



**VOLUNTEERS  
FOR ISRAEL®**

A large, faint, light-gray Star of David is centered on the page, serving as a background for the title text.

**PROGRAM  
HANDBOOK**

November 2010

Thank you for making a commitment to serve in the Volunteers for Israel® (VFI) program. We're sure that you will have a unique and rewarding experience.

We have developed this booklet to assist you while getting ready for your adventure and while you are in Israel. It's packed with information and helpful suggestions that we believe will be useful to you — but only if you read them carefully.

If you have any questions that have not been answered by our brochures, interviewers, or this handbook, please let us know.

Also, because program details may change, we suggest that you check [www.vfi-usa.org](http://www.vfi-usa.org) for the most current information.

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*Volunteers for Israel (VFI) is the U.S. organization that conducts interviews, reviews your application, and supports and assists you in the process of becoming a Volunteer. We send your information to Sar-El, a non-profit Israeli organization that coordinates your work experience while you are in Israel on a VFI program.*

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

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Volunteers perform various civilian, non-combat duties on military bases or at geriatric facilities that would otherwise have to be done by overburdened Israelis. Meeting and working closely with Israelis on the job puts you directly in touch with the culture, lifestyle, and pulse of this vibrant country, while providing essential physical and moral support.

### ***Israeli Defense Force (IDF) Bases***

**NOTE:** You are about to volunteer **ON** an IDF base. You will not be **IN** or **WITH** the IDF. Do not say or write that you were “IN the IDF.”

On a military base, work may include but not be limited to the following:

- quartermaster/supply work e.g., filling and emptying duffel bags, organizing warehouse supplies, taking inventory, packing medical and other supplies
- base maintenance, e.g., painting, repairs, gardening
- maintenance and equipment repair, e.g., truck, tank and parts inspection, replacement and repackaging
- kitchen work, e.g., food preparation, serving, cleaning
- construction, e.g., building bunkers, erecting fences

### ***Nursing/Retirement Facilities***

This program requires a four-week commitment, and volunteers work as individuals, not as part of a group. The facilities in which volunteers serve are mainly nursing and retirement homes. You can request a region of the

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country, but it is not guaranteed. Some of the work may involve close contact with patients. However, you will not be doing “medical or nursing” work. Jobs may include:

- delivering meals or transporting patients to tests or rehabilitation sessions
- feeding patients who cannot feed themselves
- kitchen or laundry duty

**NOTE:** Most facilities will not accept volunteers over 65. Also, this program is most suitable for volunteers who can communicate with patients and staff in Hebrew.

Please keep in mind that it takes a special kind of individual to cope with daily one-on-one contact with severely ill or aged individuals. If you are a compassionate person, you will find this work very rewarding.

For further information, go to Sar-El’s website, [www.sar-el.org](http://www.sar-el.org), and click the “Programs” link. If you are interested in this option, you must first speak with Pam Lazarus, Sar-El’s Program Coordinator: [pamela@sar-el.org](mailto:pamela@sar-el.org) or 011-972-528-219-945.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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### *Work Schedules*

Each base has its own work schedule. You should expect a 6–8 hour work day and a Sunday through Thursday workweek. Volunteers work with and under the supervision of male (madrich) and female (madricha) Israeli soldiers. Typically, you have breakfast around 7:30 AM, followed by flag raising and work. Lunch is around noon, and work continues until 4 PM. Dinner is usually between 5:30 and 7:00 PM. You are not permitted to leave the base during the week, day or evening, without specific permission.

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Expect work hours at **nursing/retirement facilities** to vary from place to place. An Israeli workweek is Sunday through Thursday. Friday and Shabbat comprise the weekend. However, some facilities require volunteers to work six days a week. When your shift is over your time is your own, unless a program is planned. You may be sharing a room.

## ***Clothing***

Volunteers working on military bases are issued work clothes to be worn during the workday. Clothing includes a hat, shirt, pants, and a belt. Army boots may not be available in your size, so bring your own closed-toe work shoes or hiking boots, just in case. This is especially important if you have an uncommon foot size. A sweater and parka are provided in colder weather. Work clothing comes in limited sizes, the equivalent of small, medium, large and extra-large. Trying them on can be humorous: don't expect a perfect fit. When shirts or pants get dirty they can be returned to the quartermaster for clean replacements. Work clothes may be grease- or paint-stained, but rest assured they are clean. They are never ironed.

We suggest bringing a few cotton t-shirts or tank tops to wear under your work clothes and a supply of heavy cotton or wool socks to wear with your boots or work shoes.

**NOTE:** There is a limited supply of army skirts for Orthodox women. If you prefer them, we suggest you bring two of your own khaki-colored or army-green skirts to wear while you are working on the base.

It will be a proud moment when you receive a blue Sar-El insignia that must be worn on the shoulder flap of your shirt. This identifies you as a civilian volunteer. Work clothing is to be worn only on the base unless otherwise instructed. *After your tour of duty is completed you must return your work clothing. You may not take it from the base or bring any part of it home, except for the blue Sar-El insignia you have been given.*

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Bring clothes that are comfortable, easy to care for, and that you won't mind getting soiled. You may be hand washing your civilian clothing, so bring a liquid concentrate detergent. These dissolve in cold water, take up very little space in your luggage, and go a long way. Wash your clothes in the morning rather than at night so that they will dry in the sun by lunchtime. Clothes washed at night will probably be wet in the morning because of the heavy dew. On the weekend, you also have the option of using laundry services that are readily available in most cities. Some are open on Shabbat, but, to be safe, try to drop off clothes on Thursday and pick them up Friday.

**NOTE:** Volunteers not working on IDF bases must bring their own work clothing.

### ***Living Conditions***

With few exceptions, living conditions on **bases** can best be described as austere and somewhat primitive. A three-star hotel will seem like the height of luxury by comparison. However, if you have a positive attitude and a sense of humor, you will take it all in stride. Specifically:

- Most barracks have neither central heat in the winter nor air conditioning in the summer.
- Volunteers sleep 4-10 in a room (men and women are housed separately, including married couples), usually in cots or bunk beds.
- Hot water is at a premium, so be considerate of others and shower quickly.
- Toilets often become stuffed. (If you're a plumber *this* may be a job for you!) It's a good idea to carry toilet paper or tissues with you.
- Sinks on some bases resemble a trough with several faucets.
- Some shower stalls have no curtains and may not have showerheads. Shower rooms are generally designated male or female. Occasionally, shower rooms are unisex, with separate hours for males and females.

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- Sometimes, bathrooms are far from the rooms in which you sleep. Make sure you take a flashlight for night visits.
  - Shower shoes such as thongs or flip flops are a *must*.

Living quarters for volunteers in **nursing/retirement facilities** are usually — but not always — in the facility itself.

## ***Meals***

On IDF bases, you will be eating kosher army food in the mess hall along with the soldiers and other civilian personnel, giving you an opportunity to mingle and get to know each other. Breakfast and dinner are indistinguishable. They consist of tomatoes, eggs and cucumbers, eggs and cheeses, eggs and bread, and eggs and sweet tea or coffee. Lunch is the substantial meal of the day. Meat, chicken, turkey, fish, or a soy product, and copious vegetables and salads are offered. The food may not be what you are accustomed to, but you will not starve.

Volunteers on **nursing/retirement homes programs** usually have their meals at the facility.

## ***Madrichot – (group leaders)***

On army bases, each group is assigned an English-speaking madrich (male) or madricha (female) by Sar-El. He or she is your group leader and will be responsible for you at all times including:

- meeting you when you arrive at the base. The person who meets you at the airport and accompanies you on a chartered bus to your base or assigned job site may or may not be your madrich/a.
- seeing that you have a bed to sleep in
- making sure you get work clothing (army base only) and a job the next morning
- facilitating your weekend arrangements (see “Weekends” section). Speak with your madrich/a early in the week about your requests for weekend arrangements.

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- providing directions to and from your weekend destination
  - seeing that you are contented with your job and having a great VFI experience

### ***Weekends – (Friday & Shabbat)***

Volunteers must spend from Thursday evening through Saturday night off the base and return Sunday morning. If you volunteer during a holiday, you will have to leave the base then, also. Many volunteers (wisely) book lodging in advance from the U.S. to assure a reservation, especially at high tourist season. Volunteers without plans sometimes travel together, and madrichot may be able to help with arrangements. You must arrange and pay for transportation from and back to the base. If you will also be paying for meals and lodging, *expect to spend more than \$100 dollars per day. Be sure to bring a bag suitable for weekend travel, and pack medications you might need.*

Weekend options can include:

- exploring Israel or visiting family or friends
- staying at a youth hostel or Beit Oded, the IDF soldiers' hostel in Tel Aviv/Jaffa. Beit Oded is free but fills up quickly, so you must reserve a space. Tell your madrich/a if you are interested in staying there. (Note: You do not have to be a youth or a soldier to take advantage of these.)
- staying at a hotel. Note: Volunteers' discounts are available at some hotels, especially in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Be sure to ask about Sar-El discounts wherever you stay.
- touring. There are no organized Sar-El weekend tours at this time, so you must deal directly with tour companies or guides.

Sar-El suggests two companies you can contact directly:

- 1) For individuals or small group tours, call Yair at 054-423-1736, or email him at [yair\\_maz@netvision.net.il](mailto:yair_maz@netvision.net.il).
- 2) Ben Harim Tours gives a 10% discount to Sar-El volunteers. Call 03-546-8870. You can select your tours when you are in Israel.

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- Sometimes, “home hospitality,” a stay in an Israeli family’s home, is available. If you are interested in this experience, it’s a good idea to tell your madrich/a early and to specify whether you want to stay with a religious family or not. Asking early will help your madrich/a make these arrangements.
  - *For your safety, volunteers must have permission from the madrich/a to travel to certain areas in Israel. Travel to Egypt (including Sinai) and Jordan (including Petra) is not permitted by Sar-El while you are on the program.*

### **Tours and Evening Activities**

During the work week, when possible, Sar-El arranges organized tours, educational lectures, and evening programs. Evening programs may feature talks about topics such as Israeli or IDF history, geography, famous Israelis, Israeli achievements, environmental issues, or Israel’s economy. Madrichot and education soldiers spend a lot of time preparing these programs, so do be courteous and attend them.

During the first week of a 3-week program, there is no trip. During the second week there is a day trip. During the third week of a 3-week program there is an “after work trip.” Please understand that there may be changes in the schedule. There is no tour on 1-week programs. A liaison or guide who is fluent in English accompanies the group. There is no set day of the week for a tour. At the end of a Thursday tour, you may be dropped off at a central bus station to depart for your weekend destination. Your madrich/a will assist you with directions for getting there and returning to the base. *Regardless of the length of your program, you are responsible for arranging your transportation back to the base at the end of the weekend.*

### **Hebrew Ulpan**

Ulpan for beginners may be available for English-speaking groups two nights/week. It costs \$50 for up to three weeks. You must apply from home and pay Sar-El upon arrival. Ulpan class size is limited to 15 and will be cancelled if fewer than 10 sign up.

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## TRAVEL INFORMATION

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### *Before You Leave Home*

- **IMPORTANT:** See *Travel Documents* on page 11.
- If you are bringing an ATM card (see *Money Matters* on page 13), check with your bank to be sure your card is accepted in Israel.
- It is imperative to let your credit card company know when you will be out of the country and when you will return. This way, the company won't assume their card is being used without permission and possibly cut off credit.
- It's a good idea to bring more than one type of ATM and credit card in case one does not work in Israel.
- Bring copies of prescriptions for medication. (There is no guarantee a pharmacy will fill them, but they might help a doctor who treats you.)
- Bring enough medicine for your entire trip and keep it in your hand luggage.

**IMPORTANT:** Be sure to check online at [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov) and with your airline for the latest information about what is and is not permitted in your carry-on and check-in baggage. If you are carrying a gift it's better not to wrap it because Security may open it. Paper gift bags are handy substitutes for gift wrap. It is smart to pack all medicines, prescriptions, toiletries, clean underwear, socks, a change of clothing, and Sar-El papers in your carry-on luggage in case your other luggage is delayed.

### *On Your Departure Date*

- Arrive at the airport *three hours* prior to flight time.
- Have your passport, ID, and other travel documents handy.
- You may be asked various security questions in different forms. Answer all questions honestly and courteously. Security personnel know what they are doing, and everything they do is for your safety.

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## *Upon Arrival*

**IMPORTANT:** If you arrive in Israel *prior* to the program date, you must call Pamela Lazarus, Sar-El's Program Coordinator, to arrange when and where to meet on the day the program starts. Her cell phone number is 0528-219-945. If you are on a 1-week program, you must be at the airport at 8 AM on the Sunday the program begins *or you will not be allowed on the Program*.

If you arrive very late on a Sunday or Monday, call Pam ASAP (0528-219-945). Cars are not available for evening pickups. You may be asked to take a taxi to Beit Oded or a hotel (at your expense).

If you are on a 2- or 3-week program and you arrive in Israel on the day your program begins, do the following when you arrive at Ben-Gurion Airport:

- Go through passport control. **NOTE:** There are separate lines for Israeli citizens and for visitors. Go to the correct line.
- Pick up your luggage (the luggage carts are free!) and proceed through Customs.
- Proceed to the MEETING POINT in the Arrivals Hall to meet Sar-El representatives. PLEASE WAIT IN THE ARRIVALS HALL ON THE SEATS TO THE RIGHT OF THE FOUNTAIN AS YOU ARE LOOKING TOWARDS EXIT 2 DOORS.
- You will face an ATM machine, a Currency Exchange Counter, a Phone Rental Counter and seats. Have a seat. Other volunteers may be there, too. A Sar-El representative will meet you there. He or she will be wearing army work clothes with the blue Sar-El shoulder patch and may be carrying a Sar-El sign or clipboard. Generally, someone will meet you within two hours, but sometimes it takes several hours. Please be patient and relax. Sar-El picks up volunteers at the airport on Sunday and Monday – several times a day. There may be delays as they try to consolidate people coming in on many different flights.

If you want to leave the area for any reason, please tell one of the other waiting volunteers where you are going. Be friendly. That person might be your roommate for the next two or three weeks!

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- Consider using this time to get some shekels, buy a phone card, and/or rent a phone. Do not leave your luggage unattended for any reason while you are in the airport, or anywhere else. Airport security is extremely vigilant.

If you run into a problem at the airport, call Pamela Lazarus at 0528-219-945.

### ***Travel Documents***

You must obtain your own passport (visa, or travel permit, if needed). Carry important documents with you. DO NOT PACK THEM.

- If you are a United States citizen, you will need a *valid* U.S. passport in order to enter Israel. All visitors to Israel must hold a passport that is valid for at least six months from the date they leave the country. Depending on the length of your stay, there should be at least seven months left on your passport.
- If you are a citizen of another country, please call the Israeli consulate for visa information.
- If you hold an Israeli passport in addition to another one, you must bring both passports. Sar-El needs the non-Israeli passport to register you. Upon entering and leaving Israel, you will be asked to present your Israeli passport.
- If you are an 18-to 26-year-old Israeli citizen, or if you hold dual citizenship and you do not obtain military service postponement prior to going to Israel, you will be going into the Army (for real) upon arrival.
- If you are stateless or hold a green card, you must contact the I.N.S. to obtain a resident's travel permit in order to reenter the United States.
- **Be sure to bring three collated packets of information.** Each packet must contain the following items: (1) a copy of the picture page of your passport, (2) both medical forms (signed within the past year), (3) the insurance waiver, (4) proof of medical insurance (insurance card), and

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(5) a copy of policy coverage in Israel (if applicable). One packet is for Pam, one for your madrich/a, and one is for you to keep.

## **Medical Insurance**

**NOTE: Medicare does NOT cover you outside the U.S.**

All participants in Volunteers for Israel programs are required to carry medical coverage while in Israel. Please contact your carrier and make sure that you are covered for emergency room treatment, hospitalization, and doctors' fees while traveling in Israel. Also check with your credit card company to see what they offer in the way of Travel Health Insurance. If these are not adequate for your needs, you must obtain a short-term travelers medical insurance policy. Please see VFI's website ([www.vfi-usa.org](http://www.vfi-usa.org)) for suggestions, or call VFI at 1-866-514-1948.

Emergency Room treatment automatically costs 800 shekels, or more, and private doctors also charge fees. Both will expect you to pay when services are rendered and to be reimbursed by your insurance company when you return home. Ask for a complete description, written in English, of all services you received. Be sure the receipt shows whether you paid in dollars or shekels so your insurer will reimburse correct amount to you. This is very important!

## **Weather**

Israel has essentially two seasons—a rainy season and a dry season. The rainy season lasts from October to April. It does not rain every day, and it may not rain at all while you are there, but Israel needs the rainfall during this time so don't be upset if it rains on your parade! Rain during the dry season, between May and September, is very rare so you will not need rain gear. It is advisable to bring warm sleeping clothes during the winter months, as the barracks can be cold at night. The temperature in Israel rarely falls below freezing during the winter and can be quite hot in the summer. The climate varies depending on the region of the country. Since you do not know where you will be stationed, it is advisable to bring clothes that can be layered. Check the forecast in Israel online at <http://yahoo.com>. Click "Weather."

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## ***Appliances***

Israel uses 220 current at 50 cycles. To operate appliances manufactured for use in the United States, you will need a step down transformer or converter, or an appliance with a dual voltage switch-110/220 and a European-configured plug adapter (found in Radio Shack or any good hardware store).

## ***Money Matters***

**NOTE:** Israeli banks are closed on Friday and Saturday.

Israel uses the New Israel Shekel (NIS). To obtain a current conversion rate, check with your bank or online at <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>. Currency rates can change daily.

## ***ATMs***

The easiest, least costly, and safest way to obtain Israeli currency (NIS) is with a bank or debit card at an ATM machine. They give you a good exchange rate and ready access to your money. ATMs are found throughout Israel. The first one you encounter may be at the airport, opposite the baggage carousel. It's probably a good idea to get some shekels (withdrawing at least 200 shekels is advisable for starters) while you wait for your luggage.

The ATM readout will be in English. *In Israel, money can be withdrawn only from checking accounts, and you will not be able to transfer or withdraw money from your savings account.*

**NOTE:** The Israeli ATM machines have numerical keypads only. If your PIN number has letters as well as numbers, you must know the numerical equivalents. Check with your bank before leaving home. Some bankcards must be activated for international use with a different PIN number. When the machine asks you how much money you want to withdraw, it is asking *how many shekels, not dollars*. At some point you will be instructed to press the “green button” after entering your PIN #. This button is usually located in the lower right column of buttons. The color may be worn off. If you need help, you might ask an Israeli waiting in line for assistance.

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**IMPORTANT:** Take the same precautions to ensure your safety and privacy that you would at home.

### **Credit Cards:**

See **TRAVEL INFORMATION** on page 9. Credit cards are widely accepted for purchases and usually give the best exchange rate. VISA is the most widely used. You can get cash with your credit card, but a cash advance is costly. When making a purchase, make sure that the credit slip correctly identifies the monetary unit as either NIS (shekels) or \$ (American dollars).

### **Travelers Checks**

If you choose to use travelers checks, be aware that cashing them in a bank can be costly. You pay a service charge for each check cashed, so bring checks in larger denominations to cut down on the number of service charges. To cash travelers checks in a bank you must present your passport. Remember, banks are closed Fridays and Saturdays.

### **Wire Transfers**

If you run out of money, you can have money wired to you through the “Western Union International Money Transfer Service.” Their telephone number is 1-800-325-6000.

### **Phone Calls**

REMEMBER (if you still want to be loved) that there is a 7- to 10-hour time difference between Israel and the various time zones in the U.S. Israel is ahead. Even your loved ones may not appreciate a 3 AM phone call. For example: 10 PM in Israel is 12 Noon PST. And Noon in Israel is 2 AM PST. Also, Israel’s Daylight Saving Time (DST) period is slightly different from the U.S., and this may also have an effect on the time difference.

To call home you have several options:

- You can use a cell phone brought from home or rent one in Israel.
- You can buy pre-paid (international) telephone cards at home, or buy an Israeli Bezeq telecard to use in payphones.

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## Cell Phone Rentals

For your personal security and convenience, **VFI strongly recommends that you have a cell phone during your stay in Israel.** It is very convenient and easy to rent ahead of time in the U.S. Or, you can rent one from Pelephone at the airport when you arrive. Be sure to carry the instructions and charger with you. Since every phone company has a different code to make long distance calls, read the directions carefully so you'll understand how to call the U.S.

Rental fees and usage rates vary from company to company. When comparing costs, check to see if a company's rates include the VAT tax. The following companies offer competitive rental rates. Contact them for information or to order phones. It won't hurt to ask if they offer a discount to VFI volunteers.

### AMIGO\*

1-888-264-4687

[www.amigo-us.com/VFI](http://www.amigo-us.com/VFI)

*\*AMIGO has a free walkie-talkie feature and is used by the IDF.*

### Cell Talk

1-866-801-9623 (in U.S.)

[rentals@celltalk.co.il](mailto:rentals@celltalk.co.il)

02-538-2647 (in Israel)

052-278-4715

[www.celltalk.co.il](http://www.celltalk.co.il)

### IsraelPhones

1-866-897-9393 (in U.S.)

[info@israelphones.com](mailto:info@israelphones.com)

1-800-721-1111 (in Israel)

[www.israelphones.com/volunteers.htm](http://www.israelphones.com/volunteers.htm)

## Telephone Cards

Most Israeli bases have public pay phones, but sometimes they don't work. Also, you may have to wait your turn to use them (another reason to carry your own cell phone). Payphones do not take coins. They require a **Bezeq telephone card**, which is generally the least expensive way to make a call. The card can be purchased at the airport, at many, but not all, "shekems" (PXs) on bases, in some tobacco and candy stores (kiosks), and many other places. It is a pre-paid card that has a given number of message units on it. It comes in denominations of 20, 50, and 100 units, and the cost depends on its unit size. Unless you have lots of calls to make, a small denomination is advisable. How many units a call will use (cost) depends on the time of day, the length of the call, and the distance you are calling. Evening rates are lowest.

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To use the telecard, place it in the phone slot. Wait for the dial tone and then follow instructions that will appear on the screen. The readout will be in Hebrew first, then in English. Once your call is connected, the readout will indicate the number of units left on the card. When you hang up, be sure to retrieve your card.

**IMPORTANT:** To call from Israel to the U.S., you must first dial one of the Israeli international call companies (Barak 013, Bezeq 014 or Zahav 012), then 1 (the country code), and then the area code and phone number (ex. 013-1-212-555-1212). Keep this in mind when programming phone numbers into your address book. To dial a number within Israel, just dial the area code (with the zero first) and phone number.

Another option is buying a pre-paid telephone card at home. They are widely available at drugstores and supermarkets, etc. from companies like MCI, Sprint, AT&T, and countless other providers. Make sure your card is International and will work in Israel.

You **MUST** use a Bezeq telecard to get a dial tone. After you get a dial tone you can use your U.S.-based cards. Follow directions that come with the card. **NOTE:** U.S. calling cards (or collect calls) can be **VERY EXPENSIVE**.

### ***Internet and Hand-Held Electronic Devices***

For security reasons, **Volunteers are not permitted to use the Internet, via any means, while on the base.** Equipment may be confiscated if you violate this rule. On weekends, you can find an Internet café or service at your hotel. Also, for your protection, Sar-El cautions against bringing hand-held devices that use digital services, because they might be misplaced, lost, or stolen.

### ***Transportation***

Sar-El takes volunteers who are on a 3-week program from the airport to their base on the first day and returns the group to a central location in Tel Aviv on the last day. Those on a 1- or 2-week program will get a ride to their base on the first day, but Sar-El does not provide a ride from the base at the end of the program.

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## **Buses**

Israeli Egged buses are a very convenient way to get to and from the base on weekends. Each city has a central bus station from which you can reach almost any destination in Israel. Your madrich/a will advise you on the location of your base's closest station or junction. Buses stop running one hour before sunset on Friday and do not resume service until after sunset on Saturday. If you are returning to your base on Sunday morning, keep in mind that bus stops and stations will be VERY crowded. Buy your return ticket on Friday and get to the bus stop EARLY!

## **Trains**

Israel's trains are efficient, clean, and they run frequently. Your madrich/a can help with scheduling to and from your base on weekends. Schedules are posted at stations and a paper copy can be purchased there for 1 or 2 shekels. Remember that trains will be crowded Friday afternoons and Sunday mornings. For further information, check <http://www.rail.co.il/EN/Pages/HomePage.aspx>. Click "Stations."

## **Taxis**

Taxicabs can be found in practically every city and town in Israel. Your madrich/a or a friend might know the number of a reliable taxi company. For short trips, tell the driver you want to be "on the meter," to avoid the possibility of being overcharged. For longer rides, establish the fare before you enter the taxi. Additionally, in some locations, special vehicles known as "sheruts" (shuttle vans) travel set routes and are shared with other passengers. The driver will generally not set out until the sherut is full. The fare is quoted before the ride begins.

## **Car Rentals**

If you are thinking of renting a car in Israel, please be aware that some credit cards will not cover the insurance for the rental. Check with your credit card company, your personal automobile insurance company, and the Israeli rental car company to see who will provide the car rental insurance

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coverage. **NOTE:** Sar-El strongly advises against renting a car while you are on the program. You will not be able to park it on the base, and they cannot guarantee there will be space to park it outside of the base.

## **IMPORTANT SUGGESTIONS & GUIDELINES**

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- Take along a photocopy of the front page of your passport and keep it separate from your passport. In case you lose your passport, it can help with identification and replacement.
- Travel light so that you won't have to schlep too much. Remember — you are your own porter.
- Sar-El suggests that you bring a sheet and pillow, because not all bases have them. If you are a light sleeper, bring along earplugs, and if you snore loudly, bring earplugs for your roommates.
- It's a good idea to bring work and rubber gloves. They can be handy.
- The sun in Israel is VERY strong. We advise a sunscreen of 45 SPF or higher, sunglasses that will protect you against UVA and UVB, and a sun hat when you are outdoors. And you will need to remember to drink lots and lots of water. By the time you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated.
- No special vaccinations are required before you go to Israel.
- Cultural Differences:

It's important to remember that there are some cultural differences between Israeli and U.S. behaviors, based on different cultural values and world views. For example, women, especially, should be aware that the Israeli sense of *space* differs from ours. (If anyone gets too close for comfort, don't hesitate to tell them to keep their distance.) To understand the "whys" behind the "ways," and to make the transition easier, please consult the tips on "Cultural Differences" prepared by volunteer Ruth Mastron that are available on VFI's website or through your representative.

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- DO NOT photograph or post anything that is sensitive or classified. If you are not sure, ask your madrich/a what is/is not allowed. The IDF has begun to monitor Internet sites such as Facebook for postings that contain sensitive/classified information.
  - To avoid the appearance of proselytizing (which is not permitted on the program), it is best not to discuss religion or religious issues. **Anyone who proselytizes will be dismissed from the Program.** If you encounter behavior or circumstances that concern you on the base, such as drug use, proselytizing, or other situations the madricot cannot easily remedy, call Pam Lazarus immediately at 0528-219-945.
  - For your safety, **NEVER, NEVER HITCHHIKE** or accept a ride with someone you don't know well, or someone you only met online.
  - Israeli license plates have black numbers (no letters) on a yellow background, but do not use license plate color as the only way to judge if a ride is safe. If you have any doubts, find another taxi.
  - If you are staying in Israel after the VFI program, you may need to confirm your return flight at least 72 hours prior to departure. Check with your airline. To extend your flight ticket you must call the airline yourself. Sometimes, El Al will reduce the extension fee.
  - **NOTE:** As of January 1, 2007, El Al discontinued Early Check-in in Tel Aviv for return flights. You may want to check their website for possible online options. If you are using another airline, ask if it offers the service.
  - Our most important suggestion is to go with a sense of adventure and a sense of humor. Attitude makes all the difference. Be adaptable and flexible. These are assets on the program and wherever you travel in Israel. Remember: *Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape.* **You are in for one of the greatest experiences of your life! We know this because all of us at VFI are veteran volunteers.**

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## WHEN YOU RETURN

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Please let us hear from you when you return home, and please fill out VFI's online Post-Program Questionnaire at [www.vfi-usa.org](http://www.vfi-usa.org). Click the "Keshet/Staying Connected" link. Your input is very important to our continuing efforts to upgrade the program. We would also appreciate having copies of some of your photographs. We might want to post them on our website or use them for publicity.

**VERY IMPORTANT!!** We need your help to make this program available to others. Enthusiastic volunteers are always needed to help with local and national recruiting for VFI and other important tasks. Please contact your local representative or VFI's national office (1-866-514-1948 or [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org)) to offer your services.

**Be a VFI "Ambassador."** Most first-time volunteers tell us they heard about VFI from a friend or at a local presentation. Tell your family and friends about Volunteers for Israel and encourage them to return to Israel with you. Write an article about your experience for *The Volunteer Connection* (VFI's newsletter) or another newsletter; a newspaper; a magazine; and Internet social network sites. Offer to speak to local clubs and organizations. VFI will provide promotional materials and information to help you present the program to others.

**NOTE:** Before you write or give a presentation, review the list of guidelines you were given at home or check with your local representative. *Reminder:* If you were on a military base and you want to speak or write about your experience, it is accurate to say that you volunteered **ON** an IDF base. You did not volunteer **IN, WITH** or **FOR** the IDF. The distinction is very important.

**We thank you for your service and your support of the State of Israel and its people.**

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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### **Sar-El Office**

111 Jerusalem Blvd.

68151 Tel Aviv, Israel

Email: sar-el@netvision.net.il

Phone and Fax: (from outside Israel)

Tel: 011-972-3-681-7442

Fax: 011-972-3-681-9098

(in Israel) Tel: 03-681-7442

Fax: 03-681-9098

### **Pamela Lazarus (Sar-El Program Coordinator in Israel)**

Email: pamela@sar-el.org

Cell phone: (in Israel) 0528-219-945

(from outside Israel) 011-972-528-219-945

### **Beit Oded (Sar-El weekend hostel)**

5 Jerusalem Blvd., Tel Aviv (Yafo)

Tel: (in Israel) 03-569-2848

### **VFI Headquarters (in the U.S.)**

Email: info@vfi-usa.org

Tel: 1-866-514-1948

### **Ben-Gurion Airport Information**

Tel: (from outside Israel) 011-972-3-975-5555

(in Israel) 03-975-5555; pre-recorded English message: 03-972-3332

### **EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS (in Israel)**

Sar-El office: 03-526-7513

Pamela Lazarus: 0528-219-945

Police: 100

Medical Emergency/Ambulance: 101

Information: 144

Fire Department: 102

U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv: 03-519-7475 Mon.–Thu. or 03-519-7551

*The mission of Volunteers for Israel is to connect Americans to Israel through volunteer service.*

*We achieve this goal by partnering with military and civilian organizations that enable volunteers to work side-by-side with Israelis.*

*We promote solidarity and good will among Israelis, American Jews, and other friends of Israel.*



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