

**LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON
PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS
2010**

ACCOMMODATIONS: The Ashkelon Expedition members will be housed in the Dan Gardens Hotel, a comfortable hotel near the beach. It has a swimming pool, tennis court, weight room and sauna. Many people on the Hotel staff speak English, although this should not be assumed (This situation is the same for the rest of the country).

Rooms will be shared by four persons. Common space and storage for personal belongings within each room are limited and must be shared. A spirit of flexibility and cooperation is essential when living at close quarters for a sustained period of time. You should bring a credit card so that the Hotel can make an imprint. Your card will not be charged unless there are additional personal expenses, such as room service, phone charges, or damage to hotel property. Each person is responsible for their own additional expenses.

On occasion, members of the excavation are visited by friends or relatives who are traveling in Israel. If they desire to remain overnight at the hotel or will be at meals, this must be arranged IN ADVANCE with the excavation administration and will be at the excavation member's own expense. Private arrangements whereby an additional person stays in a room are unacceptable.

CLOTHING: Although the climate of Ashkelon is moderated by sea breezes, it does get very hot in the summer. Given the depth and location of the excavation areas, which are generally shielded from the breezes, working conditions can be quite sweaty. We will provide try to provide a sun shade in the field, however, this shade is not large enough to cover the entire field throughout the day. As the sun moves across the sky, the shaded area of the field changes. Clothing made of lightweight cotton and cotton blends is ideal. While excavating, most people wear shorts and T-shirts. Be sure to bring one or two lightweight long-sleeved shirts or blouses and long pants to wear during the intense sunlight hours until you become acclimated to the sun. A change from work clothes is appropriate before gathering in the hotel's spaces, in particular, the dining room. You must bring a lightweight hat with a broad brim that shades your head, face and neck and it should be worn whenever you are in the sun. Sunglasses and sunscreen are a necessity. Persons with sensitive skin should be extremely attentive to this caution.

Good footwear is also important. It should be lightweight, sturdy and offer some ankle support. Ankle-high work shoes or desert boots are excellent. Ankle-length boots with canvas sides (fabric which breathes) and thick rubber soles, sometimes styled "commando boots," are quite popular. Tennis shoes are also acceptable. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL YOU BE PERMITTED INTO A SQUARE WEARING SANDALS OR BAREFOOTED.** You must have adequate foot protection. This advice also applies to traveling.

In addition to protecting your feet, you may wish to bring your own pair of sturdy work gloves (available at most hardware stores), especially if you are not used to using large tools such as picks. The excavation does carry a limited supply of work gloves, but cannot guarantee their availability.

For free time, casual attire is standard. Ashkelon can be chilly in the evening and a sweatshirt or windbreaker is useful. Most "dress up" occasions demand only clean slacks and shirt or skirt and blouse or summer dress and sandals. Ties and jackets are unnecessary.

When visiting religious sites in Israel modest dress is expected. In some cases you will not be allowed in the sites if improperly dressed. Women should wear skirts or long pants and should have their shoulders and upper arms covered. Men should wear long pants.

In brief, you really do not need a tremendous number of things: a change of dig clothes, one or two casual outfits, one nice outfit, a swimsuit, a hat and change of footwear. Virtually every first-time traveler and many who have been abroad before pack too much. Your belongings should take up not more than 20% of a moderate-sized closet and one small dresser drawer. One full-size suitcase should have room to spare. One well-tested guidebook suggests that after you have set out all the things you will be taking, reduce the overall amount by a minimum of one third. Another advises that the careful traveler can really fit everything needed into a carry-on size bag.

COST OF LIVING: In many ways it is comparable to New York or Boston. While inexpensive public transport and overnight accommodation at hostels help to cut costs, Israel should not be viewed as the summer traveler's bargain bonanza. Travel and other extra free time expenditures should be planned accordingly. Your room is guaranteed at the Dan Gardens Hotel throughout the season, so you should not require additional housing. There are several nearby shops, restaurants, and a general store (where you can purchase snacks and drinks.). The hotel also possesses a full bar and room service.

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES: Israeli current is 220/240 V. If you bring electrical appliances you will need an adaptor. Adaptors are available in most hardware stores and are fairly reasonably priced. Some newer appliances, however, do have dual voltage settings and will work on either U.S. or Israeli current. Check the information on your new appliances. Those of you who use electrical appliances for cleaning contact lenses should check these items carefully.

FOOD: Except for second breakfast which is served in the field, meals are served in the hotel dining room. The food will be typical Israeli cuisine. Servings are plentiful and vegetarian and fruit plates are usually available upon request. As is the case in any extended institutional living situation, menu repetition over a seven-week period is a fact of life and meals may get monotonous. However, a number of restaurants including seafood, Chinese food and pizza are located within walking distance. Snacks and cold drinks are available in the hotel at additional (expensive) charge. Most Expedition members rapidly discover the location of nearby grocery stores to round out their supply of cookies, corn flakes, nuts, etc. **Please let Sandy North, the volunteer coordinator, know as soon as possible if you have dietary restrictions that are not listed on your application.**

LETTER OF IDENTIFICATION: Before departure you will receive a letter identifying you as a member of the Excavation Staff. It will facilitate your check-in at the airport. Frequently when security officials ask why you are traveling to the designated country, they ask if you have any identification papers to confirm your statement. You should keep the letter with you until you return home.

LINENS AND LAUNDRY: Sheets, blankets, towels, pillows and pillowcases will be provided and cleaned by the hotel at no charge. It would be a good idea, however, to bring a medium-sized towel and washcloth in case you travel on your own. Don't forget a beach towel. Bedding may not be removed from the hotel. A bi-weekly (twice a week) laundry service will be provided by the hotel for volunteer members. On these occasions a reasonable quantity of clothes will be laundered, per person, free of charge.

MAIL: Mail can be sent to you on site at:

Ashkelon Excavations

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Afridar, Ashkelon, ISRAEL

MEDICAL ADVICE: Each member of the Staff must have current medical insurance coverage which is valid for Israel. All costs involving visits to physicians and hospital care are borne by the individual. You should bring all prescription drugs that you anticipate will be necessary. The pharmacies in Israel are well-stocked and you may purchase any over-the-counter medications you might need. Since store hours are inconvenient, we suggest that you consider bringing cough and cold medicine. Diarrhea medicine is strongly recommended. It can take a few days for your digestive system to adjust to the local food and water. Ashkelon has a clinic and hospital in the event of a medical emergency. The two most common ailments in the course of a season are cough and diarrhea. Veterans of the region's maladies often carry night and day cough medicine which includes an expectorant and for stomach problems, immodium.

Contact lenses usually do not cause any special problems, although it is not advisable to wear them in the field since it is very dusty. Care is relatively simple since we are housed in a hotel. Contact lens wearers should bring a pair of glasses for backup. Bring a copy of your prescription in case of loss or breakage of contacts or glasses.

Because of the climate, diet in the Middle East usually includes foods high in natural salts (e.g., olives, goat cheese, etc.) and you are encouraged to salt your meals. If you have special restrictions on salt intake, please check with your physician. We also recommend that you bring a container of powdered Gatorade (or equivalent) to help maintain your electrolyte balance. Some of these preparations are salt-free. You should plan to bring a water bottle to the field and drink frequently to help keep yourself hydrated.

MONEY: ATMs are the easiest way to obtain cash from home, although they are not as omnipresent as in the USA. You should check with your own bank about additional transaction fees for your card. Travelers checks are convenient and are accepted in most places. They usually don't bring quite the same advantage as American dollars in bargaining, but they have the obvious advantage of guarantee against loss or theft. Many places accept Visa or MasterCard. Wiring money to an Israeli bank has proven to be most inconvenient and time consuming. You needn't worry about having Israeli shekels the minute you get into the country. If it is absolutely necessary, you can change money or access an ATM machine at the airport, but in most cases you can function quite well with dollars until arrival in Ashkelon. Since the exchange rate fluctuates it is best to exchange only enough for minimal needs at one time. Carrying small denomination bills (20s) allows for conversion of no more than you need in a particular instance.

Some merchants and hotel owners will accept personal checks, but this is not absolutely guaranteed. Inquire first. Obviously the youth hostels and smaller shops refuse. Remember, if you are traveling on weekends and pay your hotel bill in U.S. currency or a U.S. credit card, the hotel will not charge the Value Added Tax, thus reducing your cost.

PERSONAL FINANCES: AS A MATTER OF POLICY, THE EXCAVATION DOES NOT CASH PERSONAL CHECKS OR MAKE LOANS TO PARTICIPANTS. Each participant in the excavation is responsible for personal finances. While choice and rate of personal financial expenditures varies individually, each participant should anticipate this reality and plan accordingly.

Easiest access to cash from home is by means of ATM card. You may also withdraw money using a Visa credit card. Money deposited in the VISA account in the U.S. can be withdrawn by presenting the card and one's passport at a local Ashkelon bank. On a very practical level, our rather extensive experience has shown that virtually all other approaches to getting money from home involve significant complications and delay. If you expect to be receiving money from home during your stay at Ashkelon--**PLAN AHEAD!!**

TELEPHONE: Your own cell phone may work internationally, or you may be able to get an international cell phone or SIM card for free from your provider. The Expedition will also be setting up a group contract with an Israeli cell phone rental service that will allow you to rent a cell phone that will work at the site; the phones will be available for pick-up and drop-off at the airport. You will be responsible for all phone charges occurred on any phone. Program staff will email you a link to the cell phone rental website at the email address on your application once the contract with the provider is complete.

The Dan Gardens Hotel phone number is the most accessible for Expedition members. For direct dialing from the U.S: 011 – 972 – 8 - 677-1777. Connection is made more quickly if the caller can give the hotel desk attendant your room number. **PLEASE LEAVE THIS NUMBER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS WHO MAY WANT TO CALL YOU WHILE YOU ARE IN ASHKELON. DURING THE EXCAVATION, PEOPLE CALLING THE OFFICE AT HARVARD WILL GET A TAPED MESSAGE ONLY.** For regular contact with home, the least frustrating method of contact in for you to set a time when you will call home. The easiest way to place this call is from a local pay phone, using an international phone card.

INTERNET: Internet Access is locally available in several ways. Those with an internet capable PDA should contact their providers about international rates and access. The Dan Garden's hotel rents access to its wireless LAN for the rather expensive rate of \$15/day. Internet Café's exist within (20min) walking distance.

TIME: Israel is seven hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time. For example, noon in New York is 7 p.m. in Ashkelon.

TROWEL: While the Excavation is well equipped with "the tools of the trade," i.e., picks, shovels, brushes and wheelbarrows, you should purchase and bring a trowel. These can be obtained in any good hardware or building supply store. Please make sure that the trowel is a mason's trowel (with a pie-slice type blade) and **NOT** a gardening trowel (a curved shovel-like blade). When you make this purchase you will be confronted by a diversity which can be bewildering. While the choice is very much a question of personal preference--you'll be using this sometimes for several hours at a time--a few suggestions may be of help. First, the brand of choice is Marshalltown, due to better construction. Second, size varies greatly. The very large ones are not recommended - the blade of the trowel should be about the size of your palm. Try a few, such as the Marshalltown 45-6, and others in that range. The numbers appear on the face of the Marshalltown trowel blade. As we noted, the choice is yours.

WEEKENDS: Whereas many excavations do not provide weekend residence, at Ashkelon you have room and board seven days a week. Our workweek will be Sunday through Friday. Saturday is free.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OVERVIEW:

Sunday through Friday: First Breakfast: 4:40 AM (in hotel) Excavation on site: 5:30 am - 1 PM (5 and 5:15 AM transportation to site, 9 AM Second Breakfast, 9:30-10 AM Lab, 11:30 AM Fruit Break, 1 PM return) Lunch: 1:45 PM at the hotel dining room, Pottery Washing: 4:30-6:30 except on Fridays.

Saturday: Free time