

WHERE TO GO?

Summer Nights in the Desert

Courtesy of VisitPalestine.ps

The summertime in Palestine is inevitably approaching with its long, hot, sunny days. The embers coming down from the sky prevent many of us from going outdoors during the daytime. Only late afternoons and evenings bring some relief. The remote, quiet desert is a perfect place to enjoy picturesque sunsets in a natural setting.

There are a couple of spots near Jerusalem where full-moon nights can be enjoyed in the company of hospitable Bedouins—a seminomadic group of people, whose name in Arabic means desert dwellers.

You will have the chance to share a meal and Bedouin tea, which they say is “sweet as love and dark as night.” Then enjoy conversation around the fire, or let your Bedouin guides take you for an evening walk along the tracks they know the best. And if you are lucky a gazelle, or a rock hyrax will show up on the horizon.

The Bedouins of Arab Al-Jahalin live couple of kilometers southeast of Jerusalem, where they wander the area to graze their sheep and goats. They also open their tents to visitors. There they are keen to share their songs and stories, or sometimes the silence of the desert.

The area of Al-Rashayda, located just a half an hour drive from Bethlehem, offers views of camels climbing the

hills. Hot tea over a roaring fire and stars like you wouldn’t believe are the setting for the evening. In the morning, you can sit on a cliff overlooking the Dead Sea and enjoy a breathtaking sunrise over the distant hills of Jordan.

Also Bedouins living near Mar Saba, a Byzantine monastery built into a rock, offer hospitality at their tent, where they would gladly show the process of baking *shrak* bread or making goat butter. A moderate hike away from the monastery is Tal Al-Qamar or Hill of the Moon—where there is a campsite with a traditional Bedouin tent.

Closer to Jericho, at the edge of the picturesque Ein Samia Valley, is the Ras Al-Auja Bedouin community, whose main income comes from breeding animals, including sheep, cows, camels, and birds. The Bedouins there have prepared a special rest stop for all those visiting the area.

Spending the night there also provides economic support for the marginalized Bedouin communities who have often been displaced from their traditional homes. Bedouins who live today in the Jerusalem wilderness have their roots in the *Naqab* (Negev) desert, which they were forced to leave.

For more information about how to visit the Bedouins, please contact Visit Palestine’s Information Point at info@visitpalestine.ps

Pictures by VisitPalestine.ps and Sahari Desert Eco Tourism.

