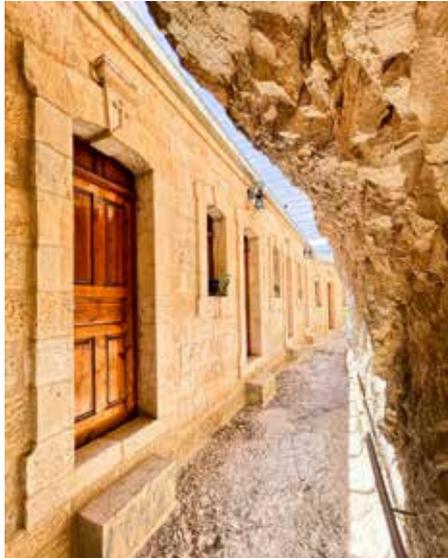




By Malak Hasan

Take the Cable Car to the Mount of Temptation



In this postcard, we pay homage to an adventure that is special and dear to almost every child who ever lived in Palestine. When my parents first moved us to the country, I spent days looking forward to my first school trip. I remember the excitement of packing my small backpack at night, running to the bus to get the best seats in the back, and dancing in the bus as we headed to the lowest and oldest continuously inhabited city on Earth, Jericho.

Bisan and I were excited to relive this experience as adults. When we arrived in Jericho, a flood of memories surged up as we parked at one of the most exciting destinations that we remember as children: the cable car that connects Jericho to Deir al-Quruntal, also known as the Monastery of Temptation.

The fastest way to reach Jericho Cable Car is to take the *mu'arrajat* (winding) road (Route 49) from Ramallah to the northern entrance of Jericho city. After passing by the village of Nu'eima, we drove for another five minutes before we arrived at the roundabout where the lower station of the longest cable car below sea level is located. The ride takes about five minutes and spans 1,330 meters from the base station to the Mount of Temptation, where Christians believe that Jesus Christ was tempted by the devil during his forty-day fast.



Bisan and I asked to sit in the first cabin so we could film our ride. We waited in anticipation as the doors closed and the cars started to move. Gazing at the beautiful scenery around us, we were able to take a closer look at the archeological site of Tel Jericho, believed to have been inhabited since the tenth millennium BC.

Next, we saw modern-day Jericho with its new homes and shining cars, a vivid juxtaposition of this city's complex imagery. We also caught a glimpse of agricultural activities in Jericho, with long stretches of greenhouses and hundreds of palm trees planted in beautiful symmetry. This view you only get to see while riding up the mountain in the cable cars.

As we moved closer to our destination, we saw the mystical structure that seems to be clinging in admirable determination to the mountain's edge. The famous Deir al-Quruntal, the Monastery of Temptation, is a Greek Orthodox church constructed in 1895

around a cave chapel that contains the stone that is venerated as the place where Jesus sat during his fast.

As soon as we arrived, we made our way to the monastery's first gate. We climbed around a hundred steps to reach the door where Father Kárlós, the Greek monk who has lived here together with other monks for over a decade, welcomed us. The monastery is not only an architectural masterpiece but also a time capsule that isolates you from the world and takes you back to ancient times.

We recommend this destination because not only it provides our children and us with the opportunity to bond over the adventure of riding a cable car in Palestine, it also allows us to educate ourselves and our youngsters on what makes this country such a special place with its religious and cultural diversity and rich history. We should not only care for our children's physical wellbeing by taking them on hiking, cycling, and swimming trips but also nurture their intellectual, mental, and spiritual growth by allowing them to explore new ideas and concepts and meet different people in life.



Malak and Bisan are the founders of Ahlan Palestine, a travel blog that promotes tourism in Palestine. You can see their visit to Deir al-Quruntal in Jericho if you visit their Instagram page @AhlanPalestine.