

# U.S. tourists to Israel advised to dress modestly

by [Michele Chabin](#)

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JERUSALEM (RNS) The U.S. State Department is advising visitors to Jerusalem to dress modestly when visiting certain neighborhoods, or to avoid the areas entirely, in hopes of not provoking local sensitivities.

The State Department guidance did not specify which neighborhoods are considered problematic, or what, exactly, constitutes "modest" attire.

The Jerusalem advisory, updated on Jan. 10, says travelers "should exercise caution at religious sites on holy days, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays" and "dress appropriately" when visiting ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods and the Old City of Jerusalem, where religious Jews, Muslims and Christians live in distinct quarters.

The warning notes that most roads into ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods are blocked off on Friday nights, Saturdays, and Jewish holidays, and that "assaults on secular visitors, either for being in cars or for being 'immodestly dressed' have occurred in these neighborhoods."

The advisory was added to the State Department's website for travel to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. It comes in the wake of many recent incidents in which ultra-Orthodox Jewish extremists physically or verbally attacked women they said were dressed immodestly.

Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women cover up everything except their faces, necks and hands.

In Beit Shemesh, a city between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, extremists have attacked religious schoolgirls on their way to school, deeming them not religious enough.

For years, ultra-Orthodox Jews have also stoned cars driving in or near their neighborhoods on the Sabbath or holidays.