

Reflections on Senior Israel Experience

One of my favorite parts of the Senior Israel Experience was our visit to Kiryat Gat—Chicago's sister city. In Kiryat Gat our programming was almost entirely created by students from Kiryat Gat's High School. So, instead of having the academic and intellectual focus of the rest of our trip, we were given the opportunity to get to know Israeli culture first hand through the eyes of our hosts. Our time in Kiryat Gat added an informal aspect to the trip that is absent in many other planned trips to Israel. Usually on an Israel program the participants are left feeling like tourists. Perhaps for the first time while in Israel, when hanging out with kids our age, I felt like we were truly taking part in the Israeli everyday culture.

~ Seth Berkman

The senior trip to Israel was one that was unique in that it forced us to see Israel as our home rather than merely a tourist attraction. It was because of this that we were able to see a new side of Israel that in all my previous trips I had never seen. I cannot pick one experience that was the most meaningful, because every new day brought with it a new experience that was life changing in its own way. One of the experiences which isn't spoken about as much by all the seniors was the night that we went to Jaffa to see a play. On the bus ride to Jaffa we really did not know where we were going or what we should expect. When we finally arrived we entered a building that was a theater as well as a restaurant but what made this place stand out from all the other theaters and restaurants in the world was that it employed people who were blind as well as deaf. The play that we ended up going to was the most inspirational experience. The actors were all blind and or deaf and despite this they found a way to share with us their dreams, fears, and their life stories. After the play we were able to speak with the actors, and our whole class had the opportunity to speak with one of the main characters. To ask your question or share your comments with him one had to move this man's hand over braille letters (English or Hebrew) and he would speak the response. It was evident that our conversation with him had made his day a little brighter, but little did he know that his speaking with us had left some in tears and all inspired.

~ Ariel Glasser

The first day of the trip, we went to the Temple Mount, one of the holiest places of Islam. We sat 100 feet from the Mosque of Omar, which, according to Raviv, is neither a mosque nor built by Omar. Dr. Raviv told us the story of Islam. Then we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and learned about Christianity in Israel. A few days later, we went to Givat Haviva where we learned about discrimination against Arab Israelis. Our guide took us to an Arab village that was divided by the Green Line and we walked through the streets and talked to random Arabs about their work and their lifestyles.

Most tour groups don't get these kinds of experiences. I never experienced anything similar to this on Ramah Seminar. It shows some of the strength of this trip that they plan it knowing that many of the students have spent summers in Israel and are ready to experience Israel in a new way.

~ Richard Kahn

The Israel trip was simply amazing. Even though it was my third time in Israel, this trip was incomparable to any other trip I could imagine. I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to spend three weeks with my peers as it helped us become much closer as a grade.

~ Avi Coven

The Senior Israel Trip has proven to be a powerful bonding tool for our students; they highly impressed anyone with whom they have come into contact, demonstrating time and again their maturity, responsibility and true commitment to learning and social welfare. They left a mark of excellence behind and I was proud to be associated with these student at every step of the way!

~ Dr. Zohar Raviv