

Canada Israel Experience Pre-Trip Guide



This trip is a gift from Taglit-Birthright Israel

Welcome!

Dear Taglit-Birthright Israel: CIE Participant,

As a participant in one of Canada Israel Experience's Taglit-Birthright Israel programs, we would like to welcome you formally to the CIE family. CIE is proud to be the largest and most experienced Taglit-Birthright Israel tour organizer in Canada. Our team of both professional and volunteer staff in Canada and Israel is completely dedicated to making sure that you not only have an enriching and educational ten days in Israel, but that you also embark upon an adventure that will last a lifetime.

“The program was indescribable, the friendships incomparable, and the memories everlasting.” Jonathan Livergant, Edmonton

Canada Israel Experience has created this guide for the purpose of helping you prepare for this incredible journey. In the following pages, you will find all the necessary tools and knowledge needed for this program. We encourage you to contact your local CIE community office should you have any further inquiries regarding CIE's Taglit-Birthright Israel program.

We wish you a wonderful trip and look forward to seeing you in Israel.

With warm regards,
The Team at Canada Israel Experience



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Canada Israel Experience Who We Are

Canada Israel Experience (CIE) is an organization born of the collective vision to strengthen Jewish identity among Jewish youth and young adults through participation in meaningful Israel Experience programs. Since 1996, CIE has proven to uphold a tradition of excellence in preserving the highest quality of educational, logistical, and safety standards. As the leading Israel tour organizer in Canada, our organization is committed to ensuring that all of our programs provide CIE participants with a unique, unparalleled Israel Experience. It is Canada Israel Experience's goal to meet and respond to the needs of the Canadian Jewish community.

As a not-for-profit organization, CIE is funded by UIA Federations Canada and local UJA/CJA Federations across Canada. CIE prides itself on playing an active role within the Jewish Federation system. In this regard, Canada Israel Experience is the only Canadian tour organizer that maintains a national network of local Israel Experience representatives. In every major Canadian Jewish community, CIE employs a regional Canada Israel Experience professional ready to facilitate and assist participants in preparing for their Israel Experience. In addition to helping orient individuals before their trip to Israel, CIE community representatives are also eager to help all interested Canada Israel Experience alumni obtain the necessary tools and knowledge needed to get involved in their home Jewish community and/or return to Israel.

Canada Israel Experience boasts an organization that is properly equipped to provide each participant with a more diverse picture of Israel. At least two Canadian staff, an Israeli tour guide, and the necessary security personnel accompany each CIE trip.



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Taglit-Birthright Israel

A Gift That Lasts

The Taglit-Birthright Israel project was initiated in the year 2000 to provide Jewish individuals between the ages of 18 to 26 who had never traveled to Israel on an organized peer program, the opportunity to take part in a FREE ten day educational trip to Israel. Taglit-Birthright Israel believes that it is every Jewish person's birthright to experience Israel. The goal of this program was, and still is, to strengthen the sense of connection between young Israelis and Diaspora Jews worldwide, to increase the number of return visits to Israel, and to promote the role of Israel as a powerful resource in Jewish Learning.

“ In a whirlwind ten days of hiking, touring, swimming, partying, talking, singing, listening, absorbing, to pre-dawn hikes, from the Golan to Tzfat, from Jerusalem to Masada, the trip flew by like an amazingly vivid dream. ” Justin Barer, Vancouver

A Cut Above the Rest

Canada Israel Experience is proud to be the most experienced Israel program coordinator in the country, and the largest tour organizer in Canada offering Taglit-Birthright Israel programs to young adults. Our organization is equally pleased to be the only Taglit-Birthright Israel trip organizer to offer both national and community-based programs. This allows our participants to tour Israel either with peers from their local or university community, or with other Canadian Jews living across the country. As a result, CIE participants will have the opportunity to meet, network and build long-lasting relationships with other Canadian Jews.

As a participant on one of Canada Israel Experience's Taglit-Birthright Israel trips, you will be warmly welcomed into the CIE family. And as a member of this extended family, our organization is proud to offer each CIE program participant with additional luxuries that most other tour organizers do not provide.

1. Canada Israel Experience is happy to supply each of our Taglit-Birthright Israel participants with two full-course Kosher meals a day. In this case, participants only have to budget for one meal per day (either lunch or dinner).
2. Our organization is also proud to provide top-quality accommodations in three-to-four star hotels.
3. Canada Israel Experience is pleased to employ the finest Israeli tour educators in the country. Our educators are all graduates of the certified Israeli tour guide course. CIE tour educators possess the highest educational standards and are ready and willing to show you all the beauty that Israel has to offer.



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Canada Israel Experience Application Process

Online Application and Trip Documentation

Congratulations on successfully completing the online Taglit-Birthright Israel registration form. Below is a list of documentation that must be sent to the CIE National office immediately (Please note: Montreal residents are required to send their documentation directly to the Bronfman Israel Experience Centre office).

Below is a list of documentation that must be sent to the CIE National office immediately.

- \$250USD deposit (payable as part of online application)
- CIE Waiver Form (found on www.israelforfree.com under 'Forms')
- A photocopy of your valid passport (A valid passport is one that expires a minimum of 6 months after your return date (i.e. if you return from Israel on January 5, 2011, your passport must expire no earlier than July 5, 2011))

✿ Montreal Office
Bronfman Israel Experience Centre
1 Carré Cummings, Suite 500
Montreal, QC H3W 1M6

✿ National Office
Canada Israel Experience
4600 Bathurst Street, Suite 220
Toronto, ON M2R 3V3

Mandatory Interview

Once CIE receives your required trip documentation (see above), a representative will contact you to schedule a personal interview. This interview is mandatory in order to confirm your suitability and eligibility for the program. At this time, you may also ask any questions regarding the trip. *The successful completion of the interview is compulsory for your final acceptance to the trip.*



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Important Passport & Additional Information

Important Passport Information

In order to fly overseas to Israel, all air carriers require you to have a valid passport. Per Israeli government policy, a passport is considered valid if it does not expire 6 months after you return from Israel. For example, if you return from Israel on January 5, 2011, your passport **MUST** be valid until at least July 5, 2011. Please ensure you have sent a copy of your passport to Canada Israel Experience's National office in Toronto.

If you carry an Israeli passport or if you or either of your parents hold or held Israeli citizenship, you may require army exemption papers. These documents are necessary in order to bypass any difficulties at Israeli customs. Please take care of this with the Israeli Consulate in Toronto or Montreal, or the Embassy in Ottawa immediately. *If you are unsure if you require these papers, please call your local consulate to confirm.*

- ✿ Embassy of Israel - Ottawa (613) 567-6450
- Consulate of Israel - Toronto (416) 640-8500
- Consulate of Israel - Montreal (514) 940-8500

In addition, please make sure to bring another form of ID, other than your passport. CIE staff will be collecting your passports from you on the first day of the program. CIE provides this service so that you will not lose or have your passport stolen.

Additional Trip Forms and Online Registration

You will receive an e-mail from CIE, assigning you a username and password for our 'sister' registration system <http://www.cieregistration.com>. You are required to complete all details, including your medical, contact, passport and insurance information. Completing these details is a mandatory step in your registration process.

The e-mail will further instruct you to complete two additional steps – submitting a medical form signed by a physician, and emailing a photo. Photos must be e-mailed as JPEG or BMP files to ciiec@ujafed.org.

Orientation

Approximately, three weeks prior to departure, your bus leaders (madrachim) will contact you, informing you about a bus orientation. At this meeting, you will meet your bus leaders as well as fellow participants who will be joining you on your journey to Israel. This will be your chance to learn crucial information with respect to the procedures and policies of the program.



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Taglit-Birthright Israel As A Participant



As a Taglit-Birthright Israel: CIE participant, individuals have the privilege of taking part in a special Israeli encounter program, a Mifgash, whereby participants have the opportunity to meet and travel with Israeli peers throughout the country. This exceptional experience creates meaningful dialogue between CIE participants and Israeli young adults, presenting an intimate perspective of Israel, through various creative and recreational activities.

Join Canada Israel Experience this year on a Taglit-Birthright Israel program. Our organization offers these trips throughout the spring, summer and winter. If the view from Massada, archeological digging in the Israeli deserts, touring the Old City of Jerusalem, white water rafting down the Jordan River, hiking in the Golan Heights, relaxing in ancient Roman hot springs, and dancing in an Israeli night club interest you, then touring the best of Israel with CIE is just the ticket.

Let Canada Israel Experience treat you to the trip of a lifetime!



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Canada Israel Experience Safety & Security

Canada Israel Experience understands that questions regarding security are of critical importance to our participants and their families. CIE values this and is available to answer any questions that may arise. All CIE itineraries are planned in accordance with the security directives of Taglit-Birthright Israel International and The Ministry of Education Situation Room.

We hope the information provided below will help to clarify our organization's rigorous security measures taken throughout each Canada Israel Experience program.



A PROACTIVE RESPONSE

What happens if something out of the ordinary occurs while we are in Israel?

Canada Israel Experience staff are trained to deal with any security situation that may arise. If a group is in the city or region where the 'security situation' has occurred, they will immediately return to the bus and drive to their hotel where they will be met by a senior CIE Israel staff and given instructions on how to proceed. All buses have at least three cellular phones and two-way closed circuit radios that may be used in times of emergency. For your peace of mind, CIE operates a 24-hour toll free telephone number where family members can contact a CIE staff member in the event of an emergency. Itineraries will be changed as security situations warrant.



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Safety & Security

1-800-567-ISRAEL (4772)

Armed Escorts and Bus Drivers

The regulations stipulated by the Israel Ministry of Education have always required Canada Israel Experience to have one armed security escort throughout the trip in Israel. In compliance with these requirements, Canada Israel Experience does its best to guarantee the highest quality staff with a solid background in security knowledge and training. All bus drivers are subject to Taglit-Birthright Israel International approval. As a means for precaution, bus drivers are instructed to never leave the bus unattended or unlocked.

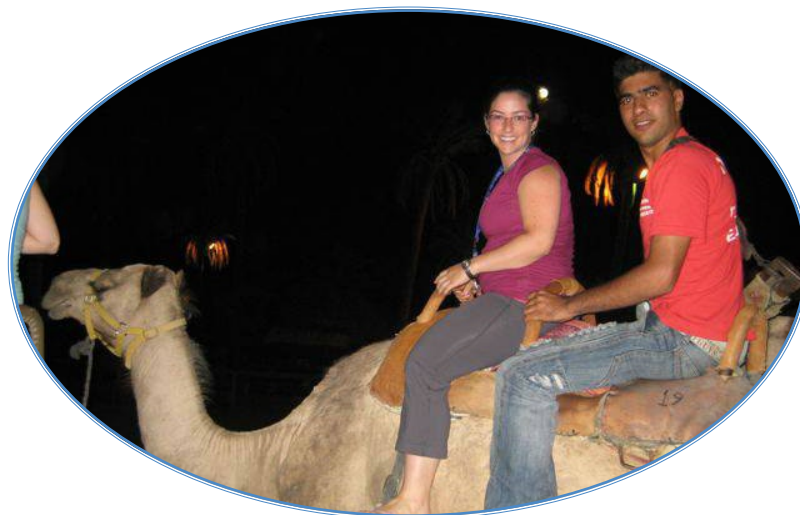
A QUESTION OF SAFETY & THE CIE RESPONSE

What is the Free Time Policy?

Should free time be granted to the group, the location and time will be at the sole discretion of the CIE Israel office. Participants are prohibited from leaving the group at any time without the supervision of a CIE staff, for any purpose including family visits, personal time, etc.

Canada Israel Experience reserves the right to immediately change a group's itinerary in response to any increased security risk.

CIE stands by its decision that participants are not permitted to take public buses at anytime.



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Routes & Roads

Safety & Security

Group travel will be according to the directives of Taglit-Birthright Israel and the Israel Ministry of Education Situation Monitoring Room.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding Canada Israel Experience safety and security guidelines, please feel free to contact our office at:

1-800-567-ISRAEL (4772)

“ We had the best group leaders and the most fabulous Israeli guide. At all times I felt safe. In fact, when the trip ended and I extended my trip, I missed the secure feeling of traveling in a group. Bus rides were never the same without the group. I now have over 40 new friends for life. ” Sharonne Katz, Halifax



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CIE Alumni Testimonies on Safety & Security

“Every protocol was fulfilled and at no time did I feel in danger, CIE took all of the precautions and I commend their efforts in providing an incredibly safe trip.” Mike Fegelman, Toronto Taglit-Birthright Israel: CIE alumnus

“The safety and security on Taglit-Birthright Israel: CIE exceeded my expectations. I never expected to feel as comfortable and at ease as I did on my trip.” Arielle Branitsky, Toronto Taglit-Birthright Israel: CIE alumnus

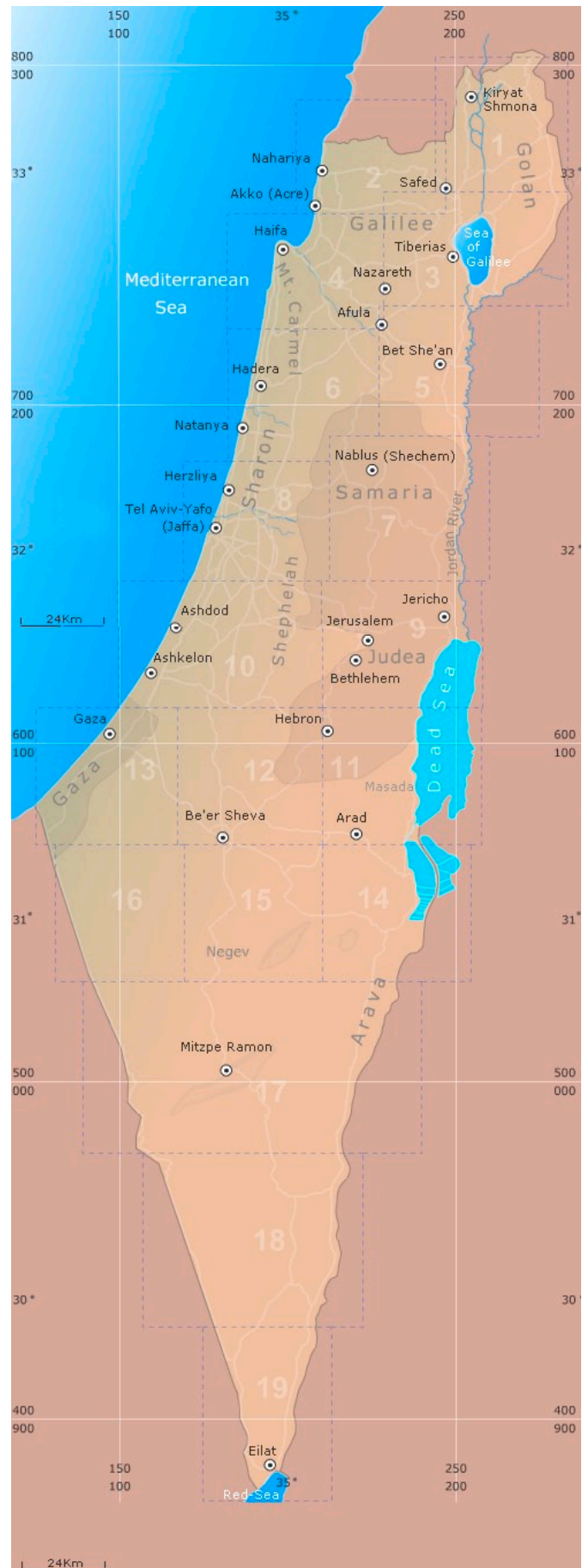
“When traveling to Israel, security is always a major priority. The Israelis from the IDF made us feel safe and enhanced our Israel experience as a group. Thanks to the security, our group experience has knit a tight web that will be hard to untangle.” Eyal Gamliel, Montreal Taglit-Birthright Israel: CIE alumnus

“I felt safe the entire time I was there. I don't believe there is anything CIE could have done to make me feel more secure. The safety and security of a Taglit-Birthright Israel: CIE trip more than met my security expectations, as I did not feel like my safety and security were ever in jeopardy.” Steve Reed, Vancouver Taglit-Birthright Israel: CIE alumnus

“My expectations of safety were surpassed during my Taglit-Birthright Israel trip with CIE. I can't say there is anything else CIE could have done to improve the safety. I felt safer in Israel than I do walking around my home city!” Todd Lipstein, Montreal Taglit-Birthright Israel: CIE alumnus



Taglit-Birthright Israel is an innovative partnership between the people of Israel through the Government of Israel, private philanthropists through the Birthright Israel Foundation and Jewish communities around the world (North American Jewish Federations; the Jewish Agency for Israel; and Keren Hayesod).



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Preparing For Your Trip

I. General departure location

All of Canada Israel Experience's Taglit-Birthright Israel trips depart from Toronto's Lester B. Pearson International Airport. Our trips fly with El Al Israel Airlines and/or Air Canada. There are two terminals at Pearson International Airport. Please note the terminal from which you are flying.

- Air Canada International departs from and returns to TERMINAL 1
- EL AL Israel Airlines departs from and returns to TERMINAL 3

II. When to arrive at the airport

All participants are required to arrive at the airport four (4) hours prior to departure. For example, if your flight to Israel departs at 10:30 p.m., you must join your group at the airport terminal by 6:30 p.m. Early arrival enables the group to go through security and board the plane in a timely and organized fashion.



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Preparing For Your Trip

III. Who can accompany me to the airport?

CIE, the airlines, and the Greater Toronto Airports Authority together request that family and friends do not join you in the terminal at Pearson International Airport. While we recognize that many people will want to wish you a safe and wonderful journey, airport security precautions require that each participant come into the terminal alone – to allow for easy and safe security passage. We would ask that you kindly adhere to this request.

IV. What do I do upon arrival at the terminal?

Once you arrive at the Toronto airport, we ask that you identify yourself to any Canada Israel Experience staff member. You will then be given your ticket, and join your group members in line for general check-in and security. As we often fly in large numbers, we appreciate your cooperation and patience.

Flight Reimbursement Information

Participants flying to Toronto from elsewhere in Canada are eligible to receive a flight reimbursement, subject to the conditions set out below. Subsidies are: \$100 from Montreal and Ottawa, \$150 from Atlantic Canada and Winnipeg, and \$250 from Calgary, Vancouver, and Saskatchewan. In order to receive this reimbursement, you must submit a Flight Reimbursement Form as well as a photocopy of your two-way e-ticket within 10 days of your return to Canada. *This subsidy only applies to round-trip plane tickets, not buses or trains, and the ticket must not be obtained using frequent flyer miles.*



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Preparing For Your Trip

Weather Forecast

Weather Forecast

The Israeli seasons are quite different than the North American seasons to which we are accustomed. The summer months are always hot and sunny and the heat usually reaches its peak in July and August. Israel also tends to experience hot and dry desert winds throughout the summer. The winters are usually rainy and windy.

Winter	High (°F)	High (°C)	Low (°F)	Low (°C)	Summer	High (°F)	High (°C)	Low (°F)	Low (°C)
Jerusalem	57	14	42	6	Jerusalem	82	28	59	15
Golan Heights	51	10	34	1	Golan Heights	75	24	50	10
Eilat	81	27	44	7	Eilat	111	44	68	20

What to pack:

Winter Months

If you are traveling to Israel during the winter months, it is important to note that the weather is very unpredictable. One day you could be swimming in a bathing suit in the Dead Sea, and the next day wearing a scarf and hat on a hike in the Golan Heights. In this case, Canada Israel Experience advises that you pack accordingly for all weather. In addition, please note that you will be traveling to Israel during the rainy season. Packing a raincoat would be wise.

Summer Months

During the spring and summer months, daytime weather is fairly consistent – HOT! T-shirts, shorts, tank tops and sandals are a standard daily uniform. However, summer nights can get cool. Don't forget to bring a lightweight jacket, or a sweatshirt.

Best For All Months

Casual wear is best for all seasons, especially clothes that can be layered. Please be sure to pack at least one nicer, modest outfit for Shabbat. Due to the busy trip schedule, there will be no time allotted for laundry. In addition, please remember to pack as lightly as possible. Over-packers beware – you will be responsible for packing and transporting your own bag throughout the trip. A medium sized suitcase with wheels is recommended.



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Preparing For Your Trip

Packing List



Clothing

- 14 pairs of underwear
- 14 pairs of socks
- 1 long skirt (women) / khakis (men) for Shabbat
- 3 pairs of jeans / pants
- 4 pairs of shorts (1 in winter)
- 3 long sleeved shirts (6 in winter)
- 10 short sleeved t-shirts (6 in winter)
- 2 sweaters or sweatshirts (3 in winter)
- 1 lightweight jacket
- 1 heavy jacket (winter)
- 1 raincoat / umbrella (winter)
- 2 bathing suits (1 in winter) Sleepwear
- 1 pair of water / shower shoes
- 1 pair of hiking boots
- 1 pair of sneakers / sturdy walking shoes
- 1 pair of nicer shoes for Shabbat
- 1 pair of sandals
- 1 towel
- 1 hat
- 1 pair of gloves and hat (winter)

✿ **Electrical equipment has to be adaptable to 220 volts and have an adapter for the prong. Equipment on a motor (i.e. electric shaver) must be adaptable to 50HZ**

Required for your Carry-On Bag

✿ **Please check with your airline regarding regulations for carrying liquids on board**

All medicine needed
Canteen / water bottle
Cash / Traveler's Cheques
ATM card / credit card
Toothbrush / deodorant / toothpaste (for the flight)

Suggested Miscellaneous Items

Camera and film / Memory card
Sunglasses
Adapter for electrical appliances ✿
Books
Games for the bus
Plastic bags (for wet clothes) Batteries
Sunscreen
iPod
Tissues / Q-tips
Journal / address book
Toiletries (shampoo, toothbrush, etc.)
Kippah (for men)
Travel alarm clock
Flashlight
Day pack / waist pack



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Preparing For Your Trip

Banking & Money

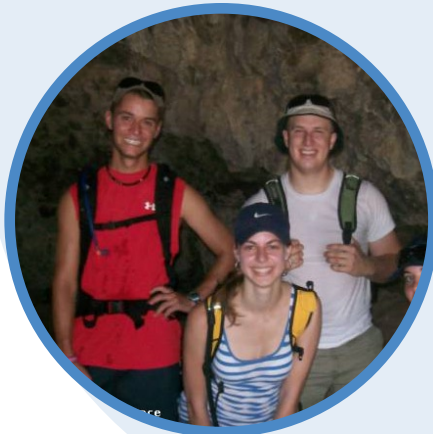
Banking and Money

On the first day in Israel there will be the equivalent of \$150 CDN prepared in shkalim (Israeli currency) to ensure an easy money exchange. This will be your only opportunity to exchange money for the first few days of your trip. Please do not bring traveler's cheques. The only money you will need will be your own spending money. It is our recommendation that you bring approximately \$400CDN or \$300US cash for your ten-day visit. Credit and debit cards are widely accepted at stores and restaurants.

Canada Israel Experience is a non-for-profit organization. This status allows us to provide an all-inclusive program in the most cost-effective manner. However, we do not cover the customary honorarium (tip) for tour guides and bus drivers. *We recommend that participants come prepared to award their educator and bus driver with a tip, the amount of which will be confirmed at your orientation. This is not mandatory, but strongly advised.*

Each day on your trip you will receive a light meal or snack, except on Saturday. If this meal needs to be purchased, you will receive a small allowance (amount subject to change). The only other cost that we will ask you to cover (aside from your souvenirs) will be the cost of one meal per day. This meal will either be lunch or dinner. Should you follow the above guideline of \$400CDN, you will have enough money for meals and souvenirs.

Roughly 20 days following your trip's return to Canada, you will receive your \$250USD deposit refund unless you forfeit it by breaking any of the rules or code of conduct.



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Preparing For Your Trip Food & Health

All of the meals provided on your Canada Israel Experience program will be Kosher. There will not always be Kosher food available during free time, depending on our location. Each restaurant that you will visit has a certificate authenticating that the place is Kosher and under Rabbinical supervision. We will do our very best to accommodate all food allergies and sensitivities. Please make sure to notify us of your particular food sensitivities so that we can do our best to accommodate you. (i.e. if you inform us that you are a vegetarian, we will ensure that every meal has a vegetarian option.)

Please note: While we will do our utmost to accommodate specific food allergies, please be aware that Israel does not have the same level of allergy awareness as is common in North America. For example, if you have an anaphalactic allergy to peanuts the National office must know this prior to your departure in order to ensure your well being. Please contact the Canada Israel Experience's National office if you have serious concerns in this area. We are committed to the health and well being of each and every one of you. By now, you should have filled out the Canada Israel Experience Doctor's Medical Form. It is important that you have been completely forthcoming on this form. This is what we use in order to ensure your health and well-being. Please speak to the National Office if you think that you may have neglected to include any relevant information.

Phoning Home - Keeping your family in the loop

Please ensure that you do not arrange a set time with your parents for when you will call home. You will constantly be on the run, and there are no guarantees that you will be able to call exactly when you had planned. In addition, please note that Israel is 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.



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Preparing For Your Trip

Rules

Traveling as a group has many advantages. You will see things and meet people that you could never arrange as an independent traveler. However, being part of a group program means that you must abide by policies designated to ensure the safety and well being of every participant in the group. Below are eight policies that we need your co-operation in upholding:

Drinking: Consumption of alcohol is permissible as long as it is not excessive. If drinking becomes the focus of your trip, or if it affects your ability to participate in the program, we will require that you return to Canada and forfeit your \$250USD deposit.

Illegal Drugs: Illegal drugs are absolutely forbidden on the trip. They are illegal in Israel. Any participant caught in possession of, using, or in the same room as someone using illegal drugs will be immediately returned to Canada and will forfeit their \$250USD deposit.

Hitchhiking: As we are responsible for your safety, we do not permit you to hitchhike whatsoever. Should you decide to take this risk, we will return you to Canada and withhold the \$250USD deposit.

Unauthorized Absence from the Group: Participants are prohibited from leaving the group at any time without the supervision of a CIE staff, for any purpose including family visits, personal time, etc. Should free time be granted to the group, the location and time will be at the sole discretion of the CIE Israel office.

Destruction of Property: Any damage to property at sites or at hotels will be the sole financial responsibility of the participant responsible for the damage. Should no participant assume responsibility, the entire group will be collectively responsible.

Anti-Social Behaviour: We require that you participate in all aspects of the program with a positive attitude. We require that participants treat each other with respect and consideration. Failure to participate or be respectful to your peers (i.e. sexual impropriety/ harassment of any kind) will be grounds for the forfeiture of the \$250USD deposit as well as being returned to Canada.

Curfew: Participants are obliged to check-in with their staff at an appointed time each night. This time will be set at the discretion of the staff and is necessary to ensure your safety and security.

Smoking: There will be no smoking on the bus or during a group program.



Pre-Program Recommendations

So you'll be traveling to Israel on your first peer-group program and you're wondering: "How can I prepare for this adventure?" Here are a few suggestions on how you can familiarize yourself with the social, political, geographical, cultural, and economic situation in Israel.

Key Websites:

View a detailed map of Israel:

www.emap.co.il/mezam/MGNindex_E.htm

Israeli search engine: <http://www.nana10.co.il>

Source for news and facts about Israel:

www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/home.asp

Dictionary of key words in Hebrew:

<http://www.milon.co.il>

Listen to samples of Israeli music:

www.israelhour.com

Useful information for the potential traveler to Israel: www.goisrael.com

Virtual Israel Experience: www.israeltour.org

Israeli history and facts:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/History/Facts%20About%20Israel-%20History>

www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel-%20History

Key Israel and Jewish News Sources

Israel's daily English newspaper: www.jpost.com

Canadian Jewish News: www.cjnews.com

The latest headline news from Israel:

www.virtualjerusalem.com/israelwire

English language version of the Israeli daily newspaper: www.haaretzdaily.com

Interesting Literature

James Michener, *The Source*

Follow the sweep of Israeli and Jewish history through the various layers of one archaeological dig

Walter Lacquer, *A History of Zionism*

A straightforward look at the history of Zionism

Howard Morley Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History*

An overview of the major forces that shaped the modern world

Howard Morley Sachar, *A History of Israel*

An introduction to Israeli history

Alan Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew*

A controversial look at modern Jewish identity

David Shipler, *Arab and Jew*

A look at Arab-Israeli conflict

Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews*

A history of the Holocaust

Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask about Judaism*

Leon Uris, *Exodus*

A novel about the heroic founding of the state of Israel

Micah Halpern, *Israel on Line at the Millennium*

Insightful essays about Israeli life



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An Introduction to Mifgashim



The *mifgash* (meaning "encounter") is a unique program designed for Canada Israel Experience's Taglit-Birthright Israel participants whereby individuals will have the opportunity to interact and travel with Israeli peers throughout the country. This one-of-a-kind experience allows CIE participants the chance to create meaningful dialogue with Israeli young adults through various creative and recreational activities. It also presents an increasingly intimate perspective of Israel. In the past, CIE participants have forged new friendships and help close the bridge between Israelis and Jews living in the Diaspora.

“ The CIE ten-day Taglit-Birthright Israel program remains a life-altering experience for the participants building a bridge to Jewish identity and sparking dramatic involvement in the local Jewish community. ” Edward Prutschi, Toronto

So how can CIE participants prepare for their first Israeli encounter? There are a few cultural and sociological facts that may help set the stage. Here are a few fun particulars for your interest:

Culture

Israel, unlike most of the Middle East, is a rare cultural hybrid, caught halfway between East and West. Only in Israel could you find a kosher McDonald's that plays Middle Eastern music and is located next to a falafel stand. In Israel, this type of cultural mix-n-match is just part of daily life. Like the country, Israelis are something of a hybrid as well: Jews and non-Jews; Western and Eastern origins; old and new immigrants; secular lifestyles and varying degrees of religious observance; urban and rural existences; a high-tech economy and ancient traditions. In a country just sixty years old, the definition of "Israeli culture" remains a controversial topic.

Character

The Israeli character has been shaped by a unique set of events and influences. From the Mediterranean climate, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the emotional legacy of the Holocaust, and the rise of post-Zionism, there are both contextual and internal forces that make Israelis who they are. The image of the Sabra or native-born Israeli—a cactus that prickles on the outside and remains sweet on the inside—still characterizes the typical Israeli today.



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An Introduction to Mifgashim Religion

Religion

In Israel, most of the population defines itself as "secular" and the great majority does not observe strict religious rituals. At the same time, most Israelis do observe basic Jewish practices, including Seder, fasting on Yom Kippur, Bar Mitzvah and the celebration of Chanukah. For example, you may notice that Shabbat in Israel is a true day of rest where shops close and mass transportation is unavailable from Friday sundown until Saturday sundown. Sunday, however, is a regular working day. Unlike Canada, where Reform and Conservative Jews are the majority, non-Orthodox movements are a small minority in Israel. It is also important to note that in Israel, the all-Orthodox government-sponsored rabbinate presides over all official life cycle rituals (marriage, divorce, burial, brit milah) as well as all conversions.

Lifestyle

Army service is one of the most significant aspects of Israeli life. At 18 years of age, men are required to serve three years, and women twenty months. Only Orthodox Yeshiva students are exempt, and Orthodox females can opt not to serve. Still, the vast majority of Israeli youth join the armed forces, many volunteering for the elite combat units. Interestingly enough, the military makes for a unique melting pot for Israelis from all backgrounds.

Most Israeli students begin university at age 22, after serving in the army and traveling. The most popular university department in Israel is business management and communications. It is common practice in Israel for university students to work throughout their years of study. In addition, many Israelis tend to get married while in school obtaining their BA.



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An Introduction to Mifgashim Language

The official language in Israel is Hebrew, however, most Israelis can speak English. Below you will find some key phrases in Hebrew that may be handy throughout your stay in Israel.

Ma ha-inyanim? A basic greeting meaning "What's Up?" "How are ya?"

B'seder OK, all right

Sababa All purpose slang for 1) Fun! 2) Fine with me, OK, no problem

Nayim Me'od Nice to meet you

Ma pit'ome?! Are you kidding? What are you talking about?!

Lo ba li Don't feel like it; don't want to

Yalla Let's go, C'mon now, All right then

L'hit Short for **l'hitra-ot**, which means: "see you"

Shalom Hello/Goodbye/Peace

Ma zeh? What is this?

Ani lo Mevin I do not understand

Kama ze ole? How much does this cost?

Erev tov Good evening

Boker tov Good morning

Sleecha Pardon me

Toda Thank you

Bevakasha Please

Rak rega One moment

“The ten days I spent in Israel were some of the best days of my life. I quickly made friends with people I has just met as we experienced Israel together. Whether dancing at the Kotel on Shabbat, experiencing Yad Vashem, or meeting IDF soldiers who were the same age as us, it was great to be able to share my emotions with my new friends. Canadian Birthright Israel is an excellent program because it gives you the opportunity to experience Israel with your peers.” Ian Goodman, Vancouver



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Israeli Culture Music & Movies

Israeli Musical Artists:

Arik Einstein
David Broza
Ehud Banai
Gazoz
Ha yehudim
Idan Reichel
Kaveret
Rami Kleinshtein
Rita
Sarit Hadad
Shalom Chanoch
Shlomo Arzti
Yehudit Ravitz



Israeli Movies:

"11 Days in September"
"Bluz la Hofesh ha Gadol"
"Broken Wings" – (Knafayim Shvurot)
"Exodus"
"It's About Time"
"Leil Sedah"
"Metsitsim"
"Raid on Entebbe"
"Summer of Aviah" – (Hakayitz Shel Aviah) – True Story
"Under the Domim Tree" (Etz Ha'Domim) – True Story
"Yossi ve'Jager"
"Walk on Water"

Sample CIE Itinerary-Summer

Day 1: Theme: Arrival and Welcome to Israel
Arrival to Ben Gurion International Airport
Opening Ceremony on the Mediterranean
Drive North & Dinner on the Way

Day 2: Theme: Jewish Reaction to Adversity
Hike Mt. Arbel
Visit the Mystical City of Tzfat
Lunch on Own
White Water Rafting on the Jordan River
Group Program

Day 3: Theme: Golan Heights, Understanding the Issues
Water Hike in the Golan
Lunch on Own in Katrzin
Oz 77 and Discussion: Golan Heights Seminar
Visit Mt. Bental for an Overview of Syria
Visit the Golan Winery
BBQ Dinner & Party on the Shore of the Kinneret

Day 4: Theme: Ancient and Modern
Visit the Kinneret Cemetery
Tour the Anti-Terror Fence & learn about the Issues
Visit Ancient Caesarea
Swimming in the Mediterranean Sea
Independence Hall & Dinner on Own

Day 5: Theme: Ancient and Modern
CIE Cultural Event
Visit Rabin Square
Lunch on Own in Nachalat Binyamin
Drive South
Camel Trek in the Desert
Bedouin Hospitality and Dinner
Bonfire, Party & Group Program

Day 6: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers 1
Theme: Massada- Choosing our Heroes
Pre-Dawn Ascent to Massada
Values Clarification Exercise on Massada
Start the Mifgash with the Soldiers

Hike in the Desert Oasis of Ein Gedi
Lunch on Own & R&R at the Dead Sea Spa
Drive to Jerusalem
Shabbat Preparation
Kabbalat Shabbat at the Kotel (Western Wall)
Shabbat Dinner & Oneg Shabbat Program

Day 7: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers 2
Theme: Dimensions of Shabbat
Jerusalem Synagogue Hop
Israel Update with A Noted Scholar
Tour the New Neighborhoods of Jerusalem
Seuda Shlisheet and Havdallah
Dinner on Own & Group Party

Day 8: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers 3
Theme: Jerusalem the Eternal City
CIE Tikun Olam Project
Tour the Old City
Lunch on Own
Southern Wall Excavation
Visit the Davidson Center & Group Program

Day 9: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers 4
Theme: Living in the Shadow of Memory
Seminar at Yad Vashem with a Survivor
Visit Har Herzl Military Cemetery
Dinner on Own & Group Program

Day 10: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers 5
Theme: Digging for our Past-Israeli Archeology
Tree Planting
Dig for a Day Program at Beit Guvrin
Lunch on Own & Free Time at the Kibbutz Pool
Hike the Burma Road
Banquet Dinner at a local Restaurant

Day 11: Theme: Taking Israel Home with us
Group Summary at the Israel Museum
Depart to the Airport



This trip is a gift from Taglit-Birthright Israel

Sample CIE Itinerary-Winter

Day 1: Theme: Opening and Welcome

Arrival to Ben Gurion International Airport
Shehechyanu at the Haas Promenade
Overviews of Jerusalem
Dinner at a Local Restaurant & Group Program

Day 2: Theme: Jerusalem Birthright and Covenant

Tour the Jewish Quarter of the Old City
Visit the Southern Wall Excavation
Lunch on Own
Shabbat Preparation
Kabbalat Shabbat at the Southern Wall Excavations
Festive Shabbat Dinner at the Hotel
Oneg Shabbat Program

Day 3: Theme: Dimensions of Shabbat

Israel Update with Noted Scholar
Tour the New Jerusalem Neighborhoods
Seuda Shlisheet and Havdallah
Dinner on Own & Party in Jerusalem

Day 4: Theme: Living in the Shadow of Memory

Meet with a Survivor of the Holocaust
Visit Yad Vashem & Lunch on Own
Tree planting
Participate in an Archeological Dig at Tel Marisha
Cave Exploring and "Spelunking" at Tel Marisha
Camel Trek
Bedouin Hospitality and Dinner

Day 5: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers Day 1

Theme: Massada- Choosing our Heroes
Pre Dawn Ascent to Massada
Values Clarification Exercise on Massada
Begin the Mifgash with the Soldiers
Hike Nachal David
Lunch Rest and Relaxation at the Dead Sea Spa
Group Program & Dinner on Own

Day 6: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers

Theme: Making the Desert Bloom
Hike in the Negev Desert
Visit the Graves of Paula and David Ben Gurion

Drive to Jerusalem

Visit IDF Check-Point
Birthright Israel Educational Fair
Early dinner on Own at Mega Event

Day 7: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers

Theme: In the Footsteps of the Fighters
Visit the Mt. Herzl Military Cemetery
CIE Tikun Olam Project & Lunch on Own
Hike the Sataf or Nachal Katlav
Druze Hospitality & Dinner at Dalyiat El Carmel
Group program

Day 8: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers

Theme: Golan Heights, Understanding the Issues
Overview of the Golan Heights
Lunch on Own in Katzrin
Overview of Syria from Har Bental
OZ 77 and discussion at Kibbutz El Rom
Hike in the Golan Heights –Baniyas or Tel Dan
Tour and Wine Tasting at the Amiad Winery
Group Program

Day 9: Mifgash with IDF Soldiers Day 5

Theme: Settlement and Defense
Hike the Ancient Jewish Fortress at Mt. Arbel
Visit the Mystical City of Tzfat
Lunch on Own in Tzfat
Shabbat Preparation
Kabbalat Shabbat
Festive Shabbat Dinner & Oneg Shabbat

Day 10: Theme: Our last Shabbat Together
Group processing program & Dinner on Own
Rest and Relaxation at Ancient Roman Hotsprings

Day 11: Theme: Taking Our Experiences Back with Us Group Program

Overview of the Anti-Terror Fence
Visit the Ancient Roman City of Beit Shean or Beit Alfa
Drive to Tel Aviv & Lunch on Own
Visit Rabin Square
Tour and Group Summary at Independence Hall
Banquet Dinner & Depart for airport



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Important Trip Information

My flight will be departing: _____

Date: _____

Airline: _____

Flight Number: _____

Terminal: _____

Departure Time: _____

Time to be at Toronto Pearson Airport: _____

Names of my trip leaders: _____

My flight will be returning to Toronto: _____

Date: _____

Airline: _____

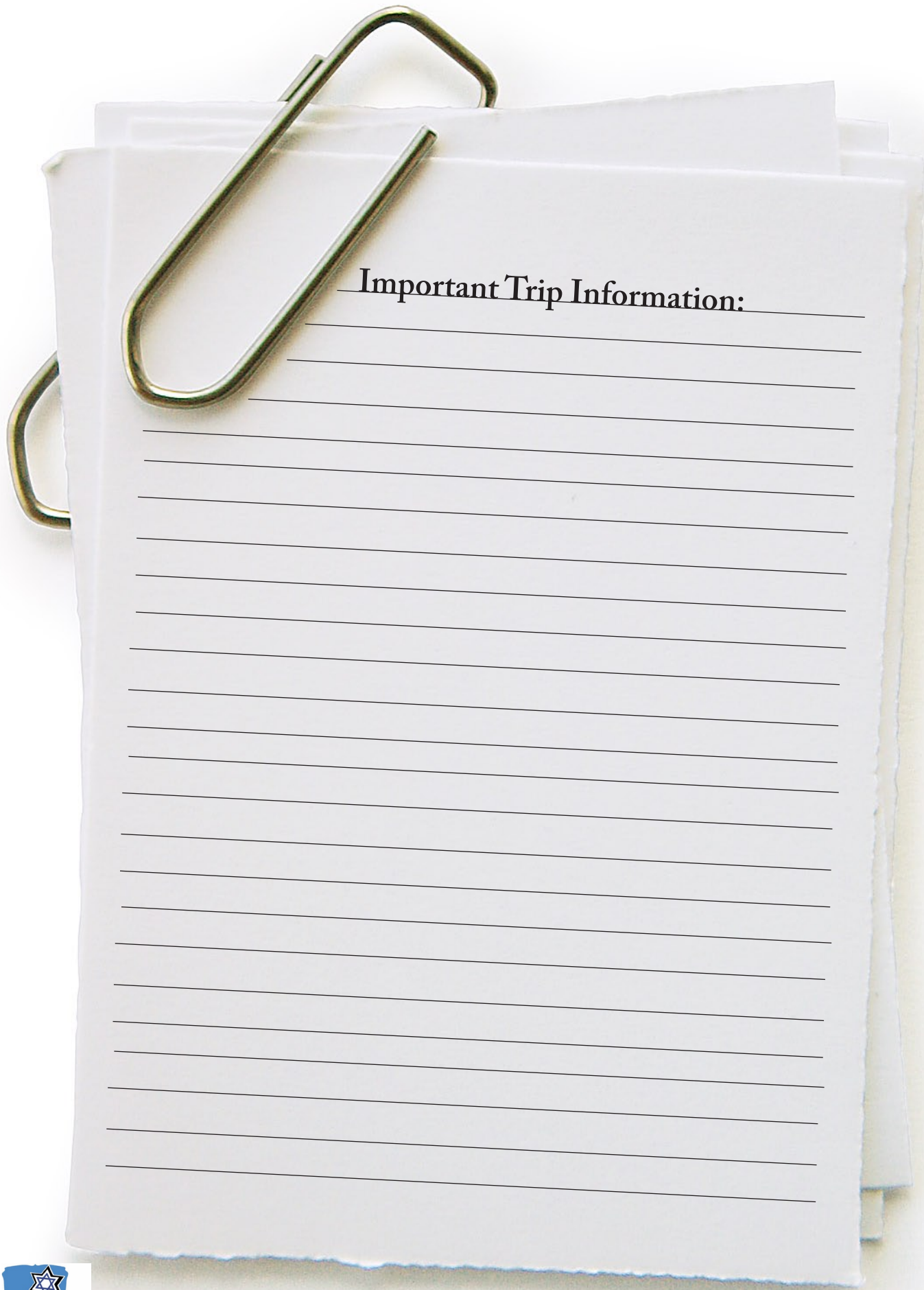
Flight Number: _____

Terminal: _____

Arrival Time: _____



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Important Trip Information:

Horizontal lines for writing.



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