PREPARING FOR YOUR

**“INTRODUCTION TO LANDS OF THE BIBLE” CRUISE AND LAND TOUR**

**MARCH 30 – APRIL 9th, 2022**

**“KNOW BEFORE YOU GO”**

**TRAVEL INSURANCE**

We WILL send insurance quotes from Travel Guard – as soon as applications are received. Immediate purchase is required for those who need coverage for a “pre-existing” condition or the extremely popular “cancel for any reason” add-on clause. Some may choose to wait until the time of the second deposit. Please just let us know what you prefer. Once the quote is sent, should you decide to purchase, it will be directly through Travel Guard (not from our agency) – and you may safely pay by credit card.

Please feel free to contact us if this information below does not address your concerns.
 **Travel insurance is highly recommended**. It’s essential that each individual protect their travel investment for the unexpected. Something like an unforeseen family emergency could necessitate a last minute cancellation, and a flight delay could cause you to miss a connection, forcing you to pay additional fees in order to catch up with the group. Lost, stolen or misplaced luggage can be both costly and stressful as you scramble to replace necessities while participating in a fast-paced itinerary.

 We generally recommend Travel Guard with cancellation coverage equal to the full cost of the tour. It is also good to have coverage in the event of a missed, delayed or cancelled flight.   Aside from that, you should check with your health insurance provider to determine if health coverage is warranted, as many providers do not cover overseas care (such as Medicare, for example).

**OUR REFUND POLICY**

**CANCELLATIONS:**

**A deposit in the amount of US $700 is due at the time application is made.**

**Gifts From Above will issue a full refund of all deposits within a 30 day period of the date applications (deposits) are received.**

After 30 days, due to supplier regulation $350 administrative fee will be deducted from all refunds.

Upon receipt of the second installment **(US$800 – due May 1, 2021)** , we will purchase group airline seats. Airline seats are nonrefundable/ nontransferable and are not exchangeable. **Once group airline ticketing is completed, cancellations will not receive a refund of the deposit or second installment of total cruise/tour cost.**

**FINAL PAYMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY NO LATER THAN NOV. 30, 2021.**

**60 days prior to departure only a 25% refund of the third and final payment will apply.**

**Cancellations made between 59 and 30 days prior to travel will receive only a 10% refund of the third and final payment will apply.**

Cancellations made 39 days or less before travel date are ineligible for any refunds.

– ANY REQUESTS FOR CANCELLATIONS MUST BE MADE **IN WRITING** TO GIFTS FROM ABOVE. THE DATE ON YOUR E-MAIL OR POST MARK ON THE ENVELOPE WILL SERVE AS DATE OF OFFICIAL NOTICE OF INTENT TO CANCEL.

**Please mail all cancellation requests to: ROBERTA KLEIN**

**GIFTS FROM ABOVE**

3130 MEMORIAL HWY, SUITE 102

DALLAS, PA 18612

E-MAIL : ARK2@EPIX.NET

**BAGGAGE**

 Each person in our group is limited to one checked suitcase (maximum 50 lbs.) and one small carry-on due to limited baggage area on buses. For some airlines and taxi/coach transfers, extra luggage may be subject to an extra charge due on the spot.

You are responsible for complying with the airline regulations concerning their baggage allowances and with the airline restrictions on the size, weight and contents of your check-in and carry-on bags. Check with the carrier for luggage guidelines. Neither Gifts From Above or our tour supplier is responsible for loss or damage of luggage or personal belongings. A protection plan is strongly recommended to cover loss or damage of your luggage.

At the time of booking we will update all travelers on baggage regulations. Typically, the following regulations apply: **LUGGAGE ALLOWANCE**-

--- 1 CHECKED BAG ---  (GENERALLY max weight is 45 – 50 LBS)

    --- 2 CARRY-ON  (usually one rolling bag , max size: 9" by 15.5" by 21.5" with

    A maximum weight of 22 LBS) and one personal item (we suggest a tote or backpack)

**FLIGHTS, TRANSFERS, AND AIRLINE SEAT ASSIGNMENTS**

**OUR FLIGHTS WILL BE BOOKED OUT OF TWO AIRPORTS – *NYC AND CHICAGO O’HARE***

***HOWEVER OTHER AIRPORT DEPARTURES MAY BE BOOKED – an additional charge may apply.***

We negotiate special rates with major carriers and air arrangements are subject to certain restrictions on change/or cancellation, eligibility and seat assignments. Group seating policy is different for each airline. Gifts From Above are not in control of seat assignments. Seats are subject to airline discretion and change without notice. We do everything possible to confirm seats whenever available. Some airlines and/or fare types do not allow for pre-seating and require this be done at airport check-in only. Even when seats are originally pre-assigned, they are not guaranteed and can be modified by the airline due to the equipment changes. Bulkhead and exit row seats cannot be requested and pre-assign ahead of time. Bulkhead seats are given to the passengers traveling with infants and for those with disability. Exit row seats are held for assignment at airport check in only, as passengers wishing to sit in these seats must be physically capable of carrying out the associated responsibilities. The airline agent must see a passenger’s physical condition before assigning them an exit row seat. On most routes, these seats can be purchased for a fee on arrival at the airport.

Gifts From Above are not responsible for flights that are occasionally overbooked, delayed or cancelled by the airlines. All fares and schedules are subject to change without notice.

**AIRPORT ARRIVAL** We recommend you arrive to the airport for your check-in at least 3 hours prior to your international flight departure time; and 2 hours prior for your domestic flights.

**TIME ZONE DIFFERENCE**  During our travel time (in March and April) there will be a 7 hour time difference between Chicago and Athens (for example: when it is noon in Chicago -- it is 7 PM at most of the sites we’ll be visiting in the Eastern Mediterranean). If calling home from anywhere during our journey, you will want to wait until after dinner – should you call home in the morning, you will be waking your loved ones from a sound sleep.

The time difference between New York and the Eastern Med will be 6 hours. (when it’s noon in NYC -- it is 6 PM over there).

**EMBARCATION PROCESS ON THE CELESTYAL CRYSTAL**

On the morning of April 2nd, we will check out of our Athens hotel and enjoy a tour of the Acropolis and Marrs Hill. Following that tour we will re-board our motorcoach and be transferred directly to the Port in Piraeus [an enjoyable and beautiful 40 minute ride].

Upon arrival we will each gather our luggage and form an orderly line in preparation for boarding. ***Each individual will need to present both passport and credit card*** (to cover any onboard expenses that may be incurred and are not included in the cruise – wifi, spa treatments, purchases made in onboard shops, etc).

Each person will be photographed and presented with a Celestyal Crystal key card embossed with your name, stateroom, assembly (or muster station) and pertinent cruise information. **For the entire duration of the cruise this key card will take the place of your passport (which will be taken by the ship’s staff at the time of check-in and will not be returned until we disembark.)** Your key card will also take the place of credit card and Visas – and will allow you free “allowed beverages” per our drink package arrangements. (Each time you order a special coffee, soda, bottled water or glass of wine or beer the waiter will ask for your key card at the time service is provided.)

**EXCURSIONS INCLUDED WITH OUR CRUISE/TOUR –**

1. **ATHENS ACROPOLIS – APR 2ND** – Immediately following breakfast, we will board a bus for a half-day tour walking tour of the Acropolis and Mars Hill. **Please note: lunch will not be included in the cost of our tour this day – but we expect to board the Crystal by around 3 PM where a late lunch should be available in the HORIZONS LOUNGE ON DECK 9.**
2. **PORT SAID, EGYPT –APR 4th** - We wake up docked at the port. Immediately following an early breakfast, we are scheduled to board our bus between 7 & 8 AM. **IMPORTANT – TAKE EVERYTHING YOU WILL NEED WITH YOU FOR THE DAY – WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THE SHIP UNTIL EVENING**. **Please note: lunch will be included in the cost of our tour this day.** ALSO – THIS IS A VERY FULL DAY; AT 8 PM WE WILL RETURN TO THE CRYSTAL AT PORT SAID.

**copied and pasted – our supplier’s details: Classic Cairo**

The largest city in Africa and all its top sights are waiting to be discovered on this full day excursion from Alexandria. Leaving the port in a luxury air-conditioned coach, you’ll journey south towards Cairo. And your first port of call will be the last remaining Wonder of the Ancient World, the mighty Pyramid of Giza. From the base of Chephren’s pyramid, the time is yours to explore these ancient marvels under your own steam. If you wish, climb aboard a camel, or simply roam the complex on foot. Then, continuing through the valley, you’ll spot the supreme Sphinx guarding the land. A buffet lunch will be served at a 5-star hotel, after which, there’s more sightseeing on the agenda – this time in the heart of Cairo. From the bustling Tahrir (Liberty) Square, you’ll head to the National Archaeological Museum to become acquainted with Egypt’s ancient history - spanning an incredible 50 centuries - through eye-catching antiquities, including the collection of King Tutankhamen. After visiting a Papyrus Institute, there’s some time dedicated to souvenir shopping before travelling back to the cruise ship.

1. **ASHDOD, ISRAEL – APR 5th** - Our Tour will take our group by motorcoach to **Jerusalem** – departure from the ship by 9 am (at latest) and return by 5 PM  [FULL DETAILS ARE STILL BEING PLANNED].

1. **LIMASSOL, CYPRUS – APR 6th -** At 11 AM we dock at Limassol. We will board a motorcoach for an included tour of the island’s highlights, including a visit to UNESCO sites. The Old City of Limassol is a lovely, ancient Mediterranean seaport city; its’s streets are lined with shops and cafes.We are scheduled to depart Limassol at 6 PM.

**5) RHODES, GREECE – APR 7th** - We are scheduled to dock at noon (be sure to be on the upper decks to watch as we approach and dock at this fabulously beautiful Greek island).

**copied and pasted – our supplier’s details: RHODES - Medieval tour - Acropolis of Lindos and the Citadel of the Knights**

Centuries of culture and layer upon layer of extraordinary civilizations await to be discovered during our bus tour through impressive Lindos and within the awe-inspiring structure of the Acropolis of Lindos. We will follow the footsteps of heroes as we walk along the Knight's Street in the heart of historical Rhodes. The seven lodges of the Order, still bearing their original coats of arms, are displayed along the cobblestone street where Rhodes’ history was written for over two centuries. Sitting at the top of Knights Street, the Grand Master’s Palace is well worth its name. You will be awed by the fort’s imposing Gothic architecture and strength displayed throughout its court structures, as you get a glimpse into the fascinating era of the Knights. We will end our tour of historical Rhodes with free time so that you may fortify your memories of Rhodes at your own pace.

**6) KUSADASI, TURKEY – APR 8th** – Our ship is scheduled to dock at 7 AM and our excursion this day takes us to the **Ancient City of Ephesus**.

**copied and pasted – our supplier’s details: Ancient Ephesus through the ages - Hellenistic and Roman**

Our Ancient Ephesus bus tour is a journey through the golden ages which shaped a pivotal center of commerce and spirituality. Built 3,000 years ago, Ephesus shaped the history of Greek, Turkish and Christian civilizations from its privileged location, chosen (according to legend) by the oracle of Delphi. A site of pilgrimage, due to its proximity to the Temple of Artemis (one of the 7 Wonders of the World) and the presence of major Christian figures (the apostles Paul and John and the Virgin Mary) within the city walls, Ephesus is currently one of the largest Roman archaeological sites in the Mediterranean. The splendor of its golden age is visible throughout its streets and exceptionally well-preserved ruins. As we explore this UNESCO World Heritage Site you will have the opportunity to breathe in the centuries of cultural effervescence, visible in the Ephesus Agora, Odeon, the Houses of the Patricians, the beautiful Temple of Hadrian and the astonishing Library of Celsus. You will also have the opportunity to bargain and shop local merchandise such as carpets, leather goods, souvenirs etc.

**PASSPORT ESSENTIALS**

For travel outside the United States, U.S. citizens must have valid passports, with an expiration date of at least six months after the scheduled return date. If possible, you should renew your passport approximately 9 months before it expires. Travelers are responsible for ensuring that they have the proper travel documents and MUST CHECK with the respective consulate(s) or visa agency to determine whether any visas are required. Any information provided pertains to US citizens only. Non-US citizens should check with the respective consulate of the country(s) to be visited for current entry requirements.

A valid Government-issued photo ID is required for all domestic flights within USA.

Regulations may also require you to have at least 2 blank pages when entering a country.

Airlines will not allow you to board, if these requirements are not met. If boarding is denied, you will be in full penalty for cost of the tour.

**NAMES MUST MATCH PASSPORT!** The name given on your APPLICATION must match the name on your passport, and in-turn, the name on your air ticket. Any variation between the spelling of your name on your air-ticket and passport will require re-ticketing, often at the cost of a completely new ticket. The airline will deny boarding if your airline ticket does not match your passport. **(And this is the reason Gifts From Above requires a photocopy of the photo page of your passport.)**

**VISA INFORMATION**

**Currently Turkey and Egypt require Visas for American tourists. We’ve arranged for the cruise line to acquire these documents on our behalf – there will be no charge to our clients.**

**Greece, Israel and the Greek islands do not require a Visa for visiting Americans.**

**MEDITERRANEAN’S TYPICAL WEATHER IN MARCH & APRIL**

**Temperature -- The Mediterranean Climate is essentially composed of two seasons: wet and dry. March comes at the end of the wet/rainy season.** This is a great time of the year to visit, as the damp and chilly days of winter are lessened, but it never becomes uncomfortably hot. **Temperatures generally r**ange between the high 50’s (degrees) at night and mid to high 70’s (degrees) during the day. While afternoons are often warm and sunny, temperatures can drop rapidly in the evenings so you should expect cooler weather towards the end of the day.

**Rain --** During this time of the year, the Mediterranean receives occasional rainfall, with an average of 1- 2 inches spread across a 10-day period. Pack an umbrella and some waterproof clothing to protect you if caught in a sudden downpour while sightseeing. **Average Sunshine Hours --** The arrival of spring means longer days, and we may expect an average of 10 hours of sunshine per day during this time of year.

**PACKING SUGGESTIONS**

**IMPORTANT** – make at least three photocopies of the picture/photo page of your passport. Keep them in different places in your carry-on luggage and, better still, give a copy to a traveling companion. Leave one in the hands of someone at home. This will facilitate replacement if your passport is lost or stolen.

\*\*\* **NEVER PACK YOUR PASSPORT IN THE LUGGAGE YOU WILL BE CHECKING** – INSTEAD --- CARRY IT ON YOU AT ALL TIMES (& consider wearing a money belt or carrier under your clothes).

\*\*\* **NEVER PACK MEDICATIONS IN THE LUGGAGE YOU WILL BE CHECKING** and when estimating your needs, **bring enough medication for four extra days.**

**\*\*\* DON’T LET BLISTERS RUIN YOUR EXPERIENCE – Pack only comfortable**, **well-broken in, walking shoes** – we will be walking up and down hills and steps. If you wear sandals, those with a closed toe and some support are your best bet for wandering around archaeological sites.

**REGARDING LIQUID ALLOWANCES AND AIRLINE REGULATIONS FOR CARRY-ON LUGGAGE:**

**All carry-on liquids must be 3.4 ounces or less** and must fit in a one quart, clear, plastic, zip-top plastic bag. Only one bag of liquids is allowed per person and must be presented at the time your carry-on luggage is screened.

**HOW TO MAKE AN OVERNIGHT FLIGHT MORE COMFORTABLE**

\*You are allowed 2 carry-on items, we suggest you take both. Ideally, you’ll want one “squishable” piece that fits under the seat in front of you – an **expandable, zippered, canvas tote** works well – you may want to consider packing the following in that bag: a **cervical pillow** (many stores sell inflatable models), **ear plugs, sleep eye-mask, socks/and or rubber soled slippers** (feet swell at high altitudes and restroom floors can get messy on overnight flights – stocking slippers are not the best choice). **Wear loose, comfortable clothing** (such as a jogging suit with an elastic waistband). You may want to consider wearing removable panti-liners in your underwear. Don’t forget a **sweater or jacket** (the temperature on overnight flights tends to be cool).

\***Chamomile tea bags** – have with dinner – it’ll help relax & lure you to sleep and/or a sleep aid containing **melatonin.**

\*Pack a small bag with travel sizes of **toothbrush and toothpaste, fresh wipes, tissues, and a change of socks**.

**\* Include all medications, cash and valuables in the bag you have under the seat in front of you – keep it with you at all times.**

**\* If you wear glasses, consider bringing a hard covered case to store them in while you sleep. A case with a hook that can fasten to your tote is handy as it will prevent loss of your glasses.**

**STORE YOUR ROLLING CARRY-ON IN THE OVERHEAD BIN–**

 **\*\*\***In that piece**, pack at least three complete changes of clothing** (this can be a lifesaver in the case of lost luggage).

**DON’T FORGET TO PACK –**

**Sunglasses and a pair of back-up glasses if you wear prescription lenses.**

**Sun-screen lotion**

**Packaged or travel-size stain remover**

**A rain jacket and an umbrella**

A **travel size Bible, a journal, notebook, and a supply of pens.**

Bring plenty of film for your camera, **estimate your needs -- then double them**. Film is available in the tourist areas – but can be very expensive. **Extra batteries and a back-up microchip** are also recommended.

Bring **packages of tissues** and keep them on you at all times, (often restroom facilities lack toilet

paper.)

**Our dress code while touring is strictly informal** –During the day, comfortable clothing which can be layered is best. The buses will be cool and air-conditioned but outdoor temperatures will vary greatly. A jacket/hoodie is recommended.

Khaki or dark- colored slacks and light-colored, light-weight, short sleeve, collared shirts are good

choices. (Consider topping sleeveless shirts with sleeved (or ¾ length) light-weight shirt as protection from the sun.)

Generally, on one evening while on the **Crystal (as is the case with most cruise ships)** they feature a “dress up” night for the dining rooms -- but even then neither dresses for ladies nor sports coats for men are required.

\*\***Many religious sites do not allow shorts or sleeveless shirts**. A jacket or scarf to cover bare shoulders is necessary. Capri-length slacks (cargo pants) or pants that zipper to shorts - especially with pockets that close -- are a good compromise for shorts.

**Choose your in-flight canvas bag carefully** – look for something that can be used on the bus each day. Items can be safely left on the bus while we are touring and could include things like a jacket, umbrella, camera, snacks, Bible, notebook, water bottles, etc., etc.

**BUDGETING ESSENTIALS**

**Our cruise tour is pretty much “all-inclusive” with a few exceptions. Our cruise includes both a full buffet breakfast every morning (coffee and tea are included with breakfast) as well as restaurant service; also full lunch and dinner (buffet or sit down with restaurant service) every day. A drink package with “lovely” Greek wine (red or white), soft drinks, bottled water, coffee, fruit juices and espresso beverages are included.**

**Optional tips for our guides are not included, nor is lunch off the ship on several days.**

**REGARDING SPENDING MONEY AND TIP MONEY** –

**We generally recommend that each person convert $100 into Euros prior to leaving the USA.**

**REGARDING CURRENCY** Like most of the rest of the European Union**: Greece, Rhodes and Cyprus** use the Euro. You'll see the Euro represented by both the symbol - € - and the initials : EUR.

**Often** smaller shops won't have change for the large denominations, so when taking money out of the bank -- ask the teller for smaller notes.

**Turkey** uses the LIRA (but because our time there is limited and all the shops we will visit accept credit cards – it is unlikely we will need to exchange currency (that is also true for **Egypt** which uses the Egyptian Pound – abbreviated LE – for livre egyptienne.)

**Israeli** uses the Israeli Shekel but the American Dollar is welcomed everywhere.

**EXCHANGE RATES** - You will almost always get the best rates when buying foreign currency with either a credit or a debit card. The rates of exchange will be between two and seven percent better than using traveler's cheques or cash.

**Travelers' cheques** are still accepted but becoming less common.  Avoid exchanging them at the 'Change' offices you'll see at airports - they almost always give a poor rate. Use a bank where possible.

You'll find cash machines in most places. Look for the **'Bancomat'** sign. The most popular credit card by far in the countries we will be visiting is Visa, with Mastercard a close second. Both credit and debit cards can be used to withdraw cash from bancomats, and to pay for goods and services.

**REGARDING CREDIT CARD USE** - before you leave the States, call your credit card provider to find out if there are charges and/or conversion fees for credit card use in Europe **AND** inform your provider of the dates you will be away and the countries to be visited: Greece, Egypt, Israel, Rhodes, Cyprus and Turkey.

**A small pocket calculator is a handy thing to pack because currency rates of exchange fluctuate by the hour - even by the minute - so it's not possible to give any 'rule of thumb' here. (however at the time we are composing this data 100 Euros = $124 US dollars).**

**CELL PHONE USE** – Mostly likely, your provider won’t offer service in the Mediterranean without prior arrangements and fees. To avoid roaming charges you should keep your phone turned off while overseas. You may, however, want to bring it for calls when you return to the USA.

\*\*\*And – just a reminder --- many of us rely on our cell phones for the time. So, you should **take a watch or other time piece.**

**INTERNET** The Crystal does not offer complimentary Internet access; instead they offer an Internet plan for purchase – BUT most areas where we will dock will have free Internet in cafes (they do this to attract business).

**HOTEL & CRUISE SHIP AMENITIES** –

Few European hotels or cruise ships stock washcloths in bathrooms. If you cannot do without them, you should pack some for your use. Our cruise ship will equip all rooms with hairdryers, soap, shampoo and shower gel.

Staterooms in Category XD (exterior with windows on Deck 7) include a refrigerator in each room; Category IA rooms do not have refrigerators.

**Laundry services** are available (at a cost) at on our cruise ship. (Another option is to hand wash items and hang them over the shower to dry – you may want to pack a few dry laundry soap pellets).

**VOLTAGE IN ITALY** –**THE CRUISE SHIP, IN EVERY ROOM, HAS BOTH 120 AND 230 AVAILABLE. (no need for converter or adaptor).**

**On the Crystal:**

* Vegetarian and gluten-free options are available; if requested at the time of booking.
* Please note, many activities offered on this cruise line are not wheelchair accessible – however the Crystal does have staterooms which are wheelchair accessible.

**PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER –– our tour IS NOT a fashion show!!**

 Considering extra baggage charges and lost luggage problems, packing is becoming a science. We encourage everyone to travel light (even though your luggage will be handled for you at the hotels, you’ll still have to lug it around the airports).

We suggest taking **only** one rolling carry-on and a fabric bag which can be stuffed under the seat in front of you. Nothing to check -- nothing that can be lost!

**Suggested clothing - Total slacks** - 4 pair – a mix of light to mid-weight slacks, jean or capris/cargo.

Generally, on one evening while on the Crystal, they feature a “dress up” night but even then neither dresses for ladies nor sports coats for men are required.

**Total shoes** -  two pair - (comfortable athletic shoes/sneakers for walking & closed-toed sandals)

**4 or 5  shirts with rollup sleeves,** light weight, light colored, breathable, collared, cotton/poly to protect from sun (choose those you can mix and match with **5 or 6 sleeveless cotton shirts**.)

Bring a rain jacket and umbrella.

Be prepared to dress in layers – for evenings on the ship’s upper decks a warmer jacket is advised as temps are expected to be in the high 50s and low 60s at night.

Try on all clothes before you leave home to make sure they are comfortable and will be worn. Don't pack items randomly and then decide, over there, whether or not you want to wear them.

If an item can't be worn with more than one outfit - leave it home.

Any seasoned traveler will tell you to take all your oldest socks and undies -- wear and toss!

We suggest lightweight PJs and bathrobe (I pick mine up at a Thrift store for $1.00 each and leave in ship’s stateroom.)

Pack only travel-sized bottles of shampoo, even hairspray – then toss them before you come home.

All the tossing makes room for the books and souvenirs you will be buying.

\*\*\* Savvy travelers know it’s not wise to wear valuable/irreplaceable jewelry.

**LAST BUT NOT LEAST**

**UPON ARRIVAL INTO ATHENS on MARCH 31st, 2022** - **after clearing PASSPORT CONTROL** please assemble with our group at **BAGGAGE CLAIM**.

**DO NOT PROCEED FROM BAGGAGE CLAIM UNTIL YOUR TOUR LEADERS AND TRAVEL AGENT HAVE ARRIVED**. (We will be at the back of the group, making sure everyone has successfully been allowed to enter the country and will meet the group as soon as this is accomplished. While you are waiting, it is acceptable to use the restrooms, but, please, let someone know where you are going – and do not leave your luggage unattended.)