

My Israel Trip: What's Right For Me

With the multitude of teen Israel experiences available, there is a perfect teen Israel trip for every teen. The trick is knowing *which* one is the *right* one. The questions below may help you focus on your needs and determine how they mesh with the trip provider's offerings. Talking with past participants about their experiences will also provide you with valuable insight.

WHO IS THE SPONSOR?

- What is the philosophy of the sponsoring organization?
 - Do you have some literature you can send me?
- Can you provide names of previous participants that I can contact for references?

WHO WILL I BE TRAVELING WITH?

- What is the age range and size of the group?
- Is it coed? If so, what is the ratio of males to females?
- Are participants from similar religious backgrounds or geographic locations?

WHAT KIND OF STAFF ACCOMPANIES THE GROUP?

- Does an educator travel with the group?
- What kind of training do counselors, guides and educators have?

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAM ITINERARY?

- What's unique about the program?
 - Are there formal classes or special speakers?
 - Will I have free time?
 - Which sites will I be visiting?
- Does the program include volunteer work opportunities?
 - Does the group spend time with Israeli peers?
 - Does the program include a "special interest" week?

WHAT ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY?

- What kind of medical services are available?
 - Is special insurance needed or advisable?
 - How are emergencies handled?
 - What are the security arrangements?

WHAT ARE THE RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES?

- Is kosher food always available?
 - How are Shabbat and holidays observed?
- What arrangements and expectations are there for prayer services?

HOW ARE POLICIES ENFORCED?

- What are the program policies on alcohol, drugs, physical intimacy and smoking?
 - Under what circumstances are participants sent home?

WHAT IF I HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS?

- Does the program provide for special dietary or disability needs?

HOW CAN I KEEP IN TOUCH?

- How do my parents contact me if there's an emergency at home?
- Will the program communicate with my parents during the trip?
- Can arrangements be made for me to visit friends or relatives in Israel?

WHAT ARE THE COSTS & IS FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE?

- What is the complete cost of the program?
- How much spending money is recommended?
- Is financial aid available from the program or sponsoring organization?

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE AND AFTER THE TRIP?

- Are orientation or training programs offered before the trip?
 - Are reunions organized upon return?

WHAT DOES EVERY TRIP INCLUDE?

- Exploring the country from north to south;
- Strict security protocols as mandated by the Jewish Agency of Israel;
 - A medic and security person for each group;
 - American and Israeli staff

WHICH ARE THE MOST POPULAR SUMMER TRIPS FOR HOUSTON TEENS?

Young Judaea
BBYO
Garin Greene & NFTY
USY
B'nei Akiva
NCSY

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Asaf Aharon, Jewish Agency Shaliach
asaf.aharon@youngjudaea.org
713-723-8354

The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston
www.houstonjewish.org