

Gesher Hai

Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is included in the cost of the program?

The cost of the program includes tuition, round-trip airfare, accommodations, three meals a day, medical insurance (while in Israel), transportation, luggage insurance, T-shirt, and all admissions as per final itinerary. Not included is the group fund (\$30 per participant), laundry money (\$30 per participant) and individual spending money.

2) How religious is the program?

Gesher Hai is not religiously or politically affiliated. We seek to experience Judaism in the most meaningful and pluralistic way. Groups observe Shabbat and all food is kosher. We do not pray three times a day, but do have a meaningful and unique approach to Judaism, seeking to enjoy special spiritual moments and offer Shabbat services. Those who wish to practice religious rituals will have the opportunity to do so.

3) What about Shabbat and Kashrut?

Guided by our staff, participants celebrate Shabbat as a group. All of our programs provide kosher meals, and do not use transportation on Shabbat. We encourage our participants to explore various Jewish customs and observances. We believe that Shabbat is a very special time, especially in Israel, and we do “take a break” from the hustle and bustle of the program to experience the enriching qualities of Shabbat.

4) Is the program educational?

Yes! Gesher Hai emphasizes enjoyable, informal learning. Participants take part in creative, hands-on seminars relevant to Israel and Judaism. Learning is a part of our program, but we do it in a fun and exciting way!

5) What about group staff (madrichim)?

We at Gesher Hai believe that staff members (madrichim) are one of the most integral aspects of the success of the program. The American counselors must have been to Israel before, and have experience working with youth in an informal and/or formal setting. Israeli counselors/madrichim are graduates of the IDF (Israeli Army) and have experience working with American youth. Our Israeli staff includes tour guides licensed through the Ministry of Tourism and/or other accredited schools. We have two offices in Israel that work year round to select and train the best staff available. Through the Israel Experience department of the Jewish Agency for Israel, two seminars are held, one a screening workshop and one a training seminar.

6) What about accommodations & transportation?

Gesher Hai participants stay at modern youth hostels, dormitories, field schools, kibbutz

guesthouses, and spend a few nights under the stars. These accommodations are well suited for travel in Israel and have both dining halls and recreational facilities. A private modern, air-conditioned bus is used for travel.

7) Do I need spending money?

All activities are covered in the cost of the program. The only additional money you need is for the group fund (\$30), laundry (\$30) and spending money. You will have supervised free time during the program to buy your family and friends lots of great presents from Israel, as well as a falafel or two for yourself. Based on our experience, we recommend \$300-\$500 a month. Of course, should you want to bring more, you can. Our staff exchanges money for the group at scheduled times throughout the trip. Please refer to the Trip Guide and Instructions for more information.

8) What about my dirty laundry?

Laundry is done “camp style” approximately once every ten days. A laundry service picks up the dirty laundry and usually returns it the next day. Each participant should bring a labeled laundry bag. *Availability of laundry service is dependent on where the group is located.

9) What type of luggage should I bring?

You may bring two main pieces of luggage, 45 pounds per bag; duffle bags on wheels with a handle is best. Pack a soft gym bag as well—a “three-day” bag as we call it. On weekends when you will stay in an Israeli home, or sleep outdoors, you can pack everything you need in this bag, leaving your main luggage stored safely away.

10) What if I get hurt or sick?

Medical services and insurance coverage for illness/injury while on the Gesher Hai trip is provided through Israel Experience and is included in the cost of the program.

11) Can I use a personal cell phone and use it on the trip?

The Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County does not allow personal cell phones to be used on educational tours. You will have the opportunity to purchase calling cards in Israel from our staff. We advise not bringing a calling card from home, as they sometimes do not work in Israel. The staff will have cell phones and will be communicating regularly with our local Jewish Federation contact in WPB.

12) Do I need to purchase travel insurance?

We do not think it is essential. We do not recommend that you bring expensive jewelry or electronics, or any items that could easily be broken, lost or stolen. We will guard your child’s passport and spending money throughout the duration of the trip.

13) How can my friends and family keep in touch?

E-mail addresses, phone numbers and all other contact information will be supplied at the final meeting for parents and teens.