

ASIA · SACRED SITES · HISTORY · CULTURE · FOOD · HIKING

 Palestine

Some of the world's most storied places lie within an hour of each other in the West Bank: the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque, ancient Jericho in the Jordan Valley, and Nablus's soap factories and knafeh bakeries. Hospitality is generous and the food superb, but access can change at short notice, so check the FCDO travel advice before planning.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Palestine.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 22 July 2026.

 CAPITAL Ramallah	 CURRENCY Israeli new shekel (ILS) £1 ≈ ₪4.14	 LANGUAGE Arabic, English	 BEST TIME Mar–May, Sep–Nov
 DAILY BUDGET £35–£170 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, H 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 5h direct to TLV ~£250–£600 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

The State of Palestine comprises the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, though in practice visitors see only the West Bank, which runs from the Jordan Valley, far below sea level, up into the hills around Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron. Most trips are short and hub-based: stay in Bethlehem or Ramallah, or in East Jerusalem, and make day trips south to Hebron, east down to Jericho, Wadi Qelt and the Mar Saba monastery, and north to Nablus and the Roman ruins at Sebastia. Gaza has been effectively closed to ordinary visitors since 2007.

Expect checkpoints, the separation barrier and the patchwork of Areas A, B and C to shape your days, and allow time for delays. Costs are lower than in Israel, guesthouses are often family-run, and beyond Bethlehem you will rarely meet tour groups. It suits pilgrims, history lovers, walkers on the Masar Ibrahim trail and travellers who want to understand the region beyond the headlines. Visitors are often surprised by the food (musakhan, maqluba and Nablus knafeh), by the brewery at Taybeh, and by how readily strangers invite them in for coffee.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

SACRED SITE

Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

Stoop through the low Door of Humility into one of the world's oldest working churches, built over the grotto venerated as Jesus's birthplace; restored Byzantine mosaics glitter above the nave. Arrive early to beat the grotto queues.
- 2

HISTORY

Hebron Old City

UNESCO-listed since 2017, Hebron's Mamluk-era old town centres on the Ibrahimi Mosque, built over the Cave of the Patriarchs and sacred to Muslims, Jews and Christians. Local guides explain the divided city and its checkpoints.

3

HISTORY

Jericho

One of the world's oldest towns, about 250 m below sea level: see the Neolithic tower at UNESCO-listed Tell es-Sultan and the mosaics of Umayyad Hisham's Palace, and ride the cable car towards the Mount of Temptation monastery.

4

FOOD

Nablus Old City

Wander covered Ottoman-era souqs between olive-oil soap factories, the steam of Hammam al-Shifa and bakeries pulling trays of knafeh, the cheese pastry for which Nablus is famous across the Arab world.

5

NATURE

Wadi Qelt and St George's Monastery

Hike the dramatic desert gorge between Jerusalem and Jericho to St George's Monastery, which clings to the cliff face above an ancient aqueduct channel; go with a guide and start early to beat the heat.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Gaza City

≈ 590,000 people

Palestine's largest city, on the Mediterranean, has been effectively closed to tourists since 2007 and suffered vast destruction in the war that began in 2023.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Khan Yunis

≈ 205,000 people

The main city of southern Gaza, with a Mamluk-era caravanserai fortress dating from 1387; like the rest of the Strip, it has been closed to visitors for many years.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Hebron

≈ 200,000 people

The West Bank's largest city, known for glass-blowing, ceramics and grapes; its old town around the Ibrahimi Mosque is divided under separate controls, so visit with a local guide.

Populations are 2017 census figures; most of Gaza's population has since been displaced by war, and Hebron may now be larger than Khan Yunis. Nablus is the next-largest West Bank city.

When to go to Palestine

Best time: **Mar–May, Sep–Nov.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

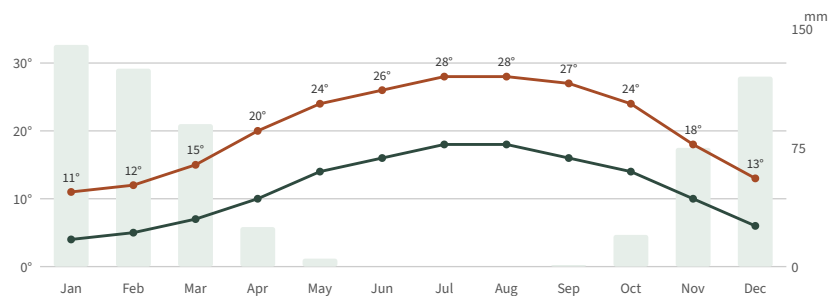
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Ramallah

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan, Dec	Christmas in Bethlehem Manger Square hosts scout parades and Midnight Mass at St Catherine's Church on 24 December; Orthodox and Armenian Christmas follow on 6–7 and 18–19 January.
Oct–Nov	Olive harvest Families gather in the groves to pick by hand; several organisations run volunteer picking programmes for visitors, and new-season oil and soap fill the markets.

How much does Palestine cost?

SHOESTRING £35 per person / day ≈ ₪145 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £80 per person / day ≈ ₪331 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £170 per person / day ≈ ₪704 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Musakhan The national dish: taboon flatbread soaked in olive oil and piled with roast chicken, slow-cooked onions, sumac and pine nuts, eaten with your hands.	Maqluba 'Upside-down' rice layered with fried aubergine or cauliflower and chicken or lamb, cooked in a pot and flipped onto a platter at the table.	Knafeh nabulsiyeh Nablus's speciality of soft white cheese under a crisp layer of semolina or shredded pastry, soaked in syrup, served hot and usually tinted orange.
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Getting around

Shared yellow minibuses called servees link West Bank towns from central stands, leaving when full; they are cheap and frequent. Arab-run buses connect East Jerusalem with Bethlehem and Ramallah. Taxis are plentiful, but agree fares first. Israeli hire cars are usually not insured in Palestinian-controlled Area A, so use a local hire firm or driver. Carry your passport for checkpoints and allow extra time for queues.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  C H 230V — bring a UK-to-C/H adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 101 Fire: 102 Police: 100 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +970	TIME ZONE UTC+2 (standard time)
TAP WATER Varies — bottled or filtered is safer	DRIVING On the right

TIPPING

Around 10% is appreciated in sit-down restaurants; round up taxi fares, and tip guides and drivers at the end of a day trip.

ETIQUETTE

Dress modestly, covering shoulders and knees, especially in Hebron, Nablus and at religious sites. Don't photograph soldiers or checkpoints, and accept offers of coffee or tea when you can.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Ben Gurion Airport (TLV), Tel Aviv — across the border; Queen Alia International Airport (AMM), Amman — across the border

Visas & entry for Palestine

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Israel without a visa as a tourist. On entry, visitors get permission to stay for up to 3 months. However, if you are a dual national, read the dual nationals guidance for more information.

If you work in Israel without the proper permissions, you can be detained and deported. This process could take several months.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

- Hepatitis A
- Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

- Hepatitis B
- Measles
- Rabies
- Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Palestine

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 15 Nov 2026	Independence Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Catholic Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Tue 5 Jan 2027	Isra' and Mi'raj

Thu 7 Jan 2027	Orthodox Christmas Day
Mon 8 Mar 2027	International Women's Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr
Wed 10 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr
Thu 11 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Sun 2 May 2027	Easter
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha
Tue 18 May 2027	Eid al-Adha
Wed 19 May 2027	Eid al-Adha
Sun 6 Jun 2027	Islamic New Year
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Prophet's Birthday

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Arabic

ENGLISH	ARABIC	SAY IT
Hello	مرحبا	MAR-ha-ba
Thank you	شكراً	SHOOK-ran
Please	من فضلك	min FAD-lak
Excuse me	لو سمحت	law sa-MAHT
How much is this?	بقديش هاد؟	b'ad-DAYSH haad

Know before you go

- Check the FCDO travel advice before and during your trip, and keep your passport on you at all times; you will need it at checkpoints, including when returning to Jerusalem.
- Plan around Friday, the Muslim day of rest, when many shops in Hebron and Nablus close; some Christian-owned businesses in Bethlehem close on Sunday instead.
- Shekels are used everywhere and ATMs are common in Ramallah, Bethlehem and Nablus, but carry small notes and coins for servees and market stalls.