



MACCABI USA SUPPORTERS MISSION (2026) 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 the Mission. The lone exception is for Masters Athletes, who can opt in 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 the Maccabi USA Supporters Mission?

1. **Transportation:** The Maccabiah is logistically complex and we have seen many changes to the event already in the lead-up to the Games. Joining us means you do not have to plan your travel to/from the airport, activities, or competitions, as we take care of that for you. While Maccabiah competition is July 1-12, please note that **ALL TRANSPORTATION ENDS AFTER JULY 6** when the Mission ends.
 - a. **Airport**
 - i. Group bus transfers to/from airport included
 1. Only provided on June 29 (arrival) and July 6 (departure)
 - ii. Option to upgrade to private transfers to/from airport, including VIP service through customs/security
 1. Provided whenever you arrive and depart
 - b. **Mission**
 - i. Group transportation provided for all activities (except walking tours), including armed security guards
 - ii. Group buses from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv when we switch cities
 - iii.)
 - c. **Competitions**
 - i. Transportation provided to your athletes' competitions from July 1-6
2. **Hotels:** Gil Travel books your hotels and can offer upgraded rooms if you desire.
 - a. Jerusalem: David Citadel
 - b. Tel Aviv:
 - i. Hilton (included in standard package price)
 - ii. Kempinski (for added cost)

3. **Meals:** Breakfast is included every day, while lunch and/or dinner are offered some of the days depending on the itinerary
4. **High-Level Access & Meaningful Experiences**
 - a. Meet politicians, including Israel's President and the US Ambassador to Israel
 - b. Visit October 7th sites, talk with Survivors, and volunteer
 - c. Meet Israeli Olympic athletes and go behind the scenes at Maccabi HQ
 - d. Explore the Old City of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv
 - e. Opening Ceremony premium or VIP (add-on) tickets and group experience
5. **Meet Other Maccabi Families:** The group hotels and activities facilitate friendships with other families that often last far beyond the Games. Without the Mission, it can sometimes be difficult to find meaningful interaction with other families.
6. **White Glove Service and Support in Israel**
 - a. Hostesses: 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: Armed guards trained in first aid are provided for all Mission activities

What are the Supporters Mission dates and where in Israel will we travel?

The Mission starts June 29 and ends July 6. Please try to arrive in Israel by the early afternoon on June 29, as our first activity will be in the evening. The Mission ends July 6, but you are welcome to stay longer (many families do), and Gil Travel can extend your hotel stay upon request. The Maccabiah ends July 12, though all sports don't have the same schedule.

- Jerusalem: June 29-July 1
- Tel Aviv: July 2-6

The Supporters Mission is 7 days, but the Maccabiah is 2 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 Mission 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 Supporters Mission is designed for everyone! Child-friendly alternatives are available during more mature activities (visiting October 7 sites), and activities have a mix of things for first-timers and Israel veterans.

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

No, with the exception of Masters athletes. The delegation has its own itinerary, activities, schedule, etc., and the Supporters Mission is 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 this Supporters Mission. 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.

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 us for):
 - Shabbat Dinner – Evening of Friday, July 3 (added fee)
 - Tel Aviv Walking Tour – Saturday, July 4
 - Masada and the Dead Sea – Saturday, July 4 (added fee) (Note: All U15/U17/U19/Open athletes will visit Masada and the Dead Sea during Israel Connect after the Maccabiah)

- Friday evening, July 10 - Saturday evening, July 11 (Supporters Mission 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 itinerary?

Unfortunately, no, as it is too complicated logistically for us to plan that ahead of time.

Alternatively, if I register for the Supporters Mission, will I get credits or refunds for any events/activities I cannot attend?

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

Is airfare included in the Supporters Mission price?

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 as the most reliable airline to Israel.

Is there a deadline to register for the Supporters Mission or to book airfare?

We have not set any deadlines for registration, but we encourage you to sign up as space can get limited, as are some of the upgrade options, including VIP Opening Ceremony tickets, hotel rooms, etc. Likewise, with flights, we recommend booking as soon as possible.

When does registration open?

Registration is now open. You can [REGISTER HERE](#).

Does the Supporters Mission include Opening Ceremony tickets?

Yes, premium Opening Ceremony tickets and transportation to/from the Opening Ceremony are included, and you can upgrade to the VIP section for an added fee.

Can I attend the Opening Ceremony in Israel even if I don't join the Supporters Mission?

Yes, you can purchase tickets to the Opening Ceremony without joining us:

- [CLICK HERE](#) to purchase tickets in the USA Supporters section
- [CLICK HERE](#) to purchase tickets available to the general public

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 the Supporters Mission?

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 joining us.

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 are 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, this Supporters Mission, etc.)
- July 14-20: Israel Connect educational program for the athletes (families do not participate and/or watch this)
- 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 Mission activities, with the exception of transportation going to/from the airport and 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 Supporters Mission, are there any opportunities to gather with other Maccabi USA families?

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

How do you recommend we get around Israel if we don't join the Supporters Mission?

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

How physically strenuous will this trip be?

Most of the Mission activities include walking tours, getting on and off the bus, meeting with people, and the like. 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?

Included in your registration cost is a \$360/person donation to Maccabi USA.

What does my donation support?

Maccabi USA is a 501(c)(3) 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
- Final payment due May 26
- No refunds May 27 and after

Can I get travel insurance?

Yes. Travel insurance is not included by Gil Travel, 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 please 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 for me and my family outside of the Supporters Mission?

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 Supporters Mission. If you would like to discuss this beforehand, please contact Samantha at: samanthas@giltravel.com.
