

# IsraelExperts Guide to the Perplexed

*The comprehensive guide to planning your trip to Israel*

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## You're planning a trip to Israel? What type of trip?

Few things in the life of a community or family can bring its members together quite as much as a shared trip to Israel. The approach and organization can make or break a trip. Details must be carefully thought out and each element should be carefully analyzed with a clear idea of the goals of the program. Organizing a trip is not easy which is a primary reason that IsraelExperts exists, to help you with anything you need when it comes to planning your trip.

Group types for an Israel Trip		
Program Types	Pros	Cons
Large Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community bonding</li> <li>• Most cost efficient</li> <li>• Most social opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large group approach</li> <li>• Less intimate</li> <li>• Less flexible</li> </ul>
Small Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More intimate</li> <li>• More flexible</li> <li>• More focused time on individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less cost efficient</li> </ul>
Adult Only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more educated approach to Israel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a family event</li> </ul>
Family trip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family bonding</li> <li>• Seeing Israel through multi-generational lenses</li> <li>• Connecting with the personal stories</li> <li>• Creating a Jewish family memory that can't be beat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs harder to structure for all age participants as scheduling needs differ</li> <li>• Expensive for multiple participant families</li> <li>• Family members responsible for each other – even on vacation</li> </ul>
Teen Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to foster Jewish identity and connections to Israel at a critical age.</li> <li>• Host organization able to build a strong connection with students in a meaningful way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility for other people's teenagers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Custom Trips</b>            At IsraelExperts, we pride ourselves on our ability to take Israel tours beyond the scope of standard, preset trips. We are able to work together with you to create quality Israel programs, of any length, for any size group, and for any budget, for your particular organization or group of individuals. Whether you are a singles' organization, an association with a particular field of interest, a group of people attending a convention in Israel, or simply a group of friends who have decided to visit Israel together, our Israel tour and travel experts will get your input and then create a customized program specially for you.</p>		

## When to plan a trip – the pros and cons of Israeli seasons

The season will affect various aspects of your trip:

- Prices
- Tours
- Locations of travel

The following chart will give you an idea of what to expect in order to choose the best season for your trip.

<b>Summer- May to September</b> Positives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break from school ensures a family experience</li> <li>• Everything is open</li> <li>• Long days</li> </ul> Negatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hot</li> <li>• High tourist season</li> </ul>	<b>Autumn -September to Mid November</b> Positives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good weather</li> <li>• A chance to see and celebrate holidays in Israel</li> </ul> Negatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many tourist sites/ restaurants are closed on some religious holidays</li> <li>• High tourist season</li> <li>• Israelis are also on vacation and touring</li> </ul>	<b>Average Temperature</b>				
			January	April	July	October
		Jerusalem	43-53 6-11	53-69 12-21	66-84 19-29	60-78 16-26
		Tel Aviv	49-65 9-18	54-72 12-22	70-86 21-30	59-83 15-28
		Haifa	49-63 8-17	55-78 13-26	68-86 20-30	60-84 16-27
		Tiberias	48-65 9-18	56-80 13-27	73-98 23-37	65-89 19-32
Eilat	49-70 10-21	63-87 17-31	77-103 25-40	69-92 20-33		
<b>Winter– Late November to February</b> Positives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• February is the cheapest time to fly to Israel</li> <li>• Great time to visit Eilat</li> </ul> Negatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rainy season – flooding in the desert</li> <li>• Shorter days</li> </ul>	<b>Spring - March to April</b> Positives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good weather</li> <li>• Longer days</li> <li>• North is greener; beautiful scenery</li> </ul> Negatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School season</li> <li>• Start of tourist season</li> <li>• The water is still cool</li> </ul>	<b>Average Sunny Days</b>				
			January	April	July	October
		Jerusalem	19	27	31	29
		Tel Aviv	17	26	31	28
		Eilat	30	30	31	30

## Marketing strategies for a community trip to Israel

The following are suggested ways that you can promote the annual Israel trip by bringing it to everyone's attention, and then maximize its impact on your entire community.

Make it a major event - talk it up, count it down. Make all families, teens, faculty and teachers aware of the trip - before, during and after.

### Advertising:

- Make a countdown bulletin board in a main lobby
- Include a place where people can write the sites they wish to visit
- Include a map marking the trip's route
- Advertise the trip departure/countdown in the organization newsletter
- Have a sending off ceremony during the Kabbalat Shabbat before the trip.
- Have students make [tefilat haderech – Prayer for Traveling](#) cards for the families or students to take with them.

### Programs

- [IsraelExperts Map Programs](#), focusing on Israeli culture, people and places
- Have students make presentations about Israel at services, in assemblies and to classes.
- Host [Israeli movies](#) and discussion nights
- Collect tzedakah for the participants to carry with them and donate when they arrive. (There is a Jewish tradition of giving a traveler tzedakah money to donate at their destination. It is thought this helps ensure a safe journey – as the journey is now a mission to perform a mitzvah.)
- Host an Israeli dancing night
- Host an Israeli food night. Recipes can be found [here](#).
- Nurture connections with partners in Israel- whether it's via Partnership 2000, a synagogue or community connection, or community center or other institution. Create long lasting partnerships with Israelis that are strengthened year after year.

## Serious planning with the Experts - steps that go into building an educational trip to Israel

A trip to Israel is not just about seeing the sites. It's about creating an experience that will be remembered and cherished. Sites can be seen on line during the planning stages. The experience comes with knowing where to look, what to see, smell and hear, and what needs to be processed and focused upon.

Planning a trip for a group is complicated. Every step of the way needs to be well planned, or you will run into logistical problems right from the start.

Here is a checklist to help ensure that nothing is forgotten. IsraelExperts can help you with all of these steps.

### Touring:

- **Sites:** *With so many choices and so much history, a schedule must be designed that best utilizes time while it simultaneously gets across what you want the participants to take away from the trip.*
- **Discussions:** *A trip is not just about seeing the sites. It's about conveying their meaning to the participants, and the best way to do that is to challenge people with interactive discussions that make them apply what they have experienced.*
- **Presentations and speakers:** *It's important to consider the diversity of opinion and perspective in Israeli society when choosing speakers and presentations. Whether politics, pluralism or humus – Israelis have strong opinions and love to share them.*
- **Site entrance fees:** *Requiring people to pay at each site adds a lot of time. Group prices can be arranged and time can be cut down; arrangements are made for groups ahead of time.*



### Logistics:

- **Hospitality:** *It's not just about the price, but also about the location of the hotel in relation to the places you will visit, in order to cut down travel time and the number of hotel changes.*
- **Transportation:** *Transportation is not just about getting to Israel, whether it's on a group flight, or individually. It's also about getting around the country, whether by private bus, rental car or public transportation. This needs to be organized, with a driver and guide who know where everything is.*
- **Food:** *There are complications that can arise both with meals that are included and those that are not. There is greater choice when people eat on their own, but timing can become more of a problem. On the other hand, eating together can be a bonding experience for the group. In all cases, meals must be carefully planned and group meals need to be organized.*
- **Guide, Medic/Guard:** *The staff who lead the trip will be instrumental figures in the trip and how it's remembered; they will be largely responsible for how Israel is presented.*



## Shabbat:

- **Services:** *Group service or with local congregation? At the Kotel or in a synagogue? Ashkenazi? Sephardic? There are so many choices in Israel, regardless of the city.*
- **Shabbat logistics:** *Much of the country closes down for Shabbat, and so schedules must be carefully structured to avoid losing a day of travel. If the group is Sabbath-observant, ensure ahead of time that synagogue services and meals are within walking distance.*

## Organizing a balanced program:

- **Timing:** *The day is 24 hours long, but half of that is at night. Evening activities should be planned according to your group's abilities.*
- **Vigorous activities:** *Each day needs a balance of activities; people need to stay active, but should not be so exhausted that they can't complete the day's program.*
- **Experienced vs. first timers:** *There can be very different approaches and itineraries, depending on the number of times participants have been to Israel.*
- **Mifgashim:** *See Israel through the eyes of its people as you explore the country. Personal interactions will teach more about the people of the country than any lecture or site.*
- **Programs:** *Each program should be carefully chosen and custom tailored to ensure that it enhances the goals of the trip.*

## Educational Modules & Themes

IsraelExperts has developed a number of educational components that can be incorporated into your program.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mifgash (Peer Encounter):</b> IsraelExperts has extensive experience working with Partnership 2000 communities to organize high quality, meaningful Mifgashim. Israeli peers may join for a Shabbat or longer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rega Shel Ivrit (Hebrew Language Integration):</b> IsraelExperts can develop a daily Hebrew language component incorporating vocabulary specific to the themes and sites of the day. We also offer, in partnership with Ulpan Akiva, more intensive Hebrew immersion modules.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Itinerary Themes &amp; Storylines:</b> There are many ways to build an itinerary for your time in Israel. A few of the themes we have found most successful include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heroes &amp; Leadership</li> <li>• Outdoor Adventure</li> <li>• Historical Civilization</li> <li>• Text &amp; Spirituality</li> <li>• Culinary Experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Service:</b> IsraelExperts works closely with Leket, Yad Lekashish, and other organizations throughout the country. We can develop and implement the appropriate community service program that meets your needs.</li> </ul>

## Suggested paperwork check list

What is needed before participants board their flight? When travelling with a group, it's important to determine ahead of time what is your responsibility and what is the responsibility of the participant.

### Travel

- Plane ticket - It may be wise to suggest that it be refundable (although this will eliminate the cheapest ticket options).
- Valid Passport for at least 6 months from the date of your return ticket to the U.S. Make sure that the trip organizer has photocopies of passports of all participants on the trip.
- Visas are not required for Americans to Israel, but if you plan to visit Egypt or Jordan you will need a visa. Citizens of other countries should check about visas before their trip.
- Travel insurance.

### Health

- Medical form to be completed by doctor.
- Copies of all prescriptions, including eyeglasses.
- Make sure that your health insurance is valid in Israel.

### Permission forms

- Children travelling on a group program should have a parent permission form for the trip.
- Written parent permission for time spent away from the program, in the event that the participant wants to spend a Shabbat with family or friends in Israel.
- Cell phone rentals.

### Registration forms

- Travel information.
- Rooming requests.
- Deposits.
- Cancellation form.

### Other forms to give to participants

- Rooming lists.
- Itineraries.
- Season appropriate packing list.
- Contact information for participants on trip.
- Contact information of hotels.

## Off the beaten track: Lesser known "Must Sees"

No matter how many times you have come to Israel, there is always something new to see and do. This list represents only the tip of the iceberg – there are thousands of special activities and opportunities available to you under these categories and others– Israelis are extremely creative and love to show others what they can do.

### Cultural:

- Visits to artists' studio – e.g., Ein Hod
- Ecological building workshop
- Photography workshop – tour with a professional photographer
- Tour the studios of designers and artists
- Art galleries

### Industry and Commerce

- Visit leading hi-tech companies and businesses in all sectors
- Visit Israel's industrial parks, combining hi-tech industry and environmental art

### Outdoor Adventure:

- Jeep rides
- Rappelling
- Hiking
- Camping
- Snorkeling
- Scuba-diving
- Parasailing
- Rafting
- Kayaking
- Horseback riding – How about a ride on the beach at sunset?

### Israeli Society:

- Visit an army base
- Volunteer for an afternoon

### Diversity in Israel:

- Visit a Druze village and the holiest Druze site– Kever Yitro (Jethro's Tomb)
- Meet Gaza evacuees and hear their story
- Tour a Circassian Village – Circassian, serving as warriors under the Ottoman Empire, came to the Holy Land in the 1870s at the behest of the Turkish sultan
- Jaffa – tour of 2 cities – guided by an Israeli and a Palestinian who live in Jaffa
- Meals in private homes – meet Israelis from all over the world, all over Israel
- Learn about the Ethiopian community – successes and struggles





## Culinary

- Cooking seminar
- Chocolate tour
- Agricultural innovations
- Specialty farms
- Goat cheese farms and restaurants
- Jerusalem Culinary Institute
- Shuk and Cook  
<http://shukandcook.com/home.html>
- Boutique winery tours

## Small Museums – a sample

- Ghetto Fighters Museum at Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot
- Atlit Detention Camp on the shores of the Mediterranean was used by the British to delouse and disinfect refugees from Europe. The original camp still stands and is the site of an open air museum
- Museum of Immigration (First Aliyah Museum) which tells the story of Jewish settlement – Zichron Yaakov
- HaMizgaga Glass Museum at Kibbutz Nachsholim on the Mediterranean coast: HaMizgaga literally means the glassery; it was a factory for the manufacture of glass wine bottles. Baron Edmond de Rothschild realized that a growing wine industry in not-far-away Zichron Ya'akov would need glass bottles. The bottles on display are made of chunky green glass – not ideal vessels for wine. A note of interest: Meir Dizengoff, later the first mayor of Tel Aviv, was the manager of the plant.
- Joe Alon Center – The Bedouin Culture Museum The museum is situated near Kibbutz Lahav and is the center of Bedouin Culture. It offers unique items of Bedouins' life, their clothes, weapons, agricultural implements, etc. colorful stands, mannequins
- Israeli Air Force Museum – *Hatzerim* – The museum houses a huge collection of airplanes and helicopters, which were just some of the standard equipment of the Israel Air Force. There are also exhibits of Israeli civil aviation. A rare collection of historical and instructive films are available in the video archives and are shown in a Boeing 707 (the one used in the Entebbe rescue operation), accompanied by explanations. There is also a separate section on air-defense means

## Outdoor sites – These are just a few of the many possibilities!

- Ramat HaNadiv National Park is the burial ground of Baron Edmond and Baroness Adelaide de Rothschild. The gardens stretch over many dunams. There are marked hiking trails into the nature reserve, and a picnic area
- Givat Ada: Alona Aqueduct Park – These ancient Roman aqueducts show the Roman presence from the shores of Caesarea all the way inland to Alona Aqueduct Park in Givat Ada. The underground cisterns are filled with water just as in days of yore, and you can walk through the cisterns. Cooling, refreshing and educational!
- Beaches – countless amazing beaches



## Archeological sites (outside of Jerusalem)

- Tzipori
- Beit Shean
- Tiberias
- Beit Alpha
- Tel Gezer
- Park Shuni (Jabotinsky Park) – home to the Etsel Museum, as well as the site of a Roman amphitheater and archeological finds, and one of the more ancient spas in Israel today.



- Beit Guvrin National Park

## Environmental:

- Kibbutz Lotan Eco-Center
- Kibbutz Ein Shemer's ecological greenhouse
- Kerem Maharal – environmental teaching center
- Friends of the Earth Middle East  
[http://www.foeme.org/about\\_us.php](http://www.foeme.org/about_us.php)
- Water research– visit the Limnological Center of the Sea of Galilee, visit a desalinization plant, learn about the National Water Carrier

## Health and Relaxation

- Water Shiatsu (Watsu) and therapeutic pools
- Spa day

## Examples of IsraelExperts Itineraries

Each IsraelExperts schedule is different, custom made to fit the participants of the program. Here are just some of the examples of kinds of groups that IsraelExperts has worked with.

- Teen adventures
- Synagogue tours
- Family tours
- Federation tours
- Bar/Bat Mitzvah tours
- First timer's programs
- Returning again and again programs
- Seniors tours

## Expert Planning

For each trip we work with you to build a program that is an experience from start to finish. It's not just the places you go that make the trip, its the things you do, experience and discuss that make it unforgettable.

### **10 Questions to consider regarding your trip to Israel**

1. **Who** is coming? Adults, singles, seniors, couples, young adults, students, families, youth, teachers, lay leaders, professionals, first-timers, repeat visitors, others?
2. What are the **ages** of those you anticipate traveling?
3. **How many** participants do you expect? (Most cost effective is approximately 40.)
4. How many **staff** do you plan to bring? What role do you expect them to play? Do their costs need to be built into the participants' costs?
5. **When and for how long** do you want to come?
6. What level/type of **accommodations** do you require?
7. Please tell us about your **goals** for the trip. Be sure to **include issues, themes, people or organizations** you are interested in meeting.
8. What type of **Shabbat** experience do you want?
9. Is you community involved in Partnership 2000 initiatives, sister-city, congregation twinning or other **ongoing relationships with Israel**? If so, please give details.
10. Please tell us **anything else** that is important for us to know in order to help you create the right program and itinerary for you.



## Trip Planning Time Table

Date	What
<p>At least 8 months before trip (10 months is recommended)</p>	<p>Contact IsraelExperts to start organizing a trip to Israel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set expectations</li> <li>• Outline objective(s)</li> <li>• Identify constraints</li> <li>• Get permission for the trip if necessary</li> </ul> <p>Gather information, develop basic plan along with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeline for plans</li> <li>• Who is the trip aimed at</li> <li>• Proposed budget and fundraising plans</li> </ul> <p>Itinerary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set the initial framework of your itinerary as early as possible (especially if traveling during peak season) and determine hotels for each night. There's still time to tweak daily itinerary – but you want to ensure you get good hotel locations</li> <li>• Gauge the activity level of your group</li> </ul>
<p>6 to 8 months before trip (will vary according to timeline set)</p>	<p>Initial advertising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start advertising the program</li> <li>• Get a general idea of who might be interested in order to determine what type of trip should be planned.</li> </ul>
<p>2 to 4 months before departure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize your participants list</li> </ul>
<p>7 to 30 days before departure</p>	<p>Lists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure that all paperwork has been turned in.</li> </ul>
<p>4 weeks before departure</p>	<p>Send to your chosen trip organizer a summary of changes to original information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final list of participants and passport numbers</li> <li>• Final itinerary</li> <li>• Flight numbers</li> </ul>
<p>2 weeks prior to departure</p>	<p>Provide the following information and details to all participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final itineraries that include the address of all accommodations (including home stays), flight numbers and emergency contact information</li> <li>• Information pertaining to excursions, adventure activities and/or adventure camping that will take place on the trip</li> <li>• Packing list</li> <li>• Contact information for the Home Contact Person</li> </ul>
<p>Trip</p>	<p>Travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have everything organized in advance for the smoothest trip. Know ahead of time that things do not always flow smoothly, and be prepared to deal with it if you do not have someone handling it for you on the ground.</li> </ul>

## Meet the Experts

At IsraelExperts, we believe that a successful Israel program must combine quality, innovation, educational value, fun, a hands-on interactive approach and logistical flawlessness. We pride ourselves on the fact that we have established IsraelExperts as one of Israel's foremost organizers of Israel tours and educational programs by consistently striving to attain these goals. We work hand in hand with you to build a program that fits your needs and wants. With experts in both travel and education on staff, IsraelExperts works hard to make your program succeed every step of the way.

### **Joe Perlov – President**

With over 25 years of experience in informal Jewish education and Israel travel programs, Joe is sought out as an expert facilitator and designer of group, youth and community initiatives in Israel and abroad.



### **Steve Jaffe – Director of Operations**

A recognized leader in Israel travel industry, Steve has worked in all spheres of travel and served as the Director of Operations of Israel's leading tour operator for ten years before joining IsraelExperts

### **Bill Frankel – Director of IsraelExperts Taglit-Birthright Israel Program**

Holding a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology and with over two decades experience in informal education and development of leadership programs, Bill has been the director of residential camps, a university Dean of Students, and a producer of major educational events.



### **Steve Burnstein – Director, Center for Israel and Diaspora Education**

Steve was the Israel Ed. Consultant at Philly ACAJE during his rabbinic studies at RRC. He coordinated the MAKOM teachers' project. With an MA in Jewish Ed. from JTS, Steve received Reform Jewish Educator Certification while at Beth Torah in Kansas City. Previously he was the Associate Director of Pinat Shorashim at Kibbutz Gezer.

### **Roslyn Roucher – Senior Education Consultant**

Ros coordinated adult learning at Congregation Sinai in Milwaukee and was P2K Director for the Jewish Federation. Ros holds the designation of R.J.E from NATE and has an M.A. in Jewish Education from the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, HUC-JIR and a B.A. from Brandeis University.

