

## Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage

### Cancellation and Full Participation Policies

*[Updated January 24, 2023]*



There are a couple of points that need to be made significantly clear as we prepare for each pilgrimage. We are highlighting this information because Grand Commanderies and local Commanderies of Knights Templar are losing money, sometime significant amounts when the ministers they register and certify do not travel and/or drop out in the preparation days for the pilgrimage. Others must work through with the process of trying to get some reimbursement from the Travel Insurance we build into the program.

**It is very important that the individual and/or Commandery who are considering nominating a minister for this program have a deep discussion as to the minister's solid commitment and appropriateness to be able to fully participate.**

1. Contracted, international group travel is not like traveling on your own as an individual or family. The Knights Templar Holy Land national committee (Grand Encampment) has a contract with our travel agency – Gate 1 Travel. They in turn have contracts/reservations with the airlines, hotels, land transportation, etc. These contracts have required deadlines far more in advance than personal, individual travel.

For example:

The following is a general schedule for penalties if Pilgrim ministers drop out within these time parameters with the travel company.

#### **Prior to Departure Penalty Fees**

Up to 91 days Prior: \$420 per person is lost.

90 to 61 days Prior: 50% of land cost & 100% air cost is lost.

60 to 31 days Prior: 75% of land cost & 100% air cost is lost.

30 days or less/ no-show: 100% of cost is lost.

The only way to attempt to reclaim some of these losses is to have the minister file a claim with the Travel Insurance Company providing the reason for dropping out is a covered situation. If the claim is successful, the minister will need to return that money to the entity that registered/certified their participation.

We fully understand that there are reasonable and unavoidable situations that make it necessary for a pilgrim minister to cancel: immediate health emergencies, death in the immediate family at the time of the pilgrimage, and the like. We prepare for those legitimate situations by always including the Travel Insurance in our program. BUT, at times it seems more like this just turned out to be an inconvenient time or an ongoing/pre-existing health situation changes their mind and the Commanderies are left holding the bag.

We are required to make initial payments of \$420 per person 150 days prior to departure (September). That's five months in advance. We are required to make full final payments 90 day in advance of our departure date (early or mid November). Yes, that's three full months.

Participants in the Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage for Christian Ministers are sponsored by local Commanderies of Knights Templar, individual Knights Templar, or State Knight Templar Committees. These Knight Templar entities commit thousands of dollars to send ministers on a study pilgrimage to the Holy Land. On their Nomination Forms (just above their signature) the pilgrim ministers agree that, **"I understand that this pilgrimage is an 11-day program that covers as much ground as possible in the touring days (we average 5 – 7 miles of walking many days, often uphill or up steps and on uneven surfaces) and I am physically able to fully participate. AND I commit to clearing my personal calendar and making the necessary arrangements with the church to facilitate my full participation and travel with the Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage if selected."** Further, each pilgrim minister signs the ***CERTIFICATE OF AGREEMENT OF GIFT BETWEEN THE HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE, INC. AND PILGRIM MINISTER which outlines the details of the pilgrimage.*** We work with the understanding that the Christian Ministers participating in this program are men and women of good character, integrity, and true to their word. In addition, each State Committee and Grand Recorder signs an agreement stating: 'It is understood that fees may not be transferable, so that if your pilgrim does not travel at the reserved time, the sponsoring Grand Commandery may lose any money already spent on travel reservations and arrangements or there may be additional fees.'

2. Fitness for travel and full participation:

### **HEALTH REQUIREMENTS AND PREPARATION**

To obtain maximum benefits from the program, you should be in good physical and mental health, able and willing to actively participate in walking tours, group events, motor coach trips and boat rides. During your pilgrimage, there will be much walking, **numerous stairs to climb** and many sites to explore. There will be 5 -7 miles of walking many days, often uphill or up/down steps/inclines and on uneven surfaces with an overall total of 50 – 60 miles in a nine-day period. We suggest preparing yourself by beginning a program of walking. Check with your doctor for medical advice pertinent to the appropriateness of this trip for you and your overall health. If this is a concern to you or your primary care physician, you should reconsider your participation. It is very unfortunate when a pilgrim minister is unable to participate and stays back at the hotel or just sits on the bus. It is also a problem when the minister's inability to participate keeps the group from keeping up with the intended itinerary so that sites and/or experiences need to be deleted from the daily plan. We will certainly accommodate emergencies and injuries, but pilgrim ministers who come and are not able to fully participate from the outset are an unnecessary burden.