



## **Palestine A Unique Travel Destination**

I recently watched a two-minute-and-forty-three-second documentary titled Palestine – A Unique Travel Destination, put out by the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and made possible with the support of the UNDP/PAPP. The description reads, “This video segment showcases Palestine as a tourism destination that offers selective programs with a wide range of tourism facilities to cater to the needs of all sorts of travelers.” And it certainly does that. Politics is not mentioned in this video, which is quite refreshing. The video includes stunning clips of hiking trails, adventurous motorcycling, five-star resorts with inviting swimming pools, gyms, and Jacuzzis, and an Asian couple enjoying a sumptuous breakfast on the balcony of the Jacir Palace Hotel in Bethlehem - a beautiful building and magnificent example of Palestinian architectural heritage. The video also showcases boutique hotels, culinary experiences that include both local cuisine and exquisite fine dining, and nightlife with people having fun, be it outdoors or at a restaurant or bar. There are scenic shots of sunsets, excerpts from a musical concert, and finally a great image of a super moon. Those two minutes and forty-three seconds surely include an abundance of beautiful content!

Away from the radar of mainstream media, our Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has been very active in promoting Palestine and encouraging tourists and pilgrims to come for a visit. Only recently, it launched [www.travelpalestine.ps](http://www.travelpalestine.ps), and I understand that each year, ministry representatives participate in no less than 20 of the most important international tourism exhibitions worldwide. According to the ministry’s statistics, Palestine welcomed 2.7 million visitors last year, and the number of overnight stays went up to 1.7 million - interestingly enough, the two countries that sent us the most tourists and pilgrims are Poland and Romania. In fact, a lot is happening on the tourism level.

All this is taking place while Palestine is practically at the epicenter of Middle East politics, and close to nothing positive is reported that would encourage tourists and pilgrims to come and visit our country. Can you imagine what will happen once peace prevails?

On the occasion of International Women’s Day, celebrated on March 8, the March issue of This Week in Palestine focuses on Palestinian women and their ongoing struggle. H.E. Rula Ma’ayah, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, is one of these women who struggle to make the voice of Palestine heard throughout the world. Our acknowledgment stems from the fact that Palestine takes pride in its professional women who are able to confront a number of challenges simultaneously - and win. Lastly, a word of gratitude and appreciation to H.E. Dr. Haifa Al Agha, Minister of Women’s Affairs, who has contributed an article to this issue of This Week in Palestine. Palestine is proud of its women achievers.



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