

Personal reflections on safety

It is natural—and very understandable—that people may have some concerns about travel to the Middle East, including Israel and Palestine, at this time.

As a general comment, it is worth remembering that Israel is actually a very safe destination for travel and especially when travelling as a group with experienced guides who have local contacts and understand the risk factors well.

Short of an outbreak of full-scale war with a mass attack on Israel by its Arab, Iranian or Turkish neighbours, there is almost no risk of a Western tourist falling victim to military action or terrorist activity. Such an attack is unlikely at this time.

There are safety issues around certain locations that are a focus for internal tensions between Jews and Palestinians in Israel, in Jerusalem, on the West Bank and in Gaza.

We monitor the local situation on a daily basis and adjust our itinerary if we discern a need to avoid places that we had otherwise planned to visit.

The venues we stay all have arrangements for security and personal safety, including air raid shelters.

Even so, it is impossible to guarantee that military activity will not erupt at short notice or that personal violence against an individual will not occur.

On the other hand, millions of people go to Israel, Jerusalem and Palestine every year and it is exceptionally rare for any visitor to be caught up in civil unrest or military activity.

However, each participant needs to form their own assessment of the dangers involved in travel and their own tolerance for risks.

Australians are advised to register with the SmartTraveller website and to subscribe for periodic travel alerts:

<https://www.smartraveller.gov.au>

—Greg Jenks