



WHERE TO GO?

Bringing Bethlehem's Star Street Back to Life

Courtesy of VisitPalestine.ps



Star Street, Bethlehem. Photo Courtesy of the Holy Land Trust.

Nowadays, passing through the curvy stone-covered paths of Bethlehem's old core, a person can admire the traditional architecture that dates to the Ottoman period in Palestine (1515–1917). Hidden underneath are the remains of buildings from previous eras (e.g., Roman, Byzantine, and Crusader).

A walking tour through Bethlehem's Old City offers beautiful views of stone streets, sometimes topped by rocky arches, and houses with beautifully ornamented entrances, windows, and smaller openings. These treasures can also be seen while strolling along Star Street, which leads from the site of King David's Wells through the prominent part of the historic center and under the Arch of Zarrara (sometimes also called Damascus Gate), towards Manger Square and the Church of the Nativity.

In June 2012, the Church of the Nativity and Star Street were inscribed on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites as the Birthplace of Jesus and the Pilgrimage Route. Old residential buildings define the route that is believed to follow the way that Mary and Joseph took to approach the Grotto of the Nativity.

At one time, Star Street was a bustling spot in the heart of Bethlehem with nearly 100 shops selling almost everything – from groceries and meat to antique items and souvenirs. Due to a sharp drop in tourism during the years of the second Intifada (2000 to 2004/5) nearly half of the businesses were closed, and the street started to decline. Until recently, the area would only come to life for a short time during the Christmas season, with the annual solemn processions to commemorate Mary and Joseph's journey.

However, some people from Bethlehem who are determined to revive the neighborhood during the summer season as well are preparing for the third Bet Lahem Live Festival that aims to bring life, energy, and business back to Star Street. The festival, which



is organized by Holy Land Trust, will take place from August 6 to 9, 2015, along the entire length of Star Street, including the nearby public squares. It will integrate musical and theater performances, workshops, and an outdoor market. Organizers and their partners hope that the event's success will motivate many shop owners to keep their shops open year-round. For more information about the festival, visit www.visitpalestine.ps/bethlehemlive.

We look forward to seeing you. You too can be a part of the Star Street revival!

For more information about the historical center of Bethlehem, contact VisitPalestine.ps Center at info@visitpalestine.ps or visit us in person as you tour Star Street. VisitPalestine's Information Point is located at the foot of the Arch of Zarrara stairs.