

## **PRE - DEPARTURE INFORMATION**

**1. PASSPORTS AND VISAS:** all travelers must have a passport **valid** at least through **SIX MONTHS AFTER YOUR DEPARTURE FROM ISRAEL**. U.S. and Canadian passport holders need no visa to enter Israel. *For other nationalities, check with the nearest Israeli consulate.*

**2. HEALTH:** There are no particular health issues associated with travel to Israel. If you have any special medical issues, please consult with your physician before traveling.

While almost all prescription drugs are available in Israel, if you are taking a prescribed medication please bring a sufficient supply with you (and extra glasses and lenses). It is recommended to bring along copies of your prescription and, if you have an unusual prescription, carry a letter from your physician explaining your need for the drug. As an extra precaution, carry the generic names of your medications with you because pharmaceutical companies overseas may use different names from those used in the United States. To prevent problems if your luggage is lost or misrouted, keep medications in their original containers and pack them in carry-on luggage.

If any medical problem does arise in Israel, Keshet will arrange medical care for you at your expense. *(Israel has the highest ratio of doctors to potential patients in the world, but we hope that you do not give them any business during your visit.)* Please check with your health insurer regarding coverage for foreign travel. To purchase Israeli health insurance for the trip, see #13below.

**3. SAFETY AND SECURITY:** Generally speaking Israel is as safe as or safer than most US cities. Nevertheless, we recommend that you take usual traveling precautions, such as keeping a separate copy of your and passport, not carrying open bags which are a temptation to pickpockets, not leaving your property lying around, etc. We particularly advise keeping your cash and credit cards in money belts and bringing a photocopy of your passport in case you need to replace it quickly.

**Please do not accept parcels from strangers who ask you to deliver them to Israel.** You will be asked about this before boarding the plane and it is best to be able to answer truthfully. While in Israel do not leave parcels, knapsacks or other baggage unattended in public places.

**4. WEATHER:** Israel has a Mediterranean climate characterized by long, hot, dry summers and short, cool, rainy winters, as modified locally by altitude and latitude. About 70 percent of the average rainfall in the country falls between November and March; June through August are usually rainless.

Summer weather in Israel can be quite hot with daytime temperatures mostly **in the 80s and 90s** throughout the country. In coastal areas like Tel Aviv, there is high humidity and evenings can also be hot and uncomfortable. In the mountains – like Jerusalem, Tzfat and Golan– the humidity is lower and evenings will often **cool down to the 60s**. Temperatures in the Negev and Dead Sea areas will **often be over 100**, but with low humidity.

Don't forget to pack sunscreen, sunglasses, water shoes for the Dead Sea, your bathing suit and a sun hat/cap. We also recommend that you bring a light jacket/sweater for the cool evenings.

**5. WATER:** The arid climate in most of Israel means that one loses fluids without necessarily noticing. In other words your body can require you to drink without making you thirsty. Keshet will be providing an insulated water bottle carrier and an initial bottle of water for each participant upon arrival. Tap water in Israel is generally as fit to drink as tap water elsewhere and bottled water is widely available.

**6. COMMUNICATIONS:** Faxes can be sent to you directly at the hotels (see below – fees may apply). You may also send faxes from any hotel in Israel for a fee. AT&T, Sprint, and MCI calling cards may be used from payphones and regular phones by dialing an access code, toll free. Dial the appropriate number from any phone, toll free, and get ENGLISH instructions for placing calls.

**AT&T 180-949-4949; 180-922-2222; 180-933-3333**

**MCI Worldphone 180-920-2727; 180-930-2727; 180-940-2727**

**Sprint 180-938-7000; 180-949-4102;**

**Calls to you from the United States: The country code for Israel is 972.** The area code for Jerusalem is 2, for Tel Aviv 3, for the south 8 and for the Galilee 4. Example: A call from New York to Jerusalem would be dialed as follows: 011-972-2-seven digit phone number. Cell phones generally have a two digit area code beginning with a 5 (50, 52, 54, 57). A call from New York to 52 would be dialed as follows: 011-972-52- seven digit phone number.

Israel has one of the most sophisticated communications networks in the world and one of the highest per capita numbers of cell phones and computers of any country in the world. **Please note that given the proliferation of cell phones, public pay phones are becoming more difficult to find.**

**If you are planning to bring your laptop computer with you, wireless connections are generally available (for a fee) at the following hotels:** Inbal, Jerusalem; Dan Carmel, Haifa; Galei Kinneret; Hilton, Tel-Aviv. There are also Internet Cafes in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

**7. CELLULAR PHONE RENTAL:** As you are about to embark on your trip to Israel, you may wish to have the convenience of a cell phone rental. While you are free to order a phone from any company that you wish, Keshet has made an arrangement with **Amigo** phones for the convenience of our groups. The web link is [www.amigo-us.com/keshet](http://www.amigo-us.com/keshet). Amigo will arrange for you to receive and return the phone in the USA.

**8. NEWS:** There are two Israeli English language daily newspapers - The Jerusalem Post, and Ha'aretz (*which comes together with the International Herald Tribune*). Most hotels have cable TV that includes CNN and/or FOX and Sky. **The American embassy is in Tel Aviv and there is a US consulate in Jerusalem.**

**9. HOURS & TIME:** Israel is at GMT +2 throughout most of the year which means that it is 7 hours ahead of Eastern Time. The 24-hour time format is used in Israel (i.e.

3:00 PM is 15:00) and the European date format is used in Israel (day, month, year— i.e. March 27, 2006 is 27/3/06).

The Israeli workweek is Sunday through Thursday with the “weekend” falling on Friday and Saturday, coinciding with the Jewish Sabbath. Stores are generally opened Sunday thru Thursday 9-7 and on Fridays from 9-2. Stores, banks, and offices are closed on Saturdays. Jewish holidays are National Holidays in Israel. In addition to the Jewish holidays, there are a number of Israeli National Holidays: Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), Memorial Day, and Independence Day. These occur in the late spring. On Jewish Holidays and the weekly Sabbath, most shops and services are closed.

**10. MONEY:** You can generally obtain Israeli shekels from most Israeli ATM machines with your US issued ATM or credit card if. Many Israeli Banks are part of the PLUS Network; some are also on CIRRUS. *Please contact your US bank prior to your departure to be sure that you are able to use your card overseas and for clarification of fees and withdrawal limits if any.* You may also use VISA, Mastercard and American Express cards for nearly all transactions in Israel over \$15. There are also many official moneychanger establishments throughout the country should you wish to exchange American cash dollars for Israeli shekels. The best exchange rate can usually be obtained at ATM machines and via credit card purchases. **Currently the exchange rate is about 3.4 shekels to the dollar.**

An average dinner is \$20 -\$25 at a reasonable restaurant, and fast food meals of pizza or falafel run about \$7.

**11. TIPS:** The industry standard is \$6 per person per day for guide, \$4 per person per day for driver and has been included already in the “tip fund” but you are welcome to augment these amounts if you choose. Recommend tip for the youth counsellor is \$2 per child per day and for the guard \$1 per person per day. It is preferable for the group leader to collect these gratuities for the group and present them to the staff at the end of the trip. The expected tip in **restaurants** is 12% (for meals “on your own”). **Chambermaids** are generally tipped \$2 per person, per night for stays of more than one night.

**12. ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES:** The electrical current in Israel is the European standard 220 volts rather than the US standard 110 volts. **Please make sure that whatever electrical appliances you plan to plug-in here in Israel (Camera/Video chargers, laptop computers etc) can accept 220 volts electricity.** You will also need a plug adapter to match the Israeli electrical outlets. You may also run appliances on a currency transformer that will convert the 220 volts to 110 volts but for the health of your appliances, we do **not** recommend this.

**13. HEALTH INSURANCE IN ISRAEL:** If you are interested in obtaining health insurance coverage from an Israeli Insurer during your stay, you can contact the Chacoty Insurance agency for further information: **Sasson Chacoty Insurance Agency** 25 King George St., Jerusalem, Israel Tel: 972-2-625-4488 Fax: 972-2-625-1276 E-Mail: [chacoty@internet-zahav.net](mailto:chacoty@internet-zahav.net) All of the details, forms and payment for insurance will be handled directly with the Chacoty office.

**14. TRAVEL INSURANCE:** We urge you to purchase travel insurance; you may want to consult with your local insurance agent. Many Keshet clients have had

positive experiences with Travelex 1-800-228-9792; the Keshet locator code is: 326260. Web site: [www.travelexinsurance.com](http://www.travelexinsurance.com)

## **15. GROUP FLIGHT INFORMATION-TBA**

### **16. HOTEL CONTACT NUMBERS**

#### **Mt. Zion Hotel, Jerusalem**

Tel: 972- 2-568-9555 Fax: 972- 2-673-1425

#### **Inbar Hotel, Arad**

Tel: 972-8-9973303 Fax: 972-8-997-3322

#### **Rimon Inn, Zefat**

Tel: 972-4-699-4666 Fax: 972-4-692-0456

#### **Renaissance, Tel-Aviv**

Tel: 972-3-521-5555 Fax: 972-3-521-5588

### **17. SOME PACKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Informal casual clothes like t-shirts and jeans- in which you will be comfortable
- and not mind getting dirty during touring and hiking.
  
- Shabbat attire for men is casual dress slacks or khakis and a dress shirt, open collar, walking shoes. For women a dress or skirt and blouse with sleeves (half sleeve okay, but over shoulder) are appropriate.
- A hat for while outside in the sun or rain.
  
- Water shoes and a towel for the Ein Gedi Hike and floating in the Dead Sea.
  
- Women: a long skirt (a wrap-around is handy) and a shirt with sleeves (not long sleeved but not sleeveless either) for some of the religious sites that require them
- Men: a pair of lightweight long pants for the same purpose.
  
- Shoes: comfortable walking shoes, preferably waterproof. We will be fulfilling
- God's injunction to Abraham to *"Walk the land to its length and breadth..."*
  
- Small knapsack or day pack for daily use
  
- Bible & Siddur (small and lightweight), kippah, tallit, and tefillin.
  
- Sunglasses and sun block
  
- Camera: Film and batteries are expensive in Israel so make sure to pack them with you. Film and batteries (*if digital: memory cards, charger, 220 volt transformer*).

- **Be sure to bring your passport and medical insurance card.** We suggest that
- you make a photocopy of your passport picture/information page and put it
- in your suitcase. A lost or stolen passport is trouble and having a
- photocopy will help speed up the replacement process.
- **Towel, Water Sandals/Shoes**

## 18. SUGGESTED READING & SOURCES

There are no required readings, testing, or grades, but coming to the program with some background and knowledge and awareness will greatly enhance your enjoyment of the experience. Your local library, video or bookstore, and the Internet are excellent resources. Here are some suggestions:

**The Case for Israel** by Alan Dershowitz (John Wiley & Sons 2003)

**From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine** by Joan Peters (J Kap Publishing) -

**Israel: A History** by Martin Gilbert (Doubleday 1998) Martin Gilbert is a prolific writer. He is an historian whose style is clear, comprehensive and interesting. Includes lots of maps.

**Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century** by Martin Gilbert (Pimlico 1996)

**The Routledge Atlas of the Arab Israeli Conflict** by Martin Gilbert Routledge 2003 Tells the story with clear, easily understood maps

**O Jerusalem** by Larry Collins, Dominique LaPierre (Simon & Schuster 1972) This is a classic and gives a great overview of Israel's War of Independence, before, during and after.

**Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East** by Dr. Michael B. Oren. Oxford University Press, 2002.

**Hannah Senesh: Her Life and Diary.** Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004.

### NOVELS

- **Exodus** by Leon Uris.
- **The Source** by James Michener.
- **The Hope** and **The Glory** by Herman Wouk.

### INTERNET SITES

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/Post>

<http://www.jerusalem.muni.il>

Jerusalem Municipality

Jerusalem Post (Daily English Paper) <http://www.jpost.com/>

Haaretz (Daily English Paper) <http://www.haaretz.com/>  
Eretz: The Magazine of Israel <http://www.erezt.com/NEW>

*Your trip coordinator is Keshet's Director of Programming, Kayla Ship.  
She can be reached at e-mail: [kayla@keshetisrael.co.il](mailto:kayla@keshetisrael.co.il) with any  
questions.*