

# Sar-El Canada HANDBOOK

© June 2019



\*Always refer to the Sar-El Canada website for the most recent information. \*

## Introduction

Sar-El Canada is the Canadian branch of Sar-El, The National Project for Volunteers for Israel. Founded by Israeli General Aharon Davidi, in 1982, Sar-El has an international presence.

Sar-El Canada is the third largest branch after Volontariat Civil (U.P.I.) in France and Volunteers for Israel (VFI) in the USA.

Sar-El is the Hebrew acronym for Sherut l'Yisrael - service to Israel.

Volunteers have the unique opportunity to meet and work with Israelis during an important part of their life cycle – when they are on military duty in their late teens, taking on huge responsibilities.

The late Ezer Weizmann, former President, has said:

*"Your spirit of volunteering to work in the IDF bases exemplifies the unity of am Yisrael, the people of Israel. When you come, you become Israelis for the short period you stay with us. When you go back, your life is enriched with a profound Israeli experience."*

**Make the most of that experience.**

## IMPORTANT SECURITY MESSAGES

### Regarding the posting of photos and comments:

The IDF has noted that many soldiers are posting pictures on Facebook and other websites that contain sensitive and classified military information. The IDF is beginning to closely monitor all such websites and will be taking strong actions against soldiers who post such pictures, including court-martialing the soldiers.

We at Sar-El welcome our volunteers' pictures, articles and publicity about Sar-El.

**However, we insist you refrain from taking pictures of anything that a reasonable person might even think may be classified or sensitive. This includes mentioning the names and specific locations of bases (beyond north, south, east, or west).**

Obviously we cannot "court-martial" our volunteers, but **we CAN and WILL reject volunteers for future programs if they disobey the rules.** Please tell your fellow volunteers and if you happen to see something on a website which should not be there, please tell the person who posted it, and **tell us.**

### Regarding trips to Arab countries:

**We strongly advise against travel to Jordan or Egypt before, during or after Sar-El, as you may not be allowed back into Israel.**

## Before you leave:

### Travel light!

Avoid taking more than one checkable suitcase and a carry-on. **You'll be carrying your own luggage**, and likely be living partly out of your suitcase on the base. You'll be issued uniforms as work clothes, but your other garments are your own responsibility. **DON'T TAKE VALUABLES.**

### Documents

You must have three copies of the picture page of your **passport**, your **medical certificate**, and **proof of medical insurance coverage**, as well as **a list of your prescribed medications**. A record of credit card numbers, safely stowed away from the originals, will be helpful if you lose the real things.

### Army issue on base

You'll be issued the following:

- a uniform (shirt, trousers, cap, belt)
- a blue Sar-El shoulder "flash"
- in winter, a sweater and parka
- army boots (only if the work-site requires them)
- blankets or sleeping bag, and, generally, twin sheets (see below)
- pillows, possibly, but not always (see below)

**Army uniforms (boots, sweaters, jackets, etc.) may not leave the base.  
All items must be returned at the end of the program.**

## Packing Checklist

### Essentials

**You** must supply the following:

- underwear, T-shirts, socks, handkerchiefs
- any clothes that you wish to wear after work and off the base on weekends
- (Women need appropriate clothes for Shabbat, if going into Orthodox areas.)
- closed-toe shoes or sneakers, suitable for work sites
- (in winter) rainwear, and waterproof footwear
- (in spring and summer) sun hat
- a robe for getting to and from the showers (they may not be very close to your bunk)
- towels, washcloths and soap
- (bring washcloths for a first-dry, since they dry more quickly than wet towels)
- sandals for the shower (rubber slippers or "flip flops")
- toiletries, sunblock, insect repellent;
- prescription medications with a list of prescriptions (Tylenol, Band-Aids, and Imodium may be useful too)
- medical devices (e.g. 220-volt CPAP with extension cord and Israeli plug)
- spare eyeglasses, sun glasses
- consider bringing a pair of cot-sized or single sheets, pillowcase and small pillow, since some bases may not supply sheets and pillows. (You will be issued blankets or perhaps a sleeping bag.)

## Optional, for convenience

- work gloves, rubber gloves, or plastic gloves
- 220-volt hair-dryer or electric razor or transformer for appliances (Israel uses 220 volts) and Israeli plug adapters.
- a small mirror can be useful; there are usually no electric outlets in the washrooms.
- a small lock for your locker, if you get one. Combination locks are cheap; no key to lose.
- a small flashlight, a camera,
- ear plugs for yourself, and if you snore, (who doesn't?) for your barrack-mates.
- (In spring and summer) shorts, sandals
- small plastic container (for laundry basin), laundry detergent, clothespins and string

## Laundry

You may get clean uniforms as needed but you are on your own for other laundry. So easy wash-and-wear clothes are essential. Some bases have a washing machine and dryer, but most do not. Laundry detergent, clothespins and string for clotheslined can be useful, if you don't find them already on the base. (An experienced Sar-Elnik may carry a small plastic container for a laundry basin. It doesn't weigh much and can be filled with socks, underwear etc. in a suitcase. And it's cheap enough to leave behind.)

## Insurance

**You must have proof of adequate health insurance.** Sar-EI provides no hospital/medical insurance for volunteers. **Review your out-of-country insurance**, and if necessary, buy appropriate extra coverage. **Canadian Provincial Healthcare, alone, is not adequate.** You must have access to sufficient funds to cover medical emergencies, since your insurance may not pay up front. Check with your insurance provider on their payment arrangements for service in Israel.

## Money

Credit cards, particularly VISA and Mastercard, are widely accepted. Cash machines (ATMs) are generally available. Bank Hapoalim, and other ATMs too, accept Canadian ATM cards affiliated with PLUS or CIRRUS systems; insert your card and the screen message appears in English if that's the "language of your card" back home. You withdraw money from your Canadian account, in *shekel*, and your account is automatically debited in Canadian dollars at their exchange rate with a service charge. And ATMs are "open" when banks are closed.

## Telephones

**Bases no longer have pay phones**, since Israelis are heavy cell phone users. **Don't ask your *madricha* (see below) to use her cell phone, however.** It's advisable to rent your own. You can arrange delivery of a cell phone in Canada, before you leave for Israel. Check with the Sar-EI Canada office for information. In Israel, you don't pay for incoming calls on an Israeli cell phone.

**Israeli pay phones, when available, use *Telecards***, and other similar cards, which you can buy at the airport. Remember: **bases don't have pay phones.**

**To Canada or the US, dial 013-1, or 014-1**, followed by the area code and the number. This works for both *Telecard* and cell-phone calls. Or use the special calling arrangements provided by your Canadian long distance supplier for calls to Canada.

## Busses / Trains

Everyone **must purchase a "Rav Kav" card BEFORE going on a bus/train.** The bus drivers will not take any money. You can purchase these cards at the central bus stations and train stations, as well as at the airport. The best place is to buy them is at the airport at the Transportation counter in the Arrivals Hall (near where the Sar-EI groups meet). The cards are 5 shekels and then you put as much money as you want. We recommend a minimum of 50 or 100 shekels. If you are going to be in Israel for a few weeks and plan to take a few bus/train rides, you should probably put 100 shekels on the

card because if you run out, the bus drivers will not add more money once you are on the bus. There are kiosks and stores in the cities where you can “refill” the cards, but NOT on the buses.

## On Arrival

### Arrival at Ben Gurion Airport, Terminal 3

While waiting for your luggage you can buy Israeli currency, shekels, at the airport bank branch, or ATM (see **Money**). (Get enough for your first weekend off the base, because you may not be able to visit a bank or ATM before Shabbat.) **See Busses/Trains above**

### Arrive on the Sunday start date

**Plan your flight to arrive before Noon.** You will be met at the meeting place in the Arrivals hall: at the chairs on the right as you face exit #2, next to the Sunglass counter. There will usually be a Sar-El representative there. A currency exchange and ATM are nearby, as are cell phone rentals. If you are early you can wait at the chairs. If you are not met, phone the Program Coordinator (054-755-0137) to make the arrangements for assignment to a base. Sar-El phone numbers (see below) are also on the back of your name badge.

### Arriving before the Sunday start date

To join Sar-El, you **must** phone the Program Coordinator Miri (054-755-0137) to confirm your arrival and the arrangements for joining your group at the airport.

### On Base

Each volunteer group has at least one *madricha* or *madrich*. She/he is a soldier assigned as your group as guide, mentor, and translator, to act as liaison with the base commander and arrange for uniforms, work, evening activities, trips, etc.

**Your madrichot are your “officers”. You must follow their rules and respect their decisions. If you have problems or questions, discuss things with your madrichot. However, please understand that they must get approval from their officer for your special requests. Please feel free to call Miri with any questions or problems. We know how much you will love your madrichot/madrichim. Though you may want to show your appreciation at the end of the program, please understand that they are not allowed to accept money.**

### Living on Base

Life on whatever base you will be assigned to is communal. You sleep in barracks with a minimum two to a room, frequently more than that. Mixed gender couples do not share a room. Sleeping arrangements, shower rooms, which will have more than one shower in them, and toilets for women are separate from facilities for men.

All meals are kosher and are eaten in a mess hall with the soldiers. The noon meal is the heartiest one of the day and is normally delicious. Breakfasts and dinners are simple by any comparison.

### Rules on Base

- No proselytizing is allowed. Proselytizing includes discussing your religion with someone who doesn't have the same beliefs as you, in a manner which is intended to be persuasive, or which is offensive. You are also not allowed to distribute any religious literature. This also applies to weekends or times when you are off the base or at Beit Oded.
- No inappropriate behavior, including sexual harassment or aggressive behavior, is allowed.
- No drugs or alcohol is allowed.

- **If anyone violates any of these rules, he or she will be immediately dismissed from the program. If you have any questions about whether you can do something, ask your *madricha* first.**

## **Work assignments**

Remember, you've contracted with Sar-El to put in a full day's work of mostly manual labour. You are entitled to get clear instructions for meaningful work within your capabilities. If necessary, ask your *madricha* for help with your assignment or to change assignments if there are issues.

Your work station may be hot. The work may be repetitive and could involve lifting. Every effort will be made to match you to the work. But, there should be no misunderstanding. You have voluntarily enrolled in the program to work with the IDF at the jobs available of which you are capable.

## **Evening activities**

You are expected to attend activities arranged by your *madrichot*. Some evening programs will be fun, others more informative.

**You may not leave the base from arrival on Sunday to departure on Thursday.** The *madrichot* are responsible for your security; please cooperate and inform the *madrichot* if you are walking out of your area.

## **Weekends**

On weekends, you will usually leave the base Thursday after lunch. You are responsible for your accommodation, off-base, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights and on holidays. Your *madrichot* may be able to advise you about reservations at a hostel, or a hotel. Be sure to ask for a Sar-El discount.

On Thursday after work, depending on where you are stationed, you will be brought to a regional bus stop, Tel Aviv to Beit Oded or the Arlozerov/Savidor Station, the main train station. You must get yourself to the Arlozerov/Savidor train station on Sunday morning before 9 AM. If you will be late, contact your *madrichot* while in transit, for instructions.

## **Beit Oded**

The Hostel, when available, is open Thursday afternoon until Sunday morning. You must sign up for use with the *madrichot* early in the week. *The doors lock Thursday, Friday and Saturday night at midnight, and there is no entry after that hour until 6 am the next morning.* If you miss the midnight curfew, you have to find another place to spend the night! **There are no exceptions.**

**Please check <http://www.sar-el.org/upon-your-arrival/rules-for-staying-at-beit-oded/>**

## **Tours**

The program may include some guided tours during the work week. And your *madrichot* may have some information on commercial tour guides for special weekend tours, at reasonable cost. **You are responsible for personal expenses on weekends.**

## **Departure from Israel**

Check with your airline to confirm your flight time and the time you have to be at the airport. You may get help from your *madricha*, but you are responsible for your own arrangements, particularly if you are staying on after your "tour of duty".

## Details for Family and Friends

### Your address in Israel

c/o Sar-El, PO Box 953, Kiron, 5510802, Israel

### Program Coordinator

Miri Sharon: 054-755-0137

Sar-El office 03-682-9740

FAX to office, from Canada 011-972-3-682-9743

Beit Oded (Sar-El hostel) 03-569-2848

in Yafo at 5 Jerusalem Blvd. near the Gesher (Noga) Theatre; entrance on Segula (side street)

**We'd like to hear from you when you return; please  
respond to the survey you will be sent.**

### Words to remember

- **savlanoot** (patience)
- **balagan** (confusion)
- **g'mi-shoot** (flexibility)
- **L'hitra-ot** - until we meet again

So **ne-see-ah to-va** and **l'hitra-ot!**  
(have a good trip, see you soon)

## GLOSSARY of SIGNS ON THE BASE

<b>Near the gate</b>		<i>al yahd ha-shar</i>	
ברוכים הבאים	<i>b'rookh-eem ha-ba-eem</i>		welcome
צאתם לשלום	<i>t'sayt-khem l'shalom</i>		go in peace
מחנה	<i>mah-kha-neh</i>		base (camp)
<b>In the mess hall</b>		<i>b'khe-der okh-el</i>	
כניסה	<i>k'nee-sah</i>		entrance
יציאה	<i>y'tzee-ah</i>		exit
חלבי	<i>kha-lah-vee</i>		dairy [blue dishes, usually]
בשרי	<i>bah-sah-ree</i>		meat [orange dishes, usually]
שמור על הכשרות	<i>sh'mor ahl ha-kash-root</i>		keep kosher
אסור לעשן בשבת	<i>ah-sohr l'ah-shen b'shabat</i>		no smoking on shabbat
<b>On the base</b>		<i>b'bah-sees</i>	
אש	<i>esh</i>		fire
אזהרה	<i>ahz-hah-rah</i>		warning
בפקודה	<i>bif-koo-dah</i>		by order
זהירות	<i>z'hee-root</i>		careful
חשמל	<i>khash-mahl</i>		electricity
מגורי חיילים	<i>mi-goo-ray kha-yah-leem</i>		barracks (male soldiers)
מגורי חיילות	<i>mi-goo-ray kha-yah-lot</i>		barracks (female soldiers)
עצור	<i>ah-tzor</i>		stop

**Sar-El Canada**

788 Marlee Ave. Suite 315  
 Toronto, ON M6B 3K1  
 (416) 781-6089  
 toronto@sarelcanada.org

**Sar-El Canada**

1 Carré Cummings Square  
 Montreal, QC H3W 1M6  
 (514) 735-0272  
 montreal@sarelcanada.org

[www.sarelcanada.org](http://www.sarelcanada.org)



**Make the most of your Sar-El experience.**