

TEL LACHISH EXCAVATION PROJECT – SUMMER SEASON 2023

1. SEASON DATES:

Arrival: **Sunday, 9th July 2023** between 3pm and 6pm at the Central Bus Station in Kiryat Gat
<https://goo.gl/maps/M5TJ7sXTEBN2>

Departure: **Friday, 4th August 2023** between 9am and 12pm from the Central Bus Station in Kiryat Gat

2. CONTACTS:

Katharina Streit: Mobile: +43-681-84088353 Katharina.Streit@oeaw.ac.at

Felix Höflmayer: Mobile: +43-664-1755341 felix.hoeflmayer@oeaw.ac.at

3. EXPECT VERY HARD WORK:

Our excavation is physically very challenging and requires a high level of fitness. We do not have any workers and do all the physical work ourselves. The project is very different to a prehistoric excavation where very little soil is moved or excavations in other Near Eastern countries, where typically workers excavate and foreign archaeologists engage predominantly in documentation. At Lachish, a very large volume of soil is shifted every day. Most excavation work consists of loosening the ground with a large pickaxe, then scraping soil into buckets and stacking them up. Every 30–40 min, hundreds of buckets have to be emptied in a “bucket line”: they get thrown from one person to the next, and emptied by the last person in line. Do not underestimate the physical challenges of an excavation and consider the conditions specific to the Tel Lachish excavation before applying. Even though extensive archaeological field experience is not a requirement, chances of getting accepted without any experience are small.

4. ACCOMMODATION:

We will be accommodated at the Mechinat Meitarim in Beit Guvrin, a boarding school for Israeli students who finished their high school. Beit Guvrin is a kibbutz with a strong communal aspect to it. We are expected to be friendly and calm members of the community and to keep our surroundings clean.

The accommodation has rooms for 3–4 people in simple bunkbeds. Mattresses are provided, but no bedding or towels. Lunch is provided by a catering company, all the other meals are organized by us with assistance from volunteers on a rotational basis.

Hot water showers are provided. A washing machine will be available for a small fee. A fridge available for everyone is foreseen. A small shop for minor purchases is within walking distance. The kibbutz-pool can be used, but has unfortunately a rather high entrance fee (ca. 15 Euro).

Please be aware that the accommodation is not a luxury resort and you will be expected to play an active part in keeping our everyday logistics up and running. We will have a rotational system for specific duties.

Please keep in mind that we are currently the only long-term excavation in Israel that is not charging its volunteers thousands of dollars for participation. This is possible because we keep costs low by doing most of the logistic work ourselves. Please value this as much as we will value your hard work at the site. We had wonderful experiences over the years with this model, and hope to be able to keep it up for as long as possible!

5. **PACKING:**

Equipment for the field:

- ✓ Closed boots, preferably covering your ankle (VERY important! No open shoes at the site!)
- ✓ Pants for the excavation (even though it will be hot, most archaeologist prefer long pants, because it protects your legs and keeps dirt out of your shoes)
- ✓ Shirts for the dig (random t-shirts are fine, parade your most insane designs)
- ✓ Hat/scarf
- ✓ Sunscreen (get the highest factor, buy it at home, because it's expensive in Israel)
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Work gloves, at least 2 pairs (cheap work gloves are fine)
- ✓ Trowel
- ✓ Water bottle (ordinary plastic bottle is enough, just have your personal bottle for hygienic reasons), cold drinking water is provided at the site
- ✓ Isotonic drink powder / water flavoring etc. (not a must-have, but some find it makes it easier to stay hydrated)

We are excavating under a shade cloth, which makes a big, big difference. However, UV radiation is still very strong in the shade, thus sunscreen is a requirement.

Equipment camp:

- ✓ Sleeping bag and/or sheet and light blanket and pillow
- ✓ Sandals
- ✓ Loose clothes (shorts, shirts etc.) to hang around in the camp
- ✓ Flip-flops for the shower
- ✓ Flashlight
- ✓ Swimsuit (we cannot promise anything, but we hope you might find use for it)
- ✓ Towel(s)
- ✓ Mosquito spray (usually not needed, but could be useful)
- ✓ Female hygiene products for the duration of the stay (rather expensive in Israel)

- ✓ All medication that you regularly take for the entire duration of the stay
- ✓ Basic medication for minor health issues (painkiller, disinfectant, plaster etc.)
- ✓ Kat's bonus survival tip: earplugs and a sleeping mask! (Seriously, I have seen excavations where these prevented homicide...)
- ✓ Kat's bonus survival tip 2: snacks to bribe room-mates

Expensive gear:

Minimize expensive equipment. Take as little as possible, preferably only what you take with you to the field. We cannot guarantee that rooms can be securely locked.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Insurance:

You require a **health/travel insurance** for the time you are in Israel. The medical facilities in Israel are at the same high level they are in Europe, even though we highly hope that you will not have to make use of them at any time.

Vaccination and general health issues:

Full **Covid19 vaccination** is highly recommended. Also make sure you have a **Tetanus vaccine**. There is no need for a rabies vaccine etc.

You are obliged to inform us about any health issues which might threaten you or others in the team, even if they are not acute. This is mainly for your own safety, as it allows us to address emergencies promptly and adequately!

Alcohol and drug policy:

Excessive drinking and/or consumption of illegal drugs will lead to immediate exclusion from the project and the accommodation.

General safety in Israel:

Israel is frequently featured in the news and is often perceived as a dangerous place. While in times of tension the situation can be indeed troublesome, most of the time Israel is a fairly safe place. As everybody, we will have to adapt to the given situation. Please note that in an unlikely case of major political tension, we might be asked to not leave the premises of the kibbutz on our own for walks for safety reasons. Additionally, a short shelter training will take place at the beginning of the season for the unlikely case of an air-alarm.

Official taxis (clearly marked as such) are perfectly safe. They do have taximeter. It is possible to arrange a fixed price before you get on, or rely on the taximeter. The discrepancy is typically small.

Please note that certain neighborhoods (especially ultraorthodox neighborhoods) have a strict dress code or are off limits for non-members altogether.

Health and safety on the site:

Safety is of uppermost priority at the excavation! Very serious accidents have happened in the past at other projects, and we do the maximum to prevent them. Follow basic rules:

- ✓ **NEVER** work with your **BARE HANDS** in the ground, but only with tools
- ✓ Don't put your hands under or around stones before you checked that there is no **SCORPION** or **SNAKE** hiding
- ✓ Closed shoes are required at the site
- ✓ Only lift what your **BACK** and your **KNEES** can handle
- ✓ Make sure you drink enough **WATER** and consume enough **SALT!**
- ✓ If you start getting a headache, feel **DIZZY OR UNWELL**, sit down and inform your square supervisor, these might be signs of **DEHYDRATION**. Even light cases of dehydration usually lead to a trip to the hospital and feeling really sh** for days.
- ✓ **DO NOT WALK ON BAULKS!** These are the "walls" separating squares. They look solid, but they can collapse. You will see staff walking on them occasionally, but we try to minimize this as much as possible.
- ✓ Be **ALERT** when working with the **PICK!** Make sure nobody stands behind or next to you and your tool is intact!
- ✓ If you find **AMMUNITION** in or around the excavation, **DO NOT TOUCH IT** and immediately inform the staff!

7. FLIGHT & ARRIVAL

The airport you are looking for is 'Ben Gurion Airport, Tel Aviv'. There are many carriers flying to Ben Gurion, from Vienna, Austrian is usually the cheapest option. If you book El Al, be prepared for extra security, and plan a bit more time at the airport.

Those coming from abroad will receive a letter for the border control, stating what you do and why you are coming to Israel. (A few weeks before the excavation, we will need the **NAME** and **NUMBER** of the passport with which you will be entering Israel.) There might be some questioning. If that is the case, don't get upset and don't get intimidated. This is standard security procedure. Today, at Ben Gurion Airport passports do not get stamped any more. Instead, you will receive a small blue paper card with your scanned passport picture. **DO NOT LOSE THIS CARD.** This is your 3-month visa.

8. GETTING TO TEL LACHISH & ACCOMMODATION

We will be staying in the accommodation of a boarding school in Beit Guvrin

(<https://www.google.at/maps/@31.612595,34.8946601,17.25z?hl=de>). The next city is Kiryat Gat, where we will pick you up from the Central Bus Station between 3pm and 6pm on 9th July (<https://goo.gl/maps/M5TJ7sXTEBN2>). There are busses going to Kiryat Gat from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and from other cities as well (cf. www.egged.co.il). Let us know when you arrive so we can plan pick-up and shuttle to Beit Guvrin.

9. FROM BEN-BURION AIRPORT TO JERUSALEM (for those who arrive ahead of the season and want to visit the city)

You arrive at Ben Gurion Airport, cross the border (this might take some 30–60 min, depending on how many flights arrive), get your luggage, and exit the airport. After c. 50 m, you come to the drop off/pick up lane. There will be 2–3 Sherut taxis (service taxis, sort of minibus in yellow) waiting, and someone will be calling “Jerusalem???”. That’s what you want. There is only one company running the service to Jerusalem: Neshar Taxi: <http://www.neshertours.co.il/about-us>. The trip costs approximately 65–70 NIS (this can be paid in Dollar as well), and takes about an hour. This is a fixed price, there is no haggling. You pay when you are getting off the car. They will ask you where you want to go to in Jerusalem (they know the hostels), because according to the address they split customers between the cars, so that they don't have to do the full round every time. They will put your luggage in the trunk and ask you to wait. Within 15–20 min the taxi fills up, and they leave.

Since 2018, there is also new high-speed train services from Ben Gurion Airport to Jerusalem available (<https://www.rail.co.il/en/stations/ben-gurion-airport>). One-way trip costs about 20 NIS and takes about 25 minutes. In Jerusalem, you get off at Yizhak Navon near the central bus station with immediate access to connecting buses and the Jerusalem city light train. Google Maps information is also usually up to date.

We recommend you arrive a few days before the project to get adapted to the environment and get a first impression of Israel, if this is your first travel to the country. Hostels with a good reputation for back packers are the Abraham Hostel and the Jerusalem Hostel, but there are many other options. If you want to spend more money, the Austrian Hospice in the Old City of Jerusalem is highly recommended.

10. WEEKENDS

In the past years, we were not working on the site on Fridays and Saturdays. You are free to explore the country, but staying in the accommodation is also a possibility (meal preparation will be more ad-hoc over the weekends). There are busses between all major cities, which are very cheap and comfortable, running on weekdays. However, please note that there is **NO**

PUBLIC TRANSPORT from Friday afternoon until Saturday afternoon (except in Haifa). It is also possible to rent cars if you are 23 (sometimes 26) or older (depending on the company). We can drop you off at the Kiryat Gat Central Bus Station on Friday morning (between 8am and 10am) and pick you up on Saturday evening (between 6pm and 8pm). We recommend getting a guidebook (e.g. Lonely Planet) to have a rough idea before you arrive about what you might be interested in. The main cities (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa) will keep you busy for a few days with museums, beaches, the Old City etc.

(Considering the difficulties of travel on the weekends, we will try to move our free days to weekdays. This does need approval of the authorities and has not been finalized yet.)

11. LETTER OF PARTICIPATION

After the project, you receive a letter of participation if requested. Please approach us before the project if your university requires an exam/grade for field work participation.