



By Malak Hasan

# Watch the Sunrise over the Dead Sea



They say that sunrises are daily miracles, and it couldn't be more true. No matter how many sunrises we wake up to, they always seem to have the power to take our breath away. But there are sunrises that are so special to watch that you wouldn't mind getting little to no sleep – and catching a ride with a Palestinian Bedouin in his 4x4 offroad car at four in the morning.

In this postcard, we want to share with you our latest adventure that took Bisan, myself, and a group of our Ahlan Palestine friends to the eastern borders of Palestine, specifically the Jerusalem wilderness and the Dead Sea. This trip was very special because, for the first time since we launched Ahlan Palestine, we invited other people to discover with us and experience for themselves what we have been promoting on social media for close to two years.



Our adventure started in Dar Salah, a Palestinian town located six kilometers to the east of Bethlehem. We were anticipating a night at a Bedouin tent in the heart of the Jerusalem wilderness while learning about astronomy with the Palestinian Astronomical Society. From the main road, we drove for another 30 minutes into the Jerusalem wilderness until we arrived at our Bedouin tent. Abu Kinan had prepared *zarab* for us, a meal with meat that is cooked underground, a method used by Bedouins for many generations. We devoured the tender meat and roasted vegetables under the moonlight, traced the stars and planets with the help of a Palestinian expert in astronomy, and then sang Palestinian songs and danced *dabka* around the campfire. After an exciting evening, it was time to sleep as we had an action-packed day ahead of us.

At 4:00 am we woke everyone up and got into our 4X4 cars to catch the sunrise at the Dead Sea. The one-hour drive was extremely thrilling because we were accompanied by experienced Bedouins who call this desert home. They can read the stars and are familiar with the plants and wild animals that live in this beautiful and harsh environment. Khaled, our driver, was very proud of the increasing interest amongst Palestinians in exploring the wilderness. This form of tourism is not only exciting but essential to build our connection to and understand the typography of our land. His words reminded me of a famous saying that

translates to: "Hike the land to own it," which means that only those who know the land have the right to call it home.

The sparkling lights of the Jordanian city of Madaba in the far distance signaled that we had arrived at the edge of the Jerusalem wilderness, overlooking the Dead Sea. As the sun rose from behind the Jordanian mountains, its light washed out the darkness, and the gleaming surface of the Dead Sea emerged from the darkness. It was so quiet, almost surreal, and its water was as still as a sleeping infant; we did not dare or wish to disturb this magical moment. Instead, we sat on the rocks silently, admiring this beautiful atmosphere. We felt thankful that through Ahlan Palestine, we are reconnecting young Palestinians with their homeland, reminding them of the blessing of being able to call this land home.

*Malak Hasan and Bisan Alhajhasan are the founders of Ahlan Palestine, a travel blog that promotes tourism in Palestine. You can also watch the sunrise over the Dead Sea if you follow their Instagram page @AhlanPalestine.*



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