

Desert Tourism in Palestine



By Osama Staiti
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Tourism is one of the world's most rapidly expanding industries, having grown to become one of the most important sectors in international trade. Academically, it is a modern science, yet it is also one of humanity's oldest practices. The multiplicity of tourism types depends on the multiplicity and diversity of human activities. Ecotourism is one of the most significant modern forms of tourism since, in addition to the well-known economic and social benefits of tourism in general, it is focused largely on environmental balance. One of the most important types of ecotourism is desert tourism.

Desert wanderers, particularly those in the Arabian Desert, are aware of two secrets: the taste of freedom derived from the expanse of its vast and spacious surface, and the feeling of contentment fostered by its simplicity, both of which reveal that everything in the desert is very precious.

The desert and wilderness areas of Palestine are key tourist attractions that provide tourists and visitors with a unique experience. This includes the Palestinian Bedouin community, which still preserves its original Bedouin customs, Bedouin or Sahara food, as well as animal, plant, and geographical variety, and many other elements that greet the visitor who explores Palestine's desert.

The strategy of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) focuses on the development of this type of tourism. The current project, implemented in cooperation with Bedouins Without Borders, will lay the groundwork for a distinguished Palestinian desert tourism industry. Furthermore, it will provide numerous job opportunities for the Palestinian Bedouin community and shed light on the cultural value of life in desert areas.

Furthermore, this project will provide an important opportunity for participation in a variety of activities related to Palestinian tourism, such as monitoring migratory birds, torrential rains, and stream flow in the winter. In addition, it will offer once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for amateur photography in wilderness areas because the Palestinian desert is unique in that it has no sand dunes. In the spring, for example, grass grows in most areas, not only providing an opportunity for camels and cattle to graze but also giving shelter and providing a source of feed for foxes, deer, and other animals that live in these wilderness areas.

“The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, in cooperation with Bedouins Without Borders, promotes desert tourism in Palestine through a framework that complements the diversity of Palestinian tourism patterns. The aim is to extend the stay of tourists in Palestine, provide other sources of income for the local community living in wilderness areas, protect the valley and land areas from Israeli occupation annexation attempts, and increase Palestine's share of inbound tourism and revitalizing domestic tourism.”

Those who enjoy walking at night can do so in the wilderness, enjoy the abundance of visible stars, and explore the world-renowned areas that overlook the Dead Sea and that have been designated as World Heritage Sites.

MoTA intends to invest further into this form of tourism and open



variety of industries and fields, the most important of which is tourism. Its significance is illustrated by its consistent growth year after year, owing to the efforts of MoTA, the private tourism industry, and the groups and institutions engaged in supporting and promoting it.

Article photos are courtesy of the author.

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a variety of accommodations and desert hostels in the future. The goal of this initiative is to maintain the authenticity of the area and its culture as visitors are introduced to the rich Bedouin cultural legacy and its personal and societal components.

MoTA is resolved to press forward with the development of desert tourism in Jerusalem's wilderness and in the desert areas east of Bethlehem and in Jericho, and to connect the great majority of available travel patterns on a single tourist map. By doing so, tourists and visitors can create their own unique tourism experience in Palestine. This includes visiting religious sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other cities and enjoying nature and the captivating desert environment, visiting charming historical villages and towns, and learning about the Palestinian people's social customs, traditions, and rich cultural life.

For centuries, Palestine has increasingly been subjected to colonialism, warfare, and occupation. But this has not stopped Palestinians from making strides in a

