



# NORTHERN PALESTINE

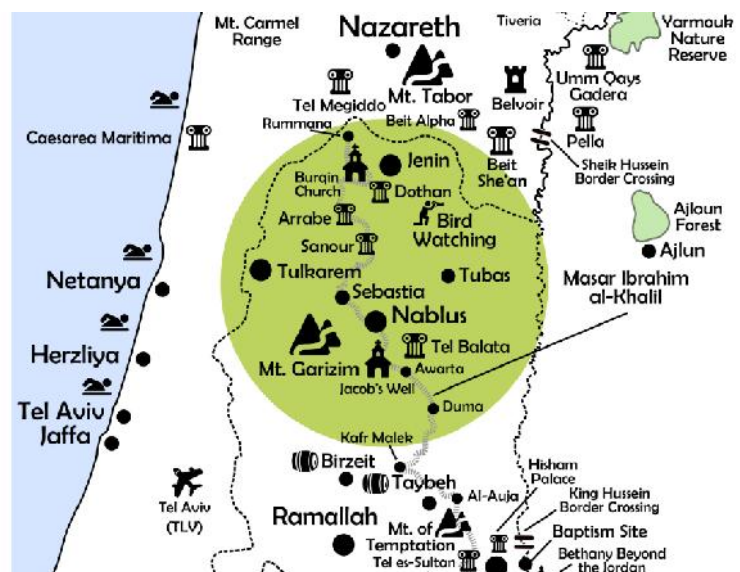
A hidden touristic jewel in the heart of the Holy Land

Dear Tourism Professional,

Right in the heart of the Holy Land, northern Palestine is still a hidden touristic jewel, rich in history, culture, faith & spirituality nestled in an extraordinary landscape, but widely untouched as a travel destination.

With Palestine topping the UN-WTO's list of fastest growing tourism destinations for the first half of 2017 (57% increase compared to 2016), the region between Jenin and Nablus is definitely worth exploring for tour operators and tourism professionals.

While cultural and spiritual landmarks like the *Church of Nativity* (Bethlehem), the *Holy Sepulchre* (Jerusalem), the *Ibrahimi Mosque* (Hebron) or signature excavations like Jericho's *Tel es-Sultan* are regularly found in Holy Land itineraries, touring northern Palestine is still a niche market waiting to be discovered.





## Enhance Your Itineraries with Northern Palestine

Adding some sites or activities from the region can perfectly add that special touch to any classical Holy Land itinerary, setting your tour offer apart from the crowds.

With smart planning, adding northern Palestine to an existing itinerary does not even require additional travel time. The northern part of the “Nativity Trail”, the ancient route the Holy Family may well have traveled between Nazareth and Bethlehem, is a direct shortcut connecting the Galilee area with the spiritual centers of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Bethany.

By including northern Palestine to your offers, your groups can actually spend less time on the road and have more time for visiting and exploration.

## Becoming Acquainted with Northern Palestine

Below you may find some brief information about the potential northern Palestine holds for professional tour operators. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at [advisor@holylandoperators.com](mailto:advisor@holylandoperators.com) or find your Palestinian incoming tourism professional in our agency database at [www.holylandoperators.com/directory](http://www.holylandoperators.com/directory).

## Your Professional Opinion about Northern Palestine

In addition to providing you with essential information about the northern parts of Palestine, we are also seeking *your* opinion about this region. If you are already familiar with northern Palestine or maybe already selling it, we would be more than thankful if you could answer our short questionnaire about some sites and the region in general! Please follow the link below:

Online survey: [“Your Opinion about Northern Palestine”](#) (completely anonymous)

## HLITOA Sales Guide 2018

Just off the press: [HLITOA’s Sales Guide and Tour Operator’s Manual 2018](#) is full of information to enhance your outgoing business to the Holy Land. Download your copy today!

We are looking forward to seeing you and your clients in the Holy Land,  
on behalf of HLITOA,

**Sami Khoury**  
President of Holy Land Land Incoming Tour Operators Association





## What to See and What to Do?

The northern region of Palestine is not only rich in history, culture and spirituality & faith but also offers a spending landscape inviting for discoveries on foot, donkey or horse-back.

Our below list of activities and places to visit is only a glimpse in the regions multiple opportunities for tour operators and travelers. Please do not hesitate to contact our HLITOA tourism professionals for further information and tailor-made suggestions for your valued business.

## Spirituality & Faith



### **Grand Mosque of Jenin and Fatima Khatun School**

Jenin's grand mosque is named after Fatima Khatun, the wife of the governor of Damascus and dates back to 1566. Today, the mosque is one of Jenin's most significant historic landmarks and open to visitors outside of the usual prayer times. Located in the city's center, visitor can also stroll through the busy market streets and pay a visit to the Fatima Khatun School, an Ottoman building dating back to 1882 and the traditional oriental market of Jenin, Al-Sibat.



### **The Church of the Ten Lepers, Burqin**

The small village of Burqin is host to one of Christianity's most significant churches in the world. The Greek Orthodox Church of St. George was commissioned by Queen Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, making one of the oldest churches in the world along with the Church of Nativity (Bethlehem) and the Holy Sepulchre (Jerusalem). The church commemorates the miraculous healing of ten men with leprosy by Jesus while he was on his way from Nazareth to Jerusalem. Recently renovated and with its enchanting garden, Burqin Church is a must stop on any pilgrims' itinerary.



### **Grand Mosque of Burqin**

The grand mosque of Burqin was built in 1865 and is named after Sheik Yassin Jarrar. The mosque is host to the Al-Jarrar Library, one of Palestine's oldest libraries.



### **The Sheik Sabi Tomb, Burqin**

Sheik Sabi was a spiritual Muslim leader commemorated for his steady faith prompting local people to ask him to pray for rain in dry seasons. His small tomb is located on top of a mountain offering a splendid view of the area and inviting for a brief hike, rest and picnic.



### **Churches in Zababdeh**

Especially to Christian travelers, a visit to the picturesque village of Zababdeh, few kilometers south-east of Burqin, is well recommended. With two-thirds of the city's residents being Christians, the tiny village is home to four churches: the Latin Church of Visitation, St. George's Orthodox Church, St. George's Malkite Church and St. Matthew's Anglican Church. Tradition holds that Mary and Elisabeth once meet in Zababdeh.



### **Tel Dothan**

The ancient site of Tel Dothan is an archaeological site, barely excavated some 8km south of Jenin located on the main road. The site derives its importance to pilgrims especially as it is said to be the place where Joseph was thrown into a well and later on sold by his eleven brothers to Ishmaelite traders to Egypt.



### **The Tomb of John the Baptist, Sebastia**

According to a local tradition, the dead body of John the Baptist was buried in Sebastia, while his head was taken to Damascus. To commemorate John, the Crusaders built a monumental church atop the tomb in the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE which was later on turn into a mosque. Today, visitors can climb down the stairs into the lower level of the tomb and visit the remains of the Crusaders' church. An archaeological museum has recently opened within the former church.



### **Grand Mosque of Sebastia (formerly a Crusaders' Church)**

The Grand Mosque of Sebastia used to be a Crusaders' Church in the Middle Ages, hosting the tomb of John the Baptist (cf. above). The current mosque is considerably smaller than the former church and open to visitors away from regular prayer times.



### **Mt. Garizim and the Samaritan Community**

Modern Nablus is enclosed by two high mountains, Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. The latter is home to the small community of Samaritans holding the mountain to be the highest, oldest and most central mountain in the world, regarding it as the 'true' Temple Mount. The Samaritan faith dates back to biblical times and is one of the oldest faiths in the world. On top of the mountain, extensive archaeological remains including fortified churches and a previous Samaritan temple can be visited. The Samaritan community also operates a heritage museum giving visitors an introduction to their faith and customs.



### **Greek Orthodox St. Photini Church “Jacob’s Well”, Nablus**

Jacob’s Well is a deep well located in the lower floor of the Greek Orthodox St. Photini Church in Nablus city. For more than two millennia, the well has been associated with Jacob by Jewish, Samaritan, Christian and Muslim traditions. The well is also associated with the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman mentioned in John 4:5-6.

## History, Culture & Archaeology



### **Bal’ama Tunnel, Jenin**

The Bal’ama water tunnel and its adjacent archaeological site Khirbet Bal’ama are located about 2km away from Jenin, just off the main road leading to Sebastia and Nablus. The tunnel is part of a water supply system dating back to the late Bronze Age. It was designed to ensure the ancient village’s access to the Bir es-Sinjil spring in times of siege or warfare. The approx. 125m long tunnel is open to visitors.



### **Jarrar Palace, Burqin**

Qasr Jarrar or Jarrar Palace was built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Awad Agha who resided here with his family. After extensive renovation of the historic building, the palace currently hosts Burqin’s cultural center and is open to visitors. In cooperation with the local women’s association



### **Abdul Hadi Palaces, Arraba**

The Palestinian village of Arraba is located about 15km southwest of Jenin and its visit can be combined with visiting Burqin or Bal'ama Tunnel. In the past, the village was home to six palaces serving as a stronghold to the Abdul Hadi family in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century CE. Two of them have recently been renovated and are used as cultural heritage centers. In the near future, one of them is supposed to serve as a guesthouse for local and foreign travelers.



### **Archaeological Excavations in Sebastia (ancient Samaria)**

The archaeological site of Sebastia, the ancient biblical city of Samaria, is located outside the contemporary Palestinian village on a hilltop offering a commanding view of the area and, on clear days, a panorama as far as the Mediterranean coastline. In a visit, lasting about 1 to 2 hours, visitors can explore the ancient site including remains of a Roman theater and temple, massive Hellenistic watchtowers along with a Christian chapel commemorating John the Baptist.



### **Tel El-Balata, Nablus**

Tel el-Balata is the contemporary name of the archeological excavation of the ancient biblical city of Shechem which was once located on an ancient trade route between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Garizim. Dating back to the early Iron Age, visitors can enjoy the archaeological park including the museum and audio-visual show and learn about Nablus' ancient roots and past. The visit takes about 1 hour.

## Activities in Northern Palestine



### **Migration Bird Watching, Jenin**

Two times a year – in Spring and late Autumn – northern Palestine is visited by hundreds of millions of visitors, when migrating birds take a rest on their long ways from Europe to Africa and Asia. Inquire at your HLITOA tourism professional for best times of the year and best viewing spots.



### **Umm At-Tut Nature Reserve, Jenin Governorate**

The Umm At-Tut Nature Reserve is located some 20min to the south-east of Jenin and inviting for a short, approx. half an hour walk through the splendid landscapes of northern Palestine. Several signs along the well-marked trail point to flowers, plants and animals in the area.



### **Donkey Tours in Nisf Jbil Village, Sebastia**

The small village of Nisf Jbil, few minutes away from Sebastia, is surrounded by slowly rising hills on all sides making it a perfect starting point for hiking or donkey tours into nature and wildlife. The tours are offered by local farmers and villagers including opportunities to taste authentic Palestinian rural dishes during a picnic outside in the countryside. Arrangements can be done through your HLITOA tourism professional.



### **The Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil Hiking Trail**

The Masar is a long-distance hiking trail extending from the village of Rummana in northern Palestine through Sebastia and Nablus to Hebron ("al-Khalil" in Arabic) and the village of Beit Mirsim. The whole trail is about 330km long and can be hiked in its entire length in about 3 weeks; its 21 individual segments can also be explored on day-trips or combined with other hiking trails, such like the Sufi Trails around Ramallah. The Masar Ibrahim was rated the #1 Best New Trail for the year 2014 by National Geographic.



### **Tasting Palestinian Delights “Kanafeh”, Huwwara**

Departing from Nablus in southern direction, make sure to stop at one of the many pastry shops along the main road in the village of Huwara, each of them selling one of Palestine’s most famous delights: Kanafeh. The sweet pastry is a signature dish of the Palestinian cuisine, made of cheese soaked in sweet, sugar-based syrup. It blends perfectly with a good cup of freshly brewed Arabic coffee and makes a perfect rest stop before heading onwards.



### Hiking in Wadi Bidan

Wadi Bidan is a picturesque valley system rich in mountain springs and biodiversity. Just few minutes away from Nablus, situated along one of the main roads, the Wadi can easily be integrated in any itinerary. Hikes in the beautiful scenery start from short strolls of half an hour to multiple hour trips accompanied by specialized eco-tourism guides.

### More Information

For more information about touristic sites and activities or if you have any specific question about the region – or Palestine in general – please do not hesitate to contact us or any of our tourism professionals.



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