



The Quick Guide to Making an Israel Trip

Questions to Ask Yourself

- **How long should we be there?** Think about the length of time you would like to have in Israel. Keep in mind you loose about 1.5 days to traveling. 10 days is pretty standard, but depending on your congregants and their respective vacation time, an 8 day trip (almost 7 days on the ground) may be appropriate. Also a 12 day trip is possible. You should plan for at least one Shabbat in Israel.
- **Who and how many will go?** What is the make up of your trip participants (families, lay leaders, adults only, bar/bat mitzvah families, etc.)? If many of them will be going for the first time, think about the sites in Israel that you feel are important for them to see. If there are many children or many seniors, you can do special activities tailored to the group.
- **How much will they spend?** What do you think is the budget for your participants? Keep in mind that on average a 10-day trip runs about \$3000 per person depending on the level of accommodations, the number of meals provided, and the number of people for entrance fees to tourist sites and other group discounts, etc. A luxury trip with all meals included is certainly an option, but you should assess your congregation's needs. To cut costs you can stay at 3-star hotels (still nice), Kibbutzim, eliminate provided meals (i.e. lunches "on your own"), etc.
- **What will we do in Israel?** What do you want to show your congregants? In addition to the staples of the Old City of Jerusalem, the Kotel, Metzada, the Dead Sea, Tel Aviv beaches, Haifa, and Safed, you may want to show them an Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism congregation up North, the Reform Kibbutzim Yahel and Lotan in the Negev Dessert, and/or a social action or Tikkun Olam project. Contact the Israel Travel Specialist for more information about specific ways to infuse Reform Judaism into your Israel trip.

Next Steps

As soon as you have some answers to those questions, you should begin to look for a trip provider. There are several listed on the Israel Ministry of Tourism's website, www.goisrael.com . Click on the link "Find a Tour Operator". Some tour operators that run Reform-oriented trips are ARZA World, Ayelet, Gil Travel, Israel Tour Connection, and Isram. Call at least these 5 places to get a better sense of "the going rate" and what they can offer your unique congregation.

Remember, hotels and flights begin to fill up several months in advance, especially group bookings. Start planning your trip 8 – 10 months in advance of the dates you'd like to go. Prices are generally lower during off-season, December thru March. You want to figure in time for promoting the trip, recruiting participants, and collecting deposits.

If you have ANY other questions don't hesitate to contact the Israel Travel Specialist for the Reform Movement, Marla Schuchman, by email at mschuchman@urj.org or by phone at 212-650-4096. Check out ARZA's website for other Israel engagement ideas leading up to your trip to Israel - www.arza.org.