

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ABOUT TRAVEL

#### **Do I need travel documents?**

A passport valid for at least six months after your return from the pilgrimage is required for all U.S. citizens. If you are not a U.S. citizen, please contact your embassy or consulate to ensure that you obtain the proper documentation.

#### **What is required regarding vaccinations and COVID restrictions?**

We are requiring all pilgrims to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. If it is determined in the future that booster shots are needed for the safety of pilgrims, we might require booster shots. Our pilgrimages will follow all future travel guidelines set by the country in which the pilgrimage will take place. We will be monitoring any country requirements and will keep you informed. After filling out an application form, please email a scanned copy of your vaccination card to Trish ([trish@shalem.org](mailto:trish@shalem.org)).

#### **What airport should I use?**

The nearest major airport is Glasgow International Airport (GLA).

#### **Any suggestions for airlines?**

Most airlines have flights to Glasgow, although some of them do not run every day. Please choose flights that will get you to Glasgow in time for our opening session (see below).

When you are planning your return flight, please note that you will most likely choose to take a taxi from our downtown hotel to the airport so include travel time in your calculations; the airport is about 15 minutes by taxi. Breakfast is included on our last day, however you are free to depart any time that morning. Pilgrims often decide to share cabs to the airport for their return flights home.

#### **What about travel insurance?**

We strongly recommend Comprehensive Travel Protection Insurance. Please consult your travel agent or visit one of the various websites such as [www.travelguard.com](http://www.travelguard.com).

#### **Where do I go once I arrive at the airport?**

After going through passport control and collecting your luggage, you'll need to make your way to our hotel: voco Grand Central Glasgow, 99 Gordon Street, Glasgow G1 3SF.

#### **How do I get from the airport to the hotel?**

From Glasgow International Airport, taxis are available at a fixed price to the city, approximately £22. Glasgow Airport Express service 500 is Glasgow Airport's official bus service connecting the airport and the city centre in just 15 minutes. Cost is about £7.50. Departing up to every 10-20 minutes from Glasgow Airport, bus service is available to Buchanan Bus Station. From there you can take a taxi to the hotel.

#### **What if I'm traveling by rail?**

From the North and East you'll arrive into Queen Street Station; taxis are available outside. From the South you'll arrive into Central Station which directly adjoins the voco Grand Central where we'll be staying.

### **Can I change money in the airport?**

Yes, there are ATM machines in the airport and these will give you a good rate. You might let your bank know you are traveling so that they know it is you using your card. In general, ATMs provide a better exchange rate than a “Bureau de Change.”

## **ABOUT OUR SCHEDULE**

### **What time should I arrive on the first day of the pilgrimage?**

The opening session of our pilgrimage begins at 4:00 pm on Thursday, June 2, 2022.

Please arrange your travel schedule to arrive in plenty of time for this opening session. Be sure to take into account the amount of time it takes to go through passport control at the airport (about one hour) and the time it takes to get to the hotel.

### **Where will the opening session take place and how do I get there?**

We’ll be meeting at the Renfield Centre, sometimes called Renfield St. Stephens Centre at 260 Bath Street, about .7 mile from our hotel. Please meet in the hotel lobby at 3:20 pm and one of our staff will walk with you. Alternately you may let our staff know and take a taxi at your own expense.

### **What if I arrive after the opening session has begun?**

Please try your best to arrive ahead of our opening session as it’s an important beginning to our time together. However, we know that the best laid plans can go awry and planes can be delayed! Our opening session will last from 4:00 until 6:00 pm. We will have dinner in the hotel that evening at 7:00 pm. If you arrive late, please check into the hotel and then either come to the Renfield Centre or, if you’re too late, just join us for dinner that night.

## **ABOUT OUR HOTELS**

We will be staying in two different hotels on this pilgrimage. Our first two nights are in Glasgow at the Grand Central. When we are on Iona, our hotel is the St. Columba Hotel. When we return to Glasgow, we will be back at Grand Central.

### **voco Grand Central – Glasgow**

99 Gordon Street

Glasgow, G1 3SF

<https://grandcentral.vocohotels.com>

[ReservationsGrandCentral@ihg.com](mailto:ReservationsGrandCentral@ihg.com)

### **St. Columba Hotel**

Isle of Iona, Argyll PA76 6SL, UK

+44 (0)1681 700304

[info@stcolumba-hotel.co.uk](mailto:info@stcolumba-hotel.co.uk)

<http://www.stcolumba-hotel.co.uk>

### **What time can I get into my room?**

We will advise you of check in time in Glasgow as soon as that information is available. If you arrive earlier, you may leave your luggage at the desk while you relax in the lobby or stroll the

nearby pedestrian mall on Sauchiehall Lane. (Ask the concierge for directions.) On Iona, we'll be checking in to the hotel as a group when we arrive.

**Do I need to be prepared for stairs?**

Second floor rooms at the St. Columba Hotel are accessible only by stairs, however the staff will take your luggage to your room when you arrive. Be sure to consult the Shalem staff before you register if you have concerns.

**Do the hotels have WIFI access?**

Complimentary WIFI access is available although our experience is that in some rooms at the St. Columba Hotel the signal is spotty; access in the lounge is generally fine.

**Is there a washing machine and dryer?**

At the St. Columba Hotel, you can ask for a laundry bag and the staff will do your laundry for a small charge.

**How about hair dryers?**

Hair dryers are available in the hotels.

**If I want to come a day or two early, or stay a few days afterwards, how do I make these arrangements?**

Whether wanting to stay in Glasgow or somewhere else, you will need to make your arrangements on your own, contacting hotels yourself to see if there is room availability. If coming early, just be sure to arrive at the Renfield Centre in time for our opening session.

**Are bathrooms in the room or shared down the hall? Are linens provided?**

All hotels are full service although at the St. Columba Hotel rooms are not made up daily. All hotels have private baths.

**Can I use a hotel refrigerator for medicine that needs refrigeration?**

You will need to make arrangements directly with the hotel.

**Can special dietary needs be accommodated?**

We may not be able to accommodate every preference, but we will certainly accommodate allergies. Please make those known on the health form we will ask you to complete and also reaffirm with the staff on site. Vegetarian options are available at each meal.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Will my phone work in Scotland?**

Most American cell phones with an international plan will work in the UK, but roaming charges can be very high. Check with your cell phone provider before leaving home to confirm that your phone will work and to ask about associated costs. Note that there is little/no cell phone reception on Iona.

**What do I need in order to plug in my devices?**

The UK has its own standard wall outlets, and you will need a plug adapter to use your devices. Note that the UK uses 220v power and most hairdryers and beauty accessories cannot handle this (even when using converters that many travel stores sell).

**What is the currency? Where can I find out the exchange rate? How/where can I change money? How much money do I need?**

The currency throughout the UK is the Great British Pound (GBP). Exchange rates change daily, and the easiest way to get an approximate rate comparing dollars to pounds is to search on Google “1USD to 1GBP.” The actual exchange rate you receive may differ slightly from this. Most stores in Glasgow and all three of our hotels accept credit cards, but many shops on Iona do not. There is no ATM on Iona, so you should try to withdraw cash before we leave Glasgow. You can do this at any ATM in town or at the airport when you arrive.

You will need money for transfers from/to the airport and our hotels in Glasgow. You will also need money for any personal expenses such as beverages, laundry, room service, meals not specified on our itinerary, any extra excursions on the free day, snacks, souvenirs, as well as contributions you may choose to make to local churches, organizations or charities.

**What to bring?**

Bring any medicines that you take on a regular basis as well as a list of medical information you would like doctors to know in case of emergency. We will send you a list of other items that pilgrims have found helpful in a future mailing. For now, consider bringing anything that nurtures your soul: art supplies, a journal, spiritual readings, a musical instrument; things that are lightweight and easy to carry.

**What kind of clothes are needed?**

Dress is casual. In general, bring clothes that you can layer. The weather changes constantly in Scotland, even in the course of a single day. Sturdy shoes for hiking/walking and rain gear are essential. Average weather conditions can be found through Trip Advisor.

**What is the level of physical activity?**

Our physical activity is moderate. It is a .7 mile walk from our hotel in Glasgow to the Renfield Centre where we will meet our first two days. On Iona, our plenary sessions will be in or nearby the hotel. Worship at the Abbey is a short walk from the hotel. Other activities listed on the itinerary require more walking, some of it on uneven ground, sometimes uphill.

We will be taking long bus rides as well as two ferries on our travel days to and from Iona. **You must be able to get on and off our motor coaches and ferries on your own.** We regret that we cannot provide individual assistance. If you need help with such activities, you must be accompanied by a companion who will assist you.

Our bus will accompany us on the first ferry. However, at the last stop, the bus can go no further. At that point, you (or your companion) must be able to manage your luggage as you board the final ferry and disembark on Iona.

Our pilgrimage leaders are available to talk with you if you have questions/concerns about mobility issues or physical readiness.

**What if I need a doctor?**

Medical services are readily available while you are in Glasgow. However, please note that there are no doctors or medical services available on the island of Iona. The nearest hospital is about an hour away on the Isle of Mull. In the case of emergency, an individual may be taken by medivac helicopter. Please check with your personal physician and the Shalem staff if you have questions or concerns about medical support.

Also we ask that you check with your health insurance carrier to understand what coverage is available to you while you are traveling in the United Kingdom. Be sure to bring your health insurance information with you.