OPERATION GROUNDSWELL’S
BEHIND THE HEADLINES
ADVENTURE TO THE MIDDLE EAST

BACKPACKING WITH A PURPOSE

OPERATION GROUNDSWELL
www.operationgroundswell.com

MIDDLE EAST: BEHIND THE HEADLINES
Early Summer 2016
The summer of your life is about to begin. This package will get you stoked and fill you in on everything you need to know about OG and your region.

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OUR APPROACH

Operation Groundswell is a collaborative organization. It’s in our DNA. Which is why over the past couple years, we’ve sat down with over fifty people close to OG to ask them which values best represent the organization. Together we built what is now called the Backpacktivist Manifesto: a working document that we will use to inform everything we do, both abroad and right here in our home communities.

Here are the values that every backpacktivist should strive for:

» **Prepared to change**: the most important quality in a backpacktivist is the ability to reflect and adapt.

» **Full life livin’**: we squeeze the sweet nectar out of every opportunity the world throws at us!

» **Conscientious**: adhering to local traditions and customs allows us to understand the value of cultures different from our own.

» **Respect**: we always make an effort to understand all people...even the ones we don’t get along with.

» **Humility**: a backpacktivist may look silly searching for words in a new language, but the very attempt connects us to locals on a whole different level.

» **Solidarity**: a backpacktivist stands in solidarity with all peoples, regardless of race, gender, or class.

» **Group-focused**: leveraging the power of a group to develop a deeper understanding of the world around us and of ourselves.

» **Thirst for learning**: the road is the best classroom and a backpacktivist is searching for truth.

» **Leadership**: we are training the next generation of positive and diverse leaders.

BACKPACKING WITH A PURPOSE IS ABOUT BEING CONSCIOUS AND CRITICAL OF OUR IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITIES THAT WE TRAVEL TO.
THE SUMMER OF YOUR LIFE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN. HERE’S EVERYTHING THAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

A LETTER FROM YOUR PROGRAM LEADERS

SHALOM/SALAM!

Marhaba wa Shalom fellow Backpacktivists!!

We hope you are as excited for this incredible experience coming at you as we are! The cold here in the winter gets into your bones (lack of central heating, sigh), so the thought of this summer is the only thing getting these old souls through the harsh winter days. We just want y’all to know how excited we are to meet each and every one of you soon! We’re already daydreaming of the times we’ll spend together here in Israel and Palestine: making fun of your sunburnt faces, pranking one another, and gorging on delicious treats. We look forward to the time we will spend exploring the whimsy and depth of this place—the debates it will generate and the friendships it will make. Soon, we will be shuffling through the Old City, trying to get from one holy place to another (maybe getting happily lost in the maze of the ancient streets). We will push our way through the motley crew of people who fill the Shuk just before Shabbat comes in, marked by a great horn sounded in the streets. We will eat one of the best Arabic ice creams in Ramallah and ponder the possibilities of never, ever leaving this place.

We truly believe this awesome initiative you are embarking on will provide you a good foundation for understanding the complexities of conflict and culture here. Though there are no simple answers as to why war and violence continue on in this place, we hope this experience will give you the tools necessary for approaching such questions, striking a balance of intellectual inquiry, on-the-ground fact-finding and heartfelt understanding. You will have real conversations with real people, whose opinions may turn the oft-used media representations of those who live here on their side, all around and upside down! You will have questions. And then more questions, and then more questions, and it will go on. You will no longer be just another person who felt compelled to study Israel-Palestine, nor will your stories resemble those of the tourist just passing through to make checks on a bucket list. You will stand witness to people who strive to make social change, and you will become a part of that change in the process.

When all you see are the scary events portrayed on the news, it’s easy to fixate on those details and forget that people here are, of course, human. We lead lives separate to war. We have daily jobs we have to go to, moms to think about, food that need to be cooked, younger siblings that need to be teased, homework that should be done before midnight, outfits to decide on, high school crushes we want to go to prom with and the list goes on. You WILL get a grasp of that. You will form a human bond with people here. And it will be beautiful.

Until that day comes, feel free to ask us any questions you might have!

With love,

Elham & Robin
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

JERUSALEM ORIENTATION
Welcome to the Holy Land! We’ll educate ourselves with a crash course on the history, politics, and implications of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while meeting local experts and exploring the ancient city! We’ll also have a chance to meet with our longtime partners, Rabbis for Human Rights, to help us contextualize our own experiences and the direction our work will take us. And of course, we’ll get settled in our cozy apartment… grocery shopping in the Mahane Yehuda open-air market, and living the local life!

HEBRON BREAKING THE SILENCE
No trip to the West Bank is complete without seeing Hebron. Home to the tombs of the Patriarchs of Monotheism, Hebron is a complex and tense city with a Palestinian population of 180,000 that is home to 500 devoutly religious Jewish settlers who have staked their claim there. We’ll meet with Breaking the Silence - an organization of former Israeli soldiers who are speaking out about the occupation - to learn about their current struggles with the Israeli government.

WEST BANK THE ROOTS PROJECT
During one of our visits to the West Bank we’ll be heading to the Roots farm, where we will be both living and working. The Roots farm is a hub of peace and conciliation outreach in the West Bank, which includes monthly meetings between Israeli and Palestinian families, a women’s group, a summer camp, language learning, and cultural exchanges.

TEL AVIV DISORIENTATION
Known as “the bubble”, Tel Aviv-Jaffa is seen as a secular, modern haven. Still, it retains its Middle Eastern flavor in its excellent hummus joints, persistence of donkey-drawn carts, and no-nonsense bus drivers. Between its free public lectures, the annual Pride Parade, or a citywide water fight, there is always something on the go. We’ll be hanging out beachside, soaking up this other side of Israel, while thinking about what we’ve learned on program – and how we’re going to bring those lessons home.

YOUR PROGRAM ON A GOOGLE MAP
Here is the itinerary for the five weeks that we will be together! In the age of Google, we decided that an interactive map is the only way to roll. Feel free to play around with it, make it your browser’s homepage, and share it with your friends and family. Soon enough we’ll be on the ground doing that route for real.

Simply plug this link in your browser: http://bit.ly/1ZLad4T
ISRAEL & PALESTINE ARE NOT THE PLACES THAT YOU MIGHT EXPECT. HERE ARE THE DETAILS.

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES PROFILE

Capital: Jerusalem, Ramallah (de-facto administrative capital)
Population: West Bank (2.6 million), Gaza (1.7 million)
Major languages: Arabic
Major religion: Islam, Christianity (mainly in Bethlehem, Ramallah and their surrounding villages)
Life expectancy: 75
Monetary Unit: New Israeli Shekel
Time Zone: +02:00 UTC

Palestine. The West Bank and Gaza. The Occupied Territories. Judea and Samaria. The future Palestinian state has a long list of names, each reflecting a certain legal, political, or religious ideology. The West Bank is a small but contentious chunk of land bordered on three sides by Israel with Jordan on its Eastern border. Control of this land has changed hands many times over the centuries with both Jews and Palestinians claiming true ownership of the land. Currently, Palestinians live under occupation by the Israeli military. Freedom of movement is restricted, violence is inflicted upon a civilian population, and human rights are constantly violated.

Life in the West Bank has improved dramatically for some over the last half-decade or so as the Intifada (or uprising against the occupation) dwindled down. Many people in the West Bank live in refugee camps; they were either driven from their homes in ‘48 or ‘67 or are descendants of those who were forced from their original homes during those wars. The conditions in the camps are cramped, dirty, and oftentimes heartbreaking. The camps are also typically much more conservative areas of Palestine than are the cities and are subject to frequent incursions by the Israeli military.

Theoretically, Palestine is a democracy though democratic elections in 2006 saw Fatah oust Hamas from the West Bank and Hamas oust Fatah from Gaza. In 2014, the two declared a unified government, but it has yet to pan out in practice. In the summer of 2014, the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens set in motion a series of events that culminated in the 50-day war, deemed “Operation Protective Edge” by Israel. The operation was highly destructive especially in Gaza, resulting in high casualties, many of which were civilians. The Gaza Strip continues to struggle to rebuild and recover, as tensions in the West Bank and Jerusalem have seen a recent spike due to fears that Israel will change the “status quo” at the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount.

Still, there is also a lot of variety to be found in the West Bank from the labyrinthine alleys of Nablus’ Old City to the bars of Ramallah, from the churches of Bethlehem to the tragedy that is Hebron. There is much to see, and the locals are eager to show you. The one constant in the West Bank is the hospitality. If you are invited to have tea with an old shopkeeper or to share a meal in a refugee’s home, say yes!
ISRAEL PROFILE

Capital: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv
Population: 7.6 million
Major languages: Hebrew, Arabic, English
Major religion: Judaism, Islam (small Christian, Druze, and Ba'hai minorities)
Life expectancy: 83
Monetary Unit: New Israeli Shekel
Time Zone: +02:00 UTC

Israel is a Jewish and democratic state founded in 1948, though many would argue that its history began decades before when the first waves of “aliyah” made their way from Europe to British-controlled Palestine.

As Anti-Semitism was on the rise in Europe, more and more Jews decided to make their way to Palestine, fueling Arab-Jewish tensions. After WWII, the UN voted for the Partition Plan, dividing the area into separate Arab and Jewish states. The plan was accepted by the Zionists and rejected by Palestinians and surrounding Arab countries, thrusting the region into war.

The following decades saw a string of conflicts, many of which continue to some degree today. The region has a long and complicated history, one that defines much of the conflict. Some of Israel’s neighbours do not acknowledge its right to exist, which is a source of tension in the region. Most recently, in the summer of 2014, Israel initiated “Operation Protective Edge” against Gaza, resulting in high casualties and mass destruction.

Beyond the conflict, there are many sources of beauty, innovation, and inspiration in Israel. One can drive from the sunny beaches of Tel Aviv to the mountains of the Golan and back down to the sacred wonders of Jerusalem, all in a day’s work.

Israel is a country of contrasts. Being at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia, these cultural influences have left its mark on the country. Tiny Arab villages dot the hilly landscape in the north, Bedouin tents brave the dust and sandy desert in the south, while modern, beachy Tel Aviv and intense Jerusalem lay opposite of each other in the centre.

Israeli society is a tapestry of East and West, religious and secular, modern and traditional. It is at the forefront of medicine and technology, and also home to some of the most sacred sites in the world. Israelis are generally tough, direct, but sweet and sincere people. They will (possibly in the same day) hand you their baby while they pay for their groceries, cut in front of you in line for the bus, and invite you to Shabbat dinner. Say yes! (Notice a theme here? Always say yes to food...mmm!)
GETTING IN & OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST

PASSPORTS
You will need a valid passport with an expiry date of no less than 6 months after your estimated time of return. If you have not done so already, you should immediately begin the process of acquiring/renewing your passport as it can take some time.

For Canadian citizens applying for a passport, visit: www.ppt.gc.ca
For U.S. citizens applying for a passport, visit: www.state.gov

VISAS
You are responsible for having all the proper visa requirements and though your program fee does not cover visa costs, it is fairly easy and inexpensive to obtain. Travelers from Western countries do not need to apply for visas in advance. Upon arrival at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport, Western travelers are typically issued free tourist visas (usually valid for 90 days).

**Note: OG cannot guarantee entry to any participants, as there are many factors beyond our control. If denied entry to the country, we cannot refund your program fee.**

Some of you may want to travel to Egypt or Jordan during your ITT. We advise that you confirm your visa requirements directly with your embassy as soon as possible to give yourself sufficient time to apply for a visa, if necessary.

WHERE WILL WE BE SLEEPING?
We'll likely be based in a Jerusalem apartment, which will either have shared rooms or larger open areas where we'll sleep on mattresses. When traveling in the West Bank and other areas of Israel, we'll be staying in hostels, as well as camping. All accommodations will include a kitchen where we will be doing our own cooking. Cleaning up comes along with that so be prepared for some chores and whistle while you work!

FLIGHT INFORMATION
With years of experimenting on how to arrange flights, Operation Groundswell has found that participants often find cheaper flights by booking on their own. What we want to stress is that you must arrive into Tel Aviv, Israel on May 29, 2016. The official end date of the program—a.k.a. the date we will drop you off at the airport to go home - is July 3, 2016.

We suggest checking Kayak, Orbitz, Cheapoair, Google Flights and other flight sites to get the cheapest rate.

If you are an American student, we have a partnership with StudentUniverse to offer you some of the most affordable airfare options. Click here to look for flights.

If you are Canadian and you would rather the personal touch of a travel agent, you can get in touch with Alan Borenstein at Flight Centre. He is a past program leader and currently books all our program leader's flights. You can reach him toll-free at 1-877-815-4906 or send him an email at alan.borenstein@flightcentre.ca.

**NOTE:** If you arrive before the program begins, you will not be under the auspices of Operation Groundswell. We cannot guarantee that anyone will meet you at the airport or arrange your accommodations. You will be entirely responsible for yourself until the first day of the program. Check all flights with your program leaders before you book them!

**IMPORTANT**
You will receive an email (if you haven't already) with a link to fill out your flight information. It is imperative that you fill this out so that we can arrange pickups on the first day of the program.
HEALTH & SAFETY ARE OUR TOP PRIORITY.

TRAVEL HEALTH & MEDICINE

STAYING HEALTHY ON THE GROUND

Staying healthy on your program is one of the most important aspects of enjoying an Operation Groundswell experience. With the proper preparation beforehand and careful attention on the program, you can minimize most health risks while still having a great time. Operation Groundswell expects every participant to meet with a travel doctor before leaving his or her country of origin. You must be up to date with all necessary vaccinations and equipped with any necessary medications for travel in the Middle East. While we provide a lot of recommended information here, the travel doctor will know what you absolutely need at the time of departure according to which region(s) you’re traveling to.

Operation Groundswell requires your doctor’s signature on a personal medical history form stating that you are both physically and mentally cleared for participation in the program. Operation Groundswell does not discriminate against physical or mental conditions or disability. We simply want to make sure that you are fully aware of the risks and challenges of the program, that we are aware of any previous medical conditions, and that we have the capacity to support you while you’re abroad! This form will be sent to you shortly after your deposit has been paid.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Operation Groundswell requires you to purchase travel health insurance for the duration of your time abroad. It’s important to make sure you find the insurance plan that suits your needs.

At the minimum, participants generally get basic medical insurance to cover themselves for any medical emergencies that occur while they’re abroad. We recommend shopping around on sites like squaremouth.com, which will list a variety of options and compare their coverage. The cost will depend on the extras you get on top of medical (covering lost or stolen baggage, electronics, etc.)

If Operation Groundswell must cancel a program due to low numbers, we will be happy to relocate you to another program. If you would rather cancel than relocate, OG will reimburse your full program fee but is not responsible for refunding any flight cost or other costs associated with the program. You decide if you’d like to insure your flight, buy a flexible ticket, or buy separate flight insurance through your airline.

KEEPING US IN THE LOOP

Two weeks after paying your deposit, you will receive an email with:

» A copy of the personal medical history form that your doctor must sign
» A personal link where you can upload the signed copy

**We require this form at the latest a month before your program starts.**

A month before your program starts, you will receive an email with a link for you to provide your:

» Emergency contact
» Travel insurance
» Flight information

The links you will be sent are live forms, so you can fill out a portion of the information when you have it and continue filling it out once you’ve booked your flights closer to the program date.

**IMPORTANT**

The above information is required for participation in every OG program.

REGIONALLY RELEVANT MEDICINE

Hepatitis A & B
Recommended for all travelers.

Typhoid
Recommended for all travelers.

Rabies
For travelers spending a lot of time outdoors, or at high risk for animal bites, or involved in any activities involving contact with bats.

Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)
Two doses recommended for all travelers born after 1956, if not previously given.

Tetanus-diphtheria
Revaccination recommended every 10 years.
SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

STAYING SAFE ON THE GROUND

As a well-established and experienced volunteer-abroad organization, Operation Groundswell takes active precautions to keep you safe and secure while overseas on your program. We take travel safety very seriously. Each section of your program undergoes a standardized risk assessment. Your program leaders do a dry run of your program before you arrive to confirm the nearest medical facilities and potential risks. At least one program leader on each program has taken a Wilderness First Aid course and is fully certified by Wilderness Medical Associates. Our program leaders are proficient in local languages (where it is necessary) and have met and discussed safety concerns with our local partners.

Each program checks in daily with our Toronto headquarters to relay important information and ensure the health and safety of participants. Our Programs Director reads regional travel warnings daily and is available 24/7 to deal with emergencies on the ground.

With that in mind, it is important to remember that every OG program prides itself on taking you directly into the experience of living in that region. Pick pocketing, purse snatching, and various types of scams are the most common forms of crime confronting visitors. Those who limit their display of jewelry and handle their cash discreetly reduce their vulnerability to crime. Participants are advised to carry limited amounts of cash for this reason.

Travel in the Palestinian West Bank, once considered dangerous, has been made much safer by the recent stability of the Fatah government and the presence of U.S./Jordanian-trained Palestinian police that patrol many cities there. However, throughout Israel and Palestine it is possible for violence to occur with little warning. Both program leaders are extremely experienced in the region and know which areas to avoid and how to spot a risky situation. We also double and triple check our itineraries for possible risks, both during pre-program planning and on the ground in real time. We check multiple news and governmental sources, as well as local contacts for every location. We will not hesitate to divert or cancel an area or activity on our itinerary if we feel it is a significant risk.

OG and its local partners are familiar with these risks and will take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety and security of its participants. This includes maintaining an effective flow of information and using the knowledge of our wonderful partners, local contacts, and officials.

Equally, OG program leaders will project an inclusive, respectful, and non-partisan image. They will be running through the entire program prior to your arrival to ensure that everything is safe and secure. Nevertheless, program logistics will remain under review and the itinerary flexible to unforeseen developments. To learn more about our safety protocols, visit http://operationgroundswell.com/programs/safety/.

Safe travellers are informed travellers. Do research about where you’re going!

**IMPORTANT**

There are also a variety of safety precautions that we require you to undertake prior to and immediately upon arrival in Tel Aviv.

First, team members should read government travel advisories for Israel and the Palestinian Territories here.

NOTE: Keep in mind that government advisories provide a countrywide assessment of risks and we will provide more region-specific information in the pre-program meetings that each team will have with their program leaders in April.

Second, all Canadian participants are required to register with Consular Services Canada as a “Canadian Traveling Abroad.” This will allow the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to contact us in case of an emergency.

Please make the required registration for your trip at http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration.

Those traveling with a U.S. passport should register at https://step.state.gov/step/.

For all other nationalities, please find your country’s consular services to see if there is an option to register as a traveler abroad.

STAYING IN TOUCH

Internet will be available periodically for you to email home. Telephone access will be limited. Buying a local cell phone can be a more cost effective way of keeping in touch. Your team will be blogging throughout the program so pass on the link to family and friends: www.operationgroundswell.com/blog/. Additionally, both your program leaders have locally serviced cell phones for emergency use. They will be in regular contact throughout the summer with OG’s Programs Director. In case of emergency, please ask your family or next of kin to call OG’s main line at 1-888-422-0164. From there, they will be connected directly to one of our on-call Summer Coordinators.
Remember: The rule of thumb is always to pack as lightly as possible!

WHAT TO PACK

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS
  » Passport (valid beyond 6 months from the start date of the program)
  » Extra passport photos (if you have them)
  » Copies of passport/tickets/credit cards (you want extras in case you lose a document)
  » Customer service numbers for credit cards/insurance

BACKPACK & DAYPACK

Because we’re not wheelie-baggers, we’re backpackers! We recommend going to an outdoor adventure store and getting a pack fitted to you. Most people should only need a 45-65L pack. Try a bunch on and compare prices to find one that is right. You could also borrow from a friend!

It is also important to bring a daypack for short trips and daily use. Also, you’ll probably want to have room in your bag so you can pick things up along the way like weavings, coffee, or books.
PACKING LIST CONTINUED

OTHER ESSENTIAL ITEMS

» Sleeping bag - a light one is fine as it is very warm here. Finding one that packs down small is best!
» 1 bath towel (quick-dry adventure towels are the lightest)
» Flashlight (headlamps are popular and recommended)
» Min. 1L reusable water bottle
» Medication/EpiPen if you need it
» Sleeping pad if you are not cool with ground sleeping. Some locations when camping can get a little rocky.

GENERAL CLOTHING

» 5-6 pairs of underwear
» 5-6 pairs of socks
» 1-2 pairs of shorts - leave the booty shorts at home, but higher than knee length are fine around the house and most places in Israel. Bring a longer pair (knee length at least) for work in the West Bank and for more religious areas.
» 3-4 t-shirts/1 tank-top - Western clothing is fine around the house and most places in Israel, but you will want more conservative options for the West Bank and religious areas.
» 1 “nicer” outfit, in case we are invited to meet some important folk or something similar. Keep it conservative (long pants or a skirt with a conservative shirt)
» 1-2 pairs of durable but lighter pants to wear when working on projects and traveling to religious sights or in the West Bank where shorts aren’t worn
» 1 heavyweight, long sleeve button up shirt
» 1 lightweight scarf/shawl to cover your shoulders in a pinch, and provide warmth on those rare chilly nights
» Ladies: long skirts and dresses could become your best friend in the heat, and they can easily be dressed up or down for a trip to the beach or the Western Wall.
» 1 sweater - A good quality fleece is great because it is warm but LIGHT.
» A Hat to protect you from the sun (you’re going to want this!) A bathing suit for the sweet beaches of Tel Aviv
» 1 pair of sunglasses (highly recommended, but also widely available there for cheap)

Israel is notoriously casual. No need to dress to impress here. The weather will be generally hot to very hot, so light and breezy clothes are your friends. Shorts and tank tops are fine to wear around the house, but you need to pack more conservative items for when we visit religious areas and for when we are in the Palestinian Territories (this means covering knees and shoulders.) Our volunteer work will most likely be hot and dirty. Pack sturdy (conservative) clothes and shoes that you don’t mind getting dirt, paint, or baby slobber on. Packing one lightweight sweater is also a good idea as it can get chilly, especially in higher elevations like Hebron and Nablus. We will have laundry available, so no need to bring the whole closet!

SHOES

If you buy new shoes, break them in before the program.

» 1 pair of good hiking/walking shoes, as we will be doing A LOT of walking.
» Sturdy sandals can be great, water ones are even better for water hikes or going in the Dead/Red Seas as they are a bit rocky. Many Israelis only hike in sandals in the hot summer months.
» 1 pair of comfortable/casual shoes

PERSONAL HYGIENE & TOILETRIES

» Regular hygiene items like soap, shampoo, deodorant, shaving cream, etc. (Note: these are all readily available in smaller quantities and at a cheaper price if you would rather buy them down there. Another good option is bringing small quantities to begin with and refilling once in-country)
» Vitamins, painkillers, cold medicines, etc.
» Toothbrush and toothpaste
» 1 extra pair of prescription glasses or contacts/ contact solution (if required)
» Tampons and pads (it is always a good idea to bring more than enough tampons though you can buy this in-country)
» Bug spray and after bite
» Sunscreen and lip balm
» Immodium/Pepto Bismol (you will want this!)
» One round of prescription medicine (i.e. diarrhoea meds - ask your doctor)
» If you have asthma and you need a puffer, bring it even if you rarely use it. Same goes for allergies and EpiPens

NOTE: All program leaders are equipped with First Aid Kits, so though it is useful to have basics like Advil or Tylenol, you don’t need to pack a pharmacy. There will be a medical form sent out closer to the program start time so you can outline and specific mental or physical health problems.

OTHER NICE-TO-HAVE ITEMS

» Journal & Pen
» iPod/MP3 player if you have one
» Camera
» Ear plugs or eye mask if you’re a light sleeper
» No need for a computer, iPhone, iPad, or anything similar as we will have access to a computer when we have access to the internet!
» You can bring books, but remember these are heavy. You can exchange with your fellow travellers.
» A photo of your family or friends back home to show to new friends in the communities we visit, or anything else that you can’t live without.
» If you’re a picky eater, need comfort food, or are particular about your nutrition: Peanut Butter, Nutella, Fruit-to-go’s, Protein Bars.
» Money belt/discreet wallet
MONEY MATTERS

IT’S EASY TO GET AROUND RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVELY ON AN OG Program. WHAT YOU SPEND IS REALLY UP TO YOU.

The program fee covers the costs of accommodations, three meals a day, transport, and excursions. It does NOT cover any personal expenses such as souvenirs, laundry, or whatever you choose to do for your Independent Travel Time. For these cases, you will want to bring some spending money.

We recommend that you bring $50-$100 USD (don’t carry too much). You can conveniently change your cash into Israeli shekels at a money changer in Jerusalem.

MONEY TIPS

» Leave any traveler's cheques and Canadian money at home. They are problematic to cash or exchange.
» Debit is a great option. ATM/ABMs are widespread and can dispense up to $200 USD equivalent. There is a transaction charge of approx. $2.50-$5.00 USD, but they are the most convenient and safest option. It is advisable to communicate with your bank before departure to determine their level of accessibility.
» Visa is the most widely accepted credit card. Do your best to have a chip card that is PIN ENABLED to have it work in ATMs. Make sure that the PLUS sign is on the back of your card so that it works in international ATM locations.
» Call your bank and inform them of your travel plans so they don’t place a hold on your account when they see money being withdrawn in a foreign country (you do NOT want this to happen!)
» There will be a safety talk before the program, but money in large amounts, Interac/credit cards, etc. will NOT be carried in any one location and we recommend using money belts/discreet wallets.
» Food/drink/souvenirs are quite cheap in the West Bank, but Israel is more similar to Western cities and things can be expensive. It’s easy to get by on the cheap, but you need to budget for yourself.
THE BEST WAY TO FIT IN IS TO DO AS THE LOCALS DO.

CULTURAL DO’S AND DO NOT’S

Be a cultural chameleon and do what you can to show as much courtesy and interest in the local culture as possible. Do as the locals do and try to follow these basic rules while in the Middle East! Being aware and sensitive to your surroundings is the first step towards being a traveler and not a tourist!

DO...

» Dress conservatively. Many Israeli and Palestinians adherents of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are quite conservative. We need to respect those beliefs and the many holy places we'll be visiting (even if it is crazy hot!)

» Keep an open mind and adapt to change. In Israel, ultra orthodox communities, conservatives, and liberals and seculars all exist within close proximity. You'll be expected to dress modestly in some areas, then you'll walk 2 minutes to the beach and see a lot of immodest dress...it’ll be fun!

» Step outside of your comfort zone! Eat something you’re not used to, wear something you don’t want to, make a fool of yourself to fit in!

» Dance a traditional Palestinian or Israeli dance

» Keep public displays of affection and the showing of skin (stomach, legs) to a minimum.

» Ask questions before making statements. Israel and Palestine are politically volatile areas and people are, understandably, sensitive on both sides.

» Be respectful of all of the people you meet along the way. We’ll be having group meetings and guest speakers throughout our program so we’ll all have the chance to share our thoughts and opinions and learn from one another.

DO NOT...

» Do not smoke in public places in the West Bank, especially for you ladies! This will more than likely invite unwanted attention and perhaps a stern rebuke from a total stranger.

» Many Muslim women will not shake hands with a male non-relative. As a male, when meeting Muslim women in the West Bank, the rule of thumb is to let them act first. You may find a handshake waiting for you, but often times you won’t. Letting them make the first move will avoid an embarrassing situation for the both of you.

» Don’t put all your money and credit/debit cards in one place. Have a few locations only you know about.

» Don’t leave your bag or purse unattended, especially in markets and on buses. It’s smart to wrap the straps around your legs if you plan on snoozing.

» Don’t make snap judgments. Ask questions before you make statements, listen and respect others’ opinions
**LIVING IN THE LANGUAGE.**

### HEBREW FOR DUMMIES

**Hello:**
Shalom

**What’s up?:**
Ma Koreh

**Please:**
Bevakasha

**Thank You:**
Toda

**Good, ok, alright:**
Beseder

**Yes/No:**
Ken/Lo

**Stop or enough:**
Dai

**How much (does this cost?):**
Kama ze ole?

**Awesome, splendid, cool, amazing:**
Sababa

**I would like a falafel sandwich in a pita with everything on it:**
Falafel beh pita im ha kol, bevakasha

### ARABIC FOR DUMMIES

**Hello:**
Salam

**How are you?:**
Ki fek?

**Excellent**
Mumtaz

**Please:**
Min fudlik

**Thank you:**
Shukran

**You’re welcome:**
Afwan

**Yes/No:**
Aiwa (or Na’am)/La

**Stop or enough:**
Khalas

**How much is?**
B’addeesh...

**What is your name?**
Shu ismek (male)/ Shu ismak (female)?

**My name is...**
Ismi...(your name)
WHO WE’RE WORKING WITH

At Operation Groundswell, we forge partnerships with local NGOs and charities to work with them on community-requested projects. This means that the communities we work with decide what kind of partnership they are looking for, how we as volunteers can be best put to use, and how our community contribution can most effectively help them achieve their goals. It also means we don’t always know in advance what will be needed in our partner communities or how we can best serve. Seasonal weather patterns, a changing political climate, and organizational needs may change so get ready to adapt like a true backpacktivist!

Though we spend solid days on the ground getting our hands dirty and volunteering, a larger chunk of our time is spent learning from our partners to better understand the underlying issues and challenges that they face. We’re not going to “save the Middle East” in our five weeks abroad, but we will be making deep connections with and learning immensely from the real change makers on the ground!

RABBIS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
www.rhr.org.il/eng

Rabbis for Human Rights is an organization that brings together volunteers, activists, rabbis, and rabbinical students. It was founded in 1988 and has, since its inception, been active in advocating for the rights of marginalized members of society, in defending the rights of minorities and foreign workers in Israel, and of protecting the rights of Palestinians in the West Bank.

OG has worked with RHR on several projects in Israel and Palestine. Together, we have renovated a daycare for Eritrean refugees in South Tel Aviv, organized a summer camp for children in the Bedouin camp of Khan al Akhmar, and set up a multi-faith centre outside an Israeli settlement.

SHORASHIM

The Roots (Shorashim in Hebrew) farm is a hub of peace and conciliation outreach in the West Bank, which includes monthly meetings between Israeli and Palestinian families, a women’s group, a summer camp, language learning, and cultural exchanges.

OG has worked with Shorashim for three years now, assisting in the construction of cisterns, the care of plants and animals, and as partners in discussion around peaceful collaboration between Palestinians and Israelis.
KNOWING STUFF MAKES YOU SMARTER

RESOURCES BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

This section is meant to provide further information on the region that simply can’t be covered in this program package. These are extra resources that’ll help you learn more about the places that you will be travelling to and the relevant issues in these places. This will help paint a cultural picture even before your plane takes off!

**If the links don’t work, just copy and paste them into your browser!**

BOOKS

The Lemon Tree by Sandy Tolan
Jerusalem: A Biography by Simon Sebag Montefiore
Palestinian Walks by Raja Shehadeh
How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less by Sarah Glidden
A Tale of Love and Darkness by Amos Oz
Dining With Al-Qaeda by Hugh Pope
Baghdad Without a Map by Tony Horwitz

FILMS

Israel vs. Israel (2011)
Paradise Now (2005)
The Lemon Tree (2009)

YOUTUBE CLIPS

Nowhere Left to Go (documentary about the Bedouin communities outside of Jerusalem with whom OG has been involved with in the past)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOxwVlGn0R4

MUSIC

Dam Rap: Arab-Israeli rappers from Lod
Moshe Ben Ari: Israeli musician, lyricist, and composer
Machina: Popular rock band
Karolina: Israeli singer/songwriter
The Idan Raichel Project: Popular singer known for incorporating multi-ethnic talents

TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO OPEN YOUR MIND AND SOAK UP EVERYTHING YOU CAN.
Almost there! Let's make sure you've got everything you need checked off!

- Make sure you have a valid passport! You must have a passport valid 6 months after your date of departure from your home country.

- Make an appointment with your travel doctor ASAP and make sure you're up to date with your vaccinations.

- Fill out your medical history form with your doctor’s signature and upload it (link sent via email; contact us if you do not receive it by the month leading up to your program).

- Book your flight! You are responsible for booking your own flight but once you’ve found it, check the exact details with your program leader before booking.

- Get travel insurance.

- Pay your final installment.

- Fill out the emergency contact, travel insurance and flight form (link will be sent via email; contact us if you do not receive it by the month leading up to your program).

- Meet your team in our pre-program meetings!

- Sign our online waiver (to be sent via e-mail).

- GET EXCITED!!!
GET READY TO BACKPACK WITH A PURPOSE THIS SUMMER.

ALL OF THE PHOTOS IN THIS BOOK ARE MEMORIES CAPTURED BY OG ALUMNI