



# ISRAEL PILGRIMAGE Program Guide



## Welcome to a great summer with USY Israel Pilgrimage!

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 Israel Pilgrimage is sponsored by USY in cooperation with the Education Department of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

### TRAVEL

Please be aware that airline flight schedules are not under our control.

Please make sure that all participant travel information is inputted in to the Regpack travel form so that we can meet connecting flights.

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

### 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 Summer Experience 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.

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, one of whom is a *chovesh* (a trained medic).

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.

These staff members are the Director of Teen Travel and Programs, Program Coordinator, Project Coordinator and Parent Liaison.

## **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 a Pilgrimage trip.

In addition, we are often accompanied by *morei derech* (tour guides). While not considered part of the staff, these guides are important and informative additions to our group.

## **ITINERARY**

The trip itinerary is subject to change from summer to summer. To get a taste of the itinerary, please visit [our website](#) and click on your child's specific trip in order to see what our groups did last summer.

Before departure, participants will receive a personalized group itinerary as well as **a copy of "Footsteps in Israel,"** a summary of the key places that USY visits.

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 Israel Pilgrimage 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.

Additionally through our *tzedakah* program, participants are given an intimate peek at life in Israel, as well as hands-on opportunities to touch the lives of its residents. Teens participate in a day of social action projects at places like:

- Lifeline for the Old (Yad LaKashish), interacting and sharing their stories with the elderly and disabled of Jerusalem
- Table to Table (Leket), an organization that collects thousands of meals and distributes them to soup kitchens
- Food pantries
- Meals on Wheels programs
- After-school initiatives
- Senior citizen and homeless shelters

*L'Takayn Olam*, USY's social action-focused trip in Israel, will have a unique itinerary.

In addition to touring and fun activities, 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.

## **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.

While in Jerusalem, most groups stay at the beautiful Fuchsberg Center for Conservative Judaism (otherwise referred to as Agron). The Fuchsberg campus is fully equipped with



dining halls, multi-purpose rooms, and plenty of outdoor space for programs and “hanging out.”

## **MEALS**

Breakfast and dinner are usually served at the hotel and boxed lunches are packed on the bus 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 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 laundry bag costs approximately \$10 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 14-18 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 Pilgrims 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 and Berlin the group will be escorted by a local security guard. In addition we have local staff responsible for all logistic and health issues. In Poland they are escorted by a Polish pilot, whose responsibility is both logistics and security & safety of the group. In Poland the Israel experience (travel company of the Jewish Agency) has their own offices and are taking care of all aspects of our trips.

## **JEWISH LIFE & EDUCATION**

### ***SHABBAT***

*Shabbat* in Israel is a truly memorable experience. No matter how much familiarity teens have with traditional *Shabbatot*, Pilgrimage 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

### ***KASHRUT***

*Kashrut* (Jewish dietary law) is observed at all times by USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 wait three hours between eating meat and dairy foods.

**Kashrut** is to be followed even when participants break out from the group or have free time.

### **TEFILLAH (PRAYER)**

USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 Pilgrims will have an understanding of and deeper appreciation for these prayers.

### **Religious Garb**

USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 USYers and staff available to help those who need any guidance in putting on these ritual items.

### **SIDDUR (Prayer book)**

All Pilgrims will receive a *Siddur* at orientation. This will be sufficient for the summer and there is no need to bring another.

## **LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

Another important component of the USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 on Pilgrimage.

If a teen would like to learn basic Hebrew or spoken language skills our staff is always willing and available to work with them.

## **WHAT TO BRING**

### **PASSPORT**

**One of the most important things to bring is a passport.**

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.

**All passports must be valid through February 2020. Please be sure to upload a copy of the passport into your Regpack account.**

## **BAGGAGE**

Participants are permitted only **one** suitcase that must not exceed **50 lbs** and cannot be larger than **27" in height. The total dimensional sum must not exceed 56"**. Please bring rectangular suitcases with wheels.

**No duffel bags are allowed.**

Additionally, participants should bring a backpack as a carry-on bag. Each traveler can only carry-on a backpack and a "hand bag." **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 USYers and staff in the airport.

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 every day 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/Israel Pilgrimage 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 and not accentuated, not because they are bad, but because they are private

### ***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.

Boys 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.**

## **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 skirt for those going to Eastern Europe, which can be easily put on over clothes
- 1-2 long-sleeve shirts
- Sweatshirt or light jacket (sweatshirt often worn when sleeping outdoors in the Negev Desert)
- Bathing suits
- 1 pr. pajamas
- Underwear, enough for 16-18 days
- Socks (many pairs as they are easily lost)
- 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 (Camelback 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, sunscreen, water, wallet, etc.)
- Sunscreen and lip protection
- 1 pr. Sunglasses (at least)
- Adaptor/converter and all necessary chargers

### **OPTIONAL (RECOMMENDED) ITEMS**

- Liquid detergent for clothes
- Tissues
- Additional pair Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Face tissues
- 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 Pilgrims 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 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.***

## **FINANCES**

### **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 Pilgrims 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 **\$70 per person** to be used for **bus driver tips, birthday cakes, group pictures, t-shirts, decorations for Shabbat, 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.

## **MEDICAL INFORMATION**

### **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 USY Israel Pilgrimage.**

**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 will not be accepted to Pilgrimage until their medical form is returned to the USY office.**

**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 Pilgrim 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.

#### **GROUP *CHOVESH* (Medic)**

Each group travels with a *chovesh* (medic) who 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 USY Israel Pilgrimage, 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.

**Pilgrims 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 medication must come in the original container or be blister packed by a pharmacy. **A staff member will be responsible for holding medication for the Pilgrims to take as prescribed.**

***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. Ice is difficult to find in Israel, therefore, participants should also bring some type of insulation with an ice pack for serums.

If a participant wears glasses or contact lenses, we ask they please bring an extra pair **plus** a written copy of their prescription.

## **VACCINATION POLICY**

All participants attending USY Summer Experience must have completed a primary series of vaccinations for the following high risk diseases:

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 (highly recommended but not required)

Those who choose not to be vaccinated will not be allowed to participate on a USY Summer Experience.

If a participant is not vaccinated for reasons of immunodeficiency, or other medically documented reasons, they must provide USY with a detailed explanation from a physician, and their participation will be subject to further approval by the USY office.



## PARENTAL NOTIFICATION POLICY

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

1. For routine doctor visits in doctor's offices, infirmaries, or clinics, USY Israel Pilgrimage will communicate the information by e-mail or phone to USY Central Staff in New York.

The New York staff will then contact the parent and relay the information. Due to the 7-hour time difference between Israel and New York, there is usually a lag between the time that a participant sees the doctor for a routine visit and parental notification.

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.

**PLEASE NOTE:** With the use of cell phones, it is possible that your child may call you with information about their condition before the New York office has been notified by the Israel office. Do not be concerned. The New York office will contact you to discuss any pressing issues.

2. In cases where participants are taken to an emergency room because of a non-routine incident, standard operating procedure designates that Israel Pilgrimage Central Staff communicates information either directly to parents (as per their judgment) or via the New York staff in the following manner:

- A. Once a diagnosis and/or treatment is determined, parents are contacted directly by either the USY Pilgrimage Office in Israel or New York. In a case where a participant must be taken to the hospital, the policy is to wait for a diagnosis by the treating physician before notifying New York Central Staff and/or parents, so as not to unnecessarily alarm parents until all the information is available
- B. In cases where, after a reasonable amount of time, a diagnosis or treatment has not been found, parents will be notified, either by the Israel or New York staff that their child is in the hospital undergoing testing.

3. In the event of a major emergency, a member of the USY Pilgrimage staff in Israel and/or New York will contact parents directly. We do our best to call as quickly as possible

**PLEASE NOTE: At no time is Pilgrimage group staff 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. The USYer's Region reserves the right to impose additional sanctions in connection with this or any other improper behavior as it sees fit"
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 him/herself 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. Participant is 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 at the convention. Clothing on which any profanity or inappropriate language, pictures or symbols are written, printed or depicted is not permitted. No visible underwear is permitted for both males and females. During *Tefillah*, inappropriately short skirts or shorts, or tight garments, are not permitted

11. The Director of Teen Travel and Programs or their designee reserves the right to search the room and belongings of any attendee if he has 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.

## **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**

## **LEISURE TIME AND VISITATION PERIODS**

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 TO THE NEW YORK OFFICE AND PERMISSION OF THE STAFF AND AT A TIME DESIGNATED BY THEM.**

*Chufsha* permission indicates that visits **only** take place during *chofesh* (free time) and only if the participant is considered sufficiently mature by the staff and in good health.

USY Israel Pilgrimage 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. Pilgrimage 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 bases 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 USYers 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. USYers must be picked up and returned by their hosts at one of these locations. Staff members will wait until all USYers have been picked up.

USYers 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). USYers 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 USYers.

**Participants are not permitted to check into hotels and/or sleep on beaches.**

**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 CHUFSHA. 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.

No hitchhiking is permitted at any time.

**SPECIAL NOTE TO PARENTS:** One of the main components of USY Israel Pilgrimage 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.

**CALLING HOME**

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 Israel Pilgrimage 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.

**To rent an Israeli cell phone, we suggest 019. Learn more about options designed specifically for Pilgrimage participants** through these links:

[Israel Adventure – L'Takayn Olam -- Eastern Europe 1<sup>st</sup> Departure – Eastern Europe 2<sup>nd</sup> Departure](#)

***(We do not endorse these companies or their products, but rather provide this information as a service to participants and their parents)***

## **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 Israel Pilgrimage participants is:

**Name of Participant**  
**USY Israel Pilgrimage 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.**

**Furthermore, these packages must be picked up at the airport by Pilgrimage staff. This is time-consuming and disruptive to the program.**

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 USY Israel Pilgrimage applicant.***

Anyone who is not a member of USY should contact [membership@usy.org](mailto:membership@usy.org) for further assistance.

## **CONCLUSION**

We are excited and looking forward to 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 Programs at 212-533-7800 Ext. 136 or [rich@uscj.org](mailto:rich@uscj.org).

**Welcome to a great summer with USY Israel Pilgrimage!**

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 Israel Pilgrimage is sponsored by USY in cooperation with the Education Department of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

## **TRAVEL**

Please be aware that airline flight schedules are not under our control.

Please make sure that all participant travel information is inputted in to the Regpack travel form so that we can meet connecting flights.

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

## **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 Summer Experience 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.

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, one of whom is a *chovesh* (a trained medic).

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.

These staff members are the Director of Teen Travel and Programs, Project Coordinator and Parent Liaison.

### **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 a Pilgrimage trip.

In addition, we are often accompanied by *morei derech* (tour guides). While not considered part of the staff, these guides are important and informative additions to our group.

### **ITINERARY**

The trip itinerary is subject to change from summer to summer. To get a taste of the itinerary, please visit [our website](#) and click on your child's specific trip in order to see what our groups did last summer.

Before departure, participants will receive a personalized group itinerary as well as **a copy of "Footsteps in Israel,"** a summary of the key places that USY visits.

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 Israel Pilgrimage 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.

Additionally through our *tzedakah* program, participants are given an intimate peek at life in Israel, as well as hands-on opportunities to touch the lives of its residents. Teens participate in a day of social action projects at places like:

- Lifeline for the Old (Yad Lakishish), interacting and sharing their stories with the elderly and disabled of Jerusalem
- Table to Table (Ieket), an organization that collects thousands of meals and distributes them to soup kitchens
- Food pantries
- Meals on Wheels programs
- After-school initiatives
- Senior citizen and homeless shelters

*L'Takayn Olam*, USY's social action-focused trip in Israel, will have a unique itinerary.

In addition to touring and fun activities, 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.

### **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.

While in Jerusalem, most groups stay at the beautiful Fuchsberg Center for Conservative Judaism (Agron). The Fuchsberg campus is fully equipped with dining halls, multi-purpose rooms, and plenty of outdoor space for programs and "hanging out."

### **MEALS**

Breakfast and dinner are usually served at the hotel and boxed lunches are packed on the bus 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, humus, and other Middle Eastern specialties.

Vegetarians and others with special dietary needs will be accommodated; however, **we must be notified of participants' specific 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 laundry bag costs approximately \$10 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 14-18 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 Pilgrims 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.

## **JEWISH LIFE & EDUCATION**

### ***SHABBAT***

*Shabbat* in Israel is a truly memorable experience. No matter how much familiarity teens have with traditional *Shabbatot*, Pilgrimage 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

### ***KASHRUT***

*Kashrut* (Jewish dietary law) is observed at all times by USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 wait three hours between eating meat and dairy foods.

**Kashrut** is to be followed even when participants break out from the group or have free time.

### ***TEFILLAH (PRAYER)***

USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 Pilgrims will have an understanding of and deeper appreciation for these prayers.

### **Religious Garb**

USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 USYers and staff available to help those who need any guidance in putting on these ritual items.

### **SIDDUR (Prayer book)**

All Pilgrims will receive a *Siddur* at orientation. This will be sufficient for the summer and there is no need to bring another.

### **LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

Another important component of the USY Israel Pilgrimage 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 on Pilgrimage.

If a teen would like to learn basic Hebrew or spoken language skills our staff is always willing and available to work with them.

## **WHAT TO BRING**

### **PASSPORT**

**One of the most important things to bring is a passport.**

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.

**All passports must be valid through February 2020. Please be sure to upload a copy of the passport into your Regpack account.**

### **BAGGAGE**

Participants are permitted only **one** suitcase that must not exceed **50lbs** and cannot be larger than **27" in height. The total dimensional sum must not exceed 56"**. Please bring rectangular suitcases with wheels.

**No duffel bags are allowed.**

Additionally, participants should bring a backpack as a carry-on bag. Each traveler can only carry-on a backpack and a "hand bag." **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 USYers and staff in the airport.

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 every day 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/Israel Pilgrimage 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 and not accentuated, not because they are bad, but because they are private

***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.

Boys 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.**

## 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 skirt for those going to Eastern Europe, which can be easily put on over clothes
- 1-2 long-sleeve shirts
- Sweatshirt or light jacket (sweatshirt often worn when sleeping outdoors in the Negev Desert)
- Bathing suits
- 1 pr. pajamas
- Underwear, enough for 16-18 days
- Socks (many pairs as they are easily lost)
- 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 (Camelback 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, sunscreen, water, wallet, etc.)
- Sun screen and lip protection
- 1 pr. Sunglasses (at least)
- Adaptor/converter and all necessary chargers

### **OPTIONAL (RECOMMENDED) ITEMS**

- Liquid detergent for clothes
- Tissues
- Additional pair Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Face tissues
- 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 Pilgrims 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 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.***

**FINANCES**

**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 Pilgrims 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 **\$70 per person** to be used for **bus driver tips, birthday cakes, group pictures, a concert, t-shirts, tree planting, decorations for *Shabbat*, and final banquet.**

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.

## **MEDICAL INFORMATION**

### **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 USY Israel Pilgrimage.**

**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 will not be accepted to Pilgrimage until their medical form is returned to the USY office.**

**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 Pilgrim 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.

#### **GROUP *CHOVESH* (Medic)**

Each group travels with a *chovesh* (medic) who 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 USY Israel Pilgrimage, 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.

**Pilgrims 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 medication must come in the original container or be blister packed by a pharmacy. **A staff member will be responsible for holding medication for the Pilgrims to take as prescribed.**

***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. Ice is difficult to find in Israel, therefore, participants should also bring some type of insulation with an ice pack for serums.

If a participant wears glasses or contact lenses, we ask they please bring an extra pair **plus** a written copy of their prescription.

## VACCINATION POLICY

All participants attending USY Summer Experience must have completed a primary series of vaccinations for the following high risk diseases:

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 (highly recommended but not required)

Those who choose not to be vaccinated will not be allowed to participate on a USY Summer Experience.

If a participant is not vaccinated for reasons of immunodeficiency, or other medically documented reasons, they must provide USY with a detailed explanation from a physician, and their participation will be subject to further approval by the USY office.

### **PARENTAL NOTIFICATION POLICY**

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

1. For routine doctor visits in doctor's offices, infirmaries, or clinics, USY Israel Pilgrimage will communicate the information by e-mail or phone to USY Central Staff in New York.

The New York staff will then contact the parent and relay the information. Due to the 7-hour time difference between Israel and New York, there is usually a lag between the time that a participant sees the doctor for a routine visit and parental notification.

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.

**PLEASE NOTE:** With the use of cell phones, it is possible that your child may call you with information about their condition before the New York office has been notified by the Israel office. Do not be concerned. The New York office will contact you to discuss any pressing issues.

2. In cases where participants are taken to an emergency room because of a non-routine incident, standard operating procedure designates that Israel Pilgrimage Central Staff communicates information either directly to parents (as per their judgment) or via the New York staff in the following manner:

- A. Once a diagnosis and/or treatment is determined, parents are contacted directly by either the USY Pilgrimage Office in Israel or New York. In a case where a participant must be taken to the hospital, the policy is to wait for a diagnosis by the treating physician before notifying New York Central Staff and/or parents, so as not to unnecessarily alarm parents until all the information is available

B. In cases where, after a reasonable amount of time, a diagnosis or treatment has not been found, parents will be notified, either by the Israel or New York staff that their child is in the hospital undergoing testing.

3. In the event of a major emergency, a member of the USY Pilgrimage staff in Israel and/or New York will contact parents directly. We do our best to call as quickly as possible

**PLEASE NOTE: At no time is Pilgrimage group staff 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. The USYer's Region reserves the right to impose additional sanctions in connection with this or any other improper behavior as it sees fit"
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 him/herself 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. Participant is 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 at the convention. Clothing on which any profanity or inappropriate language, pictures or symbols are written, printed or depicted is not permitted. No visible underwear is permitted for both males and females. During *Tefillah*, inappropriately short skirts or shorts, or tight garments, are not permitted

11. The Director of Teen Travel and Programs or their designee reserves the right to search the room and belongings of any attendee if he has 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.

## **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**

## **LEISURE TIME AND VISITATION PERIODS**

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 TO THE NEW YORK OFFICE AND PERMISSION OF THE STAFF AND AT A TIME DESIGNATED BY THEM.**

*Chufsha* permission indicates that visits **only** take place during *chofesh* (free time) and only if the participant is considered sufficiently mature by the staff and in good health.

USY Israel Pilgrimage 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. Pilgrimage 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 bases 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 USYers 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. USYers must be picked up and returned by their hosts at one of these locations. Staff members will wait until all USYers have been picked up.

USYers 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). USYers 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 USYers.

**Participants are not permitted to check into hotels and/or sleep on beaches.**

**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 CHUFSHA. 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.

No hitchhiking is permitted at any time.

**SPECIAL NOTE TO PARENTS:** One of the main components of USY Israel Pilgrimage 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.

## **CALLING HOME**

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 Israel Pilgrimage 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.

**To rent an Israeli cell phone, we suggest 019. Learn more about options through 019 [at this link](#).**

***(We do not endorse this companies or their products, but rather provide this information as a service to participants and their parents)***

## **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 Israel Pilgrimage participants is:

**Name of Participant**  
**USY Israel Pilgrimage 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.**

**Furthermore, these packages must be picked up at the airport by Pilgrimage staff. This is time-consuming and disruptive to the program.**

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 USY Israel Pilgrimage applicant.***

Anyone who is not a member of USY should contact [membership@usy.org](mailto:membership@usy.org) for further assistance.

## **CONCLUSION**

We are excited and looking forward to 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 Programs at 212-533-7800 Ext. 136 or [rich@uscj.org](mailto:rich@uscj.org).