



Beneficial for the Body, Mind, and Economy

Hiking in Palestine



By Nisreen Shahin

The promise of sunshine and blue skies may be relied on for this one day, and since the opportunity is too good to be lost, my husband and I set out for a morning hike towards the fascinating northern valleys in Palestine, a lovely amphitheater of hills and natural carpets of colorful valleys in whose bosom the end of the rainbow gets lost. It was yet very early in the season, so early that the birds had only begun to give forth their first faint chirps and twitters of spring praise and gladness. We stopped

The historical center of Deir Ghassaneh Village during an exhibition organized by Palterhal and Deir Ghassaneh Women's Association. Photo courtesy of Palterhal.



Northern valleys in spring.
Photo courtesy of Palterhal.

at a farm, chatted with one of the early-morning hardworking farmers, tasted the fresh vegetables he worked hard to grow, then continued, astonished by the wonderful scene of playful deer. We ended our hike at Ain Sakout with a cup of coffee in the midst of beautiful silence and Mother Nature. That was in the spring, the season of paradise, when Palestine's inspiring nature cannot be missed!

Exploring the history of Ramallah's nearby villages on a hot summer day is a unique experience. Deir Ghassaneh, for example, located 25 kilometers northwest of Ramallah, is one of the 24 feudal villages (throne villages) of the Ottoman area in Palestine. A hiking trail on its hills passes through 3,000-year-old olive trees and ends in the archaeologically and historically significant old center of the village. On arrival, visitors are welcomed by women exhibiting their handmade products and by the local traditional *dabka* (folkloric dance) and delicious food – important cultural, historical, and educational components of the hike that encourage interacting with people and listening to their stories

To leverage the wealth that Palestine's natural environment offers and systemize the great potential of this tourism sub-sector, policies, laws, and procedures must be in place. The Ministry of Tourism has already started this process, but there is still much to be done by all related stakeholders.

and adventures; an unforgettable experience!

When it is rainy and windy during the winter in Ramallah, we cannot resist hiking in Wadi Qelt, the site of three springs – Ain Fara, Ain Fawwar, and Ain al-Qelt – a truly astounding place! It feels like an entirely different ecosystem, a true oasis with plentiful water and shade in the middle of the desert.

These are only a few examples of the hiking possibilities and other adventures that can be experienced by Palestinians and tourists. The untapped potential of



An outdoor education program for students. A girl sliding and enjoying the water in Ein Fawwar. Photo courtesy of Palterhal.

Palestine's nature and hiking trails offers limitless possibilities for individuals and income-generating opportunities for local communities, not to mention the positive impact on people's well-being. It can serve to promote ecotourism in Palestine and active learning through direct personal experience, which offers excitement, fun, and adventure within a safe framework. The hiking adventure can impact people's intellectual, spiritual, social, and moral development, providing young people with valuable alternative avenues for achievement, and opportunities to develop independence and self-reliance. In addition, it promotes a healthy lifestyle and encourages people to see themselves as part of the global context, as well as aids in increasing their awareness, respect, understanding, and appreciation of the environment.

I had not realized the value of being out in nature until I tried it! Ironically, it never crossed my mind to focus my efforts on creating memorable outdoor experiences for others. Three years ago, I was a focused career person while my husband was touring Palestine and exploring its beautiful natural environment. Every Friday, he would hike a new trail and live new adventures, and I used to wonder what magic lay behind his passion for hiking! The turning point in our lives came when I decided to join him. We both

The deep connection to land and nature experienced through walking rewards us with positive energy and a feeling of accomplishment. Outdoor adventures and challenges foster a "can-do" attitude, and the people we meet, the places we visit, and the unforgettable memories that nature offers strengthen and deepen our passion for Palestine's outdoors.

then chose to transform the challenge into an investment that could have a real impact. So we created Palterhal, which is a combination of the words Palestine and *terhal*, which literally means a voyage or an outing.

Hiking as a trend has been evolving and increasing over the last few years, and people have started to be more aware of what Palestine's natural environment can offer. Hiking is not only a personal sport that individuals practice, it can be a great source of benefit to local communities and an important component of touristic attractions in many areas in Palestine.

Nisreen Shahin holds a master's degree in business administration, a bachelor's degree in economics, and a diploma in travel and tourism. She is a World Economic Forum Global Leader of Tomorrow, and a partner and co-founder of Palterhal, an outdoor, social tourism, and adventure company that offers hiking, camping, rappelling, climbing, retreats, and specialized training programs for corporations and organizations.

1001 LAUGHS PALESTINE COMEDY FESTIVAL



august 11-15, 2018

مهرجان الف ضحكة وضحكة في فلسطين

brought to you by
amer zahr

&
Maestro
Music Productions
& Events



azhar
usman



jennifer
jajeh



mike
easmeil



mona
aburmishan



aaron
kader

bethlehem
aug. 11

jerusalem
aug. 12

ramallah
aug. 13,14,15

sponsors



for all info, go to

WWW.PALESTINECOMEDY.com