

Coming Soon to Jerusalem

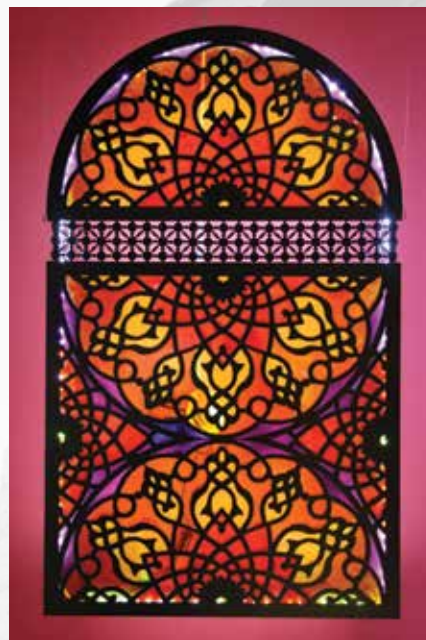
The Jerusalem House of Stories

Preserving our Cultural and Architectural Heritage

A part of the house of Mr. Azzam Abu Saud – the Jerusalemite novelist, playwright, and collector of Jerusalem oral history and tradition – is currently being renovated in preparation to welcome visitors. Tourists, scholars, and individuals will be introduced to the cultural, social, literary, and artistic life in Arab Jerusalem and will be given the chance to taste some of the choice authentic dishes from the diverse and rich Palestinian cuisine.

The nineteenth-century house will be artistically renovated to expose the beauty of the Jerusalem architecture of the period. This will allow visitors to experience firsthand the Arabesque art found in the windows, ceiling, and furniture of this house. This art dates back to the Fatimid, Mamluk, and Ottoman eras (1250–1917 AD), which were heavily influenced by Umayyad architecture (690–800 AD).

The house will host small groups of tourists at specified times to grant them the opportunity to meet one of Jerusalem's most prominent novelists, where they will hear from him about the diverse cultural heritage of Arab Jerusalem, and will have the chance to listen to a story taken from the oral tradition of Jerusalem. Azzam Abu Saud is known as the Jerusalem Storyteller, and presents his stories in an interesting and fascinating way, both in Arabic and in English. Visitors will also have the chance to sample some authentic Jerusalem cuisine, including



various traditional beverages made famous by the city.

The house is located on a hilltop that overlooks Jerusalem, providing the onlooker with a panoramic view of the Old City. Mr. Abu Saud will personally supervise the renovations. As a man of many talents, he designed and executed the house's wooden Arabesque balcony (*mashrabiya*), its windows and interior decoration and furniture, which manages to merge the arts of wood carving and stained glass with Arabesque work. He is



also currently engaged in leading a project to revive and develop traditional handicrafts in Jerusalem.

Preserving cultural heritage is means of preserving Palestinian identity, and handicrafts and artistic productions are considered an integral part of this identity. Since some handicrafts are on their way to extinction, the process of their revival is regarded as a national duty. Jerusalem is famous for the multitude of its traditional landmarks, which need to be sustained and rejuvenated, especially in the Old City



of Jerusalem, because of what they represent in terms of architectural and historic value. Mr. Abu Saud aims to exhibit the Islamic-Christian character of the city of Jerusalem and to contribute to the preservation and development of the tangible Palestinian cultural heritage in general. By sharing his knowledge and expertise in this field, Mr. Abu Saud is able to nourish creativity and encourage unique cultural initiatives by endorsing young individuals who are willing to delve into this lost art.

Photos courtesy of Yabous Cultural Centre.