

Wadi Makhrour – Just Before Sunset

Courtesy of VisitPalestine.ps

Wadi Makhrour, a valley situated west of Bethlehem that stretches between Battir Village and Beit Jala, is best enjoyed during the late afternoon hours in the summertime when the sun is about to set. Start your walk in Battir Village and follow the marked trail to enter the valley. Battir can be reached from Bethlehem with a shared taxi (orange van) that can be taken at the bus station in the *Madbaseh* area for around five shekels.

Wadi Makhrour encompasses both natural and agricultural landscapes and is well known for its ancient terraces and stone towers called *qusur*, built of neatly placed rocks that used to serve as storage rooms for various crops planted in the wadi. At the entrance to the valley you can see an old Ottoman oven that was used to burn limestone for building. The heat treatment of the stone resulted in turning it into a fine powder that when mixed with water was used to seal the spaces between stones. Along the way, you will also encounter ancient Roman tombs hewn in the wadi's grey-brown rocks. One of the most spectacular tombs was dug in a great rock that evidently was chipped off the nearby cliff and rolled down to the valley.

While following the trail farther down, you will find yourself surrounded by hills replete with agricultural terraces full of olive, apricot, and fig trees. The

abundance of the place is owed to the underground natural springs and also to the hard work of the landowners. Some parts of the valley are home to natural forests with remarkable tree species such as Palestine oak (*Quercus calliprinos*). The pine trees heated by the sun will delight your senses. An evening stroll will allow you to observe the colorful variety of birds that live or pass through the area as they search for an evening meal before they sleep.

Near the end of the trail, just before you enter Beit Jala, there are three restaurants that serve local refreshments and dishes: cold fresh lemonade with mint, freshly made seasonal juices, *hummus* and bread made on the spot, or delicious *zarb* or barbecue. There you can enjoy an evening meal while taking in the marvelous sunset behind the meandering hills that surround the valley. The colors of the sky will gradually change from orange and red to dark blue, and the green hills will become covered with grey. The warm summer night can be further enjoyed next to the bonfire of one of the eateries.

If you are interested in booking a guided informative tour of Battir and Wadi Makhrour, contact Visit Palestine Information Center in Bethlehem at info@visitpalestine.ps or call (02) 277-1992. Find out about other interesting destinations at www.visitpalestine.ps.

