

# Women's Journey to Israel - WRJ 2017

## Frequently Asked questions

### **Who is eligible to join this mission?**

The Women's Journey to Israel is a program of Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ). It is open to any woman, whether or not a member of a sisterhood or a Reform congregation. The program focus will combine touring with learning about Reform programs and visits with WRJ's partners in Israel.

### **What dates/times should I travel?**

Arrival: Our journey begins with an orientation dinner on Sunday, May 21; we will meet at 7:30 pm at our hotel in Tel Aviv. (Please note that this is a change from the earliest iteration of the itinerary.) If you are traveling from abroad that day, you should plan to arrive at Ben Gurion Airport at least 2-3 hours prior to this time. If you are taking part in the WUPJ Connections 2017 conference in Jerusalem (see below), that program will take place May 17-20, 2017. It will end on Saturday evening and you will have the day free on Sunday to make your way to Tel Aviv in time for our opening dinner.

Departure: The main mission concludes with a farewell dinner on Monday, May 29<sup>th</sup>. You can schedule your return flight any time after 11:00pm that evening. We will have a complimentary late check out from the hotel that day. If you wish to stay additional nights, ARZATravel can assist you in making arrangements for a longer stay. For those choosing the extension to Kibbutz Lotan, the program will end on Wednesday evening, May 31<sup>st</sup>. You can schedule your return flight any time after 11:00pm that evening.

### **What is the WUPJ Connections Conference? Should I plan to attend?**

The World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) is the international umbrella for Reform and Progressive congregations. Every two years WUPJ hosts an international gathering of representatives from around the world for leadership training, study, and building relationships among Reform Jews from around the world. The WRJ mission was planned to begin immediately after the WUPJ Connections 2017 conference, May 17-20 in Jerusalem, in the hopes that many WRJ mission participants will join in that conference as well. For more information and registration (open in the fall), go to <http://www.wupjconnections.org/>. Please note that there is a separate registration and registration fee for Connections and it is not linked to the WRJ Mission registration.

### **How do I get to the hotel from the airport?**

It is easy to take a taxi or shared '*sherut*' from the airport to the hotel. Simply exit the main terminal and there will be signs for cars to various city destinations. If you wish to arrange a private transfer in advance, you can contact the ARZA World Travel customer service center at 888-811-2812 and they will be happy to assist you. The cost will depend on the type of service you request and the number of people traveling. If there are multiple people traveling on your flight, this may be a nice option and a nice way to get to know your fellow travelers. Through Yammer you can 'find' other travelers on your flight. (See below)

### **What if I want to travel to Israel earlier or stay later?**

ARZA World Travel can assist you with your travel plans if you want need help making arrangements for additional days. Contact their customer service center at 888-811-2812. If you want to add days at the mission hotels the rates are:

Dan Panorama, Tel Aviv: \$255/night single; \$270/night double

Dan Panorama, Jerusalem: \$230/night single; \$252/night double

### **Should I get Travel Insurance?**

Travel insurance is always advisable for a trip like this. There are many companies that provide such insurance, and you might want to search on line, check with your credit card company, or with your airline. There is a company listed on the ARZA World Travel website, which is listed for your convenience; you are not obligated to use that company and it is not part of ARZA World Travel. Travel insurance will generally include coverage for medical emergencies while traveling abroad, trip cancellation, flight disruptions, and other contingencies.

### **What is "Peace of Mind" Insurance listed on the ARZA World Travel website?**

"Peace of Mind" is not traditional travel insurance. It allows for cancellation for any reason up to 72 hours prior to the program for the land-only portion of your travel. It allows for a full refund of the land-only cost, except for the \$350 deposit and the \$250 cost of the Peace of Mind waiver. It does not include any coverage for flight cancellations or delays, medical costs while traveling, or any other contingencies or expenses. Unless your flight is refundable and you already have medical coverage while traveling abroad, it may not be advisable, as it will not provide you with the same protection as a traditional travel insurance policy.

### **What should I do if I want to be assigned a roommate?**

Although we cannot guarantee a roommate, ARZA World Travel will help individuals traveling alone connect with one another. In addition, once you register you will be invited to join a Yammer group (see below; it is a social media network like Facebook) where participants can 'talk' with one another in a single forum. Through that network individuals can post a request for roommates. When you register, you should indicate that you want a roommate and a double room. Once you are matched up, your

registration will be updated. Please note that until the name of your roommate is entered into your registration, your registration will show as a single room, with a single supplement cost. However, you need not pay anything other than the deposit until 75 days prior to the trip. If you have found a roommate by the time the final invoice is due, the amount will be adjusted to the double room rate prior to final payment. If you are unable to find a roommate, the single supplement will apply.

### **What if I have a roommate, but she has not yet registered?**

When you register, you should indicate that you want a roommate and a double room. Once your roommate registers your registration can be updated. Please note that until the name of your roommate is entered into your registration, your registration will show as a single room, with a single supplement cost. You need not pay anything other than the deposit until 75 days prior to the trip. As long as your registration is updated before the final invoice is due, the amount will be adjusted to the double room rate prior to final payment.

### **I've never been to Israel; will we visit the major tourist sites?**

Yes! The trip is planned with first-timers in mind. We will visit major tourist sites, including the Dead Sea and Masada, Independence Hall, Old Jaffa, Tzfat (Safed), the Sea of Galilee, and of course the major sites in Jerusalem, including Yad VaShem. In addition we will have opportunities to hear from women scholars and activists, meet with Reform Movement leaders, and pray at the *Kotel* with Women of the Wall on Rosh Hodesh. Prior to the Journey we will provide reading lists, packing lists, and other background information to help you prepare.

### **I've always wanted to climb Masada; will we have that opportunity?**

#### **I am not able to climb Masada; will I still be able to go there with the group?**

Climbing Masada is not part of our itinerary. The bus will take us to the location of the cable cars, which we will take to the top. However, it is possible for individuals to go early to climb the Snake Path up to Masada on their own. Please note that the Roman Ramp, which is another way to climb to the top, is not an option as it is located on the other side of the mountain and too far from Jerusalem to be practical. At that time of year it gets very hot and they could close the trail as early as 7:00am in order to prevent the risk of people walking up after it is too hot to climb safely. That means those who wish to walk up the Snake Path on their own would need to leave Jerusalem no later than 5:30am that morning. If you wish to do this, ARZA Travel can arrange for a private car to take you. There will be ample time to make these arrangements after we are together in Israel and we find out how many individuals are interested in going early to make the climb. There will be a separate cost for the private car, which will be shared by the number of people going. Those climbing will likely reach the top of Masada several hours before the rest of the group arrives on the cable cars, so you would need to wait there to rejoin the group. There is a place where you can sit and 'chill' while waiting. Please note that our day at Masada is Shabbat and we plan to hold our Shabbat worship there.

### **I've been to Israel many times; will I get to do anything I haven't done before?**

Yes! For those who don't wish to go to Masada and the Dead Sea on Shabbat, we will have an optional walking tour of Jerusalem. Instead of visiting Safed, there will be an option to tour Israel's northern wineries. When the group is touring Yad VaShem we will have an 'advanced' tour for those who have already gone through the main museum. In addition to visiting major tourist sites (see above), we will have opportunities to hear from women scholars and activists, meet with Reform Movement leaders, and pray at the *Kotel* with Women of the Wall on Rosh Hodesh.

### **What is Yammer?**

Yammer is a social media platform, much like Facebook, that WRJ uses to allow individuals to connect with one another around specific interests. Everyone who registers for the WRJ Women's Journey will be 'invited' to join the Yammer group, which only will be open to registered participants. Once you accept that invitation, you will need to create a profile, if you do not already have one, in order to log into the group and either post or read the messages. Don't worry! We're here to help you and the WRJ office can assist you in getting started. You will want to set the notifications to let you know when someone has posted a new message. For example, women may post in the group that they are seeking a roommate, or to find out if others will be on your flights. You may want to know who else will be taking the winery tour instead of going to Safed, or you may have packing tips to share. WRJ will post updates about the trip, helpful hints, and reading materials in this group. It is a wonderful way to get to know the other travelers prior to our Journey together!

### **How can I find out more information about the trip?**

Of course, feel free to contact the WRJ office if you have any questions about the trip. In addition to providing information on Yammer (see above), we will offer a webinar prior to traveling for mission participants to share additional information and answer questions. The webinar will be recorded for those unable to join it live. We will send information like packing lists and reading suggestions directly to participants, in addition to posting such information in the Yammer group. Participants should also feel free to post questions in the Yammer group; that is a great way to get to know the other travelers and share information with one another. If you have a question, you can be sure others do as well!

### **What will be the 'religious' parts of the trip? I've always wanted a Bat Mitzvah in Israel – can I do this? Will I need nicer clothes for Shabbat?**

There will be several times when the group will pause to reflect on spiritual matters, and of course, we will be celebrating Shabbat together. When we are together at Yad VaShem and Har Herzl we will take a few moments for reflection and memorial together. Similarly, when we enter Jerusalem we will have a celebratory welcome ceremony.

Shabbat: For Shabbat evening, we will worship with a congregation in Jerusalem; they often have visitors from the States and are used to guests who may, or may not, understand Hebrew. After services we will break into small groups for home hospitality. It is nice to bring a small token, such as a bottle of wine or a small gift reflective of your local community, for your dinner host; we will discuss this during

our webinar for participants. Shabbat morning will be observed on Masada, where we will hold a brief service together. We will have Havdalah together later that evening, gathering informally before our Saturday evening free time.

Rosh Hodesh with Women of the Wall (WOW): We will be celebrating Rosh Hodesh on Friday morning at the *Kotel* with Women of the Wall. It is hard to know what the political climate will be in May; sometimes everything is calm and we can worship together at the *Kotel* with no interference. At other times, there have been interruptions by those who object to women's prayer at the site. Closer to the date we will have a better idea what to expect and we will discuss this together in advance. Hopefully WOW will be able to bring a Torah scroll, and we will have a traditional Torah service. They are expecting our group and have offered the opportunity for any of our women who wish to have a Bat Mitzvah experience to have an Aliyah and offer the Torah blessings. Those who are comfortable reading Torah may also have that opportunity, though that will need to be arranged (and prepared!) in advance. Be sure to let Marla Feldman know if this is something you would like to do.

Dress is generally very casual, and we will go over specifics during our webinar for trip registrants. It might be nice to have something a little nicer for Shabbat, and many choose to wear something white, but there is no 'dress code'.