

Temple Or Rishon Israel Trip

July 9th through July 21st, 2008

Overview

Rabbi Sheryl Nosan-Blank will lead a congregation trip to Israel this summer. The trip is open to all members of the congregation, their families, and friends. While the trip is oriented toward first time visitors, many will want to return and see the changes that have occurred in the last few years. We will attempt to visit the areas of the Torah, as well as more recent historical sites. The orientation will be to expose you to all aspects of Israel, so that you will have a better understanding of where we come from, our historical culture, and the modern Israel and the political environment. As a group trip, our tour will strive to visit areas that have the most interest. Our itinerary has been customized to include Torah service at the Southern Wall in Jerusalem.

Gama Tours

Temple Or Rishon is coordinating various elements of the trip (dates, overall itinerary, selection of tour operator, specific events, etc.), but the actual trip is being run by a tour operator. Gama Tours will coordinate all elements of the tour, including scheduling, tours, guides, air reservations, hotels, etc. All payments will be made to Gama Tours. They are bonded and all monies are held in escrow. Brochures and detailed itineraries are on our web site: www.orrishon.org. You can also view additional Israel information, pictures and videos on Gama's web site at www.gamatours.com.

What's Included

This is a comprehensive trip with most elements included in the price. What's included:

- Airfare to/from Los Angeles to Tel Aviv
- Baggage handling (after we clear customs) and transfers to and from the airport to the hotel
- All tours specified in the detailed itinerary (will be available on June 26th)
- All hotels
- Breakfast daily
- Four dinners (including a farewell dinner)
- Transportation via bus on our tours
- A guide for our tours
- Torah service at the Wall

What's not included

- Tips for guides and drivers, waiters, maids, etc.
- Airline surcharges – given the escalating cost of fuel, there may be additional fuel surcharges from El Al Airlines.
- Trip insurance – this is available and recommended. Approximate cost is \$100
- Souvenirs, meals not listed above, clothing, art work (Safed is the art center in Israel)
- To and from transportation from Sacramento to Los Angeles.
- There is a nominal charge for the use of Sidurim and Torah at our Torah reading service

The Trip

We will leave from Los Angeles on Wednesday July 9th, 2008. This will allow us to fly **non-stop from L.A. to Tel Aviv on El Al Airlines** – the most secure airlines in the world. We will

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leave it to individual travelers to make their own arrangement between Sacramento and L.A., but typically, you can get Southwest advanced tickets for \$49 each way.

We arrive in Tel Aviv on Thursday, July 10th and are met by a Gama Tours representative. We will continue to our hotel in Jerusalem for “welcome cocktail drinks” and check in at the Olive Tree Hotel. For those of you with energy, you are free to explore the city on your own for the rest of the day.

The last Saturday (July 19) starts off with Shabbat services. The afternoon will be free time which might include a swim in the Mediterranean. We will also have a farewell dinner. Sunday morning will be a late check out, so you will have time for some early morning wandering before we depart for an afternoon departure.

We arrive back in Los Angeles early Monday morning and transfer to our flights back to Sacramento. ***There's lots more information on the day-by-day itinerary and activities in the brochure. Be sure to check it out.***

Pricing

Based on a minimum of 25 people on the trip, the price for air and land is \$3,588 (double occupancy). The supplement for one person to a room is \$550. All specifics for deposits, payment due dates, cancellations, and travel insurance is in the brochure.

Questions and Answers

Q. Can I use my miles to fly there and purchase only the land part of the trip?

A. Absolutely. We anticipate that several people will elect to use miles, or have different travel arrangements. E.g. fly on to Europe, or extend their stay, travel to Petra, etc.

Q. Can I extend my stay or arrive early?

A. Again, yes. Gama Tours will provide pricing for hotel extensions, and/or land only costs.

Q. Can my kids stay in the same room as me?

A. Yes, and it has an effect on pricing. We have asked Gama to provide 3 to a room pricing.

Q. Safety is a concern. Is it safe to visit to Israel?

A. Probably safer than most of Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, etc. There are several elements to tourist safety. First, tour operators won't take you anywhere that isn't safe – just common business sense. Second, every guide carries a cell phone and should there be a concern, they will change the itinerary. This means that the published itinerary is always subject to change. Third, the IDF is always present. You see soldiers everywhere. And even when they're not in uniform, they often carry their weapons. Crime decreases when so many of the good guys are carrying guns. While it is always possible for some random act of terrorism, in reality, the incidence is so low, that it's far safer than staying home. Most of the incidents reported are adjacent to the borders (mostly Gaza) and we're not going there. We know this is a concern for many people, and this is a summary answer. A

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more detail discussion can be had with Rabbi Sheryl Nosan-Blank, Ted Blumenstein, or Gama Tours.

Q. What happens if I don't want to visit every place listed on the itinerary?

A. The tour is fixed and designed to meet the needs of the majority of the people. However, everyone is free to "rest" or take a day off. For example, this means that while we are in Jerusalem, you can "do your own thing" while the bus takes the others on the day's tour.

Q. Will we have our own bus and tour guide?

A. Yes. This is our tour, and tailored to our needs.

Q. Why are we going in July, one of the hottest months?

A. We choose July because it has the least conflicts. The kids are out of school, and there are no B'nai Mitzvahs scheduled. As for being hot, it is comparable or slightly cooler than Sacramento in July. For example:

Jerusalem	Avg. high temp. 81F	Avg. low temp. 64F
Tel Aviv	Avg. high temp. 87F	Avg. low temp. 69F

Q. What about money, credit cards, passports, etc.

A. Sorry, they don't use Euros in Israel. The coin of the realm is the Shekel. You can find exchange rates online. ATMs are everywhere. Credit cards are accepted everywhere. You don't need a Visa to visit. However, you do need a passport.

A word about passports. **It may take several weeks to get a passport.** Also, if you have a passport, **it must be valid through the end of January 2009!** There is a requirement that all **passports must be valid for at least six months past the date of return.** What does this mean? Check your passport now and if you need one – apply immediately. Last, everyone needs a passport, no exceptions. That includes kids.

Q. Dress requirements, luggage restrictions

A. The short answer is that you need to be dressed appropriately when visiting any religious site. For women, that means no bare shoulders, no shorts. The rest of the time is casual. Airlines have recently become more restrictive on the amount of luggage allowed. Generally, it is 2 checked pieces of luggage, with a weight limit of 20 kilos each (44 pounds). We'll have more information later.

Q. What provision is made for limited mobility?

A. There may be some sites where limited mobility could be restrictive. For example, a cable car takes you to a landing just short of the top of Masada. You will have to climb the last flight or two of stairs. Also the ground on top is very uneven. However, there is a waiting area at the bottom. We will also stop at the Dead Sea that same day, and it's relatively easy to get around the Dead Sea resort. Keep in mind that Jerusalem is a hilly city. But on days that you want to wander, there is a good bus system. We will research this issue for anyone concerned with mobility.

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Q. Where can I find out more information?

A. There are three ways. First, check out the brochure. Second, visit www.gamatours.com on the web. Third, the Temple Or Rishon web site will have updated information. www.orrishon.org. And last, call either the Rabbi (916) 988-4100 or Ted Blumenstein at (916) 788-8254 or email at tedbee@surewest.net.

Q. How do I sign up?

A. There are two sign ups. The first is a list of people interested in receiving trip updates. There is no obligation if you put your name on this list. To get your name on this list, simply send an email to Ted Blumenstein at tedbee@surewest.net.

Second, you can send in your deposit and be assured that you have a place on the bus – this is the actual sign up for the trip. Remember, you must send in a deposit to hold a place on the trip.

Q. What happens if I sign up and change my mind or if I get sick and can't go?

A. A terms and conditions form is in the brochure. It explains the cancellation policy for Gama Tours. You can also purchase trip cancellation insurance. Be sure to read the terms and conditions on the travel insurance policy to determine cancellation coverage.

Q. What kind of hotels are we staying at?

A. We are staying at first class hotels in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. We will be staying at a kibbutz for two nights. The kibbutz accommodations look like a hotel.

Q. Give me a good reason or two to go.

A. Where do we start? First, talk to someone who's gone. You may have difficulty in getting them to stop talking. I never met a person who regretted going.

Second, from a religious, cultural, historical perspective, you will learn, and become a changed person. It's difficult to come away unmoved. You will also have an opportunity to read Torah at the Wall.

Third, you will learn why Israel is important as the center of our religion and culture. You will be able to understand the bible, because the places will become real. You will learn how we migrated to become a Diaspora. You will see (and hopefully be able to read) the Dead Sea scrolls, written over 2,000 years ago. You will understand the political environment in Israel. You may elect to become B'nai Mitzva'd at the wall, or leave your prayers in a crack in the wall. And the list goes on.