



MACCABIAH 2026 TRAVEL PACKAGES FAQ

READ FIRST

This FAQ is for families and supporters who want to visit Israel to watch their athletes compete at the 2026 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 logistically complex with events taking place across Israel—the packages each get you a different level of service (see below). Note that **ALL TRANSPORTATION ENDS AFTER JULY 6** when the packages end.
 - a. **GOLD**
 - i. Private transfers to/from airport, including VIP service through customs
 - ii. Transportation to competitions
 - iii. Gold itinerary activities (including Opening Ceremony)
 - iv. City to city on June 29 and July 3 (upon moving hotels)
 - b. **SILVER**
 - i. Group transfers to/from airport
 - ii. Transportation to competitions
 - iii. Silver itinerary activities (including Opening Ceremony)
 - iv. City to city on July 3 (upon moving hotels)
 - c. **BRONZE**
 - i. Bronze itinerary activities (including Opening Ceremony)
 - ii. City to city on July 3 (upon moving hotels)
2. **Hotels & Meals**
 - a. Gil Travel books your hotels—the finest hotel Israel has to offer at each price point
 - i. Gold
 1. Haifa: Dan Carmel (with room upgrade included)
 2. Jerusalem: Waldorf Astoria
 3. Tel Aviv: Kempinski
 - ii. Silver
 1. Haifa: Dan Carmel
 2. Jerusalem: David Citadel
 3. Tel Aviv: Hilton

- iii. Bronze:
 1. Haifa Dan Carmel
 2. Jerusalem: Dan Boutique
 3. Tel Aviv: Dan Panorama
 - b. High-end meals and dining experiences
 - i. Hotel breakfast included every day—lunch and dinner per itinerary
 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 and group experience with your package
 4. **Meet Other Maccabi Families**
 - a. The group hotels and activities facilitate friendships with other Maccabi families, which often turn into life-long friendships. Without the organization of these travel packages, it can be difficult to meet other Maccabi Families.
 5. **Help in Israel (Hotel Hostesses, Medical, & Security)**
 - a. We will have Israeli hostesses at our hotels to help you plan side trips if desired, provide restaurant/sightseeing recommendations, procure medical care if necessary, and to help you navigate other aspects of Israeli society
 - b. Security is provided for all travel package activities
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What are the Travel Package dates and where in Israel will we travel?

Gold Mission (June 26-July 6)

- June 26-June 29: Tel Aviv
- June 29-July 3: Jerusalem
- July 3-6: Competition City (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or Haifa)

Silver Supporter’s (June 29-July 6)

- June 29-July 3: Jerusalem
- July 3-6: Competition City (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or Haifa)

Bronze Friends & Family (June 29-July 6):

- June 29-July 3: Jerusalem
- July 3-6: Competition City (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.

How do I know what “Competition City” I will be in from July 3-6?

Your “Competition City” will be Haifa, Jerusalem, or Tel Aviv—whichever is closest to where you athlete will be competing. Please click the appropriate link below to find your city:

- [For Those Supporting U15/U17/U19 Athletes/Teams](#)
- [For Those Supporting Open Athletes/Teams](#)
- [For Those Supporting Masters Athletes/Teams](#)

Please note that your Competition City could change if your athlete’s competition venue gets changed. That could result in an increase or decrease in your travel package cost depending on your new city. If this happens, you would be notified before departing for Israel and your accommodations will be updated accordingly.

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 so you can do a mix of activities before the competitions start and while they’re ongoing. This gives you time to fully enjoy Israel without having to choose between site seeing and watching games. Once the competitions start, we do our best to offer activities multiple times throughout the day so as many people can take advantage of them as possible. You do not receive refunds or credits for any travel package activities you miss.

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

Do I need a visa or special travel document before going to Israel?

Yes. Unless you have an Israeli passport, you must have a valid visa or ETA-IL approval before entering the country. Please [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more and start your application process if necessary.

It costs 25 shekels (about \$7) to apply and only takes a few minutes to complete. Approval usually takes only a few days to receive.

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, child-friendly 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 U15, U17, U19, or Open Maccabiah athlete(s) opt into a travel package?

No, with one exception. Your U15/U17/U19/Open athlete(s) will be staying with our USA delegation throughout the Maccabiah. However, if you need to depart the USA for Israel before them, then you can bring them with you on your travel package until their teammates arrive in Israel, at which time we will transport them to their team hotel.

When can I spend time with my U15/U17/U19/Open Maccabiah athlete(s) in Israel?

In addition to watching them play and seeing them after competitions, you have the option to be with them from:

- Friday evening, July 3 - Saturday evening, July 4 (when they can join you/us for):
 - Shabbat Dinner on the evening of Friday, July 3
 - USA Beach Party in Herzliya on Saturday, July 4
 - City walking tours from your hotel on Saturday, July 4
- Friday evening, July 10 - Saturday evening, July 11 (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 U15/U17/U19 athlete(s) that you want to take out on Shabbat, 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 for us to plan that ahead of time.

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 no later than Thursday, January 29, 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, each in different parts of the stadium.

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

Yes, you can purchase tickets to the Opening Ceremony without joining us on a travel package. Ticket sales are not yet open, though we will provide the link to all families as soon as we get it from Maccabi World Union (the Games organizer).

FYI that it can be very difficult to get to/from the Opening Ceremony 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 1-12: Maccabiah competitions go from July 1-12.
 - Only a few sports will begin Wednesday, July 1
 - Sports each operate on their own schedules so many teams/individuals will start after July 1 and/or end before July 12
- July 1: Opening Ceremony (Teddy Stadium in Jerusalem)
- July 12: Last day of competitions if teams make it that far
- July 13: Closing Ceremony (only open to the delegation and is closed to the public, parents, family, these travel packages, etc.)
- July 20,21,22: Maccabi USA delegations depart Israel back to the United States

Note 1: U15/U17/U19/Open Athletes, but not Masters Athletes, will all be in Israel *no later than June 29* to participate in training camp.

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 U17 Boys basketball competition will run from July 2-12, but it won't tell us which of those days or at what times the U17 Boys basketball team will actually play.

Specific Schedule: The specific schedule will list game venues, 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.

The schedule will eventually be available through a special app, and as soon as we receive his information from the Games Organizers, we will send it on to you.

Will security be provided?

Yes, security will be provided for all travel package activities, 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 at this time, which is why we recommend joining one of the packages.

How do you recommend we get around Israel if we don't join a travel package?

Some options include Gett (the Israeli equivalent of Uber), taxis, the bus, or the light rail. Remember though that if you're on a supporters travel package, we will transport you to/from the airport, Mission activities, and competition.

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.

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

Gil Travel will assist you—please contact Samantha at: samanthas@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 donation
 - 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?

\$1,000 non-refundable deposit/per person due upon registration

March 27 – April 26: 50% cancellation fee, 50% refund

Final payment due: April 27

April 27 and after: No refund

Can I get travel insurance?

Yes. Travel insurance is not included by Gil Travel in any tour package, but you can purchase it [HERE](#) from Travel Guard (or anywhere else you choose). Many travel insurance companies require you to purchase it within 2 weeks or less of registering for a trip so that pre-existing conditions will be waived. **WE HIGHLY RECOMMEND YOU PURCHASE TRAVEL INSURANCE.**

Are there opportunities to share a room with someone who is also traveling alone?

Yes, there have been some parents looking for roommates, so email Lindsay lgilbert@maccabiusa.com if you are interested.

Is there a limit to the size of the group I can bring?

No, you can bring as many friends and family as you like on this trip.

Can I add excursions onto my package?

Yes, there will be hostesses in your hotel who can help you book additional excursions that are not on our itinerary, though please note those costs are not covered by the travel package.

List of transportation options between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

You can use Gett (the Israeli equivalent of Uber), taxis, the bus, or the light rail. Remember though that if you're on a supporters travel package, we will transport you to/from the airport, Mission activities, and competition.
