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TAGLIT-BIRTHRIGHT: ISRAEL STUDENT GUIDE



TAGLIT • תגלית
BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL

HOPKINS הילל
הופקינס HILLEL

A PROGRAM OF
TheAssociated
Inspiring Jewish Community

compiled by Hopkins Hillel birthright intern Michelle Edelson '15 (Hopkins birthright participant 2014)

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HISTORY OF ISRAEL



WELCOME

to the Hopkins Student Guide to Hopkins Birthright! We are so excited to have you join us on our Taglit-Birthright Israel trip. We cannot wait to land in Israel and for our adventure to start!

This guide helps outline every part of the trip from pre-departure to your last days in Israel and incorporates past participants' experiences, memories and most importantly advice. This is a trip of a lifetime so be sure to check this guide out before we leave so you can be as ready as possible!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our Birthright intern at jhutbi.intern@gmail.com



TIMELINE

1000-922 B.C.	King David & King Solomon establish a Hebrew kingdom Solomon builds the first temple
332 B.C.	Alexander the Great conquers Jerusalem
63 B.C.	Rome, led by Pompey the Great, conquers the region
634 A.D.	Muslim armies conquer the region
1500s	Ottoman Turkish rule conquer the region
1917	The Balfour Declaration gives British approval to the effort to create a Jewish homeland and after WWI, the area is under British control
May 14, 1948	The State of Israel is proclaimed and David Ben-Gurion is its first Prime Minister
May 15, 1948	First Arab-Israeli War – neighboring Arab countries declare war on Israel, but Israel survives
1967	Six-Day War – Israel attacks Egypt & occupies West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai peninsula, & Syria's Golan Heights
October 6, 1973	Yom Kippur War – Egypt attacked territory occupied by Israel
March 26, 1979	Egypt and Israel sign a peace treaty
1982	Israel invades Lebanon to attack Palestinian Liberation Organization fighters (PLO)
1987	A Palestinian uprising against Israel starts in the West Bank and Gaza
1993	PLO and Israel sign a treaty known as the Oslo Accords to recognize each other
1994	Jordan and Israel sign a peace treaty
2006	Second Lebanon War
2009	Benjamin Netanyahu becomes Prime Minister
2014	Operation Protective Edge



PRE-TRIP PLANNING AND LOGISTICS



PRE-ORIENTATION

Before going to Israel, we will be having three orientation programs. These programs are meant to help you prepare for the trip, meet your fellow peers that you will be traveling with and to ask any questions you may have. Please mark the dates in your calendar (all programs will take place at the Hillel Smokler Center for Jewish Life).

TO-DO CHECKLIST

- Call your credit card company and bank (in order to use your credit card in Israel) and tell them where you are traveling and when.
- Pre-order cell phones if desired (they definitely are not necessary).
- Buy (or locate) a European adapter for electrical appliances.



THE STAFF



HILLEL STAFF

Each bus will have two Hillel staff members. Your Hillel staff members are on the trip to ensure that the Birthright experience is everything you want it to be.

TOUR GUIDE

When you land in Israel, your assigned guide will meet you at the airport and lead you around Israel for the entire duration of your trip. Each tour guide leads his or her trip differently, which makes every Birthright experience unique.

BUS DRIVER

Like the trip's tour guide, the trip's bus driver will be with the trip every step up of the way from pick up to drop off at the airport. Treat the bus driver with respect and try to get to know him or her (if you can). It feels great to feel appreciated so when you are getting off the bus be sure to say "thank you" and smile – it will make the bus driver's day and make your trip much more enjoyable. Remember, that when you sleep on the hour long trip to get somewhere in the morning, your bus driver is awake and focused the entire time, getting you to where you are supposed to be safely.

MEDIC/GUARD

Every trip will have a medic who will travel with you all over Israel. The medic will be the only person to carry a gun, however, it is very unlikely that it will be used (and no, you are not allowed to touch the gun, so don't ask). It should be noted that it is forbidden to have any form of a romantic relationship with the medic (no matter how cute he or she is)!

SAMPLE ITINERARY



Please note that this is a sample itinerary and may be different from your trip (some groups do Jerusalem first, some do it last – switched with the Kibbutz)

Day 1: Departure

Depart the USA

Day 2: Welcome to Israel!

Depart the airport and drive to Jerusalem

Day 3: Day Trip to Tel Aviv

Drive to Tel Aviv for a day trip – visit Tel Aviv and Jaffa

Day 4: Experience around Jerusalem

Spend a day experiencing Jerusalem and return to the hotel for Shabbat

Day 5: Shabbat

This date may change based on when you leave the USA in relation to Shabbat

Day 6: Dead Sea

Depart Jerusalem and go to Dead Sea basin. After visiting the Dead Sea, the group will head to the Bedouin tent for the night

Day 7: Masada

Climb up Masada and watch the sunrise. Afterwards, the group will head to Ashkelon

Day 8: Ashkelon

Spend a day exploring Ashkelon

Day 9: Along the Coast

Spend a day exploring nature, learning about the Gaza Strip and head to the Kibbutz

Day 10: Nature and Security

Head to Tiberias and learn about the Golan Heights (get excited for a Jeep ride!)

Day 11: Galilee

Learn about the Galilee

Day 12: If you are lucky you will get to spend a second Shabbat in Israel before heading back to the USA



TRIP HIGHLIGHTS



MASADA

Masada, an ancient fortification which resides in the desert overlooking the Dead Sea. Hiking Masada is one of everyone's favorite memories – waking up before the sunrise and watching it from on top on the mountain is well worth it. While on top, be sure to look out for any remnants of ancient civilization – many rulers lived on top of Masada and you can still see the thermal baths as well as other parts of the fortification.

"Masada was absolutely beautiful. It was amazing to look out over the mountain and see the Dead Sea spreading out before us." Teddy Owen

DEAD SEA

The Dead Sea, which tends to be one of the main attractions during Birthright, is also known as the Salt Sea. It borders Jordan to the east and Israel to the west and is earth's lowest elevation on land. The Dead Sea is comprised on 34.2 percent salt, making it one of the saltiest bodies of water and inhospitable for sea life (hence the name). Because of the high concentration of salt, anyone can easily float in the Dead Sea, making it a very fun and exciting experience for any visitors. When visiting the Dead Sea, people typically cover their body with the mud before going into the water. There are changing areas (with showers) by the Dead Sea, but nothing extremely glamorous. Additionally, for those who are interested, there is a store that you can buy AHAVA products, which are products made of minerals from the Dead Sea.

"The Dead Sea was my favorite part of the trip – I easily could have spent all ten days there. The area was beautiful and the Sea was a perfect temperature – we'd had a couple days of rain surrounding our scheduled Dead Sea trip and there was a slight chance we weren't going to be able to go in the sea – the weather held up though and it was one of my favorite days on Birthright!" Savannah Karmen-Tuohy

THE WESTERN WALL

The Western Wall is the holiest of sites that you will visit during Birthright. It is situated on the western side of Temple Mount, a very holy site in the Jewish religion. The Western Wall has been a place for both Jewish prayer and pilgrimage for centuries. When you arrive, you will see that it is divided into one side for men and one side for women. Please be observant of the other people who may be praying and feel free to join in the custom of writing your own prayer on a piece of paper and putting it into one of the many cracks in the wall – good luck finding one!



MOUNT HERZL

Mount Herzl, which translates to Mount of Remembrance, is Israel's national cemetery. Mount Herzl is named after Theodor Herzl who is the founder of modern political Zionism. Mount Herzl is a really special place where many of Israel's strong political leaders are buried as well as any soldier who died while serving in the IDF. Be respectful of the Israeli soldiers during this visit because it hits close to home for them and they may know someone who died during his or her service. They may also share stories they have during this visit and if they do, soak up every word.

"This location was incredibly unique because of the raw emotion we witnessed from the Israeli soldiers with whom we had been traveling. Although we had spent much of the trip with the soldiers laughing and joking, it was a sobering experience to see their inner feelings exposed, in relation to the danger they and countless other (who, by the way, are around the same age as us) experience while serving their country. Coming from a country where conscription is not mandatory, it took this experience to finally step inside the shoes of an Israeli soldier, and see the sacrifices they have and will make."

Henry Bernstein

YAD VASHEM

Yad Vashem is the Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem. This museum is not an easy place to visit for some. Please be respectful of everyone as you go through the museum. There will be a guide to take you through the museum and you will have group discussions about the visit to Yad Vashem.

"Yad Vashem was one of the most moving experiences for me on Birthright. After you have looked in chronological order at the events of the holocaust inside the memorial, you make your way to the end, which is a lookout point overlooking the city of Jerusalem. My grandmother was a Holocaust survivor and one of her biggest wishes was to someday travel to Israel and see Jerusalem. Even though she never got the chance, I was incredibly moved to be able to look out over the beautiful city and experience that moment for her." Andrea Fields

MOUNT BENTAL (HAR BENTAL)

Mount Bental is situated in the Golan Heights and overlooks Syria, Mount Hermon and the Golan Heights. On top of the windy mountain is an IDF fortification that is no longer in use, but shows the bunkers and construction that are used in military operation. Be sure to bring warm clothes when you visit because it can get extremely windy (and chilly) – there is a café to buy some warm hot chocolate or coffee or you would like.



SHUK IN JERUSALEM (MACHANE YEHUDA MARKET)

Machane Yehuda Market usually referred to as the “Shuk” is the open-air market in Jerusalem that is constantly buzzing with people who are shopping for their daily needs. There are more than 250 vendors that sell everything from fruits and vegetables to spices, clothing, baked goods, textiles and Judaica. You can literally find anything you want inside. On Thursdays and Fridays, the Shuk is packed with local shoppers getting ready for Shabbat, making the experience inside extremely exciting and interesting. In addition to vendors selling food to be prepared, there are also vendors that sell prepared Israeli food such as falafel, shawarma, shakshuka, and more. Before you leave, be sure to check out Marzapan for the best rugelach in Israel!

“The visit to Machane Yehuda is such an exciting part of Birthright. Especially if you go on a Friday afternoon right before Shabbat, you get a glimpse of what its like to live in Israel. There’s so much to see and taste – it’s impossible to leave without a full stomach.”

Ben Ackerman



TZFAT

Known as a spiritual or mystical town, Tzfat is home to a large community that practices Kabbalah. In the 1950s and 1960s, Tzfat was known as the art capital for Israel attracting talented artists from all parts of the country, which explains the many art galleries and local artisanal shops that populate the narrow and windy cobblestone streets. You may even get to see an artist at work while exploring Tzfat, so keep a lookout for that. If you are interested in shopping for artisanal goods, this is the place to go!



BALTIMORE-ASHKELON PARTNERSHIP



HISTORY

The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore’s commitment to connecting our community to Israel reaches its apex with the Baltimore-Ashkelon Partnership. Ashkelon has been our sister city since 2003 and provides a wonderful opportunity for Baltimoreans and Ashkelonim to explore Jewish identity and volunteerism together, bonding over issues of shared concern. Through a partnership between Jewish Volunteer Connection in Baltimore and the Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Volunteer Center in Ashkelon, volunteers and professionals from both cities work alongside one another to foster community.

PAST PROJECTS

Winter 2012 – volunteered with Kindergarten students on a project

Winter 2013 – volunteered with new Ethiopian immigrants to Israel

Winter 2014 – assisted elementary school students in Tu B’Shevat mosaic projects

“I had so much fun talking to the students in Ashkelon. It was nice that they were able to help me learn Hebrew even though they were like half my age!” Samantha Hirsch

“I loved our Baltimore-Ashkelon partnership experience – two of our soldiers were actually from Ashkelon, which made our whole volunteer experience that much more meaningful. We were just a couple of blocks from one of their houses and he knew a lot of the neighborhood kids that we met at the school, his brother even goes to their programs some times – the after school program definitely has a significant impact on the sense of community in the area – it was wonderful to experience that alongside someone who had grown up in the community and witnessed the development of the program firsthand.”

Savannah Karmen-Tuohy

"The Baltimore-Ashkelon Partnership experience was very interesting. Due to the close proximity of Ashkelon to the Gaza Strip the children of Ashkelon had been through a lot and were very mature for their age. I really enjoyed conversing with these children because I learned from a personal level what it's like to grow up in the midst of war."

Julia Silverman

"It was great to feel like we were helping out their community instead of being complacent as tourists. Instead, we felt welcomed by the residents of Ashkelon, who were very grateful for our help." Henry Bernstein



PACKING LIST



- 6 short-sleeved t-shirts (12 in summer)
- 3 pairs of jeans/pants
leggings (for women) are good extra pairs of pants to bring
- 2 pairs of shorts (4 in summer)
- 8 long-sleeved shirts (3 in summer)
- 4 sweaters or sweatshirts (2 in summer)
good for one of the sweatshirts to be a fleece
- 4 tank tops
(for women, good for layering)
- 1 workout outfit for hiking Masada
- 1 mid-weight jacket
- 1 heavy jacket (carry on plane)
you don't need a very heavy jacket (like a winter jacket) as long as you can layer the sweatshirts and jackets you bring
- 1 raincoat

- 1 bathing suit (2 in summer)
note: the bathing suit you wear into the Dead Sea will likely get covered in the mud you put on yourself – the mud comes off, but definitely don't take your absolute favorite bathing suit in case something happens... it may even get smelly from the salt water
- 14 pairs of underwear
- 14 pairs of socks
- 1 pair of water shoes
waterproof flip-flops, crocs, etc. work (for going into the Dead Sea) because the floor of the sea is sharp with salt crystals
- 1 pair of sturdy shoes for hiking/
sneakers are fine – you don't need hiking boots
- 1 pair of nicer shoes (for Shabbat)

1 long skirt (women)/ nice khakis (men) (for Shabbat)
not necessary for the skirt to be below the knees, just be conservative and respectful (should look nicer than the rest of the trip)

1 nicer blouse or shirt (for Shabbat)

1 towel
definitely bring for Dead Sea...also may get smelly and gross (may want to leave in the Holy Land)

1 hat
definitely great to bring Hopkins gear!!

"Going out" outfits (for city nights)
only need about 4 nights of going out outfits

Passport **DO NOT FORGET THIS ITEM!!**

All medications (including copies of prescriptions)
can also bring over the counter medication like Advil, cold meds, stomach meds if you want

Prescription glasses/ contact lens supplies (no liquids more than 3 oz.)

Cash/ATM Card/Credit Card (Visa & MasterCard are widely accepted)
they do NOT accept Discover credit cards, AmEx is okay

1 water bottle

Camera, charger/batteries
bring a camera if you have one, great photo opportunities!

Journal/ address book
not necessary, complete personal preference for this item

Mini flashlight or penlight
should bring a headlamp or flashlight for Bedouin tent

Plastic bags for wet or dirty clothes
definitely bring some!

Sunglasses

Sunscreen

Toiletries
shampoo & conditioner (hotel supplies if you don't have a preference). Toothbrush, toothpaste, razor

Kippa/head covering (men)

Drawstring backpack (or other type of bag for the day to put money, water bottle, camera, sweatshirt, snacks, etc.)

Adapter for electrical appliances (electrical equipment has to be adaptable to 220 volts & have a European adapter for the prong. Equipment on a motor (i.e. electric shaver) must be adaptable to 50 Hz (as opposed to 110 volts & 60 Hz for North America)

"ONE THING YOU WISHED YOU'D PACK"



"An extra pair of sunglasses. I lost mine in the Dead Sea." – *Ben Ackerman*

"I wish I had packed a backpack and layers. The Bedouin tent gets really cold so make sure to bring sweatpants and a sweatshirt." – *Andrea Fields*

"Pack your own sheets, own towel, a day bag, a tote bag for the bus and bring purell." – *Samantha Hirsch*

"A more substantial jacket - while it certainly wasn't as cold as an American winter, it did snow right before we came in Jerusalem and a lot of the cities were windy!" – *Savannah Karmen-Tuohy*

"I definitely wish I'd packed some warmer clothes! In my head I kept thinking Israel = desert so I don't need any warm clothes... but the desert gets cold at night and I was absolutely freezing the Bedouin Tent." – *Julia Silverman*

"Tougher shoes. My sneakers gave out pretty early in the trip. Had I been smart I would've packed a rugged pair of Timberlands." – *Henry Bernstein*

"Zip block bags and an umbrella for when it rains." – *Michelle Edelson*

"Hand sanitizer" – *Tracy Altman*

"Reusable/ drawstring bag to put things in for day trips and Bedouin tent" – *Audrey Bloomberg*

"Travel toilet paper, flashlight and band aids" – *Merav Fine*

"Warm clothes for the Bedouin Tent" – *Aleksandra Olekhnovich*

"Old Bay. Put it on shawarma, falafel, whatever... it makes good food great" – *Nick Gingberg*

"A portable speaker that has a long battery life and an Aux cable for jeep rides, bus rides and in the hotel" – *Hillel Pro*

"A towel" – *Rebekah Thornill*

"Cheap flip flops or water shoes for walking in the Dead Sea" – *Jeremy Cockrell*

"Snacks (peanut butter crackers, nuts, power bars, granola). Perfect for the longer bus rides of if you don't like the hostel food." – *Jordan Posner*



There is limited Wi-Fi in Israel and it isn't always reliable. Some cities will have it and the bus is equipped with Wi-Fi, however, sometimes the bus isn't reliable and the Wi-Fi doesn't work (especially if everyone is trying at the exact same time).

The three hotels that Hopkins Birthright has stayed at for the past two years have Wi-Fi, however it isn't always free. Two of the hotels have free Wi-Fi in the lobby area, but if you want Wi-Fi in your room you will have to pay (See "Hotel/Bus" section for more information).



Traditionally, each trip will stay at four different hotels including the Bedouin tent. Below are little reviews about the four hotels that Hopkins has stayed at for the past two winter trips.

RIMONIM SHALOM HOTEL JERUSALEM

Situated in one of the oldest cities in the world, Rimonim Shalom Hotel Jerusalem serves as a base during the trip's visit to the city. There is no free Wi-Fi in the hotel so be sure to send your iMessages and emails before you get there. If you want, you can purchase Wi-Fi (for two hours, an extended period of hours or for a day). This hotel isn't known for its food so be sure to grab big lunches when you get meals on your own because the food isn't the best. There is a bar in the lobby equipped with tables, chairs and couches that serves as a hangout spot at night.

"The hotel in Jerusalem was a very cool experience because there were SO many other birthright groups at the hotel with us. I got to meet lots of different people from different schools. The hotel was probably 20 stories high though, and had small elevators that stopped on every floor during Shabbat so be prepared to get a great workout walking up and down those stairs throughout your time there." *Julia Silverman*

DAN GARDENS ASHKELON

Located in Baltimore's sister city Ashkelon, Dan Gardens Ashkelon serves as the base during the trip's visit to Ashkelon. There is free Wi-Fi in the lobby, but not in the rooms. Make sure to eat up at this hotel because the food is great – they have a full salad bar (make your own salad and pre-made salads), vegetable dishes, main course options and soup. Breakfast is similarly a feast with infinite options, especially sweets. Similar to Rimonim Shalom Hotel Jerusalem, there is a bar situated in the lobby of this hotel with couches around to serve as a social gathering space.

GINOSAR KIBBUTZ HOTEL

Situated in the Galilee (the north), Ginosar Kibbutz Hotel gives participants a brief experience of what living on a Kibbutz is like. Be sure to walk around if you have any free time and get a glimpse to how many Israelis live in Israel. There is free Wi-Fi in the lobby area, but not in the rooms. It should be noted that sometimes the Wi-Fi in the café section (past the lobby) is faster and more reliable than the lobby/reception Wi-Fi, so be sure to check that out if you are getting frustrated with your Wi-Fi not working and remember this trip is an opportunity to not always be connected. Eat up during breakfast at this hotel – there is an omelets station every morning, which is delicious. At every other meal, be sure to seek out all options – there are numerous pre-made salads, soup options and of course main meal options. There is also a bar on the premise and is definitely a place the group should check out – it may be a little ratchet but a guaranteed fun time.

"The kibbutz was an awesome place to stay at because of how peaceful it was there. During free time, it was extremely soothing to sit outside and breath in the air by the nearby lake." Henry Bernstein

BEDOUIN TENT

Soak up every part of the Bedouin Tent experience – it truly is something special and unique. Of course there is no Wi-Fi as you are in the middle of the desert and sleeping in a tent for the night. The food is delicious at the Bedouin Tent, so be sure to eat up especially for dinner since it is one of the best meals provided in the entire trip. Do NOT leave any valuables (money, iPhones, etc.) in the tent unattended. This is extremely important – the tents do not lock and even though you may think nothing will happen, people have reportedly had valuables stolen, so if you don't need it for the night, leave it on the locked bus! Make sure to dress in LAYERS. As the sun goes down, it will definitely get chilly at night, but while you are sleeping, the tent will get very hot so rock those layers (wear shorts and a T-shirt and put sweats over them) so that you are prepared for the significant change in temperatures (basically it is super hot inside the tent, and freezing outside).

BUS

You will board the bus in Tel Aviv after landing in Israel to start you on your trip and you will leave the bus when you arrive back at the airport to head back to the United States. Therefore, it is imperative to keep the bus in the best condition possible. Garbage will undoubtedly collect on the bus, but be sure to throw out your own garbage because otherwise it will be your bus driver's responsibility even though it isn't his garbage.



ELECTRONICS



Bringing a computer, iPad or tablet isn't necessary, however you won't have access to a computer during your trip unless you bring one. Most students bring their iPhones as their sole electronic device because they can get Wi-Fi and it serves as an iPod, which can be good for long bus rides. Some students have brought computers or tablets, but they aren't very popular and they can take away from time you can be spending bonding with your fellow trip members.

CASH



You will be able to exchange dollars for shekels when you board the bus at the airport. It is strongly suggested to exchange some cash here so that you don't have to worry about finding an ATM on the first day or two of the trip. Israel has many ATMs (more in the big cities) so it is easy to take out money and most places take credit cards (remember to call your credit card company!), but it is definitely encouraged to make sure you always have shekels because some places will only accept shekels.



FOOD



MEALS ON YOUR OWN

Every day (roughly) you will either eat lunch or dinner on your own (breakfast is always provided and either lunch or dinner will be provided for you everyday). As past participants, we suggest you budget about \$15-\$20 per meal. Some meals may be a little bit more expensive than that and some meals less, but this is the suggested amount to budget for.

In case you are wondering how to know where you will eat, there will always be a designated area to explore for lunch. Your Birthright guide will help direct you if you have a specific type of food you are looking for, but there will be plenty of options for you to choose from. If you love falafel, go for it (there will always be some place you can find it), but if you have had too much falafel, then don't just settle – go and find another place that has shawarma, salads, soups, sandwiches, or other cuisines. And just remember, you are in a foreign country, so be flexible and open to experiencing new things!

LUNCH RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Aroma – their ice coffee is a must
 - a. "Their salads are really good." – *Samantha Hirsch*
2. Tel Aviv
 - a. Falafel
 - i. Oin the Shuk HaCarmel (6 shekels)
 - ii. One is by Kikar Rabin (has good soy shawarma for any vegetarians who want to experience shawarma)
3. Ben-Yehuda Street
 - a. Moshiko
 - i. Order a Hetzi-Hetzi in a Laffa (Half schawarma and half schnitzel wrapped into a big naan like bread and topped with French Fries.
 1. A past participant referred to it as "LITERALLY HEAVEN".
 - ii. "The biggest must on Birthright. It was packed with college-aged kids when we went, for good reason." – *Andrea Fields*

"You can't really go wrong with any of the shawarma we tried in Israel and we tried A LOT (but make sure you ask what's in it first – 'Merav Yerushalmi' Jerusalem mix is made of hearts, spleens, livers and fried onions)." Andrea Fields

"Look for sushi sandwiches (I know it sounds weird), but they're basically rice patties formed in the shape of bread, stuffed like a sandwich with normal filling of sushi roll like salmon and avocado." Andrea Fields

"The majority of my favorite food was in Tel Aviv – there was a Middle Eastern/ French restaurant (Gedera 26) that was so good, I went during our Birthright visit to Tel Aviv and again when I came back to Tel Aviv for my extension!" Savannah Karmen-Tuohy

"The constant dilemma while in Israel is schawarma or falafel, so if you're indecisive like myself, definitely go to Moshiko or Ben Yehuda Street for their popular shawarma-falafel combination sandwich, otherwise called the shawarmalafel. It's awesome!" Julia Silverman

"Pretty much any schwarmā – very hard to go wrong there." Henry Bernstein

SNACKS

If you are a picky eater or someone who is always hungry, bring snacks. The days can be long because there is so much to see and do, so having a Luna bar or Power Bar in your bag is always a useful idea. Some of the hotels have much better food than others so it is a good idea to have some snacks (pretzels, chips, crackers, etc.) in your room that you can always grab and eat if you aren't full from the meal. You will have a chance throughout the trip to buy snacks along the way at gas stations or markets, however, Israeli snacks aren't the same as American snacks so if you are a picky eater, it is a good idea to bring food you are familiar with from home that you like.

SOME TRIP FAVORITES

1. Bamba – Israeli peanut butter corn puffs
2. Kinder Happy Hippo Chocolate
3. Pop Rocks Chocolate – a huge favorite (and makes for a great gift for people back in the states)
4. Dried Dates
5. Doritos (different than American Doritos and definitely worth a try!)
6. Make sure you have a random Israeli teach you how to eat a Krembo





SHOPPING



OVERVIEW

There will be opportunities throughout the trip to shop for family, friends, yourself or any other reason you may have. Each place you visit will offer unique items. If you have something specific you are looking for, be sure to ask your tour guide if there is a specific place to buy it. If you don't have anything specific in mind, enjoy the different shopping areas – the Shuk and Tzfat specifically. If you are looking for jewelry, *tallit* or something mystical, Tzfat is definitely the place to look! For the ladies interested in Hamsas, there will be *plenty* of opportunities, so don't worry if you miss out on the first one.

"My favorite place we shopped was definitely Tzfat. It's perfect for knick-knacks and souvenirs, but also for jewelry. You'll definitely find any style of that sought after Hamsa necklace you could possibly want, and don't be afraid to bargain a little (or get someone braver to do it for you)." Andrea Fields

"The Carmel market or Shuk in Tel Aviv was definitely the best place to shop – I went back during my extension and was able to visit on one of the days that all of the artist vendors had their products on display, in addition to the vendor stalls that are always open. I found great presents for my friends and family – beautiful jewelry, hand-carved mezusahs, ceramic trinkets, those kinds of things." Savannah Karmen-Tuohy

SHABBAT



OVERVIEW

Most trips only have one Shabbat on their trip, which is celebrated in Jerusalem. If you are one of the lucky groups, you may get the opportunity to celebrate two Shabbats in Israel. The most important thing to remember is that Shabbat in Jerusalem is what you make of it and what you want. You will likely celebrate Shabbat with other Hillel Birthright trips. There will be Friday night services – Orthodox, Conservative, Reform or Meditation and Shabbat dinner following. Saturday morning services are optional as well as Saturday morning yoga. The afternoon will vary based on your leaders and what activities they have planned, but Shabbat is supposed to be a day to reflect and relax (and you should take advantage of being able to get extra hours of sleep – you will want and need it!), so be open to what is planned. Before your night activities (going out, packing before heading back to the states or something else), you will join the other Hillel Birthright trips for a beautiful Havdalah service, which, if you are lucky and the "weather gods" are on your side, it may be outside on the roof of the hotel overlooking the city. Shabbat is what you make of it so don't be afraid to go out of your comfort zone and embrace the experience.

ONEG EXPERIENCE

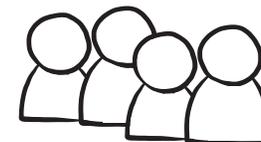
If you have never been to an Oneg before, get excited! Hopkins Hillel has their own Oneg, which can be better referred to as the after-party after Shabbat services and dinner.

"Shabbat is one of the most special parts of Birthright. You spend so much of the trip running around, trying to take in as much as you can, and then Shabbat serves as a great break to relax and reflect on what you've done. Keeping Shabbat in Israel is an amazing experience, take advantage of it!" Ben Ackerman

"Shabbat in Jerusalem was an amazing experience. While I never really go to Shabbat services at home, being able to attend them in the city of Jerusalem and look out over the entire city while praying was a moment I'll never forget." Andrea Fields

"Shabbat was an amazing experience, especially because we got to celebrate with other students from around the world." Samantha Hirsch

"The Shabbat experience in Israel was like nothing I'd ever seen before. Transitioning from being in the busy Shuk on a Friday afternoon as families prepared for Shabbat dinner to absolute peace and serenity as the sun went down was truly incredible." Julia Silverman



OVERVIEW

Most Birthright trips only get to have soldiers join them for five days, however our trips are lucky and get soldiers to join them for all 10 days thanks to The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore! For those who don't know, soldiers serving in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) join each Birthright trip, which allows Birthright participants to better understand life in Israel and vice versa for the Israeli soldiers to better understand Jewish Americans. Depending on the day, the soldiers may be in their uniform and you will understand why they are when they are. You should maximize on this once in a lifetime opportunity to get to interact with Israeli soldiers who are your age (or so) in a safe and exciting environment. Feel free to ask them as many questions as you want!

"Birthright soldiers get to take a week off from the army to join Birthright buses. It's fun to meet Israelis around your age, learn about their experiences living in Israel, and make friends that you can see again if you ever come back to Israel." Ben Ackerman

"Ask as many questions to the soldiers as possible because it is so interesting to learn about how someone your age is living in another country. The soldiers on our trip (January 2014) became my best friends because as Jews in Israel you will instantly connect on a different level than you do with most people. They truly made my experience complete and I will continue to keep in touch with them and learn from them." Samantha Hirsch

"The soldiers on my trip were all hilarious, great to be around and were definitely just as excited as we were to be touring Israel. I found it very interesting discussing with them the difference of being a Jew in American and a Jew in Israel. It was a learning experience on both ends for sure." Julia Silverman



ISRAELI MEN



OVERVIEW

Israeli men can be very aggressive. They are not like American men where they buy you a drink and it doesn't mean anything. In Israel when they buy you a drink, they think you are going back home with them.

"Israeli men are SASSY. They had no problem poking fun at us the minute we met them – our bus was very close with our soldiers (who were mainly men) and because we were all so close, the men had no problem joking around with us all the time."

Savannah Karmen-Tuohy

"There are few things more incredible in this world than beautiful passionate men in uniform...I'll just leave it at that." Julia Silverman



T-SHIRT



OVERVIEW

Every Taglit-Birthright group designs a T-shirt that captures their 10-day long trip. The T-shirt is supposed to be a fun memento that every participant (tour guide and bus driver included) gets to take home with them whether that home is Israel or the United States. If you are artistically talented, creative in any manner, or have a simple desire to work on designing the T-shirt, be sure to be on the lookout for the T-shirt committee announcements and let your staff member know you are interested in helping design the T-shirt.

PAST T-SHIRT IDEAS:

January 2014 – Instagram application from iPhone and the different hashtags used throughout the trip

Dec 2012/January 2013 – Inside jokes



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