

TURKEY STUDY TRIP

- WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW -

COVID/VACCINATION

Initially, we were not allowing non-vaccinated participants to sign up for this trip. However, with the changing policies we've seen across Turkey, Israel and other Middle Eastern countries, non-vaccinated participants may now apply for this Turkey trip. But please understand that Walking The Text nor GTI Tours will be able to reimburse you for any financial losses (outside of what's laid out in the payment schedule on the Trip Brochure and Itinerary docs) if Turkey changes their current policy and requires participants to be vaccinated to enter the country.

SAFETY

Is it safe to travel to Turkey? This is usually the first question I get asked. If there wasn't an enormously high degree of safety, I would not be leading trips to Turkey. I would not want to shoulder that kind of weight. Although it is impossible to guarantee 100% safety, travel in Turkey is very safe. In fact, I partner with GTI Tours for all of my trips, and in GTI's 28 years of existence (now doing 60 trips a year), only 3 trips have ever been cancelled due to safety concerns. We travel with a Turkish guide who serves as my assistant, and he's always aware of what's going on in the country. If there is even a hint of potential danger, we'll simply avoid the area. We do not take chances! Overall, the likelihood of any danger is very, very slim. In fact, everyone who returns from these trips remarks, "I never once felt unsafe." My general rule of thumb is that we won't go anywhere I wouldn't take my four kids!

TYPICAL DAY

A normal day begins with a wake up call at 6:00 a.m., breakfast at 6:30, devotions at 6:55, and then we're on our way! Most of our days involve moderate to strenuous hiking. Lunch tends to fall between 12:15-1:30pm, and will be served on location or at a quick restaurant. Since lunch can come later in the day, it's highly recommended that you carry snacks with you. At the end of the day, we'll arrive at our hotel for dinner. We stay at hotels with wonderful breakfast and dinner buffets and great rooms. At the end of a long day, we want you to have a great meal, a wonderful shower, and a much needed night's rest (generally speaking, you'll be able to get at least 8 hours per night).

WEATHER

The weather at this time of year is usually fantastic with averages in the 80's. However, depending upon the year, temperatures can rise well into the 90's. As we get closer to the trip, I'll be in contact about weather trends and what to expect for our trip.

SHOES/BOOTS

You will need a sturdy pair of hiking boots or shoes that have great ankle support. Obtain them well in advance and break in thoroughly before departure. Having a high quality, well broken in pair of boots/shoes is essential for benefiting the most from this experience! Many people wear boots. I normally wear a low-top hiking shoe or an extremely tough trail runner. Please find a boot/shoe that your feet are happy in. Your shoes will be one of the most important items you have for this trip. Extra cushioned insoles are also helpful.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS AND TRAINING

As you get ready for our trip, please understand there is no level ground in Israel, and you should prepare for 5 to 7 miles of strenuous hiking/climbing/walking each day of the trip. **Physical training (long before our departure) is a must for this trip.** I can't emphasize this enough. On every trip, I've had some admit they didn't train as much as they should have, and they deeply regret it. The first thing that goes when you become physically tired is your mind. The more physically prepared you are, the better your mind will be. The trip will be more meaningful, educational, and fun if you prepare in advance for the activity level you'll experience. I highly recommend physical training that includes cardio and strength training. Stair climbing (actual stairs or machine), lunges, bike riding, running, and long walks are all very good. Additionally, doing some hiking and climbing of stairs with your backpack (including your Bible, notes, water bottles, etc.) is good practice for the body to recognize the additional weight it needs to carry on the trip. To give you some litmus tests to see if you're able to do this trip, you must be able to: (1) walk/run 1 mile within 13 minutes, (2) walk/run 3 miles within 46 minutes, (3) ascend 20 flights of stairs (240 steps) without stopping, (4) descend 20 flights of stairs (240 steps) without significant joint pain. If you aren't able to do all of these, you will struggle on this trip.

Please consult your physician about these requirements and any medications or conditions that may impact your ability to fully participate fully. Prescription drugs you anticipate using during the trip should be packed both in your suitcase and your carry-on. We suggest you bring along a written prescription as well (can be filled if needed). Please contact your health provider to check your coverage when traveling outside the United States. Traveling to the lands of the Bible requires no immunizations though you'll want to be sure your tetanus shot is current.

WHAT TO BRING

Please see the "Suggested Packing List." Keep in mind the trip is casual and expect to wear shorts/pants and a short sleeve shirt (or a long-sleeve hiking shirt if you prefer) every day. Also, please be prepared to bring a "modesty kit," meaning long pants and something to cover your shoulders, as there are some religious sites that require modest dress. A pair of zip-off pants is helpful on days where pants are required for modesty.

GEAR AND GADGETS

Feel free to bring a digital camera, action camera, and/or your cell phone for taking pictures. I will ask that cell phones not be used for taking or making calls during the day. And a word of warning, please make sure your camera doesn't control you. Your camera is a servant, not a master. Sometimes people experience an entire trip through the lens of their camera, and they miss so much of the experience God has for them. Also, due to unfortunate situations in the past, there is NO recording (audio or video) of any of the teachings during the trip. You can record anything else, just not the teachings. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

I will introduce you to the basics of history and geography during the course of our trip. It would be helpful to familiarize yourself with some of the basic maps provided in the study guide (which will be sent to you a few weeks before departure). Please try and memorize Paul's Missionary Journeys as well as the general locations of the Seven Churches of Revelation. Feel free to refer to a good Study Bible or Bible Atlas for additional maps of these places and events.

WHAT TO READ

In preparation for your upcoming Turkey study experience, these are the readings I highly recommend. I realize it is a lot — do what you can. It is most important to focus on the readings from the Bible, but the additional reading will be very helpful to you as well.

Hebrew Scriptures: Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah (40-66), Obadiah

New Testament: The Gospels (especially John), Acts, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1-2 Peter, 1-2 Timothy, Hebrews, Philemon, 1 John, Revelation

Additional Reading: *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: Why the Greeks Matter* - Thomas Cahill
A Week in the Life of Ephesus - David deSilva

Memorization: Please try and memorize, or become very familiar with, the Seven Letters to the Churches in Revelation (Revelation 2-3)

SHEMA

With great confidence I can say there was never a day in the life of Jesus, our Messiah, when he did not lift his voice to God in the saying of the Shema. Although the Shema is longer than what we'll recite on a daily basis, here is what I would like you to try and memorize for our trip - in both the Hebrew & the English (this is the "Shema" according to Jesus in Matthew 22:34-40). Please note I will be emailing you an audio recording of the Shema roughly six weeks prior to departure so you can hear it audibly.

Sh'ma Yis'ra'eil
Adonai Eloheinu
Adonai echad.
Ve'ahav'ta et Adonai Elohekha
b'khol le'vav'kha
uv'khol naf'she'kha
uv'khol me'odekha.
Ve'ahav'ta Le're'akha Kamokha

Hear, O Israel,
the LORD is our God,
the LORD alone.
Love the Lord your God
with all your heart
and with all your soul
and with all your might.
And love your neighbor as yourself.

RECEIVING YOUR GEAR

You will receive your Osprey hydration backpack, complete with a study guide, notebook, travel Bible, and luggage tags approximately two to three weeks before trip departure.

NEEDING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have any additional questions about registration, flights or similar logistics, please contact Signe Koning of GTI Tours at (616) 396-1234 or at signe@gtitours.org. If you have any questions about anything else, please email be at brad@walkingthetext.com. Thank you!

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL ON THE BIBLE (JUST A BONUS):

"Irrefutably, indestructibly, never wearied by time, the Bible wanders through the ages, giving itself with ease to all men [and women], as if it belonged to every soul on earth. It speaks in every language and in every age. It benefits all the arts and does not compete with them. We all draw upon it, and it remains pure, inexhaustible and complete. In three thousand years it has not aged a day. It is a book that cannot die. Oblivion shuns its pages. Its power is not subsiding. In fact, it is still at the very beginning of its career, the full meaning of its content having hardly touched the threshold of our minds; like an ocean at the bottom of which countless pearls lie, waiting to be discovered, its spirit is still to be unfolded. Though its words seem plain and its idiom translucent, unnoticed meanings, undreamed of intimations break forth constantly. More than two thousand years of reading and research have not succeeded in exploring its full meaning. Today it is as if it had never been touched, never been seen, as if we had not even begun to read it." [Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, pg. 242]