



 **usy** USCJ's youth
movement



USY EPIC Israel - Program Manual

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Welcome to a great summer with USY EPIC Israel!

Over the course of this trip participants will see amazing sights, make new friendships, engage in identity-shaping fun experiences, and take part in Jewish celebrations and traditions, all the while having the summer of their lives.

But before you embark on the road to an *incredible* summer, we want to make sure you are prepared for the journey!

Contained in this guide you'll find information about what to expect when traveling with USY — from day-to-day living to Jewish living to important policies. Participants' understanding and acceptance of these policies is crucial to ensuring a successful summer and positive experience for everyone.

Every participant on this trip has a special responsibility. They are not only representing themselves, but also USY and its parent organization, USCJ, and are therefore expected to behave, speak, and act accordingly.

USY EPIC Israel is sponsored by USY/USCJ and the Teen Engagement Committee, which underwrites each participant by subsidizing this program, in cooperation with the Education Department of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

TRAVEL

USY travels as a group from NY (JFK) to Israel (or your destination in Europe) with their North American staff and back. We meet our Israeli staff at our destination. If your child wants to meet our group at their destination, please be in touch with our office asap to work on a deviation in the flight. In addition, if you would like your child to stay in Israel after the group leaves we can arrange a deviated ticket with advanced knowledge. Once we finalize and pay for our tickets, we cannot deviate tickets without a penalty fee. Parents are responsible for any additional costs in deviating tickets. Please be aware that airline flight schedules are not under our control and do change.

Please make sure that all participant travel information is inputted into the Regpack travel form so we are aware of your child's arrival. Staff will meet participants at baggage claim upon arrival at JFK. If your child arrives at another airport in the tri-state area, it is your responsibility to get them to JFK to meet the group. Our staff cannot meet participants at airports other than JFK.

It is important that participants advise us *in writing* of any special circumstances, such as a family event, which require they leave after or return by a specific date, etc.

Please check your travel form carefully as some groups require an overnight stay on the way back. We will have rooms and staff at a local hotel near JFK to accommodate those participants. Staff will be sure that they get through security for their flights.

GROUP SIZE & STAFF

Each trip or group is made up of approximately 20-45 teenagers and three to five staff members.

The carefully selected USY staff members are mature, responsible, and caring individuals. They are chosen based upon their commitment to, and experience working with, Jewish youth. Staff members include youth workers, rabbinical students, teachers, and others who devote their lives and talents to Jewish values and youth. A complete background check with reference checks as well as interviews are part of our screening process. Our staff is trained in basic first aid, CPR and mental health first aid.

Staff is responsible for the overall functioning of the trip as well as creating an atmosphere in which participants can grow and thrive. Depending on the size, each group usually has two or three North American staff members plus one or two Israeli staff.

The low staff to participant ratio enables USY to supervise activities closely, hold small discussion groups, and ensure the highest level of personal attention and care for each participant.

During the summer, there is also dedicated staff based in the New York and Jerusalem offices that are committed to ensuring participants' safety and answering parent questions/concerns.

TRANSPORTATION AND TOURING

While in Israel, we travel in air-conditioned chartered buses. Whenever possible we maintain the same drivers throughout the summer. Participants are not allowed to travel on public transportation at any time during an EPIC trip.

In addition, we are accompanied by *morei derech* (tour guides).

ITINERARY

The trip itinerary is subject to change from summer to summer. Here is the tentative itinerary for this summer:

[EPIC Israel Plus](#)

[Eastern Europe/ EPIC Israel](#)

In addition to spending a great deal of time in Jerusalem, the groups will take trips of varying length to the Galilee, Haifa, the northern seacoast, Tzfat, Tel Aviv, the Negev Desert, Masada, and other exciting places.

USY EPIC Israel is not just a tour of Israel. It is an active experience. We don't want to just *show* participants places, we want to introduce them to life there.

The trip is filled with time to bond with new friends, fun games and activities, amazing seminars, and captivating speakers who bring Israel alive. Groups will participate in intensive and exciting 'Mitzvah Projects' throughout the country, which will allow them to directly interact with and impact the communities they visit.

Teens participate in a day of social action projects at places like:

- Table to Table (Leket), an organization that collects thousands of meals and distributes them to soup kitchens
- Food pantries- packing food for needy families

Here are some of the sites you will see on your trip:

Tel Aviv Area:

Kikar Rabin - Visit and hold a group memorial ceremony at the site of the assassination of Former Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin z"l

Old Jaffa -Participants will stroll through the quaint alleyways of Old Jaffa and bargain in its flea market

ANU Museum - an interactive museum that celebrates the variety of the Jewish World

Shuk Hacarmel - Enjoy Tel Aviv's bustling marketJerusalem area

Ammunition Hill - Referred to in Hebrew at *Givat Hatachmoshet*, this was the site of fierce fighting during the 1967 Six Day War. The victory here enabled Israeli troops to enter the Old City of Jerusalem. Visitors can walk along the extensive Jordanian bunkers and visit the museum of the Six-Day War.

Beit Guvrin - Dig for a day with "Archaeological Seminars" at the Second Temple town of *Maresha*. Participants will visit this site and crawl in some of the ancient tunnels that were used by Jews to hide from the Romans.

City of David - The original city of Jerusalem from the time of King David, the City of David lies south of the Temple Mount and is surrounded by hills on all sides.The water source of First Temple Jerusalem, the Gihon Spring, lies here.

Ezrat Israel - This is the egalitarian prayer site located next to the Robinson arch at the *Kotel*.

Hezekiah's Tunnel - An underground channel found in Jerusalem, this tunnel was erected during the reign of King Hezekiah in the 8th century B.C.E. One can walk through this channel, filled with water.

Israel Museum - The Israel Museum is the largest cultural institution in the State of Israel and is ranked among the world's leading art and archaeology museums. Among the highlights of the Museum are the Shrine of the Book, which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls—the oldest biblical manuscripts in the world, and the Model of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period.

Kotel - (The Western Wall of the Temple Mount) USY trips will visit the *Kotel*.

Knesset - This is Israel's Parliament, which participants will visit to learn how the country's democracy works.

Mount Herzl - The final resting place of Theodor Herzl, this site is home to Israel's deceased presidents and prime ministers, as well as many of Israel's founders and heroes. Israel's main military cemetery is also located in the area around the mountain. It is a place that is generally venerated by modern Israelis, and is the focal point of commemorative and celebratory proceedings related to the State of Israel.

Promenade - The Haas “*Tayelet*,” provides a southern view of Jerusalem in all of its glory. The area is beautifully landscaped and includes many walking paths. From here participants can watch as the sunset turns the city to gold, *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*.

Southern Wall Excavations - One of the most amazing sites in Jerusalem, you can see actual remnants of the Destruction of the Second Temple and the main entrance to the Temple itself here. This site includes the “Davidson Center” visitor’s center, with a multimedia presentation and artifacts from that period.

Yad Lekashish (Lifeline for the Old) - An innovative center for the elderly of Jerusalem, it is filled with workshops and provides Golden Age citizens with a protected social environment for their creativity and handiwork.

Yad Vashem - This is Israel’s national Holocaust Museum, which participants will visit in addition to spending time in the Children’s Memorial.

Yemin Moshe/Mishkenot Sha’ananim - Built in the 19th century by Sir Moses Montefiore, it is the first of Jerusalem’s neighborhoods built outside the Old City walls.

The South:

Coral Reef - Participants will swim and snorkel at the coral reef of *Eilat*, enjoying some of the most beautiful fish and coral in the world. (EPIC Plus only!)

Dead Sea - Here at the lowest place in the world—1,200 feet below sea level—participants can swim, float, and cover themselves with the special and therapeutic mud.

Ein Gedi - A modern *kibbutz* on the edge of the Dead Sea, *Ein Gedi* is located near the ancient oasis known by the same name.

Ein Ovdar (Ovdar’s water spring) - These miraculous, beautiful water springs are found in the midst of the desert and serve an important purpose in the desert’s ecological structure.

Latrun - (The Armored Corps Commemorative Center) Dedicated to the thousands of fallen tank corps soldiers who died in Israel’s battles.

Machtesh Crater - A moon-like scene, this crater has a unique earth formation that includes colored sands, minerals, plants and wildlife in Mitzpeh Ramon.

Masada - The rock fortress built by Herod, Masada served as the Zealots' stronghold during their heroic, tragic battles against Rome. Participants will climb the Roman Ramp at sunrise, pray in the ancient synagogue and learn about *Masada's* glory and its destruction.

Nahal David - Not far from *Ein Gedi*, this river is famous for its lush foliage and the ibex that inhabit the area. A hardy climb leads to the mystical cave where King David is said to have hid from King Saul.

Outdoor Desert Experience - This 24 hour desert experience is located next to the Ramon Crater. Activities here include: Rappelling (descending by rope from a cliff), Navigating in the dark, star gazing, sleeping outdoors.

Sde Boker - This place is the "dream come true" of David Ben Gurion, founding father of the State of Israel, who envisioned the "greening of the desert." Today it is a thriving kibbutz and a center for education and desert research. Participants will visit Ben Gurion's cabin and his grave.

Yotvata - A kibbutz that made the desert flourish, *Yotvata* undoubtedly serves the best milk products in the world. (EPIC Plus only!)

The North:

Acco (Acre) - A port city on the Mediterranean which has had many rulers, Acco includes a fort used by the British to imprison and execute Jewish freedom fighters are all part of the city's historic significance.

Arbel Mountain - The cliff-side fortress of the northern Zealots during their battles with Rome, participants will follow *Arbel's* winding path, which the Romans had to climb in order to conquer it.

Baha'i Gardens - These beautiful gardens are located at the world center of the Baha'i sect in the city of *Haifa*.

Druze Hospitality - The Druze, a unique Arab tribe with a secret religion, live in picturesque villages and serve in the Israeli armed forces. Participants will be hosted at the Usafia village and enjoy a kosher Druze meal.

Golan Heights - While visiting the *Golan Heights*, most northern part of Israel, participants will become familiar with its history, its importance, and the conflict over returning it to Syria, while hiking and traveling through its breathtaking sights.

Hof Hachelet (Blue Beach) - A water park in Tiberias, Blue Beach sits on the shores of the *Kinneret*.

K'far Kedem - Just as in biblical times, participants will ride a donkey in the hills around the ancient city of *Tzipori*.

Nachal Snir - Here participants will take a water hike through a gorge that is one of the three major sources of water in Israel.

Rosh Hanikra - These are magnificent grottos formed by water hitting the sea-side cliffs for thousands of years.

The Cemetery of the Kinneret - The graves of the poets Naomi Shemer and Rachel are located here on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, along with graves of Zionist founders A.D. Gordon, Moshe Hess, Berel Katzanelson, and Dov Borochoy.

Tveriah (Tiberias) - Participants will explore the ancient and modern sides of this holy city, which sits on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Tzfat (Safed) - The mystical city of *Tzfat* is the birthplace of *Kabbalah*, and was the home of Rabbi Joseph Karo, author of the *Shulchan Aruch*.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Our groups stay at a variety of facilities over the course of the summer, including hotels and youth hostels that are carefully chosen by USY to provide the best possible location and living conditions.

Rooms in these accommodations are usually built to house three to six participants. At each new facility, participants will have new roommates. This will give participants the opportunity to get to know all their fellow travelers. USY strives to create a welcoming community for all of its participants. Please note: you must remain in the room to which you were assigned.

While in Jerusalem, groups stay at the *Agron* Guest House . Located in the heart of Jerusalem and part of Fuchsberg Center for Conservative Judaism, this is the home of *Nativ*, USCJ's gap year program, and all other USY and high school programs in Israel. It is fully equipped with dining halls, multi-purpose rooms, and plenty of outdoor space for programs and "hanging out."

Other facilities used are:

South

Chavat Hanokdim (Roded) - Located between *Arad* and *Masada*, this base is a camel ranch built in Bedouin style. Here participants will enjoy a *haflah* (feast), camel ride, and a night in a Bedouin tent.

Arad - A modern city located in the North-Eastern Negev, *Arad* is on the mountain ridge approaching the Dead Sea. EPIC Israel is based at the *Arad Youth Hostel*, in walking distance of a shopping area.

Eilat - Youth Hostel *Eilat* is a resort town on the coast of the Red Sea. Accommodations in *Eilat* will be provided at the youth hostel/guest house. (this is EPIC Plus only)

Kibbutz Ketura - A modern *Kibbutz* based in the *Arava* region 30 miles north of *Eilat*, *Ketura* has a beautiful guesthouse and educational center, which focuses on coexistence and renewal in the desert.

At the Galilee

Poriya Youth Hostel - This hostel is situated on top of Mt. Bariniki, near the city of *Tiberius*, overlooking the Sea of Galilee and the Golan Heights, and provides high-level accommodations.

Kibbutz Gadot- Situated in the Upper Galilee in a beautiful countryside atmosphere including a swimming pool.

At Tel Aviv

B'nai Dan (Guest House) - *B'nai Dan* is situated in Northern Tel Aviv next to the Yarkon River and Tel Aviv Port shopping center.

Sea Net Hotel - Beautiful hotel located in walking distance to the beach promenade of Tel Aviv.

MEALS

Breakfast and dinner are usually served at the hotel and boxed lunches are packed to eat while touring.

From time to time, groups will stop to have meals in restaurants. Being in Israel will give participants the opportunity to try out new foods such as falafel, hummus, and other Middle Eastern specialties.

Vegetarians and others with special dietary needs will be accommodated; however, we must be notified of participants' specific dietary needs prior to the summer.

LAUNDRY

While in Jerusalem participants will have access to a laundry service, which will pick up their clothes, wash and dry them, and return them neatly folded - all within 24 hours!

Each participant is entitled to one laundry bag each time we do laundry. Additional bags cost approximately \$20 and must be paid at participant's own expense. While traveling to other areas hand washing may be necessary, for which we recommend participants bring small packets of detergent.

It is also recommended that participants bring 14 days' worth of clothing with them on the trip (see packing list for more information).

SECURITY

USY takes every possible precaution to ensure participants' health, welfare, and safety. Each participant is our responsibility, and we take that responsibility very seriously.

Our touring schedule is reviewed with the appropriate Israeli authorities for security and safety control. Each facility we stay in has its own security precautions.

To gain admittance to one of our bases, we often require identification from both participants and staff.

If participants have relatives or friends who'd like to visit, they will be asked to come to the main entrance of the lodging where, if they are on an approved list of visitors, a member of staff will escort them inside.

While traveling, we take all security measures recommended and required by the authorities. Rather than take unnecessary chances, we err on the side of caution when deciding on issues of security.

In Prague, Berlin and Poland the group will be escorted by a Polish security guard and Pilot.

JEWISH LIFE & EDUCATION

SHABBAT

Shabbat in Israel is a truly memorable experience. No matter how much familiarity teens have with traditional *Shabbatot*, EPIC Israel gives them a special opportunity to enjoy and to participate in this meaningful experience alongside a community of peers.

Each group creates a *ruach shel Shabbat* (*spirit of Shabbat*) which builds a warm, unique atmosphere that sets the day apart from the rest of the hectic week, and affords participants the opportunity to relax with friends, enjoy down time, and/or catch up on sleep.

In order to create the most effective Shabbat atmosphere, both as a group and as individuals, we refrain from: traveling, writing, handling money, listening to music (playing instruments), using phones in public spaces.

KASHRUT

Kashrut (Jewish dietary law) is observed at all times by participants. This applies to all regular meals as well as snacks.

Observing *kashrut* means that all food participants eat must have a kosher stamp and that everyone waits three hours between eating meat and dairy foods.

Kashrut is to be followed even when participants are away from the group or have free time.

TEFILLAH (PRAYER)

USY EPIC Israel provides the opportunity to experience and learn about prayer in an inspirational setting that only Israel can provide.

Imagine the beauty of a sunrise *Shacharit* service at Masada, davening *Mincha* at the *Kotel* (Western Wall), or singing along to a *Kabbalat Shabbat* service while overlooking Jerusalem's Old City.

Additionally, creativity is a welcome and daily part of the prayer experience. Whether rapping during hip hop *Shacharit* or expressing prayers through the arts, USY encourages creative approaches toward *tefillah* that actively engage teens and strengthen Jewish identities.

All participants on EPIC Israel engage in daily prayer, including *Shacharit* (morning service), *Mincha* (afternoon service) and/or *Maariv* (evening services).

On *Shabbat*, we have additional services starting Friday evening with a lively *Kabbalat Shabbat* and concluding on Saturday evening with a meaningful *Havdalah* ceremony.

Every Meal begins with *HaMotzi* and ends with *Birkat Hamazon* (Grace after Meals). By the end of the summer, all participants will have an understanding of and deeper appreciation for these prayers.

RELIGIOUS GARB

EPIC Israel is a time when we come together to practice Judaism as a community, sharing common traditions and trying new experiences.

Each participant is expected and encouraged to bring and use a head covering at appropriate times, and *tallit* and *tefillin* at *Shacharit* (morning) services.

We recognize that you may not own these items. Please be in touch with your synagogue Rabbi or chapter youth director to borrow *tallit* and *tefillin*. We will strive to have extras available as well.

There will be participants and staff available to help those who need any guidance in putting on these ritual items.

SIDDUR (Prayer book)

All participants will receive a *Siddur Sim Shalom* at orientation. This will be sufficient for the summer and there is no need to bring another. We will also have transliterated booklets available for those who need it.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Another important component of the EPIC Israel trip is educational experiences. Like USY's approach to *tefillah*, we also try to make learning a fun and interactive experience for teens.

In addition to traveling through Israel and/or parts of Europe, participants will have several opportunities to touch, breathe in, and learn the history of each city and sight they visit. These visits will encompass Jewish and secular history, as well as an understanding of Jewish traditions and values both in the modern world and ancient times.

There are also several peer group study sessions which may be part of the morning, afternoon, or evening schedule, or included as part of another program.

Although it is not necessary to speak Hebrew when traveling to Israel, in the past many participants learned how to read and speak Hebrew while traveling with USY. If a teen would like to learn basic Hebrew or spoken language skills our staff is always willing and available to work with them.

PASSPORT

One of the most important things to bring is a passport. All passports must be valid through February 2024. Please be sure to upload a copy of the passport into your Regpack account.

We ask participants to make two copies of the second and third pages of their passports, one copy of which they should pack. This is very useful if for any reason a passport needs to be replaced. The second passport copy should be left at home with participants' parents.

LUGGAGE

Participants are permitted only one suitcase that must not exceed 50 lbs and cannot be larger than 30" in height. The total dimensional sum must not exceed 56". Please bring rectangular suitcases with wheels or duffels.

Additionally, participants should bring a backpack as a carry-on bag. Each traveler can only carry-on a backpack and a "handbag." No suitcases of any kind can be used as carry-on luggage.

Please Note:

- A carry-on item such as a backpack, pocketbook, jacket, camera and other small hand-carried items are permitted aboard free of charge
- Larger hand-carried items, such as roller suitcases, overnight bags, and briefcases will be counted and charged as one extra item
- The airline also reserves the right to further limit the 45" maximum for carry-on luggage to actual under-the-seat space dimensions
- Please check the TSA website for up-to-date baggage restrictions:
<http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/prohibited-items>

We urge participants to keep these stipulations in mind when preparing their luggage. In addition, the airlines' rulings on these matters are subject to change. Should this happen, we will be in touch with more up-to-date information.

Please Note:

Participants who are traveling on domestic flights to and from New York should check with their domestic carrier about additional luggage restrictions.

DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

On the day of participants' departure from New York, they will have a chance to meet their fellow participants and staff in the airport. Staff will meet those who fly into NY at baggage claim and bring them to the group for the group check-in.

We will spend some time getting to know one another and briefing participants about the details of the flight and arrival in Israel. Then, we're off!

PACKING LIST

We recommend that participants pack easily laundered sports clothes for everyday wear. Dressier clothes will be needed for *Shabbat* and religious sites (see section 2, below).

When determining how much clothing to pack, participants on Eastern Europe/EPIC Israel should keep in mind that they will not do laundry for the first two weeks of the trip.

DRESS CODE

Kavod (dignity or respect) should be embodied in USYers' attire.

- Clothing on which profanity or inappropriate language, pictures, or symbols are written, printed, or depicted is prohibited
- Clothing cannot be made of see-through material and undergarments should not be visible
- Clothing, including bathing suits, should be of an appropriate length such that a person's private areas are adequately covered.

Shabbat Dress Attire

To celebrate and mark the important distinction between *Shabbat* and the weekday, *Shabbat* dress attire is required. The following attire is acceptable for *Shabbat*:

- Slacks, khakis, dresses or skirts

- Blouses, collared shirts or sweaters with sleeves
- Dress shoes or sandals
- Religious head covering

DRESSY ATTIRE

Dressier attire is required for visits to religious sites. Dresses should be knee-length for synagogues, the *Kotel*, and religious sites in Poland and Eastern Europe.

Male identifying participants should be sensitive to their dress at these times and are expected to wear kippot.

WEATHER-RELATED CLOTHING & GEAR

Believe it or not, in some parts of Israel it gets chilly at night during the summer. Therefore, we advise bringing a sweater or light jacket.

It never rains in Israel during the summer; however, if traveling on one of our Eastern European trips, we recommend packing for the chance of rain.

During the day the sun can be scorching. It is mandatory that participants bring a hat to wear when outdoors, as well as a water bottle that can hold 3-liters of water. We highly recommend a 3-liter CamelBak, or something similar. When hiking in Israel in the summer T-shirts that cover shoulders should be worn as protection from the sun. Please make sure that you bring with you T-shirts that cover shoulders for this.

PACKING LIST

- 9-11 T-shirts (Hanes t-shirts are easy and lightweight)
- 4-5 pr. shorts (some for touring in cities, some for hiking)
- 2 pr. slacks/jeans
- 5 *Shabbat* outfits (see above list)
- 1 long skirt which can be easily put on over clothes (for more religious sites)
- 1-2 long-sleeve shirts
- Sweatshirt or light jacket (sweatshirt often worn when sleeping outdoors in the desert)

- **Bathing suits**
- **1 pr. pajamas**
- **Underwear, enough for 16-18 days**
- **Socks**
- **1 pr. shoes for walking/hiking (can be sneakers if they provide sufficient support)**
- **1 pr. dress shoes (can be nice sandals)**
- **1 pr. flip-flops**
- **1 pr. sandals (consider purchasing Teva or Naot sandals in Israel)**
- **1 pr. water shoes with backs (can be a second pair of sneakers)**

In previous years, participants brought a few outfits to be worn out at night when the group goes downtown.

MANDATORY ITEMS FOR EVERYONE

- **Hat (no visors, bandanas, or headbands)**
- **1 water canteen that can hold at least 3 liters of water (Camelbak recommended)**
- **1 extra toothpaste and toothbrush**
- **Beach towel**
- **Flashlight and batteries**
- **Deodorant, shampoo, conditioner**
- **Hair accessories (brush, comb, etc.)**
- **Fanny pack or small backpack for day trips (to hold camera/phone, sunscreen, water, wallet, etc.)**
- **Sunscreen and lip protection**
- **1 pr. Sunglasses (at least)**
- **Adaptor/converter and all necessary chargers**

_OPTIONAL (RECOMMENDED) ITEMS

- Tissues
- Additional pair Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Hand lotion or moisturizer for skin
- Notebook for journal writing

CAMERAS

Although most people use their cell phone for cameras, some participants choose to bring a camera. To ensure participants take all the pictures they want, we recommend bringing memory cards with space for 600-800 pictures, a battery charger, and an adapter.

To protect cameras, keep them in a case and with the participant's name on it. The summer is full of many memorable experiences and participants will treasure their pictures.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

USY/USCJ accepts responsibility only for those items of value and monies deposited with the group staff. Staff will hold onto passports, domestic plane tickets, and any monies requested.

Please understand that we do not have room for large items, such as cameras or video equipment, and cannot take responsibility for those items under *any* circumstances.

Participants must take responsibility for their personal belongings used on a daily basis, i.e. expensive cameras, phones, etc. *If you are afraid of losing or breaking it then please think twice before packing it.*

SPENDING MONEY

How much money should you bring?

Previous participants recommend taking about \$500, though often they've spent less.

Spending money is typically used to purchase snacks, souvenirs and gifts. Gifts purchased for family and friends usually account for over half the total amount spent.

We encourage participants and their parents to discuss a list of gift recipients beforehand.

Many participants bring credit or debit cards with them. There are ATM machines in most places and most of the larger souvenir shops accept major American credit cards.

If participants have their own debit card from a major bank, that is the easiest option. We cannot guarantee that any card will be accepted at any given location. Additionally, please note that ATM withdrawals frequently involve a fee.

It is safest for participants to bring most of their money in the form of pre-paid debit/credit cards. Lost cash cannot be recovered.

What if you run out of money?

We urge parents to contact the New York office to discuss options should this occur.

KUPPAH (COLLECTIVE TREASURY)

There are a number of events that occur during the summer such as birthdays, which the group will want to celebrate or organize a special activity.

In order to do this, the group will establish a *Kuppah* (treasury). Each participant will contribute \$100 per person to be used for bus driver tips, birthday cakes, group pictures, t-shirts, decorations for *Shabbat*, laundry and special treats.

The *Kuppah* is important because it allows the staff to incorporate little touches and provide opportunities for building group identity that can make the summer truly memorable.

GRATUITIES

Aside from the bus driver's tip (as mentioned above), we do not allow staff members to accept gratuities. The staff members receive a salary for their summer work and we request that parents not present them with monetary tips.

In lieu of gratuities, we suggest that you make a donation to the USY Summer Experience Scholarship Fund in honor of your child's staff member. You will receive a mailing during the summer that will explain this donation procedure.

HEALTH CARE AND MEDICAL POLICIES

One of the priorities of our staff during the summer is to keep each and every participant healthy. Failure to disclose medical information will prevent USY from giving each participant the medical coverage and attention he/she deserves. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Allergies
- Psychiatric care
- Past illnesses

In order for our staff to be able to deal with medical problems, they must be made aware of them. Failure to report existing or developing conditions may jeopardize participation in EPIC Israel.

The medical form is to be filled out completely and signed by a parent/guardian and doctor. No individual whose physician felt that he/she could adapt to the program has been turned away from the trip. Additionally, the medical form must be received well in advance of the trip. Participants acceptance is conditional until their medical form is returned to the USY office and reviewed by our medical team. Be sure that the medical form has all necessary signatures and information included before it is submitted.

NOTE TO PARENTS: It is absolutely necessary that we be informed of any special medical, health, dietary restrictions (including vegetarianism and lactose and/or gluten intolerance), or personal situations and conditions in order for our staff to be properly prepared.

If any situation changes between the time we receive your child's initial information and the time the trip leaves, the USY office should be advised immediately. Only with honest, up-to-date information, can we look after your child's health and well-being.

IF ANY PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL ILLNESS OCCURS ON THIS TRIP AND IT IS FOUND THAT THERE IS A PAST HISTORY OF THE ILLNESS THAT WAS NOT REPORTED, THE PARTICIPANT MAY BE SENT HOME WITH EXPENSE TO BE INCURRED BY THEIR PARENTS.

If a participant contracts mononucleosis within 90 days of the day of departure, please have the attending physician send written authorization for him/her to participate in the program.

STAFF

Each of the North American staff is training in basic first aid and CPR. The staff will hold all medication and will attend to the health and medical needs of the group. In addition, each participant is enrolled in a special medical plan. This plan covers doctor's consultations, medication, and hospitalization.

It does not, nor does USCJ/USY, cover dental care, optometry care, psychiatric consultations, or treatment related to pre-existing conditions (mental or physical).

Our medical insurance begins when participants reach Israel/Eastern Europe and ends when they board the plane for North America or depart from the group at Ben-Gurion Airport.

MEDICATION

All participant prescription medication must be clearly indicated on the medical form in Regpack, or indicated separately in writing if the medication is prescribed after submission.

Participants may not hold their own prescription medication (with the exception of one epi-pen and emergency inhaler – participants requiring these should bring two of each, one to be held by staff).

All prescription medications are held by a staff member for the duration of the trip. They must be clearly indicated on the medical form or in writing if prescribed after submission. Wheelniks may not hold their own prescription medications (with the exception of one epi-pen and an emergency inhaler). Our staff will hold the second epi-pen. Our staff will oversee the taking of the medication and hold all as needed medications as well as over the counter medications. While we prefer that the medication be pre-packaged, it can come in the original container. **WE WILL NOT ACCEPT PILLS THAT ARE IN A GENERIC MEDICINE DISPENSER WITHOUT THE ORIGINAL PRESCRIPTION ON IT.** If your child takes growth hormones or other injectables, please be in touch with our office immediately to discuss transporting them safely.

If a participant takes a prescription medication, they should be sure to have the generic English name with them. This information is important should they need to see a doctor for any reason.

Please note that sharing of prescription medications is absolutely prohibited.

If allergy or growth hormone shots are required during the summer, please be sure to bring extra vials of each serum in case one should be lost. Participants should also bring some type of insulated bag with an ice pack for serums.

If a participant wears glasses or contact lenses, we ask them to bring an extra pair of glasses.

VACCINATION POLICY

All participants attending USY EPIC Israel must be up to date on the following vaccines:

- 1. DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis) with one dose after age 4**
- 2. Polio (oral or inactivated – with booster dose after age 4)**
- 3. Tetanus Booster -Td or Tdap (Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis) within the past 5-10 years (5 years preferred)**
- 4. MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella) – 2 doses after age 1**
- 5. HBV (Hepatitis B)**
- 6. Chicken Pox (in absence of disease history) – 2 doses - 1 after age 4**
- 7. Menactra (meningococcal meningitis)**
- 8. Hepatitis A**
- 9. COVID-19 vaccination**

Medical exemptions to any of our policies will be handled on an individualized basis.

If a participant contracts mononucleosis within 60 of the day of departure, they must obtain written authorization from their physician in order to participate in the program.

PARENTAL NOTIFICATION POLICY

Health and safety are top priorities on EPIC Israel. Our standard operating procedure for notifying parents when a health incident does occur is as follows:

- For routine doctor visits in doctor's offices, infirmaries, or clinics, your child will call you before they go to the doctor. The Israel office will send the doctor's report to the NY Office which will then be forwarded to you by e-mail by the next business day.

At times, participants may be in locations where scheduling a routine doctor visit is difficult. In these cases, USY treats the participant immediately by bringing them to an emergency room. Notification in these cases is handled in the same manner as a routine doctor visit.

- In cases where participants are taken to an emergency room because of a non-routine incident, the Israel office will be in touch with you.
- In the event of a major emergency, a member of the USY staff will contact parents directly. We do our best to call as quickly as possible.

PLEASE NOTE: At no time is an EPIC Israel staff person permitted to speak directly with parents. In addition, USY cannot be held responsible for the relay of inaccurate information if parents are notified in an unofficial manner, i.e. by their child calling them directly.

BEHAVIOR POLICIES

In connection with the USY Summer Experience, including travel to and from this program:

1. There is to be no smoking or vaping. There is to be no possession of cigarettes, e-cigarettes or any associated liquid or paraphernalia
2. There is to be no possession or use of any narcotics, marijuana, illegal drugs or prescription drugs not prescribed for the user, or matches, firecrackers (or similar devices), knives, sharp or dangerous objects
3. There will be no possession or consumption of any alcoholic beverages
4. There will be no shoplifting or theft of any kind
5. If a USYer is caught in possession of/or found to have used alcohol or illegal drugs or is caught shoplifting and/or involved in theft of any kind, he/she will immediately be sent home at his/her parents' expense. Furthermore USY International Policy states, "If a USYer is apprehended for an infraction of the International Youth Commission's policy regarding drug and alcohol abuse or any other criminal offense (including, but not limited to, shoplifting) punishment for that offense will include suspension from USY events (including, but not limited

to, the International USY Convention and USY Summer Experience) for one year following the infraction.

6. At no time are males permitted in sleeping rooms or on floors occupied by females and at no time are females permitted in sleeping rooms or on floors occupied by males

7. Each participant is expected to maintain proper decorum and attitude during the entire program. Disruptive behavior (including, but not limited to, inappropriate sexual behavior) will not be tolerated. Their parents will be responsible to pay for any damage you may cause

8. No participant may leave the USY event except at such times as those specified by the schedule (if such times are specified) or with the express permission of the Group Leader.

All participants must be at all scheduled programs and, during specified free time, remain within boundaries set forth by the Group Leader. At curfew, all participants must return to their assigned room/host home and remain there until the program resumes the next day.

9. Each participant is expected to conduct themselves appropriately as a Conservative Jew (including through observance of *Shabbat* and *Kashrut*), in accordance with the applicable USY guidelines and/or the local Rabbinic Authority

10. Participants are expected to adhere to the dress code as stipulated by the International Youth Commission. Specifically, bare midriff styles, halter-tops or see-through blouses are prohibited. Clothing on which any profanity or inappropriate language, pictures or symbols are written, printed or depicted is not permitted. No visible underwear is permitted. No inappropriately short skirts or shorts, or tight garments, are not permitted.

11. The program staff reserves the right to search the room and belongings of any attendee if they have reasonable grounds to believe that such a search is necessary to secure the health, safety and/or welfare of the program and or its participants. USY also reserves the right to enforce other rules relating to the integrity of the program and/or the safety, health or welfare of its participants

12. USCJ and USY have a ZERO tolerance policy regarding any activity that can be construed as bullying, hazing or harassment. This includes Cyberbullying that is bullying that is using the internet, a mobile phone or other technology (e.g. a

camera) to engage in any of the following inappropriate misconduct: Posting nasty or threatening comments on someone's social networking profile; sending anonymous texts or picture messages to intimidate or embarrass; hacking existing website accounts or create fake profiles of people to intimidate or embarrass; scaring or embarrassing others; or spreading rumors or try to isolate others using technology. The above list is not inclusive. Any individual involved in these or similar acts will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including removal from our programs.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

We are committed to ensuring that USY is a safe physical, spiritual and emotional space for teens. Here are some of the ways in which we do that:

- USCJ has a zero-tolerance policy toward any inappropriate behavior, including any and all actual or alleged hazing, bullying, harassment or sexual abuse occurrences
- There is a Youth Protection Officer (YPO) at every regional and international USY event whose focus is to promote a culture of awareness concerning USCJ's zero-tolerance policies
- Each participant is given the YPO's phone number at program orientation
- All USY staff and volunteers must sign a statement of conduct for working with youth that reads, "USCJ/USY is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants. It is the duty of the staff and volunteers to safeguard to the best of their ability the welfare of the participants and to prevent physical, sexual or emotional abuse of the participants with whom they come into contact."
- All USY staff and volunteers must adhere to behavioral guidelines regarding relationships between staff and participants; guidelines include the below:
 - Excepting emergencies and brief room checks at curfew, no staff member should be in any participant's room unless another adviser is also present
 - One-on-one contact between staff members and participants is not permitted in private. A staff member should never be in a room with any participants with the door closed. In situations that require personal conferences or discussions, these should be conducted in a separate section of a public area (i.e. the hotel lobby away from the rest of the group)

- All USY staff receive training and agree to abide by all USCJ policies prior to employment; failure to abide by any policy may result in immediate dismissal and termination of employment agreement
- All USY staff and volunteers must clear a National Sex Offender Registry background check
- All USY staff and volunteers, as well as program participants, **MUST** report any incident of inappropriate behavior to the event YPO

USY is committed to being a safe physical, spiritual and emotional space for teens. Please contact our Mauria Atzil Director of Child and Youth Protection at atzil@uscj.org to report any inappropriate behavior.

EARLY LEAVE/DISMISSAL POLICY

In the event that a USYer must leave the program before its conclusion, the following guidelines will apply:

- A. If the decision for the USYer to leave early is made by the parents/guardian or the USYer, there is no refund, and all related expenses (such as return travel arrangements) are the responsibility of the parents
- B. If the USYer is dismissed from the program because of behavior problems or actions that are deemed to be detrimental to themselves or the group, there is no refund and all related expenses are the responsibility of the parents
- C. If the USYer must leave for medical reasons, USY will reimburse parents 60% of the non-transportation costs of the remainder of the trip on a daily pro-rated basis, knowing that USY is not able to cancel arrangements that have been made

VISITATION/FREE TIME

During the summer there are opportunities to visit relatives and friends in Israel. This *chufsha* (leisure-time) comes in two forms:

1. Throughout the summer there will be time, usually in the evening, to visit with relatives. Visitations are permissible **ONLY WITH PRIOR WRITTEN PARENTAL PERMISSION** .

USY EPIC Israel is a highly structured program with several exciting activities planned every day. Please stress to relatives and friends that they should call in advance to find out when participants will be free to spend time with them. EPIC Israel staff must approve all visits in advance.

2. During the summer there will also be a free weekend when participants can visit relatives or friends in Israel. Further information and the dates of this weekend can be found on the 'Free Weekend' form in Regpack. As with all other visitation, we must obtain written permission from the participant's parents. IF WE DO NOT RECEIVE WRITTEN PERMISSION, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO REMAIN AT THE GROUP'S BASE FOR THE ENTIRETY OF SHABBAT.

During the free weekend, our Jerusalem base will be open and fully operational with staff coverage. In addition to providing *Shabbat* meals and staff supervision, we will also plan programming (of a lighter nature) for *Shabbat* as well as social/recreational opportunities.

While participants are welcome to stay on base, we recognize that many of them will want to take advantage of the opportunity to visit relatives/friends in Israel. To help facilitate this, we will provide charter bus transportation to pre-designated pick up locations. Participants must be picked up and returned by their hosts at one of these locations. Staff members will wait until all participants have been picked up.

Participants will only be able to visit people who their parents have given written permission for, including the visitor's name, address, and phone number(s). Participants will not be permitted to accompany a friend from their group to visit relatives/friends unless those names and addresses are also submitted in writing from the participant's parents.

A. Please inform host families of the free weekend dates. During the week prior, one of our staff members will be in contact with the host family to discuss pick up and drop off times/places.

B. Please inform the hosting family that any place which is off limits all summer is off limits during the free period. This includes all communities beyond the "Green Line," though we will make an exception to this rule with additional written parental permission. PLEASE NOTE: USY has the right to change the list of restricted areas throughout the summer. Exceptions will only be made with advanced written parental permission. We will distribute the most up to date rules to hosting families when they pick up the participants.

Participants are not permitted to check into hotels and/or sleep on beaches. No hitchhiking is permitted at any time.

Participants are not permitted to enter areas that are restricted for security reasons.

Participants are not permitted to be picked up or dropped off on *Shabbat*.

ALL RULES OUTLINED IN THE BEHAVIOR POLICY APPLY DURING THE TRIP INCLUDING FREE TIME AND FREE WEEKEND. VIOLATION OF ANY OF THESE RULES CAN RESULT IN PARTICIPANTS BEING SENT HOME AT THEIR PARENTS' EXPENSE.

Please note that even in the homes of family and friends, participants are expected to observe *Shabbat* and *Kashrut*. The same applies to those who remain behind on the base.

SPECIAL NOTE TO PARENTS: One of the main components of EPIC Israel is the Jewish education we give our teens. To help reinforce and ascribe meaning to the Conservative Jewish values and traditions we need your help.

If you visit your child during the summer in Israel, we urge you to eat in kosher restaurants and observe *Shabbat* together as a family. By adhering to these Jewish principles, you can help emphasize their importance and show their value to your family.

CELL PHONES

Cell phones are permitted during the summer, but are only allowed to be used during free time and/or in participant's rooms at night. They may be used as a camera or to play music.

We highly encourage our USYers not to use their cellphones on the bus. Additionally, they are prohibited during any type of programming or on *Shabbat*. Usage includes phone calls, texting, and/or internet use.

USY EPIC Israel is not responsible for lost or damaged cell phones.

While many participants choose to use Whatsapp on their American phone, please note that unless wireless connection is available, they will not be able to communicate through Whatsapp. Therefore we recommend getting a sim card for their phone. Please check with your carrier to be sure that the phone is unlocked and can accept a sim card. *We do not endorse 019 or their products, but rather provide*

this information as a service to participants and their parents. Feel free to choose any carrier that you like.

To rent an Israeli cell phone or get a sim card, we suggest 019. Here is the link to 019: <https://019mobile.com/groups/usy-programs>

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

We know that the Internet, when used wisely, provides many positive ways to stay in touch with friends and family and can be a constructive outlet for self-expression.

We remind all our participants that once they identify themselves as a member of the USY/USCJ community in a social networking profile, website, group page or blog, or use the USY/USCJ name or logo, everything and anything that they post can be viewed as a reflection of USY/USCJ. Therefore, we require participants to observe the social media policy guidelines below.

We've established these guidelines to ensure that USY/USCJ remains an emotionally and physically safe environment for all staff, participants, and their families.

USY program participants must be respectful of USY/USCJ and its programs, participants, and employees in all communications (e-mails, messages, social media profiles, blogs or other Internet sites). This means that participants will never:

- Share or post e-mails, blogs, images or any content that is cruel, demeaning, disrespectful, or intentionally hurtful to a member of the USY/USCJ community
- Post comments that are derogatory with regard to any individual's race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or any other group protected under applicable federal, state or local law
- Engage in harassment or intimidation or post content that presents USY/USCJ programs, their participants or staff negatively
- Share, send, or post material of a sexual nature or that which includes nudity, violence, drug or alcohol use, illegal actions, delinquent behavior, destruction of property, harassment or intimidation, or any activity against the program rules

- Post photographs that compromise anyone's privacy or that are used to demean, humiliate or otherwise embarrass anyone

PHOTOGRAPHY RELEASE

All participants give USCJ/USY permission to use any photographic, video or audio representations of minors that may be taken during the scheduled activities, be it used in print, online, or in other media produced by USCJ/USY for publicity, promotional, or any other purposes without further permission.

MAIL

The summer mailing address for USY EPIC Israel participants is:

Name of Participant

USY EPIC Israel Group # _____

8 Agron Street

P.O. Box 7456

Jerusalem, ISRAEL 91999

Feel free to distribute this address to family and friends. Mail will be picked up by the staff and given out to groups, usually on a daily basis in Jerusalem. When groups are on their Northern or Southern *tiyul* (trip), mail may only be distributed once or twice during the week.

If participants are traveling in Europe before arriving in Israel, they will receive mail upon arrival in Jerusalem.

Mail service from Israel to the United States and Canada (and vice versa) can take 7-10 days for delivery *under the best conditions*. ***IN THE SUMMER THE MAIL SERVICE IS VERY UNRELIABLE***. Do not worry if letters seem to take a long time in arriving.

Please refrain from sending packages through the mail. They often arrive late and are charged additional customs duties which can exceed the value of the items sent.

In a future mailing, we will provide parents with information about companies that they can send care packages through. (We do not endorse these companies or their products. We merely provide this information as a service to parents.)

Please be aware that participants may not have access to email throughout the summer.

MEMBERSHIP

USY membership is a prerequisite for any participant. Anyone who is not a member of USY should contact membership@usy.org for further assistance.

CONCLUSION

We are excited and looking forward to a happy and healthy summer full of life changing experiences, new friendships, and personal growth!

If you have any further questions or concerns after reading this guide please contact Michelle Rich, Director of Teen Travel and International Engagement at 212-533-7800 Ext. 136 or rich@uscj.org.