

UJIA Israel Experience FAQs

Israel Tour Launch: February 2024

1) Who runs Israel Tour?

RSY-Netzer is part of the Movement for Reform Judaism (MRJ) and runs tour in partnership with UJIA Israel Experience, our Provider in Israel and the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI). Israel Tours have been run successfully for decades through this partnership.. When you sign up, you do so through RSY-Netzer and the success of Tour relies on each of the Organisers playing their part.

UJIA Israel Experience (organised by JAFI and supported by UJIA) takes on a number of administrative roles including helping manage the application process, coordinating flights, and being responsible for crisis management. UJIA Israel Experience provides support to Youth Movements / Organisations and Tour Providers in Israel to help ensure Israel Tours run smoothly and to high standards.

RSY-Netzer will be responsible for the educational content, delivery and ethos of the programme, and all communication with you.

The Tour Provider in Israel is responsible for all the day-to-day arrangements on the ground, for example food, transportation and accommodation.

UJIA supports the project through its support for JAFI and UJIA Israel Experience, but it is not one of the Organisers. In partnership with RSY-Netzer, UJIA provides financial assistance on a means tested basis to participants to ensure Israel Tour remains accessible for all.

More information about this and all of the topics covered in these FAQs are set out in the UJIA Israel Experience Important Information Booklet, including the UJIA Israel Experience Terms and Conditions. If there is a conflict or inconsistency between the information in these FAQs and the UJIA Israel Experience Important Information Booklet, the terms of the UJIA Israel Experience Important Information Booklet prevail.

2) Why have you decided to launch Israel Tour?

What we have witnessed in Israel since October 7th has been unprecedented. As a community we have mourned for family, friends, and colleagues, and have shared in the grief of the people of Israel. We are

united in solidarity and support and pray for the swift return of all hostages and the healing of those injured.

We have been working hard to find a pathway to run Israel Tour this summer, with the safety and security of participants as the utmost priority. We have undergone a detailed risk analysis within UJIA Israel Experience, taking legal advice in the UK, securing travel and medical insurance policies (see below for further details), and liaising with our partners and security officials in Israel. UJIA has continued to support Masa long-term and gap year programmes in Israel, and has sent many Birthright, volunteering, and solidarity groups to Israel since October 7th. Our global partners in North America and other countries continue to plan and run programming.

We know that the decision to send your child on an Israel Tour this summer may be a difficult one, and whilst we have worked hard to ensure everything is in place to run a safe and secure Israel Tour, we encourage you to discuss this with your child and come to the decision that is right for your family. Our job is to do everything possible to provide a safe and secure environment for those who do wish to participate in Israel Tour, but we know that whilst there are always risks involved in travel to Israel and indeed any overseas travel, these are particularly apparent this year.

UJIA Israel Experience works closely with a wide network of Youth Movements and organisations in the UK, tour providers in Israel, and Israeli security services. This has enabled us to run Israel Tours safely for decades through conflict and unrest, and has ensured that these formative educational experiences will continue to be a rite of passage for countless young people in the British Jewish community.

It is clear that continuing to arrange and support trips to Israel is more important than it has ever been. We continue to have an educational responsibility towards our youth to provide them with meaningful educational Israel experiences, but this summer's Israel programming will also bring a vital and much needed boost to local communities who are deeply appreciative of diaspora Jewry's solidarity at this time.

3) UK Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) guidance is currently against all but essential travel to Israel – doesn't this mean we can't go?

RSY-Netzer and the Movement for Reform Judaism have made a decision to run Israel Tour only subject to this guidance changing. If the FCDO guidance changes to recommend against travel only to certain *parts* of Israel, they will ensure the Programme does not travel to those parts that the FCDO recommends against 'all but essential travel'.

RSY-Netzer have clearly laid out cancellation terms in the event that this Programme cannot proceed; please ensure you have read and understood these.

4) In what circumstances would you cancel Tour? Will I get my money back if you cancel?

RSY-Netzer Tour is subject to a minimum of 36 participants – if we do not get sufficient participants by 4th March, we will cancel the Programme.

RSY-Netzer will cancel Israel Tour by 17th June if the FCDO guidance remains against travel to all parts of Israel. If RSY-Netzer cancels Israel Tour, you will receive a refund less a maximum of £200. We will endeavour to limit this loss, and will refund as much as we are able to recover.

In the event that RSY-Netzer Tour can go ahead on 17th June, and the FCDO guidance subsequently changes back between 18th June – 7th July, to once again advise against 'all but essential travel', RSY-Netzer would cancel Israel Tour. You will receive a refund less a maximum of £600. We will endeavour to limit this loss, and will refund as much as we are able to recover.

Curtailment

There may be security circumstances during the Programme which lead to significant changes to the Programme, or to the curtailment of the Programme, with Participants returning home at an earlier date. In such circumstances, it is unlikely that any money would be recoverable and therefore no refund would be available. We will endeavour to limit this loss, and will refund as much as we are able to recover.

If you choose to cancel your child's place on Israel Tour, RSY-Netzer's standard cancellation terms apply (see below).

5) What is my financial risk? How much do I have to pay now?

On application there is a deposit payment required (£500 unless you are applying for financial assistance). We know this is a big decision for you to make and have sought to reduce the financial risk to you for as long as possible. As such, you will have the right to a full refund if you change your mind for any reason, without deduction of any administrative fees, until Monday March 18th 2024. This will allow you several weeks to begin the application process before you are fully committed to the programme. After this point there are financial commitments made by the Organisers for flights and land costs, some of which may not be recoverable.

If you choose to cancel your child's place on Israel Tour, standard cancellation terms apply.

Up to 18th March: full refund

35 days or longer prior to departure day: 100% of monies paid less the deposit.

15-34 days prior to departure day: 50% of monies paid less deposit.

1-14 days prior to departure day: no monies refunded.

Should you be forced to cancel your place after March 18th as a result of an event outside of your control (e.g. injury, family bereavement, travel disruption etc) it is possible this would be covered under the Israel Tour Travel Insurance policy, and you could be able to claim the full cost back. Please read the travel insurance policy carefully when considering your decision to apply.

6) What if I change my mind?

By signing up for Israel Tour you are committing to joining us on this pathway in the same way you would any normal year. If you choose to cancel your place there are terms and conditions in place.

After March 18th, if you choose to cancel it would be subject to the normal cancellation policy and you would lose your deposit in addition to an admin fee should you choose to cancel 60 days or more before the programme begins. You can see the full cancellation policy in your Youth Movements Israel Tour literature.

Please note, this financial risk is only in the event that you choose to cancel. Should you be forced to cancel as a result of an event outside of your control (e.g. injury, family bereavement, travel disruption etc) it is possible this would be covered under the Israel Tour Travel Insurance policy, and you could be able to claim the full cost back.

7) What extra security measures will be in place?

We have already made steps to ensure there is additional security in place this year, and increased provision to care for the participants on Israel Tour. At the time of writing, it is difficult to predict what may or may not be required in the summer, and these steps are of course subject to change depending on the advice received from Israeli security organisations we work with.

- i. All Israel Tour groups this year will have an armed security guard at all times.
- ii. All Israel Tour groups will have an Israeli Madrich/a trained and responsible for managing emergency/siren situations. It is their responsibility when arriving at any location to know where safe areas/shelters are, and ensure participants get to those places in an emergency.
- iii. All Israel Tour Groups will have knowledge of the location of shelters at each accommodation, and on scheduled routes the buses take. This will be given in advance of arrival. Please note, travel itineraries can change for a variety of reasons.
- iv. All Tour Providers will have an emergency protocol in place for locating all participants immediately in the event of an emergency situation.
- v. There will be increased provision of mental health support on call, should a group or individual be affected by a siren or serious incident. There is provision for this through the Tour Providers,

Medical Insurance, UJIA Israel Experience support infrastructure, and often also through your Youth Movement.

- vi. Additional training will be given to UK Madrichim on safety & security best practice.
- vii. Participants' free time will be restricted to those areas approved by the office of the Cheder Matsav/Moked Teva, and there may be no possibility of free time. Participants should be aware that the decision to allow free time is made on a day-to-day basis. If Participants are given free time, it will always be within specific geographical boundaries. They will be split into sub-groups of no less than three Participants and will have to report to their Israel Tour Madrichim/ot (Leaders) at regular intervals. Participants will have an emergency card that will include all relevant and emergency phone numbers. Travel to and from any potential free time activities will only be on the group bus.

8) What happens if a new war starts, or there's an escalation, whilst the groups are in Israel? Will you bring groups home ?

Israel Tours under UJIA Israel Experience have been run for decades through periods of conflict and unrest. There are a number of local, national, and global, government and non-governmental support systems we are able to call upon in an emergency situation. There is a detailed crisis management protocol that can be enacted at a moment's notice.

In the event that certain areas of the country become unsafe, itineraries and accommodation can be changed immediately, and participants moved to a safe location. This has happened in the past, and we work with partners experienced in this field. Tours ran successfully with geographic restrictions in 2014, during the Intifada, and on other occasions.

In the very unlikely event that circumstances require a curtailment of the programme and participants to return to the UK, our core partnerships would come into play. All Israel Tours are under the auspices of the Jewish Agency for Israel with direct access to Israel Government officials in emergency situations. There is also a long-standing and very close partnership with ELAL backing up Israel Tours that ensures all participants would have a flight home in an emergency. In addition to this, our community infrastructures include close working relationships with both the Israel Embassy in the UK, and the British Embassy in Israel. Whilst participants on Israel Tour enjoy a unique and formative experience with their young leaders and Youth Movements, the UJIA Israel Experience network supporting those groups is vast and provides an extensive level of support in crisis situations.

9) What insurance cover is there for the programme?

Travel and medical insurance policies are included in the cost of Israel Tour. These policies will be made available to you by your Youth Movement. Medical Insurance is taken out on your behalf by the Tour

Provider in Israel. Travel Insurance is taken out on your behalf by your Youth Movement in the UK. Please make sure to spend some time reading these policies to know exactly what is and what isn't covered.

There may be some pre-existing medical conditions that are not covered in the general policy, and additional cover may need to be provided. Please speak to your movement about arranging this cover with the providers in Israel. Medical costs in the event of 'hostile action' are covered by the Israeli State, and include a number of additional benefits, including, transportation costs for families, mental health support, and ongoing grants and support where required.

The **travel insurance policy** covers you for cancellation, curtailment and disruption in a number of scenarios, as well as covering lost, delayed or damaged luggage. Despite this cover, we encourage all participants not to bring expensive or valuable items with them on Israel Tour to avoid unnecessary upset. **It does not cover claims brought about as a direct result of war but** the policy does cover you for non-war related issues during times of war and even though current FCDO guidance is against travel to Israel **BUT** (see above for medical costs covered by the Israeli State).

10) What will Tour look like? Will it be fun?

Yes! RSY-Netzer Tour will be fun and will also reflect the current reality in Israel.

Israel Tour will look different this year but there will be ample opportunities to engage with a country that is in need of a collective hug, and there will of course be a strong emphasis on volunteering and social action projects with RSY-Netzer Tour. RSY-Netzer is experienced at managing the balance between creating an educational experience that is both meaningful and enjoyable. Remember, we will only go to areas approved by Cheder Matzav on the day and itineraries may change even at the last minute, but Israel Tours will continue to strengthen the Jewish identity of our youth and deepen their connection to Israel. The RSY-Netzer brochure contains more information on the content of the programme and you can contact them directly for more information.