

Get Excited for your Birthright Israel Trip

Are you ready to explore incredible new places and take part in an awesome adventure?

This is one of the best parts of the Birthright Israel experience! You probably haven't slept in a Bedouin tent in the middle of the desert, right? New experiences are often fun and exciting, but being outside of your comfort zone can be challenging at times. Plan for foreign languages, new foods, unique landscapes, and fantastic photo ops.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime trip (which can sometimes be exhausting).

When you arrive in Israel you'll be warmly welcomed, but you may feel some jet lag. (Depending on where you're departing from your flight could take 10-13 hours). Your itinerary is packed with touring, tasting, playing, praying, listening, learning, hiking, and exploring. Fitting all of this excitement into ten days means there isn't much downtime, and days often start early and end late. Thankfully, Shabbat will allow us special time to rest and relax.

You'll meet amazing people and bond with friends.

Your group, or "bus," will have up to 40 participants and two Hillel staff members. You'll also be joined by Israeli peers. Prepare to ride the bus, share hotel rooms, and eat delicious meals together. You can bring headphones, eye masks, earplugs, a journal, or other items that help you travel comfortably. You'll mostly be with the group, but there are some opportunities to explore, shop, and eat independently.

Israel is lively, beautiful, and imperfect.

You'll get to swim in the Dead Sea, shop at the *shuk* (outdoor market), and pray at the Western Wall. You'll also discuss identity, religion, geopolitics, difficult circumstances, and traumatic history. You'll be exposed to different perspectives from different personalities. We encourage you to learn and grow, while also engaging in conversation to the level of your comfort.

You're an adult, and we trust you.

We expect you'll act safely and responsibly, show up prepared and on time, communicate, and manage your personal needs. Plan to pack and transport your luggage to different locations, and carry what you need with you for the day. Keep important items with you (like money/cards, passports, medications, chargers/ adapters) as needed. Don't worry, we have a packing list to help you prepare!

You'll have a team on hand to help you have a great time.

Each trip has a tour guide, guard, bus driver on site, and additional staff on call if needed. You are your best advocate: communicate openly and honestly with staff about how you're doing & what you need. We are all here to support your success.

Birthright Israel Participant Self-Reflection

This tool is intended as a self-assessment to help you plan for your Birthright Israel experience. Consider the overview above, the itinerary for your trip, and your personal experiences as you complete this form. If you determine you'd benefit from additional information or support, reach out to your Hillel campus professional or the Hillel International team (israel@hillel.org).

What is your comfort and experience with these situations?	Familiar & Comfortable	New, Feeling Confident	Need More Info/Support
Spending time away from home, school, family, or friends			
Navigating international/foreign/unfamiliar environments			
Handling long days (early mornings, late nights, jet lag)			
Engaging in new experiences and activities			
Participating in physically-demanding hikes and tours			
Sharing a bedroom and bathroom with others			
Traveling by plane and bus, including repacking and transporting your belongings to multiple locations			
Having limited personal time or downtime			
Spending extended social time with others (bus, meals, activities)			
Navigating unstructured free time (meals, shopping, nights out)			
Learning and talking about sensitive topics, including religion, history, geopolitics, trauma, and identity			
Coping with sensory stimuli (loud noises, crowded spaces, intense smells, physical touch or proximity)			
Managing your personal needs (being prepared and on time)			
Navigating your physical and dietary needs			
Communicating your needs to staff and fellow participants			

Birthright Israel Participant and Staff Discussion & Planning

These questions are to help the campus Hillel professional and participant review information gained through the self-reflection, address questions, and determine a plan for support. The Hillel International team is available for further coordination or to request accommodations (israel@hillel.org).

If this is your first time away from home or school, outside of the country, in Israel, or on a group trip, what do you know about yourself from other experiences that can help you prepare for this one?

What is your comfort with international travel, new experiences, unfamiliar circumstances, or sensitive conversations – what helps you feel comfortable during times of transition or challenge?

Do you know any of the staff or other participants on the trip or who would like to be connected to? Who in your support system is available during your trip (friends, family, Hillel staff, medical team)?

What additional information would help you prepare for this experience? Is there equipment, assistance, or accommodations you have at home that might benefit you on the trip?

Are there specific conditions, sensory input, or personal triggers that might cause you distress? How can we best prepare to navigate those circumstances?

What is important to communicate with your Hillel team before you travel? How will you communicate your needs to the staff on the trip to address your needs or navigate any challenges?