

## Israel Experience – Planning Guide

### Meals and Cuisine

All meals during the trip will be included and served either family-style or buffet-style. Most restaurants in Israel follow kosher dietary laws, meaning dairy and meat are not served together. Israel's rich culinary tradition and use of fresh ingredients provide a delicious and diverse range of meals. Whether a dish is dairy or meat-based, travelers will find plenty of flavorful options to enjoy.

### Special Dietary Needs

Guests with specific dietary restrictions or food allergies will find a wide variety of choices at each meal. While Blue Diamond Travel makes every effort to accommodate dietary needs, we cannot guarantee full compliance for all restrictions.

### Money

The official currency in Israel is the New Israeli Shekel (NIS), though U.S. dollars are widely accepted. Since many tour stops will not have ATMs, we recommend bringing cash in small denominations, either in dollars or shekels. Hotels can exchange limited amounts of currency. For convenience, you may choose to exchange U.S. dollars for shekels at your bank a few weeks before travel. This is optional, as most locations on the itinerary will accept U.S. currency.

### Credit Cards

Most Israeli businesses accept U.S. credit cards. Debit cards generally work only with ATMs, as many retailers do not use PIN-based machines. If you plan to use credit cards, check with your providers about international exchange fees and choose cards with the lowest rates. Be sure to notify each card issuer of your travel dates and destinations to avoid fraud alerts or holds. Keep your bank's contact details in a secure location and leave unnecessary cards at home.

### Packing

Depending on the time of day and location, temperatures in Israel during this trip typically range between 65°F and 95°F. We recommend dressing in layers to adjust to daily temperature changes. Check the weather forecast a week before departure. A suggested packing list will be provided closer to the travel date.

### Packing Checklist

Bring casual clothing (pants, skirts, jeans, shorts, t-shirts, collared shirts or blouses), a light sweater or jacket, a bathing suit with cover-up, a raincoat or umbrella, comfortable walking shoes or sandals, a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Include toiletries, medications, personal hair care devices (hair dryers are available at hotels), and a small bag or backpack for daily use. Don't forget your passport and a photocopy of its information page.

## Packing Tips

Ensure your luggage closes securely and is clearly labeled inside and out. Include a one-day change of clothes and essential toiletries in your carry-on. Keep your passport and travel documents with you at all times. A color photocopy of your passport should be stored inside your suitcase. Colored luggage tags will be provided for easy identification.

## Phones and Smartphone Tips

Before you travel, contact your mobile provider to activate international service and understand roaming fees. To preserve battery life, disable automatic updates for apps, and switch to Airplane Mode during flights. Charge your phone nightly and use a proper adapter for Israeli outlets. To minimize roaming costs, disable data usage and check emails manually while connected to free Wi-Fi in hotels or cafes.

## Safety

While Israel has complex regional dynamics, it remains a safe destination for tourists. Blue Diamond Travel closely monitors conditions and accompanies travelers throughout the journey. Your safety is our priority—we are going with you, not just sending you.

## Tips for Traveling Safely

Stay relaxed and alert, and don't hesitate to ask questions. Be cautious of pickpockets and aggressive vendors. Carry only essential belongings during outings, and store valuables such as passports in hotel safes. Avoid exploring alone—travel with a companion when venturing out during free time.

## Tipping

All tips and gratuities for the tour—including those for airport porters, hotel staff in Israel (not NYC), and guides—are covered by Blue Diamond Travel. You won't need to worry about additional tipping; our team ensures excellent care for all service providers.

## Value-Added Tax (VAT)

Israel imposes a VAT of 16–20% on goods, which is typically included in the sale price. While services like hotel stays and meals are not eligible for VAT refunds, tourists may receive refunds on certain retail purchases made at certified shops.

## VAT Refund Process

To be eligible for a VAT refund, shop at stores with the VAT REFUND logo and spend at least \$100 in one transaction. Request a VAT form and retain your receipts. On your departure day, present your items and forms to a VAT officer at the airport before the first security checkpoint. After clearing passport control, submit your stamped documents at the VAT desk to receive your refund, either in shekels or credited to your card (note that card refunds may take up to three months).

## Appliances and Electronics

Israel uses a 220-volt electrical system. Many electronics are dual-voltage and adapt automatically. For non-dual-voltage devices, use a converter. Adapters are necessary for fitting U.S. plugs into Israeli outlets and are widely available or can be purchased in a universal travel kit. Most hotels supply hair dryers. If you prefer your own, choose travel-sized, dual-voltage options. Most phones, laptops, cameras, and MP3 players have dual-voltage chargers and will only require an adapter.

## Vaccines and Visa Requirements

- No vaccinations are required for the Israel Experience. Blue Diamond Travel does not mandate Covid-19 vaccines but will adhere to all airline and Israeli government policies.
- While US citizens are not required to have a Visa to enter Israel, there is an Electronic Travel Authorization that is required. You can apply and find further details at: <https://israel-entry.piba.gov.il/> This authorization is mandatory for all tourists from visa-exempt countries. Without an ETA-IL approval, passengers cannot check-in or board. Tourists have to apply personally and provide Blue Diamond Travel with a copy. There is an application fee of 25 NIS. (about \$7)

For the latest guidelines, visit: <https://www.touristisrael.com/when-will-travel-to-israel-resume/31963/>