



Briefing Session for 2022 Pilgrimage

Holy Land Pilgrimage Briefing Session
Grand Encampment Knights Templar of the USA

The Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage: An Investment in Christian Ministry		
We plan to give Pilgrim Ministers an experience of the Bible ,	The History , and	The Culture of the Holy Land.
The pilgrimage is intended to be Educational ,	Inspirational , and	Challenging .
It is our goal to advance the cause of Christ in the lives of Pilgrim Ministers ,	The congregations , and	The communities they serve.

AGENDA FOR ONLINE SESSION

- Greeting, Welcome, and Introductions

- Introduce Video resources

- Review of BRIEFING NOTES

- Discuss Travel Arrangements, details, etc.

- HOLY LAND VIEWS (Power Point) optional

- Q & A, Wrap-up and dismissal

KNIGHTS TEMPLAR HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

BRIEFING SESSION NOTES

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PILGRIM MINISTERS

Participants in the Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage are nominated by local Commanderies of Knights Templar and selected by their respective state committees. Those selected as pilgrim ministers from each state are registered with the Grand Encampment (national) Committee who makes the travel arrangements for the Pilgrimage. Domestic flight arrangements are made by the individual states.

NAME TAGS

Name tags are provided by the tour company and are important for several reasons. They help provide clarity and security for the group and for those caring for the well being of the group. In addition, they offer a courtesy to those traveling with you in our group. Once you receive these lanyard name tags on the bus in Tel Aviv, please wear them.

ITINERARY

We have provided a tentative itinerary to give you an overview of the trip. Due to local conditions and situations unknown to you, it may be necessary to rearrange some days and specific sites visited. Please be ready to be flexible. All changes will be made for your benefit. Your tour host (Knight Templar Servant) and tour guide will be working to make the best arrangements possible.

HOTELS

During your trip you will stay with the group together in the same hotel or kibbutz guest hotel. The names of the hotel and kibbutz will be sent to you with your travel documents with your eticket numbers about three weeks before we leave.

Generally, you will stay in a hotel in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and at a Kibbutz in Galilee. All accommodations are considered first class or better (fairly standard hotel rooms).

Towels and soap are provided. In some cases, wash cloths are not. It would be wise to bring a few with you if that is important to you. In the recent past, many of the rooms have had small refrigerators.

The television power switch may be by the bed. Light switches are sometimes unusual locations. Some rooms have motion sensors to help control lighting. Some rooms require you to put your room key in a slot by the door to turn your lights, etc. on.

MEALS

In Israel, you'll enjoy a full Israeli Breakfast buffet. This will be a dairy meal.

Lunch is included in your travel package. Your tour guide will have made arrangements to stop for lunch along the way during the day. Do not plan on being back at the hotel for lunch. These lunches usually have a set menu. If you have special dietary needs, make sure that your tour host has been informed.

Each evening you will enjoy a buffet dinner, usually at the hotel or kibbutz. This will be a meat meal.

It is suggested to purchase and drink bottled water while traveling in foreign areas. Bottled water is widely available throughout the Middle East. A small bottle carried during the day can be refilled from a larger bottle kept in the hotel room. Bottled water is available throughout the day at most sites and on the bus.

All meals in Israel (with the exception of lunch on Sunday) are covered by the Knights Templar.

WEATHER

During the winter months the average temperature normally ranges from 30 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. You should carry a sweater and a lined coat to be prepared for cooler temperatures in the early morning and evening. It is a good idea that you dress in layers. The winter months are also considered to be Israel rainy season; an inexpensive plastic poncho might be in order.

Some suggest that you prepare the same as you would for a trip to Atlanta, Georgia.

.THE JEWISH SABBATH

On Saturday your hotel room may not be ready until after dinner, due to the Jewish Sabbath. You may also find that dinner is a few minutes delayed, as food cannot be prepared until after sunset. You'll find many stores close on Friday at noon and do not reopen until Sunday morning / afternoon. **(Shabbat shalom)**

WHY SPOUSES ARE NOT INCLUDED

This pilgrimage experience is offered as a study trip and an investment in ministry. Couples trips are very different in nature, atmosphere, and schedule. The needs of spouses take time away from the study focus of this trip. The very thought of nearly doubling the size of our tour groups would be unworkable.

LUGGAGE

You will be allowed one checked bag and one carry-on bag. Please pack lightly and check with the current regulations as to weight restrictions for luggage (checked bag = 50 pound limit, carry-on bag = 17 pound limit). Wheeled luggage is encouraged for both your checked bag and carry-on bag. Remember that your luggage will have the same weight requirements on your return with the additional items you may have purchased.

Any carry-on piece which does not fit under the seat or in the overhead compartment will be placed in the cargo hold with the checked luggage. Expect heavy travel wear on your luggage. The use of garment bags is not recommended.

NOTE: Your hand luggage (carry-on) is your responsibility. **CARRY YOUR HAND LUGGAGE.**

All bags must be clearly marked with your name (and only YOUR name) and address as well as with any identification given to you by your host/guides for that purpose.

Do not allow your bags to be checked in beyond the east coast (JFK or Newark Airport). You will need to collect ALL your luggage and take it to the International Gate for ELAL. If transferring between airports, please leave ample time.

CPAP and BiPAP machines for sleep apnea may be carried as a second carry-on (hand luggage). Please have it marked as "Medical Equipment". You should also carry a letter of medical necessity in case there would be any questions. Medical equipment may be packed securely inside your checked baggage.

You may be able to check a 2nd bag on the return trip with EL AL. This may be a piece of soft luggage or a small duffel packed flat in your checked luggage initially. Remember to be aware of any extra luggage fees ELAL and your domestic carrier may charge.

TAKE YOUR CAMERA

You will have time to take pictures. You will find that you will be taking many, many pictures. Be sure to carry an ample supply of memory cards. You may be able to buy them as you go, but it will be significantly more expensive and not always convenient to obtain. You also cannot be assured of the age or condition of the items.

It is best to bring an extra battery since you will be taking more pictures than usual in a short period of time. You may choose to secure an extra set of rechargeable batteries if your camera uses them. Make sure that you have plenty of extra memory cards with you each day.

Many will be using your smartphone for pictures. Be sure to keep your phone charged. A travel charger may be in order.

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

The electrical current in Israel is 220 volt AC, single phase, 50 Hertz. 110V appliances can be used only with a step-up transformer or appropriate adapter. To operate American small appliances or gadgets you will need both a converter and adapter plugs. Some pieces of your equipment may have fuses – bring a spare. Check out your electronic items. IF they are rated for 110 – 240 v. you will only need the plug adapters. Like plugs in the US, some have two prongs others have three. Either will work. Check them out on the items with which you choose to use them.

Plug adapters



MONEY MATTERS

It is not necessary to change currency. In fact, it is better if you use American Money and avoid any exchange. Money is lost on the exchange and most shops would prefer to have the purchase made with American money. Smaller denominations are best. Please bring at least \$50 in ones and several \$5, \$10 and \$20 bills. Always carry a good supply of one dollar bills. One pilgrim minister suggested that you might want to bring at least \$500 in cash for souvenirs and incidentals some suggest more. All of your basic costs and fees are covered, what other cash and resources you carry will vary based on your needs and expectations.

Major Credit cards are accepted in many stores and shops throughout the Middle East. Do call customer service for any credit cards you may use and give them your trip dates to avoid security problems or concerns. Debit Cards may be a problem. VISA credit cards are most widely accepted. Personal checks are accepted in some stores and shops. However, personal checks CANNOT be written to banks, hotels, or your travel hosts or guides for cash. Do not plan on credit cards or personal checks for necessary cash.

Exchange Rate: 1 (NIS) Shekel = \$._____, \$1 = _____ NIS **(Demo money)**

When paying a bill, remember that the change back from your dollars will almost always be in shekels. Please do not expect or demand American money. Your travel hosts do not provide money exchange or personal check cashing services.

In the interest of security, take care in how you handle your money, credit cards, and other valuables. The use of a fanny pack (worn under your jacket and in front) or other accessible but secure pouch is recommended. In some congested areas, you may run into pick pockets. Take advantage of the safe deposit boxes or in room safes available at the hotel. Use them to hold any valuables and cash that you are not carrying. You may get into your box to put things in and take things out at almost any time. At some hotels, there is a safe in the closet in your room. Keep track of how you spend your money.

Standard service charges and tips are included in your trip package. The tour guide will distribute the tips to the porters, waiters, maids, reception staff, etc. If you ask for a special favor of a maid or porter, for example, you should tip these persons as you would at home. **A voluntary monetary gift for your Guide and Driver will be taken on each bus as an expression of your appreciation for their services "above and beyond . . ."** A standard gratuity has already been paid as a part of the Knight Templar tour package.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS AND PREPARATION

To obtain maximum benefits from the program, you should be in good physical and mental health, able and willing to actively participate in group events, motor coach trips and boat rides. During your pilgrimage, there will be much walking, **numerous stairs to climb** and many sites to explore. Some days will 5 -7 miles of walking many days, often uphill or up/down steps/inclines and on uneven surfaces We suggest preparing yourself by beginning a program of walking. Check with your doctor for medical advice pertinent to the trip and your health. If you have environmental allergies, take medications that you would normally need in the spring. (antihistamines, antibiotics, etc.) A dose of Cipro obtained from your primary care physician may help with any travel diarrhea problems. Pepto Bismol is a good travel item to carry, also.

INSURANCE

Travel Insurance is included in your package. This insurance will cover a number of situations not the least of which could include: illness or death, medical expenses overseas, lost or damaged luggage, and economy airfare if it is necessary to fly home early due to personal illness or death of immediate family member.

Check your homeowners policy to see if there are any provisions for coverage while traveling (usually personal property coverage only).

Please remember, travel insurance benefits cannot be collected until a passenger returns to the U.S. and files a claim and receipts with the insurance company.

SHOPPING AND SOUVENIRS

Be ready to bargain for items, much of the time. Always when price is not marked.

Value Added Tax (VAT): There is a value added tax (V.A.T) on most goods and services in Israel. At retail stores, this tax is always already included in the price. Upon making a purchase of \$ 100.00 or more at a gift store that has an agreement with the VAT authorities, you should fill out a form at the store and have it stamped there. You will be eligible, upon presenting the form and the item, for a refund at the airport prior to departure. Tourist services, such as hotel accommodations and meals taken in hotels, paid with foreign currency are exempt from V.A.T tax. You will need to present your purchased items WITH the V.A.T. forms at the airport to collect your refund.

Please remember that shopping is not the primary purpose of this trip. Limit your shopping on tour days. From time to time we will make special stops just for shopping. Do NOT hold up the group for your purchases. Also, keep in mind that you have luggage weight limits for both our international flight and your domestic flight(s).

CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS

Upon your return, you will receive a certificate of participation which will outline the number of contact hours of instruction directly involved in your pilgrimage and detail how you may wish to certify additional hours. Plans are that the certificate will qualify you for three hours of Continuing Education credit and offer suggestions for bringing the total up to five hours by doing additional reading and research.

ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORS

On your trip, you WILL encounter people with bad attitudes and inappropriate behaviors. Don't add yours. Do yourself and everyone else a favor. DO surround yourself with your best positive attitude and always exhibit your best behaviors. This is not the time to change peoples' minds, not the time to press religious dogma or political views nor the time to utilize aggressive or assertive behavior. Keep an open mind. Do be patient, courteous, and attentive.

We will be served by people of many other cultures. Do not assume that you are in the presence of an all Jewish or Arabic audience. It is best not to speak ill of any culture at any time.

It is essential that you be tolerant of others in your pilgrimage group. The participants are adults making their own individual decisions and choices. Many denominations ordain women as clergy, they should be treated as such. Some may choose to have wine and beer with meals etc. You are encouraged to make your own good decisions and we are expecting you to let others make their own decisions based on their background, culture, and beliefs -- giving to them the same right to their beliefs that you expect from them.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Other than Covid-19 Vaccinations and Boosters, no immunizations or vaccinations are required for travel to Israel. A local health department supervisor strongly suggests that you make sure that your tetanus shot is up to date (DPT or TDaP)

TIME

While in Israel, you are two hours ahead of GMT which puts you at seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. (EST + 7)

REST ROOM BREAKS

Please take advantage of rest room breaks and opportunities whenever you can. Do not delay the tour by requesting additional rest room stops unless absolutely necessary. On occasion, at some sites, there is a one shekel fee needed or suggested. Having a couple of shekels in your pocket can be a good idea.

ROOM CHARGES

Settle any room charges (only for extra items you charge) in a timely manner before the group check out time at each hotel. Local phone calls will be added to your room charges.

LAUNDRY

When we are in Jerusalem (from day 6 on) laundry can be done through the hotel (pricey) or through a local laundry nearby (several blocks away). I do hand laundry in my room from the 4th day on. Your tour host will have information when you arrive in Jerusalem.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Telephone calls may often be direct dialed to and from Israel to the United States. Check your long distance carrier for international numbers and usage details.

To make a standard call, dial the

INTERNATIONAL	+	COUNTRY	+	CITY	+	LOCAL
ACCESS CODE		CODE		CODE		NUMBER

To place a call to Israel at 10 p.m. (a time when you would generally be at the Hotel and near your room) would be placed at 3:00 p.m. EST. A 7:00 a.m. call in Israel is 12 midnight USA.

Some choose to make arrangements with their carrier to use their mobile phones while in Israel. Make sure you have checked out all of the necessary details and arrangements. Please remember that phone use must be limited to times that do not interfere with the pilgrimage. **Check with your carrier for special rates.**

INTERNET & EMAIL

Most years, free WiFi was available in the rooms at the Tal Hotel and the King Solomon Hotel. At Kibbutz Nof Ginosar, there was free WiFi in the lobby. An email service computer may be available from the lobby of your hotel. There will be a per-minute fee or a fee for 10 minutes or so. You will need a credit card to pay for this service. Internet service is often available (usually for a fee).

PASSPORT – apply immediately

If you do not have a current passport, you will need to apply for one as soon as you are notified of your selection as a pilgrim minister. **We will not be able to process your travel documents without a current passport number and expiration date.** If you are slow to provide that information, you will hold up the travel documents for the entire group. You don't want to be 'that one.' ALSO, your current passport needs to be valid for six months after the date of your return from the pilgrimage. If it is not, you will need to apply for a passport renewal.

Do not carry your passport with you when touring in Israel. Do carry a black and white copy of the lead page with the numbers or at least write down the passport number and have the number with you. If you are renewing your passport your new passport will have a new number. Please make sure the Knights Templar and Gate 1 have your current passport number.

WAKE UP AND GROUP MEETING TIMES

You are responsible for doing whatever it takes to get yourself up and to the group meeting times during the day. Make a back up plan. Check on each other regularly. Don't leave someone behind. Do the buddy system thing.

AIRLINE TICKETS

Your airline tickets for your international flight from New York to Tel Aviv will be sent to you as a part of your travel documents directly from the travel agency via email. They will come in the form of Etickets. An Eticket is an identifying number / ticket number. You will not receive paper tickets. You are responsible for any necessary follow up required to facilitate you receiving travel documents with your Eticket number(s) in a timely manner.

ARRIVAL FOR DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

Domestic flight arrangements are made by the Grand Commandery of the state that has selected the pilgrim minister or by the pilgrim minister themselves. The Grand Encampment committee has no information on individual domestic flights.

ALWAYS arrive for your initial domestic flight (from your beginning city to JFK) and check in with plenty of extra time to spare. I suggest at least two hours. If there are any potential problems with your flight(s) to JFK there will be time to make adjustments. ALSO, make sure you have ample time between your arrival at JFK and our evening departure time to Tel Aviv. Check in time for the group will be 8:00/8:30 PM Arrive early and enjoy the scenery, a book, or a tour guide book.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT CHECK IN

Be prepared for many questions! Be prepared to wait. This is not the time for slang, unnecessary humor, and don't kid about anything. Answer questions briefly and to the point. Bring a business card and carry your itinerary, and paperwork related to the trip. Avoid bringing borrowed items or be prepared to explain them thoroughly. This is standard procedure, not to worry.

THE FLIGHT BETWEEN NEW YORK / NEWARK AND TEL AVIV.

Ten to twelve hours.

If you have special requests, make sure you communicate these with Gate 1 Travel as soon as possible.

Let the Flight Attendants on the plane know any special needs you have ahead of time.

Flight Arrangements: Your International Flights (from JFK to Tel Aviv and back) are arranged by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage Committee (the national committee). Your domestic flights (from your state to JFK) are arranged by someone from your state. Questions and adjustments in your domestic flights will need to be handled through someone from your state Knight Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage Committee.

TRANSPORTATION IN ISRAEL

You will be traveling by tour bus while in Israel. You will leave immediately after breakfast most mornings and not return to the hotel / kibbutz until late in the afternoon. You may want to carry a "day bag" containing some or all of the following:

bottled water	tissues or toilet paper
any necessary medication	Bible and tour book
camera and memory cards	Sunglasses
wrapped munchies, gum, or mints	Sun block & lip balm
hat or cap	Journal or notebook

A USEFUL TIDBIT OF INFORMATION

For registration, ticketing and security identification purposes, it is necessary that we work with your official, legal, full passport name. As a result, our lists, name tags, hotel reservations etc. will have your official, legal, full passport name. That is what we need to use for our program. You may add your nickname to you name tag (you will get that on the bus in Israel) and yellow luggage tag (you will receive from me via postal mail), etc. We are not in a position to keep a double set of information with nicknames, shortened names, etc.

BITS AND PIECES

There will be an opportunity to have Baptismal Renewal in the Jordan River at Yardenit while we are in the Galilee. There will also be a time to take a dip in the salty waters of the Dead Sea. If you might want to take advantage of either of these special moments, do pack some sort of swim wear. There are thin baptismal robes and towels available at Yardenit for a fee of \$10 – 12 I think (and a changing room and hot showers). You will use a towel from the hotel for the day near the Dead Sea (where there will also be a changing room and showers). Do consider both of these possibilities. It's may be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Other possible / optional expenses:

At the Church of the Nativity photographers may be present and will take group photos. They usually come out quite well. If you would choose to purchase a group photo they run around \$10 each, I think.

You will have the chance to purchase or order a Holy Land Pilgrimage Cap (sand colored / tan) with Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage Logo embroidered on the front. The cost is \$20 for ones the tour host may have on hand. All ordered (to be mailed) caps will be \$25. (good for you or the person who nominated you)

The bus driver will have an assortment of books, videos and DVD's available for purchase at reasonable prices. These titles have been chosen because pilgrims have reported that they were useful in the past. Orders will be taken on the bus and money is due when the items are delivered (on the bus).

Near the end of the pilgrimage, we will send around a set of envelopes to collect an honorarium for both our Guide and our Bus Driver. Both of these are highly skilled professionals and you will have grown to appreciate their care and expertise. A standard gratuity is included in the tour package so this is a sort of an appreciation / love offering for these two very special individuals. They are very valuable to our program, as you will see.

There will be ample opportunities for souvenir and personal shopping along the way. Only you can know what you will want to do on this front.

Remember, these things are optional, but many in the past have expressed a wish that they had known ahead of time. You know ahead of time.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

When you travel abroad, you can bring home up to \$400 worth of goods duty-free.

Israel has special trade status and you can bring almost any amount of purchased goods back without paying duty. You can **NEVER** bring back any agricultural products.

Near the end of your return flight, you will be given a DECLARATION form to fill out for U S Customs. Keep a list of all items you purchased and their cost. Keep all receipts as well.

These will be very helpful in filling out your declaration.

For more details, get a free copy of KNOW BEFORE YOU GO at any Customs office or send a postcard to U S CUSTOMS SERVICE, P O BOX 7407 DEPT P, WASHINGTON D C 20044

VAT – VALUE ADDED TAX

Israel's value added tax stands at 17 percent, but since you're a tourist, don't sweat it -- when you return to the airport for your departing flight, you can get the tax refunded on many big-ticket purchases by following several simple steps.

Only purchases of more than \$100, made at participating stores, are eligible. Before plunking down your cash, look for the "tax refund for tourists" sticker on the store's front door.

A standard receipt is not enough to ensure your refund, so even if the store's employee tells you otherwise, insist they write you out a special tax-refund invoice, also known as a Change Place tax refund form. The form must be pre-printed with the store's name. If an employee tries to make an excuse as to why they can't provide you with the special form, you can use it as an opportunity to bargain for a lower price or take it as a sign that you should shop elsewhere.

To get your money back, visit the tax refund booth at the Ben-Gurion Airport departure hall in Terminal 3. You will need to present both the receipts themselves as well as the items in question, so make sure to pack your new purchases in your carry-on baggage so you'll have it on hand.

Be aware that your refund is subject to a service commission, and it can fluctuate depending on the current exchange rate of your home currency and whether or not the money is returned to a credit card. Check with the teller to see how you can incur the lowest possible charge.

Finally, remember that you'll need to show your tourist visa to claim your refund. If you prefer not to have your passport stamped when entering Israel, make sure you hang on to the piece of paper stamped by the border agent instead.

BE AWARE AND ALERT

At all times, be aware of yourself, be aware of your surroundings, be aware of your stuff.
PAUSE, ASSESS, INVENTORY.

WHAT TO PACK

You don't need to buy a new wardrobe for your trip. Clothes (casual/tourist) that you wear at home will be fine. Pack items which you find comfortable; clothes which don't wrinkle and can be worn in layers; colors which allow you to mix and match; combinations which can go from a market place to a cathedral easily. Do not wear shorts or immodest clothing while on tour with the group (no sleeveless shirts or blouses). Some take old clothes and discard them along the way.

Packing list:

2 pair of super walking shoes (to live in!) – comfortable socks.

Slacks, casual pants (jeans are OK), shirts

Men - no shorts at religious sites which mean most days

Women – slacks are always appropriate (Skirts need to be below the knee).

Never sleeveless at religious sites, long sleeved is best, carry something long sleeved in your day bag.

(generally modesty is the appropriate order of the day)

A sweater

A lined coat or multi-season jacket, a rain coat or inexpensive plastic poncho

A hat or cap, (gloves)

Swim suit & beach shoes

All purpose travel bag or "day bag"

Ear plugs – for quiet on the plane and in case your roommate snores

Travel alarm

Fresh batteries in everything (extra batteries) & equipment spare fuses

Toweletts (packets), Tissues (travel packs)

Talcum powder / baby powder

Extra shampoo for hand laundry

Plastic hangers and a few clothes pins (maybe a length of line)

Emergency sewing kit and safety pins

Beach or swim shoes

Sealed wrapped munchies

Sunscreen

Washcloths and zip lock baggies

Passport **(and black and white photocopy of page 1)**

E-ticket receipts

Copies of insurance documents

Spare glasses / contacts, if worn (and Sun glasses)

A notebook or note pad, and pens (compact / small)

Bible – bring it with you each day on the tour (compact / small / pocket)

[cough & cold medication and/or upper respiratory medication]

[recorder for lectures and guide stories for at least 10 hours of lectures]

Zip-lock bags for various uses – large and small, 1 Qt for security.

TRAVELER'S DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do carry an extra supply of all prescription medication (in your carry on bag) in original bottles, if possible (or have a detailed list)
- Do carry a list of essential medications (use the generic names) and your doctor's phone number.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do carry at least one change of clothes in your carry-on bag.

- Do take only what you can carry yourself!
- Do plan your wardrobe around basic, easy care items. Do plan to dress in layers.
- Do take nothing that wrinkles (or simply ignore wrinkles).
- Do place all liquids in plastic bottles and pack inside zip-lock bags per security guidelines (1 Qt. for carry on).
- Do mark all cameras, umbrellas, coats, etc. with your name, address, etc.
- Do consider keeping a daily journal, making frequent entries.
- Do get organized early. "If you know that everything is in order at home, this will allow you to enjoy a 'relaxed' study trip".
- Do relax, enjoy -- and take in everything.
- Don't over pack.
- Don't bring expensive jewelry.
- Don't pack your passport in your checked luggage.
- Don't pack heavy books.
- Don't pack or carry knives.
- Don't pack money or valuables in a suitcase.
- Don't pack essential medication in a suitcase.
- Don't start giving out pocket change to beggars.
- Don't go with pre-conceived notions.
- Don't take extra work or reading material
- Don't plan to do anything for the first few days when you arrive home.

Get your hand out of my pants How to pickproof your pockets

Weaving through a crowded Saigon market, a roll of freshly changed dong in my pocket, I almost crushed a tiny old woman who had suddenly stopped to pick up her cane. Ten minutes later, I realized my money was gone.

Pickpockets leave you feeling humiliated and violated. "Never again," you swear, though most of us can't figure out exactly how we got taken in the first place. Like a skilled magician, a good pickpocket makes you want to see the trick one more time.

THE SCAMS

The Dropped Cane An elderly or handicapped person is enlisted to let something fall down in front of the target (you). While you're distracted, nimble fingers slip into your pockets. A friend experienced a variation on this theme in Paris. He was about to step off a Métro escalator when the gentleman ahead of him dropped his wallet. Although my friend smelled a rat, he failed to pick up the scent of the man's partner, right behind him. Seconds later my friend had lost several hundred dollars (and a good deal of face).

The Grabby Children A persistent beggar hounds you for money, or plies you with fake watches, while her children clutch at your clothing. Feel free to indulge them with pens or candy, but watch your back—the waif behind you probably has her hand in your purse.

The Angry Couple This method is usually deployed in crowded places—subway cars, train platforms, airports. An attractive couple begin bickering loudly, or two boisterous yahoos start pushing each other around. When people stop to watch, accomplices work the throng. (Tourist attractions such as the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and the rose windows of Notre Dame may also provide sufficient distraction.)



THE SOLUTIONS

Money belts and neck pouches are virtually impregnable; but they're also uncomfortable and inconvenient. Besides, how would the waiters at La Tour d'Argent react if Monsieur had to unbuckle his trousers to pay the bill? Better to follow these simple strategies:

1. Put a rubber band around your wallet. The band makes it harder for the pickpocket's effectiveness and possibly alerting you to wrongdoings.

2. Keep your wallet in a front pocket or, preferably, in one that buttons shut. Avoid trousers with oversize (read: easy-access) pockets.

3. Carry your purse with the strap around your neck and the clasp against your body. Opt for bags with clasps that require two hands to open or that automatically lock—professionals recognize the ones that present a quick score.

4. Keep a small amount of "daily" money separate for incidentals. It's better to hide the location and the amplitude of your assets: a full wallet in plain view will attract the eye of any observant pickpocket, who will also be sure to note where you put it when you're done paying.

5. Trust your instincts. If you keep your wits about you, your sixth sense will tell you when something is rotten (in Denmark and elsewhere). Don't wait until it's too late: when in doubt, stop walking, put your hands in your pockets or on your purse, and move away from the crowd.

6. Say something. My friend's wife had become suspicious on that Métro escalator, but rather than warn her husband, she waited till they were off the escalator. Then she told him to check his pockets. Too late. —ANTON SEGAL

N.I.S. = New Israeli Shekel



The Shekel

1 Shekel (N.I.S.) is 100 Agorot (ag.).

Bills:

200 Shekel - 200 N.I.S.

100 Shekel - 100 N.I.S.

50 Shekel - 50 N.I.S.

20 Shekel - 20 N.I.S.

Coins:

10 Shekel - 10 N.I.S.

5 Shekel - 5 N.I.S.

2 Shekel - 2 N.I.S.

1 Shekel - 1 N.I.S.

50 Agorot - 0.50 N.I.S. - 50 ag.

10 Agorot - 0.10 N.I.S. - 10 ag.



Tour Guides:

INSIGHT GUIDES: ISRAEL (from the Discovery Channel)

Reference Books:

THE HOLY LAND: The Indispensable Archaeological Guide for Travelers by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, Oxford University Press, Fifth Edition (revised & expanded), 2008.

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