



MACCABIAH 2025 TRAVEL PACKAGES FAQ

READ FIRST

This FAQ is for families and supporters who want to visit Israel to watch their athletes compete at the July 2025 Maccabiah. Maccabi USA delegation members (i.e. athletes, coaches, managers, medical, etc.) have separate accommodations, programming, etc., and while you can see them during/after competitions and during Shabbat, they CANNOT join a Travel Package. The lone exception is for Masters Athletes, who can opt into a Travel Package if desired.

If you have questions relating to the delegation's logistics or your athlete's Maccabiah experience, please click this link: <https://maccabiusa.com/faq/>

What are the benefits of joining a Maccabi USA travel package?

1. **Transportation:** The Maccabiah is a logistically complex event with competitions taking place across Israel—the Gold and Silver packages will get you everywhere:
 - a. To/From Airport
 - b. Competitions
 - c. Travel Package Itinerary Activities (including Opening Ceremony)
 - d. City to City (upon moving hotels)
 2. **Hotels & Meals:**
 - a. Guarantee of finest hotels Israel has to offer
 - b. High-end meals and dining experiences
 3. **High-Level Access & Meaningful Experiences:**
 - a. Meet politicians (including Israel's President), journalists, experts, Survivors, and Olympic athletes
 - b. Behind-the-Scenes tours, including of Israel's Knesset (Parliament), including meeting with MKs, the new National Library, and much more
 - c. Opening Ceremony upgraded seats with other USA Supporters
 4. **Meet Other Maccabi Families:**
 - a. Without these packages, it can be difficult to meet other Maccabi Families, and we take pride in facilitating what often turns into life-long friendships
-

The Travel Packages are 7-10 days, but the Maccabiah is two weeks—why is that?

Most families and supporters cannot take a full two-week vacation. Therefore, we built our timeline out so you can do a mix of activities before the competition starts and while it goes on. This gives you days to fully enjoy Israel without needing to travel for competition, while also giving you options during the Games as your schedule allows.

If you would like to come earlier or stay later, that is no problem, and our partners at Gil Travel can handle extensions. Please email Ariel at ariell@giltravel.com for assistance.

Are these trips built for Israel first-timers vs. veterans AND/OR adults vs. families with kids?

The travel packages are designed for everyone! You will have options for different tours based on what you may (or may not) have already experienced in Israel. Likewise, kids' options are available during more mature activities (i.e. visiting October 7 sites or Yad Vashem), including the possibility of fun childcare experiences while you attend the activities you want.

Can Maccabi USA delegation members (i.e. athletes, coaches, managers, doctors, etc.) join the Travel Packages?

No, with the exception of Masters athletes. The delegation has its own itinerary, activities, schedule, etc., and these Travel Packages are intended for everyone else who wants to come and watch the action, including family, friends, and supporters of Maccabi USA or Israel.

Masters athletes can choose to opt out of their delegation lodgings and make their own accommodation arrangements, including through one of these travel packages. However, please keep in mind that Masters athletes often have busy practice/competition schedules, so they may miss activities, and there is no reimbursement for that.

Can my U16, U18, or Open Maccabiah athlete(s) opt into a travel package?

No. Your U16/U18/Open athlete(s) will be staying with our USA delegation throughout the Maccabiah, though please see the next question to learn more about when you can see them.

When can I spend time with my U16, U18, or Open Maccabiah athlete(s) in Israel?

In addition to watching them play and seeing them after competitions, you have the option to be with your U16/U18/Open athletes from:

- Friday evening, July 11 - Saturday evening, July 12 (during the Travel Packages)
- Friday evening, July 18 - Saturday evening, July 19 (Travel Packages already over)

Maccabi USA prioritizes the athlete experience and thus we encourage them to spend as much time as possible with their teammates and new friends. We will also have delegation activities for the athletes throughout Shabbat, which they can choose to participate in.

If you have U16 or U18 athlete(s) that you want to take out on July 11/12 or July 18/19, you must follow a specific 'check-out' procedure so we know where they are at all times. Open athletes who are over 18 years old also have procedures they need to follow, and you will get more information about that as we get closer to the Games.

Can I pay on an a *la carte* basis to join specific activities from the daily Travel Package activities?

Unfortunately, no, as it is too complicated logistically and financially.

Alternatively, if I register for a Travel Package, will I get credits or refunds for any events/activities I cannot attend?

There is no reimbursement for any Travel Package activities missed during your time in Israel.

Is airfare included in the travel packages?

No, but if you would like, Gil Travel can make your flight arrangements for an additional fee. Please reach out to: air-dept@giltravel.com.

If you book your own flight, we recommend El Al at this time as the most reliable airline to Israel.

Is there a deadline to register for the Travel Packages or to book airfare?

We have not set any deadlines for Travel Package registration, but we encourage you to sign up as space can get limited. Especially given the recent ceasefire in Israel, we expect a general summer tourism rush, so we recommend booking as soon as possible.

Likewise, with flights, we recommend booking as soon as possible, as increased demand to get to Israel will increase those prices.

When does travel package registration open?

Travel package registration will open by Friday, January 24, and we will send out an email with the link and further information.

Do the travel packages include Opening Ceremony tickets?

Yes, all 3 packages include an Opening Ceremony ticket and transportation to/from the Opening Ceremony.

Can I attend the Opening Ceremony in Israel even if I don't join one of the travel packages?

Yes, but every spectator (including children) will need to purchase a ticket to be allowed into the stadium. Opening Ceremony tickets will become available for purchase as we get closer to the Maccabiah (pricing and date to be determined by Maccabi World Union). We will facilitate the Opening Ceremony ticket sale and provide more information to families as soon as we get it.

FYI that Opening Ceremony transportation can be very difficult without organized transportation because of security and the blocking of streets/added traffic. Getting public transportation, especially after the ceremony ends, may also be difficult.

Can I watch Maccabiah competitions in Israel without opting into a Maccabi USA travel package?

Yes. The Organizers have never required credentials at previous Maccabiah Games in Israel, and as of now, that is still the case. Should they change their policy and require a credential to get into Maccabiah venues, you will be notified and also able to purchase credentials to watch competitions without opting into a travel package.

What are the major dates to be aware of for the Maccabiah as I plan my own/my family's Maccabiah experience?

- July 8-21: The Maccabiah competition goes from July 8-21. Only a few sports will begin Tuesday, July 8, which is why the Travel Package itineraries indicate that competitions start on Wednesday, July 9, though please note it is possible you could have an athlete who will play that day.
- July 10: Opening Ceremony (Teddy Stadium in Jerusalem)
- July 20: Last day of competitions if teams make it that far
- July 21: Closing Ceremony (only open to the delegation and is closed to the public, parents, family, etc.)
- July 22-23: Maccabi USA delegations depart Israel back to the United States

Note 1: U16/U18/Open Athletes, but not Masters Athletes, will all be in Israel *no later than July 1* to engage in our educational Israel Connect program, as well as to participate in training camp.

Note 2: Some competitions last longer than others. For example (and this is HYPOTHETICAL), gymnastics might compete over a 2-day span while basketball might compete over a 10-day span.

When will we get the athlete competition schedule to help plan our trip?

General Schedule: By the spring, we will likely be sent the general schedule from Maccabiah Organizers. The general schedule indicates the dates that specific competitions take place. For example—and this is HYPOTHETICAL—the general schedule *might* tell us that the U18 Boys basketball competition will run from July 9-20, but it won't tell us which of those days or at what times the U18 Boys basketball team will actually play.

Specific Schedule: The specific schedule will list game dates, times, and opponents, but please do NOT expect to receive it until just a few weeks before the Maccabiah starts, and remember that the schedule is always subject to change even after publication.

As soon as we receive these schedules from the Games Organizers, we will send them on to you.

What are the Travel Package dates and where in Israel will we travel?

- Gold Mission
 - July 4-7: Tel Aviv
 - July 7-11: Jerusalem
 - July 11-14: Whichever city your athlete is competing in or closest to (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or Haifa)
- Silver Supporter's Package
 - July 7-11: Jerusalem
 - July 11-14: Whichever city your athlete is competing in or closest to (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or Haifa)
- Bronze Friends and Family Package:
 - July 7-11: Jerusalem
 - July 11-14: Whichever city your athlete is competing in or closest to (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or Haifa)

Both the Gold and Silver will also have the opportunity to travel to the Dead Sea & Masada, kibbutzim in the south that were impacted on October 7, and elsewhere.

Will security be provided?

Yes, security will be provided for all travel package activities and buses, with the exception of transportation going to/from competition venues (Maccabi World Union will secure all venues).

FYI, the USA delegation (athletes, coaches, trainers, etc.) will have their own security as well.

If I don't sign up for one of the Travel Packages, are there any opportunities to gather with other Maccabi USA families?

Anyone is welcome to go to Israel on their own for the Maccabiah and we hope you will do so even if you don't join us. Outside of the Opening Ceremony and competitions, there are no other communal gatherings planned, which is why we recommend joining one of the packages.

How physically strenuous will this trip be?

There is flexibility in your itinerary, so it largely depends on the tours/activities you choose. We can accommodate everyone, including seniors and those with mobility concerns, but please note it will still be Israel in July, and the temperature will get hot.

Can we cancel our Travel Package after we find out when our athlete(s) compete?

You can always cancel, but there will be deposit and refund issues. More information on deposit /refund deadlines will be available on the Travel Package registration site once finalized. Note that it is very likely you will NOT know your schedule until just a few weeks prior to competition, and even then, the schedule often changes.

The Travel Packages are built to give you flexibility, so even if you have to miss some activities, we will get you where you need to go while still offering you fun experiences.

If I want to extend my stay, how does that work?

Gil Travel will assist you—please contact Ariel at: ariell@giltravel.com.

What is the difference between the trip cost and the donation?

There is the actual cost of joining a travel package that goes to Gil Travel, as well as a minimum donation required to join each travel package, which goes to support Maccabi USA:

- **GOLD:**
 - **Minimum Donation:** \$25,000 (one per family)
 - All tax-deductible donations made to Maccabi USA since January 1, 2023, count in the aggregate towards that \$25,000 figure
 - **EXAMPLE:** If you donated \$5,000 to Maccabi USA in 2023 and \$5,000 in 2024, then a \$15,000 donation makes you eligible to join.
 - **NOTE:** Registration costs for athletes (i.e. \$9,800 to participate in this Maccabiah, \$6,650 to participate in the Pan Am or Euro Games, etc.) do **NOT** count towards the total because those are not tax-deductible gifts.
 - **2-Step Payment Process:**
 - 1) You will register for the trip and pay the actual cost of the trip on Gil Travel's website
 - 2) Contact Danny Sirdofsky at Maccabi USA to process your donation (i.e. check, credit card, DAF, wire, stock gift, etc.): dsirdofsky@maccabiusa.com
- **SILVER:**
 - **Minimum Donation:** \$540/person
 - **1-Step Payment Process:** The donation is built into your trip registration costs on Gil Travel's website—no additional payment is necessary.
- **BRONZE:**
 - **Minimum Donation:** \$360/person

- **1-Step Payment Process:** The donation is built into your trip registration costs on Gil Travel's website—no additional payment is necessary.

I understand it requires a donation to opt into a travel package—where does my donation go?

Maccabi USA is a non-profit, so your donations are tax-deductible, and your gifts are used to help subsidize this experience for athletes, coaches, and volunteers, as well as to support the operations required for us to put this life-changing experience together.

What is the cancellation policy?

Cancellations before February 14th receive a full refund, minus \$100/person for transaction costs

Cancellations from February 15th to May 1st, \$1,000 cancellation fee/person

Final payment due May 1st

Cancellation from May 1st to June 1st, 60% cancellation fee, 40% refund

Cancellations after June 2nd, no refund

Can I get travel insurance?

Insurance is not included in any tour package. Insurance for baggage, trip cancellation or medical emergency is available. Please contact Gil Travel Group for an application. INSURANCE IS

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED AND CAN BE PURCHASED ONLINE AT

https://www.travelguard.com/agentlink.asp?rcode=&ta_arc=396

[68403&agencyemail=Ariell@giltravel.com&ta_initials=30082](https://www.travelguard.com/agentlink.asp?rcode=68403&agencyemail=Ariell@giltravel.com&ta_initials=30082)

Delegation Flights

- **Get list of flights from Shane**
 - **List will be consolidated Feb. 15**
- **If under 18, delegation members must be accompanied to the Maccabi USA team flight departing airport by a parent or legal guardian, or otherwise pre-arrange with Maccabi USA that another adult will be chaperoning them to the airport.**
- **When will athletes know what flight they are departing on for Israel?**
 - **Feb. 15**

- Parents can go on same flight as their kids, but we cannot control if they sit next to the kids because group reservations don't give us that option
- **COMING HOME FROM ISRAEL**
 - Parents can get their kids and fly back with them if they choose starting at 7 am on July 22 – you must independently get to their hotel and you must follow check-out procedures (more info on that to come)
 - Cannot get kids from Closing Ceremony (usually takes place in evening)—if you did pick them up July 21, then they would miss that, but ...
 - Any other arrangements to get your children before then must be pre-approved by Maccabi USA staff or volunteer (depends on the sport)
 - Cannot meet your kids at the airport because we are transiting 1,000 people on different flights and chaperones cannot be pulled away to find parents or remain behind security if parents are late
 - If kids are going to opt out of team flight, they need to tell us before February 1 (deadline for this was really Jan. 6)
 - If they forego their return ticket, doesn't matter when they tell us
 - If they are going to request a deviation, they must do this by April 1
 - Service fee: \$75 to Gil Travel
 - Change of fare fee: Up to airline
 - Alternates: if still seat we're holding is available, they'll get it, and if not, they have to plan their own flight and they get \$1,200 off Maccabiah registration
 - If alternate is a minor and there are no delegation flight seats available, then a parent or legal guardian will have to accompany the child to Israel and deliver them in person to the delegation
 - Can parents book their kid on the same itinerary because they have miles?
 - In theory, yes, but it is complicated
 - We book through Gil Travel and if something changes, they take care of everyone they booked for the group—if parents book for kids, there is no guarantee they will be treated the same way (i.e. mechanical failure and need to book different flight)
 - Also, for Flight Captains, anyone not booked by Gil Travel will not appear on the list of kids
 - Any questions/needs/etc., contact your MUSA staff sport liaison—if you want to deviate the return flight, then you must email your MUSA staff sport liaison and air-dept@giltravel.com
 - Need special permission to deviate group flight on departure or if leaving Israel early