



Visit Palestine – My Home. My Heart. Welcome.

**Northern West Bank opens up for tourism including archeological sites, biking and hiking tours and launches new app and future press trip at WTM.**

*The Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association "HLITOA" in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism launches new products and press event at WTM 2016. All media visiting the stand can enter a business card draw to win a press trip to Palestine and apply for a press trip in May 2017.*

Tourism is important to the Palestinian economy and is estimated to contribute around 3-4% of gross domestic production and 2% of employment \*1. It is estimated that approximately 50% of the State of Palestine's tourism revenues come from domestic tourism (mostly Palestinians living in Israel who provide the largest number of inbound visitors). Of the other 50%, 85% of those revenues result from international visitors coming on pilgrimages. Visitors figures to Palestine have been stable over the past 3 years averaging 1.5 million visitors per annum of which approximately 20,000 this year to date have been British and over 160,000 Russian. Figures show signs of diversification, with new source markets showing growing numbers such as Indonesia, Turkey, Central European countries, India and Nigeria and growth in niche products.

Alternative and out-door tourism (hiking and community based tourism) is also on the rise with hikes and routes spreading across the West Bank. Stretching from the far North near Jenin down to Hebron. The fertile triangle of Jenin, Tulkaren and Qalqilya offers stunning scenery for biking and hiking, the Massar Ibrahim (formerly Abraham's path) is a highlight. Hiking and rural tourism in Battir near Bethlehem (UNESCO Protected site) is another popular experience, including the Nativity, Sufi and Battir trails. The Northern West Bank is an undiscovered destination, the

landscapes are among the most beautiful in Palestine. The city of Jenin is home to the recently renovated Burqin Church (one of the oldest in the world).

**Palestine offers a wide range of experience:**

For experiential and multi faith-based travelers, only the Holy Land (Palestine sites) offer such a deep concentration of sacred places, historic sites, cultural richness, warm people and natural beauty. From Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Jericho (the oldest continuously inhabited city of the world) to Hebron, Nablus and Ramallah you will find 14 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. One of the newest sites is the largest floor mosaic in the Middle East, located at the desert castle known as Hisham's Palace, an important Islamic antiquities site just north of the ancient city of Jericho. Hisham's Palace, was built in 724, by the Ummayed Caliph (ruler) Hisham Ibn Abulmalik. The mosaic covers about 820 square meters of the floor of the reception hall which lies between the office of the Caliph which was used to host high-level visitors, and the large bathroom in the Palace.

-ENDS-

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Or visit the stand (ME 260), where Sami Khoury, President and Michel Awad, Vice President of the Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association will represent Palestine throughout the show.

**Notes to editors:**

**About HLITOA:**

Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association "HLITOA" is a Palestinian registered not for profit organisation that represents the Palestinian Incoming tour operators with the goal to increase incoming tourism to Palestine and has its offices in Jerusalem. HLITOA, registered in 2005, is recognised as the official body of tour agencies specialized only in inbound tourism and as the institution responsible to brand Palestine as a destination internationally. HLITOA has 48 (licensed) member tour operators, which represents almost 90% of the inbound industry around 80% of these tour operators have their head offices in East Jerusalem. HLITOA is a major partner in the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism strategy to increase the visibility of Palestine.

**About the Press Trip:**

HLITOA is arranging a familiarity visit for the press and media to visit Palestine and learn more about the variety products, itineraries and enjoy the hospitality of the Palestinian people.

The proposed date of travel is 01 May 2017. Included in the press trip will be; a return airline ticket, a 4 to 6 day program, accommodation and local transportation on a full board basis.

All commissioned media and/ or bloggers with a high level of followers will be considered.

To apply, fill in the application form, which you may download from [www.holylandoperators.com](http://www.holylandoperators.com) and return to [pr@representationplus.co.uk](mailto:pr@representationplus.co.uk).

**About the WTM Delegation:**

- Shepherds Tours/ visitPalestine.ps: Sami Khoury, President HLITOA
- Siraj Center: Michel Awad, Director of NEPTO, Vice-President HLITOA
- Alternative Tourism Group: Rami Kassis, Director
- Goldan Gate Tours: Richard Elias, Board member HLITOA
- JT&T Tours
- Net Tours
- Jerusalem Hotel: Raed Saadaeh, Board Member of the Hotel Association and President of NEPTO
- Bethlehem Hotel: Elias Arja, Board Member of AHA
- St. George Hotel and Jacir Palace Bethlehem: Kareem Abdel Hadi