



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
DIGGINGS**

PO Box 196 MORISSET NSW 2264 AUSTRALIA
Free-call 1800 240 543 Fax (02) 9012 0882
editor@diggings.com.au

TRAVEL HINTS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

Dear Traveller,

Thank you for your interest in the **Wesley Institutes Biblical Sites Study Tour** of the Middle East. These notes outline some information that you may find useful. The Middle East is fascinating and beautiful and there are so many different places to see. Massive pyramids, beautiful tomb paintings, fabulous treasures, and places you may have read about in history books or the Bible. You are sure to have the trip of a lifetime, and the following hints are designed to ensure you are prepared.

WEATHER

- November/December is approaching Winter time in the Middle East.
- Egypt is usually very warm, though the heat is dry, not humid. Some places are hotter than others, such as Luxor, and particularly Abu Simbel. In contrast, it can be quite cool at night so a light jacket will come in handy.
- Israel will have colder weather at this time of year and often rain.
- The weather in Jordan is similar to Egypt, although it can be cooler.

CLOTHING

- Casual clothing is acceptable at all times, while out sight-seeing and in the hotels.
- You may wish to take a more formal outfit for special occasions, but even hotels do not require formal attire for dinner.
- Women may wear pants and shorts, skirts are not necessary.
- In some churches and sacred sites, particularly in Israel, short shorts and sleeveless or revealing tops are not permitted for men or women. On these occasions, clothing should be modest with knees and shoulders covered. We will endeavour to keep you informed about when this will be necessary. Please check your *Tour Notes* booklet each morning for information about any special requirements for that day.
- Most of your washing will need to be done by hand in your hotel rooms, so pack clothes that wash and dry quickly. Most hotels offer a one day laundry service if you prefer that, but they can be costly.
- Take a swim suit if you wish to swim in the Dead Sea or the hotel swimming pools.
- Travel light - remember, you will be moving your luggage regularly and you will probably buy souvenirs along the way.
- A hat is a must, and a pair of sunglasses may be desirable - all that sand creates a lot of glare. Use sunscreen.
- Please ensure that you pack suitable footwear for walking.

EQUIPMENT

- A small bag or backpack is useful for day trips to store your water, snacks and other essentials.
- A mini-cassette or digital recorder will record any information on the sites visited if desired.
- A camera for photos is compulsory! See our hints on Photography for more information.
- Some travellers may wish to bring a video camera, but be aware that some sites do not allow them and others will charge you to use one. Any extra cost associated with a video camera is your own responsibility.
- Electricity in Middle East countries is about 220V. Most hotels have sockets into which 2 round pins will fit, so pack an adaptor which converts from 3 flat pins to 2 round pins. You can purchase these at the airport in Singapore if you are unable to locate one before you leave.
- A torch can be handy for use in pyramids and tombs.

PHOTOGRAPHY

- If you buy a new camera for the trip, try it out before you leave to make sure it works, and become familiar with its operation.
- Camera film and digital storage cards are expensive in other countries and may be of poor quality. It is advisable to buy an adequate supply of these before you leave.



- For digital cameras consider two 2GB cards **as a minimum**. You will be surprised at how quickly you fill them.
- If your camera requires AA batteries, we recommend that you purchase lithium-ion batteries. They cost more but last significantly longer.
- Taking photos with a flash is not allowed in most museums and in some temples and tombs, and may be banned completely in others. Please take careful note of any signs and check your *Tour Notes* booklet for photography information on each site.

BAGGAGE

- Try to keep your baggage to a minimum. One suitcase and a carry-on bag is ideal.
- You will be responsible for moving your baggage many times during the trip so ideally you should be able to handle it alone.
- A suitcase with wheels and a pull-out handle is very useful and should be considered a necessity.
- Airlines require that you keep to a maximum of 20kg for a piece of check-in luggage. They may charge you each time you check your luggage in if it weighs more.
- Pack all sharp items and large amounts of liquids (including water), gels and aerosols in your check-in luggage, as your carry-on baggage will be checked at least twice at every airport. We will send you specific information on this process as our departure date gets closer.

EXTRA TRAVEL

- The international airline tickets that we arrange are flexible and can be cancelled or changed, although airline charges usually apply.
- You may like to have a stopover in Singapore or Dubai (at your own expense) on the return journey, or extend into Europe. Our travel agent can arrange this if required. Please attend to these extra arrangements as soon as possible due to the proximity of the tour to Christmas. Seats will be limited!
- Any travel you choose to take outside the *Archaeological Diggings* itinerary is your responsibility, including any organisation and associated cost such as transfers and hire cars.

MONEY

- The currency of choice for the Middle East is US Dollars. You can carry it in the form of a travel VISA or cash passport (recommended), in cash, or in Travellers Cheques.
- In each country you can exchange some US Dollars for local currency to use in the purchase of souvenirs, lunches, snacks, drinks or medication.
- Please note that the use of Travellers Cheques is being phased out in Egypt, and while you will still find places that will exchange them for you, it may be simpler to use an alternative. Other countries may soon follow this trend.
- Some travellers prefer to use a card to withdraw cash from their bank account as needed, but be aware that local charges and exchange rates can sometimes be different to your expectations. In addition, cash machines are not always readily available. You also need to check with your bank to ensure your card will work overseas.
- Credit cards can be used in most places, but the same issues with exchange rates and charges will apply.

FOOD & DRINK

- In the hotels, food is usually served buffet-style and you can choose from a variety of dishes, including meat and vegetarian. You will need to pay for any drinks you order with your meals.
- The weather in the Middle East is hotter than what you are probably used to, so make sure you drink enough.
- Bottled water is available for purchase from the coaches we travel in, the hotels, and at most sites we visit. It is not expensive, although the hotels will charge more.
- Despite what some say, our guides advise that you should drink and clean your teeth with bottled water throughout Egypt and Jordan to avoid any health complaints.
- **WE STRONGLY ADVISE YOU TO REFRAIN FROM EATING ANY FRESH FRUIT OR SALADS IN EGYPT.** Hot food should be These types of food may contain contaminants from poor handling which can make you sick.

HEALTH

- If you are on any medication take sufficient supplies for the duration of the trip. While on the tour it may be hard or even impossible to obtain brands that are well-known in Australia.
- A certificate from your GP outlining what medication you are carrying, and why, will avoid any issues with security.



- Cholera, typhoid, malaria and yellow fever are not a problem in the countries on our itinerary, and no vaccination or immunisation is required. We do suggest you ensure that your tetanus and hepatitis B vaccinations are up-to-date.
- **Imodum** will be very useful in the event of an upset stomach. There is a product called **Gastro Stop** which contains the same ingredient but is significantly cheaper. Please bring a supply and keep them on hand as you never know if you may need them. We have a few cases of “Pharaoh’s Curse” on every trip!
- **Imodum** and **Gastro Stop** will only treat the symptoms of an upset stomach. We also recommend you bring a supply of charcoal tablets. Charcoal will actually absorb any poisons from your stomach.
- Egypt can be very hot and if you are particularly susceptible to the heat, we recommend you to bring a supply of electrolytes to add to your drinking water. They can be purchased at any pharmacy.
- Please consider a visit to your doctor before you leave to ensure you are in good health.

INSURANCE

- Travel insurance is compulsory for the duration of all *Archaeological Diggings* Tours.
- As soon as you start to pay out money for your trip, we advise that you take out a travel insurance policy. Check your policy to ensure it will cover you in the event of accident, sickness and loss of baggage. It should also cover any costs incurred if you have to cancel your trip for reasons outside your control (such as health problems). Another thing to check is whether it will cover you in the event of company insolvency *ie* an airline declaring bankruptcy.
- You will need to supply us with a copy of your travel insurance policy upon payment of your final invoice.
- If you are unsure where to obtain travel insurance, our travel agent can organise a policy for you. Their details are: Harvey World Travel (Toronto) 64 The Boulevarde, Toronto NSW Ph 02 4032 7828

PASSPORT

- We require a clear copy of the front page of your passport upon application for one of our tours. This allows us to accurately verify your details for the purpose of ticketing and hotel bookings, and also arrange for your visas.
- Please ensure that your passport is valid for **no less than 6 months from the date of your return** from the tour. Airport customs will not allow you to depart from Australia if your passport validity does not conform to these requirements.
- If you need to apply for a passport, or update an existing one, you can still book a place with us on the condition that we receive your passport details 60 days before the departure date. You are welcome to contact us with any questions regarding your passport.

VISAS

- Our tours include the cost of all visas required for our itinerary. If you are travelling outside of our itinerary and require a visa, this will be your responsibility to arrange and pay for.
- The countries we are visiting allow the purchase of visas on arrival. One of our tour leaders will collect passports and purchase visas for the group in each country.

Enjoy your trip!

The Diggings Team