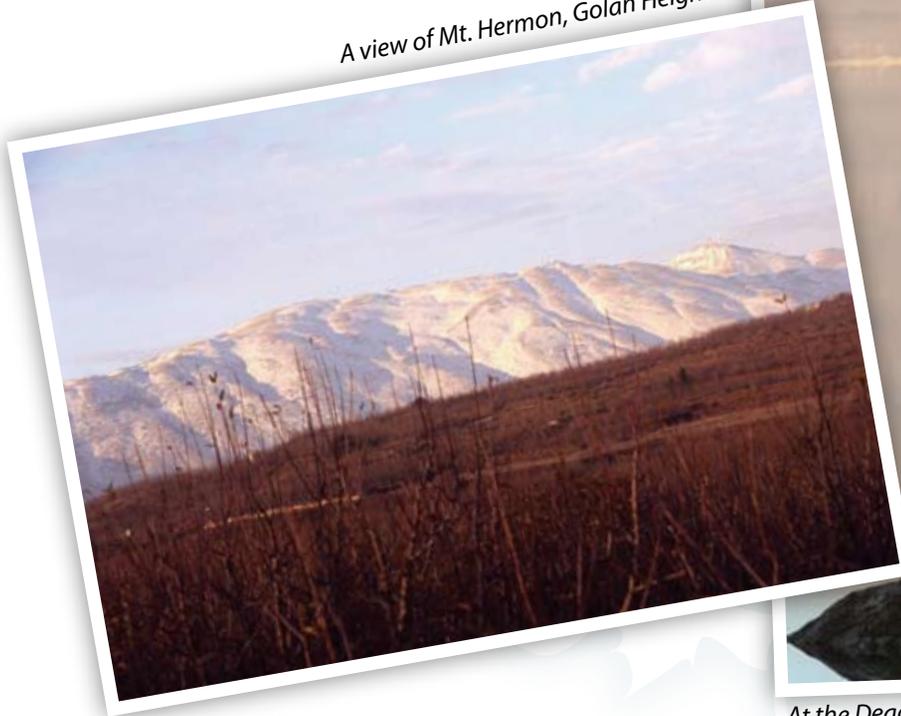
1. Provide registration forms. Make sure that registration forms are always available. Forms should be posted on your website, mailed/emailed to anyone interested, and included in any mailing to your list.
2. Ask for the deposit. Make clear that a deposit is required to reserve a place on the trip. If people have not sent in their deposits on their own, a team member should ask for the deposit. If your trip is limited in space, remind people that spots are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.
3. Ask participants to promote the trip. Think about organizing a group of personable and well-respected trip participants, or perhaps those who have previously visited Israel, to personally speak to those who are undecided about traveling to Israel.

RETAINING PARTICIPANTS

“Retention” refers to actions which ensure that those people who have registered follow through on their commitment to travel. Retention efforts are important since the promotion period for a trip can sometimes last for months.

1. Communicate regularly. Send new bits of information and insights about the trip regularly to participants. As mentioned above, this will keep people excited and informed.
2. Provide trip details. As early as possible, provide practical information about the trip. Details include an itinerary and map with trip route, a brief bio of your tour guide, packing lists, hotels and hotel contact info, money issues, and even weather forecasts. Make sure the itinerary is written as a marketing document, not a technical itinerary with extra information used by trip planners.
3. Offer pre-trip education. Enlist the help of others in setting

A view of Mt. Hermon, Golan Heights



At the Dead Sea

up fun classes for trip subjects on anything from basic Hebrew (if possible) to the history of Israel. Classes help maintain excitement, as well as create and deepen relationships between travelers long before departure.

4. Involve trip participants in trip planning and promotion. Some participants may like to join the committee/promotion team. Participants can make excellent promoters and gain valuable experience at the same time.
5. When necessary, acknowledge bad news. If news out of the Middle East is negative, it is important to be in touch with participants. Here are some ideas of what can be communicated:
 - Acknowledge anxiety if expressed by participants.

- Reaffirm your personal commitment to going.
- Review the safety precautions that are integrated into most organized tours to Israel.
- Reiterate the big picture – the fact that tourists are safe in Israel and that millions visit annually and enjoy a trip with no complications.
- If necessary, host a meeting to address concerns and review trip plans.
- Provide good and interesting news about the trip – more members joining or new sites added to the itinerary. 🗨️



WHILE IN ISRAEL

While in Israel, you can begin laying the foundation for future trips by taking the following actions:

1. SEND REGULAR UPDATES FROM ISRAEL.

Before leaving home, have trip participants create a list of contacts whom they think would like to receive updates. Then allow time every other day for participants to summarize their thoughts and communicate updates. Any of the following will do:



- **EMAIL AND WEB UPDATES**

Emailing reports and posting blogs about your experiences in Israel are the easiest ways to communicate with friends and family, and you will have no problem finding Internet access at various sites along the tour.



- **TELEPHONE CALLS**

Personal calls to North America are not as expensive as one might think.



- **POSTCARDS AND LETTERS FROM ISRAEL**

Take a few minutes to pen a letter, or send a quick postcard to friends and family.



WHEN YOU RETURN

After returning from your trip to Israel, you are poised to make regular trips to Israel an integral part of your ministry. Build on the enthusiasm and excitement of your recent trip to make promoting and recruiting for future trips an easier process.

1. TALK ABOUT IT.

At every opportunity, speak about the trip and what it meant to you personally. Encourage other travelers to share their stories of personal growth and transformation.

2. THANK AND HONOR PARTICIPANTS.

Write a letter to all participants and thank them for joining you. Also, thank each member of the tourism committee/promotion team.

3. WRITE ABOUT IT.

Publish your thoughts in bulletins, newsletters, email messages, or even an editorial in the local newspaper. You can also send a press release to local media outlets, letting them know about your trip.

4. POST-TRIP MEETING.

Invite trip participants and those interested in future trips as you share the highlights of your journey.

5. SET THE DATE FOR YOUR NEXT ISRAEL TRIP.

Build on the enthusiasm by making plans for another trip. Consider a trip for a different demographic or with a different focus.

6. POST NAMES AND PHOTOS OF PARTICIPANTS.

7. SOLICIT FEEDBACK ABOUT THE TRIP.

Get feedback from participants about trip quality and marketing efforts. 📧



APPENDIX FOR YOUR REFERENCE

Regions of Israel

The mere size of the State of Israel can be a shock to North Americans: about the same size as the State of New Jersey. Yet in this small stretch of land more momentous history has occurred than in any place on earth. Israel is home to green pastures, mountains, deserts, valleys, four seas and six micro-climates.

In preparing to visit Israel, it is worthwhile to become familiar with the regions of the Holy Land. For purposes of touring Israel, we recommend you keep in mind the five general “touring” regions.

ISRAEL’S “TOURING” REGIONS

As you journey through Israel, you can think of your trek as a trip through five different “touring” regions of Israel: North, Golan Heights, Central, South, and Jerusalem. On the corresponding map, you will see these five regions, along with several cities from biblical times. Many of these cities played a large part in the life and ministry of Jesus, and they are marked with a  for easy reference.

1. NORTH – In the north, you will find the Sea of Galilee, the Galilee region, and the Golan Heights area. This region figured prominently in the ministry of Jesus. The north also includes Bethsaida, Beit Shean, Cana, Capernaum, the Mount of Beatitudes, Mount Tabor, Nazareth and Tiberias.

2. GOLAN HEIGHTS – Known in the Bible as Bashan, the Golan Heights is a basalt plateau overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Here, travelers can visit the ancient city of Caesarea Philippi (modern Banias), Nimrod’s Fortress, the peaceful Gamla Nature Reserve, and



Inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem



A food market in Jerusalem



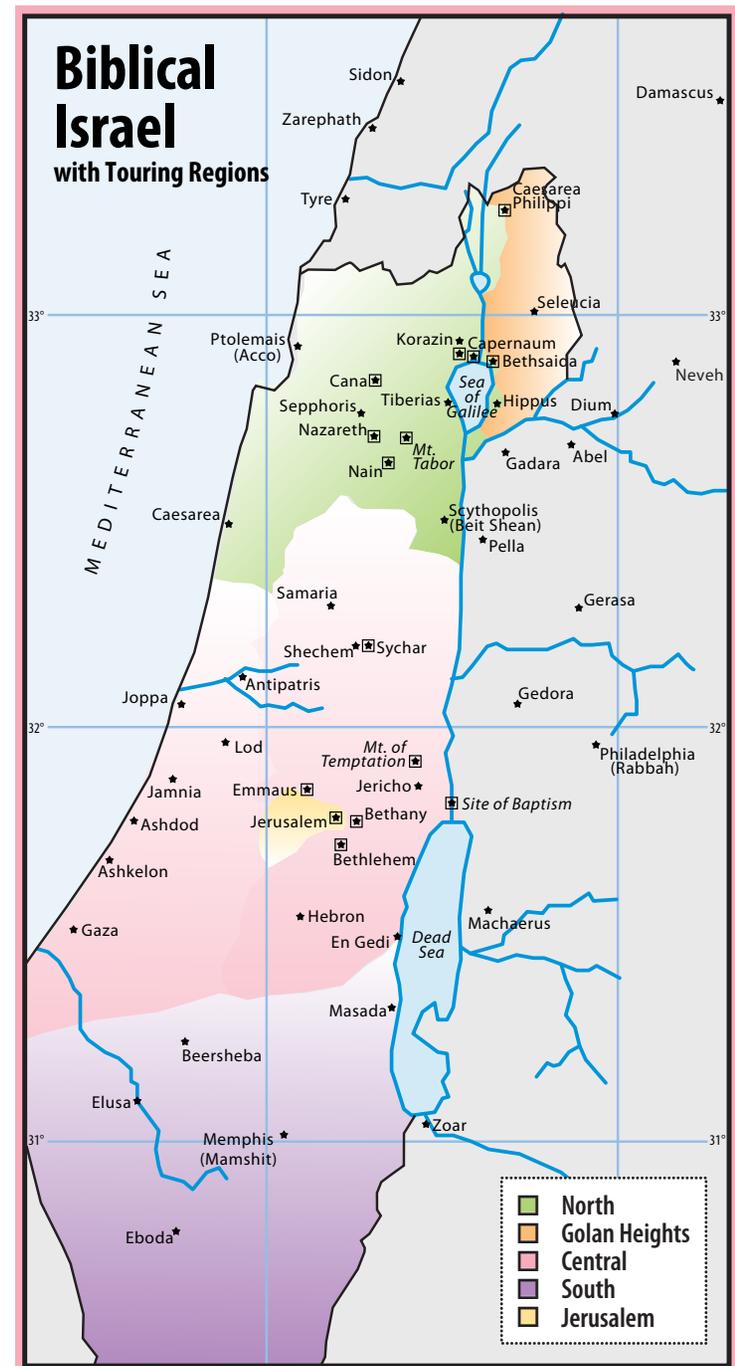
The Basilica of the Annunciation, Nazareth

the poignant Peace Vista ... all in the area occupied by the tribe of Manasseh in biblical times.

3. CENTRAL – The central area of the land of Israel features the Mediterranean Sea, the Plain of Sharon, Judea and Samaria. Again, you will recognize many of the sites in this region as being key places in the life of Jesus and the disciples. In addition to Jerusalem (see No. 5) and Bethlehem, locations include Sychar, Caesarea, Joppa (modern Jaffa), Jericho, the Mount of Temptation, and Shechem.

4. SOUTH – The Dead Sea and the Negev desert highlight Israel's south region. You will also find Beersheba, Masada, and Qumran.

5. JERUSALEM – With roots in the Old Testament and the center of events in the New Testament, Jerusalem – the Holy City – features so many spiritually significant sites that it could be a tour in and of itself. A brief sampling of the sites to see includes the Mount of Olives, Garden of Gethsemane, Mount Zion, the Garden Tomb, the Temple Mount, the Western Wall, the Via Dolorosa (Way of the Cross), and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



SAMPLE ITINERARY

(See next section for more information on sites mentioned here.)

A trip to Israel is typically at least 10 days. Here is a sampling of what a ten-day adventure to Israel might be like:

DAYS 1 & 2

Leave North America for Israel in the evening and arrive at the beautiful Ben Gurion Airport outside of Tel Aviv the next afternoon. You will be greeted by a representative from your tour company who will assist you through customs. Travel by bus to your hotel in Tel Aviv, located on the Mediterranean Sea.

DAY 3

Your journey begins at Jaffa (biblical Joppa), one of the oldest port cities in the world. Then you will drive north along the Mediterranean coast to Caesarea, the great Roman port city and one of the largest archeological digs in Israel. Continue to Mount Carmel, where Elijah battled the prophets of Baal; then to Megiddo, a fascinating *tel* (hill), comprising 26 ancient cities superimposed on one another, overlooking the Valley of Jezreel (Valley of Armageddon). Next, drive across the valley to Nazareth, the boyhood home of Jesus; then on to Cana where Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into wine. Finally, drive on to Tiberias where you will stay for the evening.

DAY 4

This day begins by visiting the biblical sites around the Sea of Galilee: the Mount of Beatitudes, where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount; Capernaum, the town where Jesus lived during the Galilee ministry; Tabgha, where Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes and where Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Stop at Nof Ginnosar to see the 2,000-year-old fishing boat unearthed from the Sea of Galilee. Then, enjoy a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee and a traditional

St. Peter's fish lunch. After lunch, visit the Upper Galilee and the Golan Heights where you can see ancient cities of Caesarea Philippi and Hazor before returning to your hotel in Tiberias.

DAY 5

Today you travel down the Jordan River Valley from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. Your first stop will be the Crusader fortress of Belvoir overlooking the Jordan River Valley. Then, drive on to Beit Shean, the largest and most spectacular excavation in all of Israel. Then, continue via Jericho to the Dead Sea. Travel through the wilderness of Judah to your hotel at Ein Bokek, on the Dead Sea shore.

DAY 6

Begin your journey today with a visit to Masada, where you will ascend the mountain by cable car to view Herod's desert fortress. Continue to the beautiful oasis of Ein Gedi where David hid from King Saul. Stop for a short float on the Dead Sea. Then, drive to Qumran, the home of the first century sect known as the Essenes, the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Finally, the bus makes its way to Jerusalem. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem is an ascent of 4,000 feet in 13 miles. Stop at the top of Mount Scopus for your first view of the "Golden City" as the sun sets over Jerusalem.

DAY 7

Today you will explore Jerusalem. Begin with a drive around the Old City walls and note each of the city gates. They each contain a wealth of history and significance. Tour the Davidson Center; then travel by bus to the top of the Mount of Olives and view the entire city of Jerusalem. Later, walk down the Palm Sunday Road to the Garden of Gethsemane, stopping at Dominus Flavit, where Jesus stopped to weep over Jerusalem. See the ancient olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane and visit the beautiful Church of All Nations.

Next, the bus will ascend Mt. Zion where you will visit the Tomb of David and the Upper Room – traditional site of the Last Supper.

Enter the Old City through the Zion Gate, make your way to the Jewish Quarter and visit the Cardo, Hezekiah's Wall, and have your first glimpse of the Western Wall.

Then, leaving the Old City for the day, a short drive takes you to the Israel Museum with its Shrine of the Book, home of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Model of Jerusalem from the time of the Second Temple. Continue to the Knesset (Israel's Parliament) to view the beautiful Menorah, and to Yad Vashem, Israel's national Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust. Time permitting, visit Bethlehem, birthplace of David and Jesus, and return to your hotel.

DAY 8

Enter the Old City through the Dung Gate to explore the Southern Temple excavations and the Western Wall. Visit the Rabbinical Tunnel, which leads underground to the base of the Temple Mount, and the actual street level that Jesus, Mary and the disciples walked. Ascend the Temple Mount and visit the Dome of the Rock. Continue with a walking tour of the Old City that includes the Via Dolorosa, Pools of Bethesda, St. Anne's Chapel, Lithostrotos, Ecco Homo Arch, Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the exotic bazaars. Then, exit the Old City through the Damascus Gate and take a short walk to the Garden Tomb and Gordon's Calvary. Here you can enjoy a memorable communion service to conclude your journey.

DAY 9

Spend a day without a planned itinerary. Take time to collect your thoughts; indulge your whims. Revisit the places that moved and interested you most or shop within the walls of the Old City where bargaining is a must. There is so much to see and do in Jerusalem! After dinner, transfer to Ben Gurion Airport for your return flight back home.

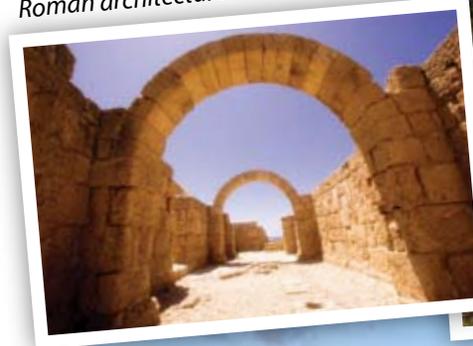
DAY 10

Say farewell to Israel and arrive back in North America.

*The Tower of David and
Jerusalem's ancient Citadel*



Roman architecture in Caesarea



Caesarea

SUGGESTED SITES TO VISIT

Just to give you a sampling of the incredible sites in Israel that you can visit, the following is a list of some of the most popular sites in the Holy Land, many of which will be of particular interest to Christian tourists:

(Please Note: In the wake of the peace process, some of the sites mentioned in this list and throughout the booklet have been transferred or are in the process of being transferred to the Palestinian Authority's responsibility.)

ACRE (AKKO) – Ancient Phoenician and Crusader port. Crusader capital after the fall of Jerusalem (1187-1291).

ASHKELON – Originally a Philistine city-state, associated with Samson's time as a judge. Roman and Crusader remains.

AVDAT – Ruins of first and second century B. C. E. Nabatean city in Negev Desert, with later Roman and Byzantine additions. Fabulous rock pools.

BEERSHEBA – Capital of the Negev Desert. Here Abraham pitched his tent.

BELVOIR – Last Crusader stronghold in the land of Israel. Magnificent view of the Jordan Valley from this hilltop fortress.

BET ALFA – Kibbutz whose grounds contain magnificent mosaic floor from a sixth-century C. E. synagogue.

BETHLEHEM – The birthplace of both David and Jesus. Visit the Church of the Nativity, the Shepherds' Fields and Rachel's Tomb.

BETHSAIDA – Recent excavations reveal that the miracle of the loaves and fishes may have occurred here.



CAESAREA – Originally a Phoenician port, rebuilt by Herod in honor of Caesar Augustus. Capital of the Romans. Magnificent Roman theater, plus later Byzantine and Crusader remains.

CAESAREA PHILIPPI – Here Peter made his confession of faith.

CANA – Site of Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine. Visit Franciscan and Greek churches.



CAPERNAUM – Site of miracles on the Sea of Galilee shore. Excavations of St. Peter's house, as well as fourth/fifth-century synagogue.



EN GEDI – Dead Sea desert oasis where David hid from King Saul.

GALILEE/GOLAN HEIGHTS – Northern region of Israel where Jesus first called the twelve disciples. Also where Jesus performed numerous miracles.

HAIFA – Israel's major port city on the slopes of Mount Carmel.

HAZOR – Major archaeological “tel” (mound). Remains of Hyksos, Canaanite, and Israelite city.

HERODION – One of Herod’s mountaintop retreats in the Judean Desert. Archaeologists recently discovered what they believe is Herod’s tomb.

JERICHO – Oldest city in the world.



JERUSALEM

The capital of the state of Israel for 3,000 years

- Ein Karem: Birthplace of John the Baptist.
- Holy Land model: Scale stone model of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus.
- John F. Kennedy Memorial: Judean Hills memorial to the assassinated American president.
- Shrine of the Book, home of the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- Yad Vashem: Museum and Memorial of the Holocaust.
- Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem
- Bible Lands History Museum.
- Garden Tomb: Believed by many to be

the site of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

- Mount of Olives.
- Garden of Gethsemane.
- Mount Zion: Burial place of King David and traditional site of the Last Supper.
- Via Dolorosa: Way of the Cross.
- Antonia Fortress: Site of Jesus’ trial.
- Church of the Holy Sepulchre: Traditional site of the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- St. Stephen’s Gate.
- Western Wall and the Western Wall Tunnels.
- Temple Mount.
- Cardo and the Herodian Quarter.
- The Hulda Steps: most probably used by Jesus to the Temple Mount.
- Southern Wall Archaeological Park.
- City of David.
- The King’s Walk.



KIBBUTZ – Israel’s unique cooperative living communities. Many kibbutzim have comfortable guest houses enabling visitors a glimpse of kibbutz life.

MASADA – Originally a Herodian palace overlooking the Dead Sea. Last stronghold

of the Jewish revolt against Rome. Archaeological site and hilltop palace reached by cable car.

MEGIDDO (Armageddon) – Archaeological excavations of King Ahab’s stables.



MOUNT OF BEATITUDES – Site of the Sermon on the Mount. Franciscan church, hospice, and gardens.

NAZARETH – Basilica of the Annunciation, Church of St. Joseph, the Synagogue Church, and Mary’s Well.



QUMRAN – Archaeological remains of 2,000-year-old Essene community on shores of the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered here.

RED SEA & EILAT – Israel’s southern seaport and resort city. Beautiful beaches, comfortable hotels, underwater observatory and coral reefs make this a popular recreational area.

SOLOMON’S POOLS – Reservoirs built in Herodian period to supply water to Jerusalem.



TABGHA – Traditional site of miracle of the loaves and fishes. Byzantine mosaic floor.

TEL AVIV-YAFO (JAFFA) – Israel’s most vibrant city - heart of a metropolitan area of 4 million people, on the Mediterranean. First known record of Jaffa/Joppa is 4,000 years ago. Home of Simon the Tanner, where Peter stayed (Acts 9:36-42). Old Town reconstructed into art and entertainment center.

TIBERIAS – One of the four “Holy Cities of Judaism” founded in honor of Tiberius Caesar. Early center of Talmudic writing. Crusader and Byzantine remains.

SAMPLE PROMO LETTERS

The following are sample letters you can use to promote your tour to Israel, either through mail or email.

1

LETTER OF ANNOUNCEMENT – To be sent immediately upon your decision to go to Israel (no brochure is included)

Dear _____,

“You’ll never be the same!” That’s what I kept hearing as I looked into taking a trip to Israel. After a lot of thought and prayer, I’m convinced it’s true! And that’s why I’m writing to you today.

On [DATE], I am leading a group on a [NUMBER OF DAYS]-day tour of Israel, the land of the Bible and the land where Jesus Himself walked, transforming hearts and lives.

I am praying that you will join me on this trip of a lifetime as we walk where Jesus walked and visit the places where He healed the sick, taught the multitudes, died on the Cross – and arose 2,000 years ago.

This trip is much more than simply a vacation. I believe we truly will never be the same upon our return. This is an opportunity to see the people, places, and

events of the Bible come alive before our very eyes ... an opportunity to never be the same again!

I look forward to worshipping with you in the holy silence of the Garden Tomb where Jesus was laid. I am eager to visit the Garden of Gethsemane and the Upper Room, and I can only imagine the feeling we will have as we stand together and look out over the Sea of Galilee where our Lord stilled the waters!

You’ll be surprised at how affordable the tour really is. So please check your calendar...and then make your plans to join us!

Let me hear from you right away, and I will send you some additional information for your review. Spaces are limited, so I encourage you, don’t delay! Let’s worship, fellowship, and rejoice together in Israel ... you’ll never be the same!



The remains of the Roman port at Caesarea



The Western Wall in Jerusalem



In Israel's Negev Desert

2

LETTER OF INVITATION – To be sent two to three weeks after the announcement letter

Dear _____,

Please find enclosed a brochure with complete information on our trip to Israel, [DATE] through [DATE], which I announced several weeks ago. Please review the brochure and let me know if I can answer any questions. I'm certainly hoping you will be part of this life-changing journey to the land of the Bible!

If you have already decided to come with us, please send your deposit of \$[AMOUNT] so our tour operator can make your airline and hotel reservations. The balance of \$[AMOUNT] will not be due until 45 days before departure.

Remember, we are limiting the group to [NUMBER] people – and I want to include you in that group!

Please pray about your decision, and let me know as soon as you decide. This may be your only opportunity to take a journey to Israel – an opportunity to walk where Jesus walked and to never be the same again!

3

LETTER OF REMINDER – To be sent four to six weeks after the invitation letter

Dear _____,

I hope that by now, the dates of [DATE] through [DATE] on your calendar read, "ISRAEL!"

By way of reminder, the total cost for this life-changing trip is \$[AMOUNT], with a deposit of \$[AMOUNT] needed by [DATE]. That's a tremendous bargain for an experience you will never forget – one that will draw you closer to our Lord and leave you saying, "I'll never be the same!"

I have enclosed a list of those who have already made their reservations for the trip. But I want to add your name to the list, as well! If you would like to come but still have questions or need more information, please don't hesitate to call me. I will help in any way possible.

4

CONFIRMATION LETTER – To be sent immediately after receipt of a deposit (this letter does not necessarily follow in the sequence)

Dear _____,

Thank you for joining us!

Thank you for your deposit for our upcoming trip to Israel. I have forwarded it to our tour operator so that your airline and hotel reservations can be confirmed.

I'm excited to know that you will be with us on this incredible tour. Let me suggest three things you need to take care of promptly:

1. Be sure your passport is in order and valid for at least six months at the departure date (no visa is required for American citizens traveling to Israel only).
2. Be sure you have the proper clothing and luggage as specified in the orientation materials.
3. Don't forget your Bible, notebooks, pens, maps, etc.

We will depart from [PLACE] on [DATE] at [TIME], on [AIRLINE] [FLIGHT NUMBER] and connect with [AIRLINE] [FLIGHT NUMBER] from [PLACE] to Israel.

Know of a friend or family member who might want to join us? We still have some time – and spaces – so please let them know right away. If you would like me to mail them a brochure and personal invitation, please send me their names and addresses. Thank you!

5

LAST-CALL LETTER – To be sent 60 days before departure

Dear _____,

It's coming quickly! In about eight weeks, we will be in the Holy Land. I hope you are as excited as I am about what I know will be a life-changing experience.

I want to let you know that on [DATE] at [TIME] in [PLACE], we will have an Israel orientation night to discuss our itinerary and give important information on how to pack for our trip, as well as to share helpful travel tips.

Each traveler will also receive maps of Israel, a traveler's guide, and other information from the Israel Ministry of Tourism office. In addition, we will see a special presentation on the land where Jesus lived, died, and rose again.

I hope you will be a part of this evening. If you are planning to come but have not completed your preparations, please do two things right away: First, make sure that your passport is valid and up to date. Second, let me know immediately if you are coming to Israel so we can make the necessary reservations for you.

Once again, I have enclosed a list of those who will be coming with us on this trip. I'd love to add your name if it's not on that list. Thank you for your time and consideration of this life-changing trip!



**PROCLAIM THE POWER OF GOD, WHOSE MAJESTY IS OVER ISRAEL,
WHOSE POWER IS IN THE SKIES. PSALM 68:34**

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact
Joe Smith
Executive Pastor
XYZ Church
Phone: 123.456.7890
Email: jsmith@xyzchurch.com

XYZ CHURCH ANNOUNCES INTERNATIONAL TOUR TO HOLY LAND

Anytown, Pennsylvania – April 1, 2020 – XYZ Church of Anytown, Pennsylvania, is planning to take a group of 50 people on an international tour to the State of Israel from Oct. 10-19 this fall, with members of the community invited to take part.

The tour will depart from ABC Airport the morning of Oct. 10 and land in Tel-Aviv. Major sites along the tour will include the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, and Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, those on the tour will follow in the footsteps of Jesus as they visit multiple sites, such as the Mount of Olives, Western Wall, Via Dolorosa, and the Garden Tomb.

“Going to Israel has been a lifelong dream of mine, and I’m excited to be leading this tour and going with family and friends,” Senior Pastor and tour host John Doe said. “I truly believe that every person on

this trip will be forever transformed and that we’ll never be the same after going to the Holy Land.”

XYZ Church must have commitments from those interested in attending by July 31. Initial deposits to secure a place on the tour are due at that time. The final cost of the tour for individuals will include airfare, hotels, meals, tips, and admission fees to various museums and sites.

The tour schedule will also include visiting the mountain fortress of Masada, floating on the Dead Sea, enjoying a traditional St. Peter’s fish lunch, and seeing the caves at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were first discovered in 1947. Time will also be scheduled for Bible-based devotionals at select sites, as well as for leisure activities.

Anyone from the community interested in joining the tour can call Joe Smith, XYZ Church Executive Pastor, at 123.456.7890 or email him at jsmith@xyzchurch.com. Because only 50 spaces are available, the church asks for responses as soon as possible.

ABOUT XYZ CHURCH

Senior Pastor John Doe founded XYZ Church in 1999 to reach out to the community with the gospel and to provide hands-on help for those in need throughout the area. Now with more than 1,500 people in weekly attendance, the church has more than 20 outreach ministries serving the community.

For more information, contact:
Joe Smith, XYZ Church Executive Pastor
Phone: 123.456.7890 • Email: jsmith@xyzchurch.com
Church Website: www.xyzchurch.com

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SAMPLE TALKING POINTS

Use the talking points below to recruit tour participants. Include them in your weekly announcements, or create a simple one-sheet highlighting the benefits.

ISRAEL: A UNIQUE DESTINATION

- Biblical sites
- Spiritual impact
- Rich heritage and history
- Diverse physical geography
 - 4 seas
 - 6 climates
 - Approximately the same size as New Jersey
- Wide variety of options and activities
- Excellent restaurants and hotels

WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD VISIT

ISRAEL

- Experience personal spiritual impact
- Discover the land of the Bible in person
- Gain a deeper understanding of the Bible
- Take a stand for Israel ... show solidarity
- Safe, accessible, affordable, and transforming

ISRAEL IS SAFE

- 2 million tourists last year
- Thousands of people are visiting Israel, right now
- Children are playing in the parks
- Israel is safer to visit than most major cities in North America

ISRAEL IS ACCESSIBLE

- 70 airlines fly to Israel / 5 airlines fly nonstop from North America
- Ben-Gurion Airport – ranked as the most customer-friendly airport in Europe and the Middle East
- Length of flight:
 - New York-Tel Aviv nonstop: 10h 20m
 - New York-Honolulu nonstop: 10h 35m
 - Los Angeles-Tel Aviv nonstop: 14h 20m

ISRAEL IS AFFORDABLE

- Tours range from 7 days to several weeks
- Most popular length tour is 10 days
- A 10-day tour to Israel is no more expensive than most other vacation destinations

ISRAEL IS TRANSFORMING

- Walk in the footsteps of Jesus
- Stand on the sites of the Scriptures
- Enjoy the warmth and hospitality of the Israeli people
- The sites, sounds, smells, history, culture, and people all make the Bible come alive
- New levels of understanding and appreciation for the Scriptures
- The Bible comes to life
- History, geography, and culture come together
- New insights into God's Word and his character
- Sail on the Sea of Galilee
- Walk the streets of Jerusalem
- View the empty tomb
- Sense God's presence
- Once you visit Israel ... you'll never be the same!

CHRISTIAN LEADER ENDORSEMENTS

“Each time I visit the Holy Land, I am impacted by not only the beauty of the land, but by its historic significance as well. I encourage you to visit the land and take others with you. You will never be the same!”

Jay Sekulow

Chief Counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice

“Visiting Israel has had a profound impact on me. It changed the way I read the Bible. It increased my passion for Christ and his coming. It transformed me into a more zealous ambassador for God's truth. I urge you: Visit Israel – You'll never be the same!”

Dr. Jack Hayford

*President of International Foursquare Churches
Founding Pastor of The Church On The Way*

“We support Israel because all other nations were created by an act of men, but Israel was created by an act of God!”

John Hagee

Cornerstone Church

“I cannot tell you the difference visiting Israel has made in my life. Now when I open God's Book, it takes on a whole new dimension and depth. I can honestly say that if you visit Israel, you will never be the same.”

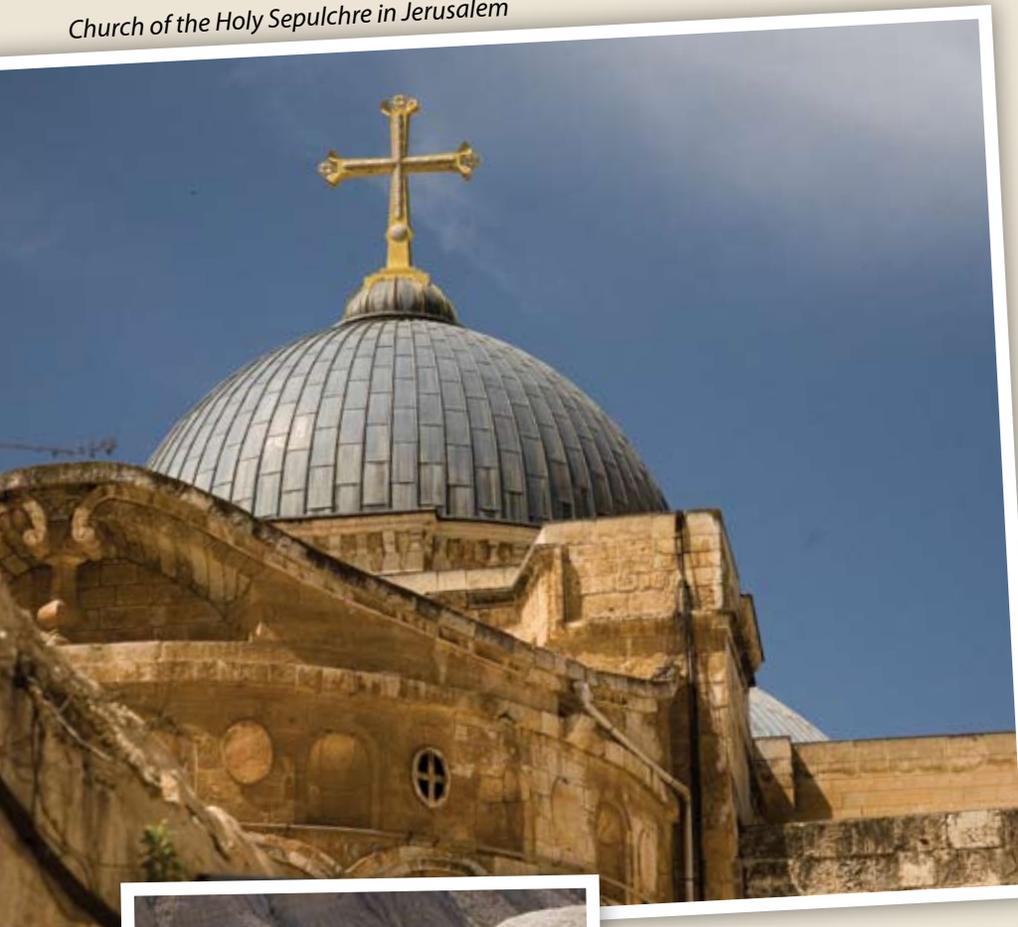
Kay Arthur

Author, speaker, and Bible teacher

“That very first night we arrived in Israel, I felt as though I'd come home. My heart was overwhelmed. Thus began a relationship that continues on to this day. Israel has become part of me – I have never been the same.”

Willard Thiesen

Founder and Chairman of the Board of New Day Ministries



SAFETY AND SECURITY IN ISRAEL

Is it really safe to visit Israel?

Yes ... clearly and emphatically. This question is only asked by people who have not been to Israel. The fact that millions of people visit Israel every year and return safe and happy shows how exaggerated news reports are about Israel.

In fact, Israel has one of the lowest crime rates in the world. Plus, the chances of being involved in violence is actually far higher in visiting most major cities in the world than in touring all of Israel. Finally, visitors who come to Israel sense just how safe we feel in our homeland when they see for themselves our children walking alone or in small groups to and from school each day.

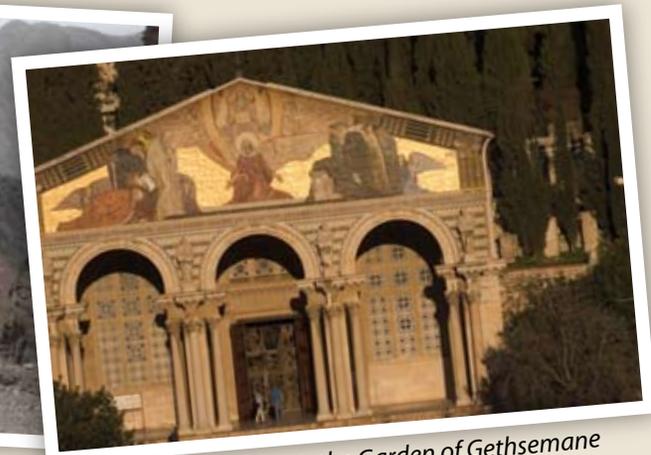
These facts and the travel record of our many visitors speak for themselves. Ask someone who has been to Israel – then, come see for yourself.



Qumran



Camel riders in the Negev Desert



Church of All Nations in the Garden of Gethsemane