

Young Adult Convo 2010/11
A Journey to the Holy Land

Frequently Asked Questions

The Most Important Question: Is there a difference between a pilgrimage and a vacation?

YES! Vacations are primarily for pleasure; while a pilgrimage is a sacred journey to deepen one's faith through community and learning (and it can also be a lot of fun). This trip is a pilgrimage. If you register for this once-in-a-lifetime journey, you will be traveling in community with other Moravian Young Adults from across North America to trace the steps of Jesus Christ, our Lord. On vacations we move at our own pace and choose our own activities. On a pilgrimage we move in community and share the journey together so that we can learn not only from the experience itself, but also from those with whom we travel. Our itinerary is fairly full and we ask that you remain with the community at all times. If you find that you are unwilling to travel in this manner, we would respectfully ask that you make the trip on your own time. If you are ready to experience this sacred journey, then please join us. What follows are the answers to questions that you may have.

1. How do I register for Convo?

All registrants need to fill out the form found on the back of the brochure. As per the instructions on the form, this needs to be mailed directly to our travel company along with a deposit of \$300. (Please note that we highly recommend that all participants pay the additional money for the optional travel insurance. This will cover expenses should one not be able to attend, as well as provides for medical emergencies or lost luggage.) **Please note that registration and full payment must be made no later than September 14, 2010.**

All registrants also need to advise the Convo office of their intent to attend by completing the form which is found in the brochure and mailing to the Convo Office or by emailing the information to chris@mcnp.org.

2. What ages are eligible for Young Adult Convo?

Young Adult Convo is for members of the Moravian Church who have already completed High School and are at least 18 years of age up to those who are no more than 25 years of age.

3. Do I need to have a Passport?

Yes, you do. You must have a passport that will be valid for at least 6 months after our travel. If you do not currently have a passport you should apply for one right away. It normally takes six weeks to get one issued. If yours is about to expire please begin the process of renewing immediately as this process also takes six weeks. Your passport information will need to be supplied to our travel company through a process on their web at least 105 days before we leave which is September 14, 2010. You should make a copy of your passport and keep it with you while you are traveling.

4. How do I get a passport?

Obtain an application at your nearest passport office, courthouse, or post office. You will need a certified birth certificate (with raised seal and file number) and 2 duplicate non-glossy photographs measuring 2" x 2" taken within six months of application. For more information regarding passports, go online to: www.travel.state.gov.

5. Will I need a visa?

U.S. and Canadian citizens do not need a visa for Israel. If you will be traveling on a passport issued by a country other than US or Canada, you must contact the Israel Consulate for more information.

6. What about travel protection coverage?

We HIGHLY RECOMMEND that you take out the travel protection plan listed on the brochure for medical and trip

cancellation coverage. It is important to remember, however, that all medical bills and other services must be paid for at the time service is rendered. Upon your return to the US, a claim will then need to be filed directly with the insurance provider. Please review the protection plan that has been included in your pre-tour literature.

7. Will I need vaccinations?

None are required but you may wish to contact your personal physician for his/her advice.

8. What if I do not have a roommate?

While the travel company will try to match you with a roommate, we cannot guarantee one will be available. Therefore, you should try to find a roommate and notify the travel company of your selection no later than 105 days prior to departure (September 14, 2010). If no roommate can be found, you will receive an invoice for the single room supplement charge(s) as listed in the fine print under Accommodations on the brochure. This notification may come as late as 30 days prior to your departure.

9. When is final payment due?

Final payment for the trip, including optional insurance premium if applicable, is due 105 days prior to departure (September 14, 2010). Thereafter, a late payment fee of \$100 will be assessed. Please note: once the insurance premium has been paid, it is non-refundable.

10. What if I need to cancel?

Call both our travel agent and Chris Giesler or Brad Bennett immediately, then submit your cancellation in writing. Refer to the information in the tour brochure regarding cancellation fees. Beginning at 105 days prior to departure (September 14, 2010), you will be charged the single room supplement if your cancellation forces your roommate into a single room.

11. Will our tour schedule ever change?

Our intent is to follow the itinerary that is listed on the brochure. However there might be a need to change the order in which things are visited to accommodate changes in local conditions and/or circumstances. If possible, you will be notified of any changes that are made to this itinerary prior to departing.

12. What airline will be used?

Our travel agent has connections with several airlines, including El Al, Royal Jordanian, Lufthansa, British Airways, Continental, and Delta, just name a few. They will book our international flight. Every effort will be made to keep our group together, however, if you are flying from a different departure city, you may be on a different schedule and/or even a different airline from others in our group. Once you arrive overseas you will be met by an agent of our travel company and we will all meet on the same bus.

13. When may I receive my flight information?

International flight information will be available approximately 30 days prior to departure. Airline tickets will be mailed with your final itinerary package approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

14. May I purchase my own domestic tickets to the departure city?

Yes; however, we strongly recommend that passengers DO NOT purchase discounted tickets because of unforeseen schedule changes that may result in high cancellation fees. All flight times are subject to change without advance notice. Airlines have been known to change flight times by five or more hours, or cancel flights completely. We **HIGHLY RECOMMEND** that you use our travel agent to book your connecting flights. At this point all we know is that we will be leaving from either Newark or JFK. If you book with our agent, they will make the flight arrangements for you and insure the best shot of you making it to our flight on time. As of right now here is what they are charging for connecting flights to NYC (prices may change according to market conditions):

Charlotte - \$248

Raleigh / Miami / Detroit - \$298

Toronto - \$328

Minneapolis / Green Bay / Los Angeles - \$398

Edmonton / Calgary - \$798

To make those connecting flight arrangements call 1-800-247-0017. Press "1" then EXT 590. If you experience confusion there, ask for Bethany at EXT 225.

15. May I purchase my own international tickets?

No, as much as possible we want our travel company to be responsible for all of our arrangements so they can track folks if travel delays occur. If you are already overseas and will be meeting us in Israel, you will meet us at our first Hotel in Tiberius and leave us at our last hotel in Jerusalem. You will be responsible for your ground transportation before and after the tour.

16. Who is responsible for any airline schedule changes and/or expenses?

All flight times are subject to change by the airlines without advance notice. We are not responsible for changes and/or delays in airline schedules nor the expenses associated with such changes. NOTE: Due to increased security at the airports we recommend arriving at least two hours prior to departure for domestic flights. Arrive at the departure airport at least three hours prior to departure for international flights whenever possible.

17. What if I miss my flight or it is canceled on the day of departure?

Contact our travel agent immediately so they can inform the overseas office. The airline's responsibility is to get you to your destination as quickly as possible. Be sure to let the agent know your new arrival information so they can meet you at the arrival airport. NOTE: Their emergency line is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For emergency phone number information, refer to the flight letter you will receive after registering. Listen carefully for the emergency instructions given in the recording.

18. May I request special seating and/or meals on the flights?

Yes, requests should be submitted in writing to the travel agent no later than 105 days prior to departure (September 14, 2010). We cannot, however, guarantee your request can or will be honored by the airline. We regret that we cannot process Frequent Flyer requests for you. If you desire to claim Frequent Flyer Miles on your trip, we suggest they be requested upon check-in.

19. Will our group travel together on the same airline?

Our travel agent has assured us that every effort will be made to keep our group together. However, depending upon your itinerary, the size of the group, and the availability of seats on the same flights, some groups may be on several different domestic and/or international flights. Once at our hotel, we will be on the same bus during the entire program.

20. Will a company representative be available at the airports?

Personnel associated with our travel agent will meet our group upon arrival in Israel. They will get us to our buses and will help with return departures to the US. In most cases, there will not be a representative at US airports.

21. What is the difference in our time zones?

Israel is seven hours ahead of US Eastern Standard time.

22. What are the hotel rooms like?

Hotel rooms are First Class or better. Each room will have a private bath, TV, and phone. In Tiberius we will be staying at the Royal Plaza Hotel (www.royal-plaza.co.il/tiberias.html) and in Jerusalem at the Olive Tree (www.olivetreehotel.com).

23. What meals are included in my journey?

Breakfast and dinner are included daily. Coffee or tea is served at breakfast but beverages at dinner will be at a supplemental charge.

24. How long is the typical sightseeing day?

On most days we will depart the hotel between 8:00-9:00 AM and return in the late afternoon around 5:00-6:00 PM. Our guide will announce the sightseeing schedule. On most evenings we will gather for worship and debriefing.

25. What are the buses like?

The deluxe touring motor coaches are air-conditioned and will accommodate approximately 45 passengers. In Israel the buses are not equipped with bathrooms, however, there will be ample stops to accommodate those needs.

26. How much money should I bring?

This is a personal decision. NOT included in your tour cost are: shopping and lunches. Also a love offering will be collected for our guide and driver. We suggest bringing at least \$300 in cash for lunches and miscellaneous items.

27. What type of currency is used?

Shekels are used in Israel though US currency is widely accepted. We suggest you take a good supply of small bills - \$1's and \$5's because if you pay in cash you will get change in local currency, which will be hard to trade back at the end of the trip.

28. Should I exchange some money before departure?

While this is not necessary, we know some people feel more comfortable doing this, so it is your choice.

29. Will the travel company or hotel provide money exchanging services?

All exchanges will need to take place in the airport or at a local bank. Hotels may exchange money into local currency but will charge a higher fee for this service.

30. Will ATM machines be available?

ATMs are available at local banks. The money you receive will be in the local currency.

31. What about travelers' checks and credit cards?

We DO NOT recommend the use of travelers' checks as you may experience difficulty using and/or cashing them. In addition, banks usually charge a significant handling fee when cashing travelers' checks. Credit cards can be used for most purchases. Our guide will take us only to shopping sites where credit cards are accepted.

32. Will US currency be accepted for extra expenses?

Yes, generally US currency is accepted for less expensive purchases and credit cards for more expensive ones.

33. Will I be able to shop while on tour?

Time will be allotted for shopping. While some will feel that too much time is spent for shopping, others will think it is not enough. Remember that ours is not a shopping tour. Also, any purchases made are at your own risk. We are not responsible for your dissatisfaction with any items purchased. Guides are not authorized by EOT to recommend any store or shop.

34. What are the US Customs regulations?

A returning US resident is allowed \$800 in purchases duty free. Gifts may be mailed to the US duty free but are limited to \$100 per person, per day.

35. What is VAT?

VAT (Value Added Tax) is a sales tax that is charged for most goods in Israel. This amount is included in the price - not added on at the cash register. The VAT in Israel is at least 17%. It is possible for you to claim back most of this tax for Israel. The best way to do this is to see if the retailer you are buying from is affiliated with "Tax

Free" shopping. If so, they will give you the instructions for your refund. Generally, all you have to do is collect a completed form from the store which lists your purchases. You MUST have the form stamped by customs when you leave the country. Look for the TAX FREE SHOPPING symbol.

36. What about a "love offering" for our guides and drivers?

Our suggested amount for the voluntary love offering is \$4.00 per person, per day for your guide and \$2.50 per person, per day for your driver. Your Bus Captain will pass an envelope for this collection towards the end of your trip.

37. What about other "tips"?

Prepaid gratuities have been collected for the following persons: hotel dining room staff, bell man/porters, housekeeping. You will not need to tip for standard services as all tips will be distributed by our company. If, however, you request any special services from the staff, additional gratuities would be appropriate.

38. What will the weather be like?

While there is no way to predict the weather, you can check www.weatherbase.com for information. We can tell you that in Jerusalem average highs for this time of year are in the mid-50's and lows in the low 40's. It will be slightly warmer in the Galilee region, and warmer still in the desert region around the Dead Sea. So the weather in Jerusalem is cool, but certainly not the cold associated with Canadian or even northeastern US winters. But do bring clothing that you can layer as it may be cool in the morning when we leave the hotel, but then quite warm if we are hiking by the Dead Sea.

39. Should I take a swim suit?

YES! If nothing else we hope to take a swim in the Dead Sea, so be sure to bring something to swim in.

40. What if I lose something on the tour?

Leave valuables, including items of sentimental value, at home! Crime rates are quite low, but pick-pocketers are not uncommon. Double check your belongings before leaving the plane, hotels and buses. We cannot assume responsibility for lost items.

41. I've heard a lot about prepaid phone cards. What's your advice?

If you decide to purchase cards here or overseas, you will need a card or access for Israel. (Make sure your prepaid card is for international use.) If you have a cell phone you can check with your local provider for service in Israel.

42. Any other tips?

Yes, here are a couple-

- 1) Be on time for the bus and be prepared to rotate seats on the bus.
- 2) Settle personal charges the night before checking out of the hotel.
- 3) Notify your tour leader, Bus Captain or guide if you will not be on the bus for sightseeing.
- 4) No smoking allowed in dining rooms, on bus, or in most of the sites that we will visit. If you smoke, best to just quit now.
- 5) Remember you are a guest in another country. Customs and food will be different than at home. Chances are very high that McDonalds will not be on our itinerary.

If you have any questions, please contact the Rev. Chris Giesler either by email at chris@mcnp.or or by phone at 610-866-8793.