

# THE AMERICAS<sup>2025</sup>

## PRE-TRIP GUIDE



## WELCOME FROM OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Dear BBYO Passport Families,

Welcome to Summer 2025! We're so excited that your teen will be part of our BBYO Passport adventure across the Americas this year. Whether they'll be hiking through breathtaking landscapes, participating in hands-on community service, or connecting with local communities, this experience is designed to be as impactful as it is unforgettable.

Our programs across the Americas offer teens a chance to explore the beauty of the natural world while diving into meaningful conversations and building strong friendships. Every moment—from group reflections under the stars to the acts of giving back—was created with intention, giving teens the space to grow, challenge themselves, and return home with a stronger sense of identity and purpose.

At BBYO, we've spent over a century building life-changing Jewish experiences for teens. We believe that travel is one of the most powerful tools for growth, and we're proud to provide a supportive environment where teens can feel safe, seen, and celebrated for who they are.

Thank you for trusting us with your teen's summer. We are here to make this journey incredible—for them and for you. Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions along the way.

We can't wait to experience this amazing summer together!

L'Shalom,

**Marni Heller**

Associate Vice President, BBYO Passport

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## PROGRAM CHECKLIST

This list will help you make sure you and your teen are ready to travel with BBYO Passport this summer. **Don't forget to complete all forms as early as possible.**

- ☐ **Sign up for your desired program:**
  - o [Signing up](#) only takes a few minutes, and a deposit to hold your spot!
- ☐ **Confirm your personal information in [your account profile](#):**
  - o To help our team prepare for your trip and ensure we have the correct information, please verify that teen information, personal information, and any additional parent/guardian contact information is up to date.
  - o Please double-check all phone numbers, mailing addresses, spelling of names, email addresses, and family roles. Please confirm that you are entering teen and parent information in the appropriate fields.
  - o BBYO Passport materials are mailed to the address provided to BBYO in the registration portal. Please be sure the address submitted is your teen's current residence.
- ☐ **Confirm Your Passport Information is Current**
  - o Ensure that your teen's passport is valid for at least six months after our return date. This is not a BBYO policy, rather, it is a requirement from your teen's destination country. **If your teen's passport has expired, or it will expire within six months of travel, you need to apply for a new passport immediately.** Failure to submit a valid passport by BBYO's deadline could delay or jeopardize your teen's ability to travel this summer. For information on how to renew or apply for a passport, please visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply.html>
  - o If your teen holds Israeli citizenship, please contact your local Israeli Embassy to ensure all requirements with the Israel Defense Force have been met before entering Israel.
- ☐ **Log in to your [portal account](#) to complete payments:**
  - o Follow our installment payment schedule as outlined in the [Payment Schedule & Cancellation Policies](#) document, then pay your remaining balance in full by **March 25, 2025**. Payments may be made by either ACH/E-Check (no processing fee) or by credit card. Any credit card payment made will be charged a non-refundable 3% processing fee.
  - o Once in your account click the "View" button next to your registration to make a payment.
- ☐ **Tell us about any scholarships or grants (including the RootOne Voucher):**
  - o Families are responsible for paying their total account balance **minus** any scholarship or grant award amounts they are expecting to receive, and that the BBYO Summer team has been made aware of.
  - o If you have yet to notify BBYO Passport of your teen's scholarship or grant, please forward your teen's award letter to [bbyosummer@bbyo.org](mailto:bbyosummer@bbyo.org), so our team may note your teen's account. **Award letters are not required for the RootOne voucher.**
  - o Please see the [example](#) below:

Example Program Balance	Example Pending Scholarship/Grant	Example Amount Due to BBYO
\$4,450	\$3,000	\$1,450

- ☐ **If applicable: Submit your application for a RootOne voucher.**
  - o All eligible trip participants will receive an email from BBYO with the link to apply. Please visit our [RootOne FAQ page](#) for more information.



❑ **Log into [CampDoc](#) to complete all required medical forms:**

- Healthcare Provider Form
  - Please note, every teen is required to provide a copy of a physical received within one year of our program start date. The BBYO medical form can be found through a teen's CampDoc profile.
  - If you do not have a valid physical, and your Primary Care Physician is booked, our recommendation is to visit an urgent care or clinic that can complete the form for your teen. **Make an appointment and/or contact your physician early to avoid a last-minute rush.**
- All those in attendance at BBYO Passport experiences are required to have the age-appropriate vaccines recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Please review BBYO's Vaccine policy [here](#).
- COVID-19 Vaccination
  - BBYO highly recommends—but does not require—each participant be fully vaccinated for COVID-19, including the most recent booster available. BBYO is following the guidance of many public health institutions, scientists, and medical professionals who have led the battle against the coronavirus and are recommending that people be fully vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19.

❑ **Complete all forms through [your account](#). (Some forms will be released in Spring 2025)**

- Group Flight Information
- Passport Information (*except Western USA Trek*)
- Domestic Travel Form
- Pre-Trip Guide Waiver
- *Optional* - Early Arrival Hotel Opt-In

❑ **Arrange your travel to/from the departure airport:**

- BBYO provides guidelines for arrival and departure times to the airport in our [BBYO Group Flights](#) document. **All domestic travel should be arranged within these guidelines.**
- Families should submit this information through the BBYO portal under "Incomplete Requirements" (this includes all methods of transportation: drop-off & flights). **In the event of a travel delay or cancellation, BBYO cannot assist teens that did not provide this information.**

❑ **Arrange for a local SIM card or phone (*except Western USA Trek*):**

- You can purchase a SIM card either through one of BBYO's recommended vendors or use an international phone plan through your family's provider.
- More information about SIM cards will be available in late Spring 2025.

❑ **Get ready for a fantastic adventure:**

- Review your Pre-Trip Guide, Summer Expectations, and BBYO's Code of Conduct together as a family.
- *Gear Up!* Double check our packing list and purchase what you need in advance.
- *Plan Ahead!* Think about accessing spending money during the program and what you need to be successful in another country.

We recommend speaking with your teen(s) about what this summer will look like and include. It will be an incredible experience and may include schedules that differ from their normal routine, culture shock, and the need to be flexible and advocate for themselves in a new country.

Don't forget to Like BBYO Passport on [Facebook](#) and Follow Us on [Instagram](#)

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## PACKING LIST

*Proper attire at BBYO Summer Experiences involves clothing that is neat, clean, and in good repair. We want you to be able to express yourself and be true to your individual style while adding to our environment of leadership, learning, and community. Clothing that detracts from that environment is not allowed.*

### LUGGAGE

- 
- One Checked Bag:
  - Teens can only bring **one** checked bag (weighing less than 50lbs.) Space on the bus is extremely limited and teens will be responsible for carrying their own bags throughout their program. Please check the airline's website for specific luggage requirements. Your teen must be able to carry their luggage around the airport and in/out of the bus and accommodations without assistance. BBYO does not have any additional bag size restrictions.
  - We recommend a **rolling duffle bag** since they are easier to travel with and more adaptable as room size/storage space could be small and elevators may be limited.
  - **\*Please note, the cost of a checked bag is not included because of airline policies. You will have the opportunity to pay for a checked bag when checking in on the day of departure.** Fees for overweight and/or additional bags will be covered by your teen at the airport.
  - Many teens like to purchase souvenirs while they are traveling. Please have your teen leave extra room in their bags.
- One Carry-on Backpack:
  - Teens should bring a backpack/gym bag that can be used for day trips and any short overnights.
  - Teens will not have time to go back to the hotel or bus throughout the day.
  - **We do not recommend a rolling carry-on.** Having two rolling bags makes moving through airports and accommodations more challenging, and there may not be sufficient space for two larger bags.

### THE BASICS

- Teens should bring enough clothes for approximately 2 weeks. Laundry will be done once or twice during your program, depending on the length of your specific program, and we recommend that teens bring clothes that they would feel comfortable re-wearing. See **Laundry** section for details.
- Be prepared for lots of walking and exploring in hot temperatures. **Bringing comfortable clothing and sturdy, closed-toed shoes is required.** Days will generally be hot, but evening temperatures may be chilly.
- A water bottle is required, and we recommend an insulated water bottle that holds 32 ounces or more. **If your teen misplaces their water bottle, they will need to purchase a new one.**

*It is highly recommended to label your belongings!*

<b>T-shirts</b>	Bring shirts that can be re-worn (10-12 shirts.) <i>We recommend linen as opposed to cotton for the humidity in Costa Rica.</i>
<b>Shorts/Leggings/Pants</b>	For hiking and walking around cities. Lightweight pants of any kind are preferred due to the heat.
<b>Windbreaker or Sweatshirt &amp; Sweatpants</b>	For the plane, bus, air-conditioned spaces, chilly evenings, etc.
<b>Undergarments &amp; Socks</b>	Laundry will be done around 10-12 days into select trips, plan accordingly.
<b>Pajamas</b>	We recommend 2 to 3 pairs.

<b>Bathing Suit</b>	We recommend 2 swimsuits.
<b>Beach Towel</b>	We recommend a lightweight towel for beach or water activities.
<b>Hat</b>	Summers are extremely hot. Everyone is required to wear a hat on hikes, and for extended time outdoors.
<b>Raincoat</b>	Rain is common during the summer in Costa Rica and the northern US.

## FOOTWEAR

We will be doing a lot of walking so having comfortable shoes is important! Comfortable and sturdy walking shoes are more than sufficient for Western USA Trek and Costa Rica.

<b>Closed Toed Shoes, Walking Shoes</b>	We recommend 1-2 pairs that are in good condition. One pair should be suitable for hiking and outdoor activities.
<b>Water Shoes/Sandals w/ a Backstrap</b>	Teva's or Chaco's with a backstrap are fine for most days and can be used in water hikes and activities. Your "day shoes" are not considered water shoes. Crocs are not recommended, as many teens report pain while walking long distances wearing Crocs.
<b>Shower/Hotel Sandals</b>	Sandals, slides, or shoes that teens can wear around the hotel or in the shower if that is what they prefer.

## SHABBAT AND RELIGIOUS SITES

At religious and holy sites, most people dress conservatively. We require these clothing options so you feel comfortable in these spaces, including clothing that covers the knees and shoulders.

*When visiting religious sites and synagogues, teens should wear:*

- Long skirts or dresses that cover the knees
- Pants
- Covered shoulders (e.g., no tank tops or strapless tops)

*It is tradition to wear clothing on Friday night and/or Saturday that is nicer than what we wear the rest of the week. The Shabbat dress code is "dressy casual," which means:*

- Khakis or dress jeans with no holes
- Button-down shirts or a similar nice top
- Long skirts or dresses


***Please remember that it is important to dress respectfully for Shabbat each week. The general guidelines for dressing still apply. If you are found to be wearing clothing that is not appropriate, you will be asked to change.***

## THE ESSENTIALS

Our essentials are the items teens and families should triple-check they packed before departing for their program.

<b>Passport (All trips except Western USA Trek)</b>	<i>Must be valid for at least six months after our return date.</i>
<b>Photocopies of Passport (All trips except Western USA Trek)</b>	We require bringing two printed copies just in case you misplace your passport, as well as a photo of your passport on your cell phone.
<b>Medication</b>	Over the counter & prescription medications in its original packaging (for allergies, headaches, etc.) Refills on prescription medication are not readily available abroad, please plan accordingly.
<b>Phone &amp; Charger</b>	Information on international plans and SIM cards can be found below.



<b>Prescription Glasses/Contact Lenses</b>	If needed, we recommend bringing extra lenses or an extra pair of glasses as a backup.
<b>Sunscreen</b>	SPF 30 or higher
<b>EpiPen</b>	BBYO recommends 2-5 EpiPens depending on the severity of the allergy.
<b>Photocopies of Prescriptions</b>	We recommend bringing at least one copy just in case medicine is lost, as well as a photo of your prescriptions on your cell phone.
<b>Power Adapter/Converter (Costa Rica only - recommended, not required)</b>	<p>Generally, power adapters are not required in Costa Rica. If you choose to bring one, we recommend universal adapters:</p> 
<b>Laundry Bag</b>	We recommend a laundry bag to keep track of dirty clothing.
<b>Electrolyte Packets</b>	Dehydration is the most common illness for teens during summer travel. Popular examples are Liquid IV, Nuun, or Gatorade.

## TOILETRIES

- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Hairbrush
- Soap/face wash/body wash
- Shampoo/conditioner
- Deodorant
- Razors (if electric, bring an adapter)
- Contact lenses, solution, eye drops, and case
- Feminine hygiene products
- Electrolyte packets

Most hotels and locations where groups stay will supply small bottles of basic toiletries (shampoo, body wash, etc.) It is always a good idea to pack a small amount to have on hand just in case.

## WHAT TO PACK IN YOUR CARRY-ON BACKPACK

- Passport (*must be valid for at least six months after our return date; All trips except Western USA Trek*)
- Medication
  - *If you are taking prescription medication, bring enough for the duration of the program as well as an extra written prescription record in case you misplace/lose your medicine. Take all medication on the plane with you in your carry-on luggage. **Do NOT pack any medication with your checked baggage.** The same applies to contact lenses. Please review [TSA's restrictions](#) on traveling with medication and liquids.*

- EpiPens (*if needed*)
- Spending Money (all teens must travel with a credit or debit card)
- Sunglasses
- 1 Change of Clothing (baggage may be delayed and an extra pair of clothes always comes in handy)
- Tech
  - Phone
  - Phone charger
  - Headphones and charger, if needed
  - Voltage adapter/converter, if desired
- Personal Snacks
- Chapstick or lip balm with SPF
- Hand sanitizer
- Extra travel-sized toiletries
- Tissues

#### GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL APPAREL

- No item of clothing may bear a logo or message that is antithetical to BBYO values or have any drug or alcohol words, pictures, or symbols.
- Shorts, skirts, and dresses must cover the rear end and must not expose any undergarments.
- All clothing must appropriately cover the midriff, back, and chest.
- Clothing may not reveal undergarments in any way (either because the clothing is sheer, it does not fit properly—e.g., too loose—or it does not meet the requirements noted above)
- While tank tops may be the most comfortable in the heat, prolonged sun exposure can be dangerous. We recommend wearing t-shirts during daytime activities or programming due to the constant sun exposure. There may be times during the program where teens are prohibited from wearing tank tops due to the site or activity, please plan accordingly.
- No flip-flops and no high heels. Teens may be walking long distances throughout a program and these styles are not practical for the environment.

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## ADDITIONAL PACKING TIPS

### LAUNDRY

A laundry service will be scheduled once or twice during your program on programs longer than 2 weeks. We recommend that teens bring clothes that they would feel comfortable re-wearing and labeling any clothing to be laundered. BBYO Passport and its program partners are not responsible for clothing lost or damaged during the laundry process. We also recommend packing travel laundry detergent for small washes between laundry days.

### OUR SUGGESTIONS

Here are the items we suggest that might make your trip more comfortable:

- Travel neck pillow
- BBYO Clothing (to wear & trade)
- Tallit, Tefillin, Kippah
- Travel laundry detergent
- Bug repellent
- Anti-itch cream
- Camping or travel toilet paper/personal wipes (*toilet paper is always available at accommodations, but may not be available in public restrooms while the trip is out & about*)

- Gatorade gels or drink mix (e.g., Nuun or Liquid IV) to help with hydration
- Zippered wallet or coin purse to hold money/change
- Flashlight with batteries
- Ziploc bags (various sizes for holding valuables, snacks, and wet clothing on water hikes)
- Keep cosmetics to a minimum, including hair dryers and straighteners.
- You will receive two BBYO Passport luggage tags along with a program t-shirt in advance. Fill out the luggage tags and affix them to your carry-on and checked luggage for identification purposes.

## OVER THE COUNTER MEDICINE

Each bus has a very limited amount of over-the-counter medicine. Certain brands and/or medications are difficult to find outside the US and we recommend bringing a **substantial amount** of over-the-counter-medicine. It's much easier for your teen to pack these medications in advance than to rely on navigating a pharmacy in another country when they run out.

If your teen frequently relies on over-the-counter medicine, please be sure to include enough for the duration of the trip:

- Ibuprofen or Acetaminophen
- Benadryl or other antihistamine
- Dramamine or other anti-nausea medication
- Tums, Pepto Bismol, Imodium, or other stomach medication
- Cough drops and/or cough syrup

If your teen is not able to swallow pills, **BBYO strongly recommends working with your teen in advance to help them adjust to swallowing medicine.** Most common antibiotics and medicine are prescribed as pills, with limited or no options for a chewable or powder alternative. If your teen cannot swallow pills by their trip departure, we will require you to pack chewable or powder alternatives for all the above medicines.

## ITEMS WE DO NOT RECOMMEND

- Linens like sheets or a blanket, pillows, or a sleeping bag (bedding will be provided at every location)
- Luggage that is not easily carried
- Expensive jewelry or other valuables
- Heavy backpacks or hiking boots
- Laptops, iPads, or expensive electronics
- Anything of significant sentimental value that could cause concern if lost

## VALUABLES

Theft is not uncommon in any place where many tourists congregate and there have been instances of theft on programs in the past. We encourage you to leave items of value at home and to carefully keep track of anything valuable that you do bring on the program. Generally, hotel rooms should always remain locked. However, even a locked hotel room should not be considered a secure area unless a locked safe is available. If you bring a lock for your suitcase, locking it in the room is an option. If it is possible to bring a locking suitcase, we recommend it. Although, it is not a solution on its own. Teen property is the sole responsibility of the teen. Lost valuables or items cannot always be recovered, found, or replaced. BBYO is not responsible for items misplaced or left behind at a location.

## MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

If you are musically inclined and willing to bring your instrument, please feel free to do so. Please remember that as with any other valuable item, bringing an instrument on the program is done at your own risk of loss or damage. Airlines may charge additional fees to transport an instrument.

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## TRIP POLICIES

### MADRICHIM (COUNSELORS)

Each group is staffed by a team of *madrachim* (counselors), a local tour leader, and a dedicated bus driver. A Wellness Specialist is available by phone if needed. Staff names are provided 3-4 weeks prior to your departure and your teen can expect a staff welcome call leading up to their departure. Please know that we do not share the personal phone numbers of our staff for privacy reasons. Disrespectful behavior, language or actions towards staff are considered in breach of the BBYO Code of Conduct.

### VISITORS

While your teen is traveling, there may be periods of time where they are able to have friends or family visit the group. This can be coordinated directly between your teen and their trip staff once your teen starts their trip. **Teens are prohibited to leave the program to visit friends and family and must always sleep at the BBYO hotel with their staff.**

### ROOMING PLAN

Standard accommodations are based on 2-4 teens per room. Every time we move to a new overnight location, we will rotate rooming assignments. **BBYO does not allow teens to request specific roommates and teens will not always be paired with their friend requests for rooming as we want to provide a better opportunity for our teens to get to know one another and promote group bonding. Families should speak with their teen prior to the trip about this policy and encourage their teen to be open minded in rooming with new peers.**

### KEEPING FAMILY UPDATED DURING THE PROGRAM

Parents of teens will receive email updates from the road and links to our Google photo album for the trip.

### MAILING PACKAGES

Please **do not** send packages to teens. Packages often get delayed by customs or a mail carrier, and even if a package does get through, it may be difficult to get the package to our group. If your teen forgets any necessary item(s), the staff will do their best to help them purchase or obtain the item(s) in a timely fashion.

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## TRAVEL INFORMATION

### GROUP FLIGHT INFORMATION

Details about the group supervised flight and how to meet at the airport were shared in the early Spring or shortly after registration. All group flight tickets are issued electronically, and staff will have a copy of the e-ticket (electronic ticket) at the airport. **Specific reservation numbers will not be available in advance of travel, and no advance check-in with the airline is needed.**

Families are responsible for purchasing and arranging domestic transportation for their teens to meet the group at their departure airport. The supervised flight will depart from the cities listed below.

**Per airline policy, group tickets are not eligible for any refunds, vouchers, or credits.** If your teen is unable to join the group flight after the ticket has been booked, no refund will be issued. This includes if you withdraw from the program or cannot join due a medical reason. Families may incur "No Show" fees if your teen cannot join the group flight and

BBYO is not informed in advance. BBYO recommends purchasing travel insurance to protect their investment and plan for the unexpected.

Program	Departure Location
Americas Trek	New York
Stand UP Adventure Costa Rica	Miami
Western USA Trek	New York

### PASSPORT VALIDITY *(All trips except Western USA Trek)*

Please check **today** to make sure that you know where your passport is and that it is not expired or is about to expire.

**Make sure your passport is valid for six months after our return date. If it is not, you will not be allowed to board your flight(s).** Information about ordering or renewing a passport can be found at [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov).

- **Plan to Carry a Photocopy of Your Passport During the Program**

Because we hold onto your passport for safekeeping on the road, teens are required to save a picture of their passport on their phones. We recommend always carrying a copy of your passport in your wallet or backpack as a backup form of identification.

- **Check That the Name You Used to Register Matches Your Passport**

If you registered with a nickname, your ticket will be printed accordingly, and you may be denied boarding. Contact us to make any corrections ASAP at [bbyosummer@bbyo.org](mailto:bbyosummer@bbyo.org).

### VISA RULES *(All trips except Western USA Trek)*

If you are traveling with a United States passport, you do not need a visa to enter any of the countries we visit. If you are traveling on a passport from another country, you may need a visa. Please email us at [bbyosummer@bbyo.org](mailto:bbyosummer@bbyo.org) if you need proof of program acceptance while acquiring a visa.

### MEETING AT THE AIRPORT

Plan to meet the group in the check-in area of our departure terminal **five hours in advance of the group flight**. If you are taking a domestic flight to meet the group, please make sure it lands at least five hours before our departure. Starting six hours prior to departure, our team will be wearing staff t-shirts and will greet teens as they arrive at our meeting point. **The BBYO Passport t-shirt you will receive in the mail just before the program MUST be worn on departure day.**

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### AIRLINE SEATING AND POINTS

- Seating is pre-assigned by the airline on our group flights. Special requests for seating (type or location of seat, sitting next to a friend, etc.) can be made at check-in on the day of departure and are not guaranteed. **Requests cannot be made ahead of time.**
- If desired, teens are responsible for obtaining reward points via the airline using the ticket information obtained during check-in for their departing flight.
- BBYO books economy tickets for all teens. Teens who wish to upgrade their seat will work with the gate agent on departure date to make this request. Teens who upgrade their seats are responsible for paying the airline directly.

### UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

BBYO will only provide unaccompanied minor chaperones if it is required by the domestic airline due to the age of your teen. Each airline has its own rules and separate age thresholds for mandatory "unaccompanied minors" and additional fees may apply. Please refer to your airline's website to determine their age requirements. For families booking a flight, refer to your chosen airline for information and contact us well in advance if special arrangements need to be made with our staff. Last-minute requests for staff supervision of "unaccompanied minors" cannot be guaranteed. Families booking a

ticket for an unaccompanied minor must consult with BBYO before booking their domestic flight to ensure BBYO staff can accommodate the teen's flight timing.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU ARE DELAYED?

If you are delayed on departure day and will not meet the group on time, please call your assigned airport representative immediately. Families are responsible for getting their teen to the departure airport listed above and will need to rebook any domestic travel if there are delays or cancellations. If your teen misses their flight, BBYO will re-book your teen on the next available flight, however, please keep in mind that seats are subject to airline availability. **Families should immediately inform BBYO if their teen is experiencing delays so we may begin to secure a new international flight for your teen. BBYO will work to rebook your travel and ensure your teen's return flight remains valid.**

BBYO is only able to assist rebooking tickets that are purchased via BBYO. Rescheduled flights will not have a staff escort. If a teen requires an overnight stay due to a missed flight to their destination, parents will arrange and pay for those accommodations and BBYO will provide staff supervision for 24 hours. Additional rebooking fees may apply. More information will be released within a week of your departure.

## ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

### *Costa Rica*

Upon arrival, groups will make their way to the passport control area and regroup at baggage claim. At baggage claim, there will be time for restroom breaks and to exchange money, but teens are not permitted to wander beyond baggage claim without staff. From there, groups will proceed to the bus loading zone.

### *Americas Trek, Western USA Trek*

Upon arrival, teens will make their way to a designated area at baggage claim. At baggage claim, there will be time for restroom breaks, but teens are not permitted to wander beyond baggage claim without staff. From there, groups will proceed to the bus loading zone.

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## PROGRAM ITINERARY

Due to the fluidity of our itineraries, only location and highlights will be shared with families prior to the group's departure. Each night of the program, teens will be provided with the following day's itinerary to properly prepare for the next day's excursions. Please note that even a confirmed itinerary may be subject to changes on the ground.

## GROUP COMPOSITION

Each group forms its own traveling community, and the size of each group varies by program date. Our typical bus size for trips is around 35–45 teens.

## KASHRUT & DIETARY NEEDS

Our trips are designed to be inclusive and meaningful for Jewish teens from all backgrounds. We believe that travel provides a unique opportunity to connect with others, immerse in new environments, and build a sense of community. By experiencing different cultures together, we focus on shared values and personal growth, fostering a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

All meals provided on the program are Kosher style. When dining as a group, meals will be vegetarian or buffet. Shabbat meals are hosted at Kosher facilities when they are available. BBYO Passport experiences include "pizur" meals where participants can use a cash allowance to buy their own food. Kosher meals during pizur time are subject to what is available locally and to the teens' personal choice. **Teens with special dietary situations must make sure their**



**restrictions are reflected in their medical forms.** Teens with special dietary situations should bring snacks from home in the event they are having a difficult time adjusting to a new cultural cuisine.

There will be multiple opportunities throughout the trip for teens to purchase snacks. When traveling, your teen may encounter new foods that will not be to their liking, so we ask teens to be flexible and have snacks on hand just in case.

## SHABBAT PROGRAMMING

Shabbat is a special time and can be an amazing opportunity for rest and reflection. Friday nights and Saturdays will include prayer, informal discussions, and various Shabbat programming. We aim to provide a space for more rest and relaxation on Shabbat. Shabbat may include visits to local synagogues to give teens a taste of how Judaism is observed locally, or Shabbat programming organized by the staff. Teens may visit a traditional Orthodox service. Even if this is not part of your tradition, it is an opportunity for a rich cultural experience and can be meaningful, too. Teens are encouraged to take an active role in how the experience is shared with the group.

As a program, we do not drive on Shabbat. We do, however, require that teens carry items on Shabbat, such as water bottles. What teens do during the non-programmed time on Shabbat is their own personal decision. We only ask that everyone be mindful and considerate of each other's practices.

## MONEY

The group flight, sleeping accommodations, all meals, in-country transportation, basic health insurance on programs outside of the US (excluding pre-existing conditions), and all program activities are covered by the program fee. The only spending that is your responsibility will be snacks, souvenirs, bottled water, and gifts. **We estimate \$100-\$150/week is sufficient.**

### How to Bring Money Abroad

There are several ways to bring money abroad. **Please keep in mind that BBYO Passport Staff will be unable to facilitate money transfers (including Venmo) to teens during the program.** ATMs are common but are not available at every location. BBYO requires all teens to travel with a debit or credit card that can be used in the case of an emergency.

**BBYO recommends teens bring a combination of both cash and a credit/debit card.** Many markets and street vendors operate on a cash only basis, while credit cards are needed in the event of an emergency. Apple Pay is also accepted at most locations.

### Debit/Credit Cards

If you choose to use your personal debit card or credit card, we ask that you be aware of the following:

- Each family must contact their bank or credit card service in advance to determine if their cards will work while abroad. BBYO strongly recommends families alert their banks the dates and locations of their teen's travel before their teen departs. Failure to notify your bank may result in a teen's card being frozen upon arrival.
- Teens may have trouble withdrawing money from savings accounts. We strongly recommend that ATM cards be linked to checking accounts only to prevent any potential complications while abroad. ATMs may not accept all debit cards, so please contact your bank in advance.
- Check with your bank for the exact fee charged when using ATM, debit, or credit cards internationally.

### Local Currencies *(All trips except Western USA Trek)*

U.S. and Canadian dollars are not accepted abroad, so if you plan to bring cash with you, either plan to exchange it to local currency before you depart for the program or at the airport in your destination country. **The official currency in Costa Rica is the Colon**, and you will find that goods in Costa Rica can cost nearly 70–80% less than what they typically cost in the US. Exchange rates are constantly fluctuating so please [check the rates](#) prior to your trip.

### PHONE CALLS ABROAD *(All trips except Western USA Trek)*

Prior to using your cell phone abroad, please contact your cell phone provider to understand the costs associated with international roaming. If you wish to rent a SIM card **(for unlocked phones only)**, please review the options below. *If you are choosing to rent a SIM card, please contact your cell phone provider in advance to unlock the phone so that it may accept an international SIM card.*

**SIM Card Rental Options** - More information about SIM cards will be available in late Spring 2025.

- You can purchase an eSIM card through BBYO's recommended vendor.
- You can use an international phone plan through your family's provider.

Teens should be aware of limits on their data plans and use Wi-Fi whenever possible. **BBYO cannot support troubleshooting with SIM cards. When you order a SIM card, you will be given contact information by the vendor for any SIM card issues.**

### How and When to Call

For parents and friends who wish to contact a teen during the program, please be aware of the time zone of your teen's destination. We remind you that cell phone use during programming will not be permitted. Evenings are generally a good time to call.

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## RETURNING HOME

We typically clear customs and baggage claim within 60–90 minutes of arrival. If scheduling a connecting flight home, allow for a window of at least three hours between flights within the same airport. Our staff will be available to escort teens through baggage claim and direct them to their connecting flights within the same terminal as requested, but **our staff will not be available to escort teens to other terminals**. BBYO cannot assist with connecting flight delays or cancellations but may be able to provide a supervised overnight if necessary. BBYO does not have staff at the airport for more than three hours after the group's return.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### SUN SAFETY

The sun during the summer months is strong—often stronger than teens are accustomed to. Dehydration, heat stroke, and sunburn are serious concerns. **Teens not following the proper sun and water safety will not be able to participate in programming. Teens are required to follow any sun and water safety rules set in place by their staff. BBYO considers following sun and water safety as a part of our code of conduct.**

Below are some rules we employ whenever we go on hikes or whenever we will be outdoors for an extended period. **If teens do not follow these rules, they may be asked to sit out of a program or activity in the interest of their safety:**

- Wear a hat.
- No tank tops\*
- Use sunscreen.
- Carry at least two liters of water *(Many teens use a backpacking bladder-style water bottle during long hikes).*

Teens will not be permitted to board buses unless they have adhered to the above protocol. **If teens misplace their hats and/or water bottles, they will need to purchase new ones in their current location.**

\*Direct skin exposure to the high-intensity sun can lead to intense burns and can accelerate dehydration. Teens are required to cover their chests and shoulders during long hikes and/or full days outdoors to ensure their health and safety.

## WATER IN COSTA RICA

Proper hydration is essential during a program of this nature. Teens should be drinking two large bottles of water per day. The tap water in Costa Rica is generally safe to drink in most areas of the country, aside from rural areas. Bottled water is widely available and inexpensive, and you will have many opportunities to purchase it. Teens will not be allowed off the bus without full water bottles! BBYO will not purchase bottled water on behalf of the group and will not reimburse families if their teens choose to purchase bottled water.

## MEDICATION

Teens are responsible for carrying and self-administering their own medication. With the exception of over-the-counter treatments and EpiPens, our staff is not allowed to hold or administer prescribed medication and cannot be responsible for ensuring that prescribed medication is taken. If you have special requests (e.g., refrigeration requirements), please note them on your health forms and reach out to our team at [bbyosummer@bbyo.org](mailto:bbyosummer@bbyo.org). Teens are never allowed to share or dispense prescribed medication.

Don't forget to fill out your medical forms in [CampDoc!](#)

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

Many of our itineraries include community service opportunities. Estimated hours are listed on our website but will vary based on your teen's specific trip. Teens will receive instructions to verify their hours once their trip returns.

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## MEDICAL INSURANCE

BBYO Passport program fees include basic medical insurance that covers treatment and medication; however, it will not cover any pre-existing medical conditions. This means that the policy covers treatment for issues like a stomach bug, broken limb, or dehydration, without any out-of-pocket expenses or paperwork. The policy does not cover any medical conditions for which a teen is already being treated or for which treatment has been received in the past. This exclusion rule also applies to all psychological care. For this reason, teens are required to come on the program with their own medical insurance policy, which includes coverage for short-term travel abroad. If a teen needs to be treated for a pre-existing condition during the program, the parents of the teen will be solely responsible for any associated costs.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

BBYO has partnered with a licensed travel insurance agent to offer travel insurance through **Travel Insured International**. They provide a cost-effective solution for student groups with important benefits like trip cancellation, trip interruption, missed connection, trip delay and baggage delay. Families should *strongly consider* purchasing travel insurance to protect their investment and plan for the unexpected.

Information on specific insurance plans, costs, and purchasing varies depending on your teen's trip. Families may also opt to purchase Travel Insurance through a provider of their choosing.

Where do I go to find more information about Travel Insured International plans and pricing?

- [Click here to view BBYO Passport program insurance details.](#)

Should I include scholarships and grants in my travel costs when purchasing insurance?



- Scholarships, including the RootOne travel voucher, are used to cover program costs on your behalf. As such, those funds are considered a recipient's financial obligation to BBYO. Each scholarship has its own policy regarding the recipient's financial obligation to the funder in the event a teen cancels their participation beyond the refund deadline or leaves the trip early.
- For this reason, we encourage you to review the policies related to your scholarship and to *consider purchasing travel insurance that covers the combined cost of your direct program/travel costs and the RootOne voucher or any other outside scholarship funding.*

#### Where do I go if I have questions about travel insurance?

- BBYO is not licensed or authorized to answer questions regarding your teen's travel insurance policy or options. When it comes to travel insurance, all questions regarding insurance matters (**including what is covered, purchase deadlines, how to purchase, etc.**) must go directly through our [licensed travel insurance agent](#). **BBYO's customer service team can assist you only when submitting a claim.**
- Send an email to [info@teentravelinsurance.com](mailto:info@teentravelinsurance.com) with any questions you have. If you would like a phone call, please request to speak with a member of their team in your email.

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## SAFETY & SECURITY

We ask our teens to follow some basic security-related guidance as follows:

- **Be aware of suspicious objects** and be careful not to leave behind personal items that may be confused with a suspicious object.
- **Do not share information** such as length of stay, hotel locations, or trip itinerary with anyone not traveling on the program. This includes sharing these details on social media.
- **Stay together as a group.** This is a supervised program, and we depend on our teens to always stay together.
- **Follow staff instructions.** We travel with licensed guides who are trained in security procedures, and we depend on everyone to follow staff instructions.
- **Dress mindfully.** In the interest of maximum cautiousness, we recommend not dressing in a recognizably Jewish or touristy way and generally choosing clothes that are culturally neutral.

### PICKPOCKET ALERT

Pickpocketing is a relatively common occurrence in large metropolitan areas, and we recommend protecting your valuables at all times when we are in public.

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## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Prior to departure, families will be provided with an essential contact number. This is a 24-hour emergency number that is to be used in the case of a family emergency at home, or if a teen is in physical distress and contacts a parent before contacting their staff member.

To ensure your teen's Madrichim (Staff Counselor) can best utilize their time with the group, we do not share the contact information of our bus-specific staff with families. We ask that families adhere to the above protocols to ensure the well-being of both our teens and staff members.

Please only use the emergency phone number when there is an emergency as described below:

Emergency Situations	Non-Emergency Situations
<b>Call the provided 24/7 emergency phone number</b>	<b>Email the provided non-emergency email address</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Family health emergencies</li><li>Urgent medical or safety situation pertaining to family or friends at home.</li><li>Immediate need for a teen to leave the program and return home</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Missing luggage or general transportation questions/concerns</li><li>Lost or misplaced personal items (e.g., toiletries, clothing, etc.)</li><li>Concerns about fatigue or social adjustment</li><li>Information on itinerary or sleeping arrangements</li><li>Requests for flight extensions</li><li>Requests to be featured in photos or add more photos for your teen's trip</li><li>General security concerns (email updates will be sent in such scenarios)</li><li>General questions regarding the itinerary or location of your teen</li><li>Request for your teen to change roommates</li></ul>

It is common to experience some degree of culture shock when traveling abroad, especially for the first time. Culture shock can trigger feelings of anxiety or surprise, disorientation, uncertainty, depression, and confusion when transitioning to a different and unfamiliar cultural or social environment. It is also common for teens to struggle with adapting to a new social environment and group travel setting, where they may experience new personalities and lifestyles.

These feelings are normal and often dissipate after the first few days of the trip. While these feelings do not constitute an immediate call to the emergency line, it is important for your teen to talk with a staff member so BBYO can best support them through their transition to a new culture. We recommend emailing the field director of your respective trip, to arrange for a staff member to check-in with your teen. If these feelings persist, BBYO can arrange for your teen to meet with one of our wellness specialists. BBYO will set up calls in the spring with more information on how to best support teens experiencing culture shock.

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## PRE-TRIP GUIDE WAIVER

The following waiver is available in your MyBBYO Portal for your completion, due by **May 15, 2025**:

- ☐ We have read and agree to the information shared in the Pre-Trip Guide for my destination.
- ☐ We have read and agree to the information shared in the BBYO Expectations & Code of Conduct Guide.
- ☐ We understand that my teen is responsible for carrying and dispensing their own medication (over-the-counter and prescription) for the duration of the trip.
- ☐ We understand that BBYO will not provide bottled water on this trip. Water will be available for purchase on the bus (when available) and during rest stops and pizza meals.
- ☐ We understand that meals will be provided by BBYO and my teen will be responsible for purchasing additional food should they not be satisfied with the meals. Alternative options will be provided for allergen-friendly meals when needed, and my teen will be responsible for their own meal should they not like the option provided to them.
- ☐ We have reviewed the packing list as a family and will ensure my teen is adequately prepared with any country-specific items they may need.
- ☐ We have reviewed the laundry policy for BBYO Passport trips. We understand that laundry service will only be scheduled in the middle of trips exceeding two weeks. For trips with a duration of 15 days or less, we understand that teens should plan to pack enough clothes for the trip, rewear clothing as needed, and/or bring travel laundry detergent for cleaning during travel.
- ☐ We understand that cell phone service is required during the trip, and will purchase either an international phone plan through our mobile carrier or rent an e-SIM to attain international coverage during travel.
- ☐ We have read and understand the guidelines in this guide's Money section, and agree that our family is responsible for any additional expenses incurred while traveling. **This includes but is not limited to forgotten items, medical expenses not covered by insurance, transportation outside of the group transportation, and shipping costs related to personal items.**
- ☐ We agree that our family (at least 1 Parent/Guardian and the registered teen) will attend the virtual BBYO Passport Orientation or watch the recording of the orientation.
- ☐ We have read and understand the guidelines in this guide about sun safety, proper hydration and policies around hats and sun protection.

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**VISIT [BBYO.ORG/SUMMER](https://bbyo.org/summer)**

**CALL 202-537- 8091**

