



Welcome to *Ahlan wa Sahlan*
PALESTINE

Palestine, Crossroads of Civilizations

أَهْلًا وَسَهْلًا



Word of Welcome

Ahlan wa Sahlan

On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in the State of Palestine, I am pleased to introduce this pamphlet (Welcome to Palestine, Crossroads of Civilizations) published originally in English within the framework of the project Sustainable Tourism in Palestine through the partnership between public and private sectors, carried out in cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, JICA, JTB, Private sector, municipalities, local action groups and local community organizations. It reflects many years of fruitful cooperation between Palestine and the International Community in Tourism development particularly between Palestine and Japan.

In the regional development Plan, supported by JICA and carried by a Joint Palestinian and Japanese study team in 2005, Tourism and agriculture were identified as the main resources in Jericho and the Jordan valley. In the years 2009-2011 the first phase of the Sustainable tourism project was carried out in Jericho area, supported by JICA. A series of activities were accomplished, including training workshops, promotion of tourism, tourist information center, training of local tourist guides, signage of archeological and tourist sites, and work with the local community groups

The second phase of the Sustainable Tourism project, 2013-2016 encompasses several components, including a baseline survey, tourism promotion of Palestine, development of community based-tourism, strengthening the partnership between the public and private sector and cooperation on the regional and international level. Work will focus also on new markets, including the Japanese market, with the aim to see more international tourists touring Palestine. Currently several projects are being carried out in support of tourism development in Palestine namely: the COMPETE project funded by USAID, the EU funded project carried out jointly with UNDP in support of the rehabilitation and development of the Nabi Musa site and other projects and supported by Italy and the Netherlands..

Palestine is a small country with rich and diverse history and culture, an abundant of historical, archeological and religious heritage. It is the home place of three monotheistic religions and the birthplace of Jesus Christ. Its history extends more than one million years, with thousands of cultural and natural heritage sites. Moreover, the Palestinian folk heritage, including craft making, of wood, mother of pearl, ceramics, oral traditions, music and customs is part of this diverse national wealth.

Although Palestine was recognized by the United Nations as a State in 2012, at this stage of state building it is still under Israeli occupation evident by borders control, streets blocks and the separation wall; tourism is regarded as one of the main economic sectors in Palestine, with a great potential for growth. However, despite political difficulties imposed by the occupation, Tourism in Palestine generates a significant economic impact, contributing significantly to the GDP and employment.

Thanks to the technical and financial support of the government of Japan. I am sure this project will establish another important cultural and tourist bridge between Palestine and Japan and will contribute in establishing peace and prosperity in the region.

Finally I would like to end this brief introduction with an open invitation to visit Palestine and to say the Palestinian word of welcome *Ahlan wa sahlán* in Palestine

Rula Ma'aya

Minister of Tourism and Antiquities

Palestine occupies a strategic location between Eurasia and Africa, a narrow stretch of fertile land between the Mediterranean Sea and the desert, located in the southern part of the Levant, an integral part of *Bilad esh-Sham*. Despite its small size, Palestine has extraordinary geological features, namely, its coast, mountains, desert, the Jordan Valley, and the Dead Sea, which is the lowest point on earth. One geographer described it as the "small continent".

Palestine was also known in historical sources as the land of Canaan, which has been generally linked to the name Holy Land. It is the home of various religions and faiths.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF PALESTINE

Throughout the millennia, Palestine has been a meeting place for successive civilisations and a cultural bridge between East and West. It has played an important role in human history since it contains thousands of archaeological, historical, and religious sites. Its cultural history dates to more than one million years ago, and it is the birthplace of the prehistoric cultures: the Palaeolithic period (ca. one million years ago), associated with hunting and food gathering, and represented by the caves of Wadi Kharitoun; the Neolithic revolution (ten thousand years ago), associated with agriculture and the domestication of plants and animals, represented by Tell es-Sultan; the Bronze and Iron ages, (the emergence of urban societies), associated with first cities, trade, metallurgy, the invention of the alphabet, religions, and literature, and represented by Jerusalem, Jericho, Tell Dothan, Tell Taannek, etc. These early periods were followed by the Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Arab civilisations.

Archaeological excavations and research that were carried out on more than one thousand archaeological sites during the last century have revealed much information about the past social and economic systems in Palestine, how people lived, made their livings, hunted, gathered food, cultivated land, built their homes, made tools, exchanged their products, raised their children, and managed their resources.

The wealth of archaeological heritage is an important resource for sustainable development in Palestine. It contributes to preserving the cultural identity of the Palestinian people and the development of its economy based on tourism. This rich cultural diversity that is characteristic of Palestine is viewed as a source of wealth for the Palestinian people and their culture. At the same time this heritage is regarded as an integral part of human heritage and an important tool for promoting dialogue and cultural understanding between peoples and cultures.



General Information on Palestine

State of Palestine is on the Eastern Mediterranean coast.

Area: 6,020-km².

Population: 4 million (West Bank: 2.5 million, Gaza Strip: 1.5 million).

Capital: East Jerusalem.

Government: Palestine is governed by a Parliamentary democracy with a bicameral legislative system. The President, who is currently Mahmoud Abbas, is elected every seven years and the Head of Government is the Prime Minister.

Weather & Climate: Situated in the Mediterranean, Palestine has a moderate sea climate.

The rainy season in Palestine is between November and April.

Clothing: When visiting Palestine's religious sites, one should dress somewhat modestly.

Language: Arabic is the official language of Palestine, however most people speak at least one more language; mainly English.

Religion: More than 96% of Palestinians are Muslims and less than 4% are Christians.

Public Holidays: Religious holy days (such as Ramadan, El-Fitr, Christmas, and Easter,) in addition to national days are national holidays. The dates of the Islamic holy days, however, change every year and are celebrated in accordance with the lunar calendar. During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.

Business Hours: Stores are generally open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., six days a week, and are closed either Friday or Sundays. Public sector institutions, like ministries and post offices, are closed on Friday and Saturday and major national and Islamic holidays.

Post: There are post offices in every major city and town. Large hotels are equipped to handle postal services.

Public transportation: Orange painted minivans and buses are used to travel from one city to another. Yellow-painted taxis (called service) are used for in-town transportation.

Car Rental: Many car rental agencies are available in the main cities of Palestine. An international driver's license is required, and insurance is available from the rental agency.

Electricity: Palestine uses a 220-volt system.

Medical Care: Palestinian doctors are generally well-trained and competent. Hotel staff can refer to a doctor or hospital if needed. Pharmacies are spread throughout the main cities, and medicine is inexpensive.

Tourist Information: Information on travel and tourism in Palestine may be obtained from the tourist information offices, or tourist agency, or hotel receptionist.

Currency: U.S dollars, Jordanian dinars, and the Israeli Shekels are accepted in Palestine. Also the Egyptian pound is accepted in Gaza. There are currency conversion offices throughout Palestine. You can also draw cash from local banks using major credit cards. Tourists paying in foreign currency are exempt from value-added tax (VAT) at their hotel. Most hotels accept major international credit cards. Personal checks are generally not accepted.

Time Zone: GMT+2.

Weights and Measures: Palestine follows the metric system in weights and measures.

For more information, please visit www.travelpalestine.ps



Egypt

Jaffa

Asdood

Asqalan

Jabalya
Gaza

Deir al Balah

Khan Yunis

Rafah

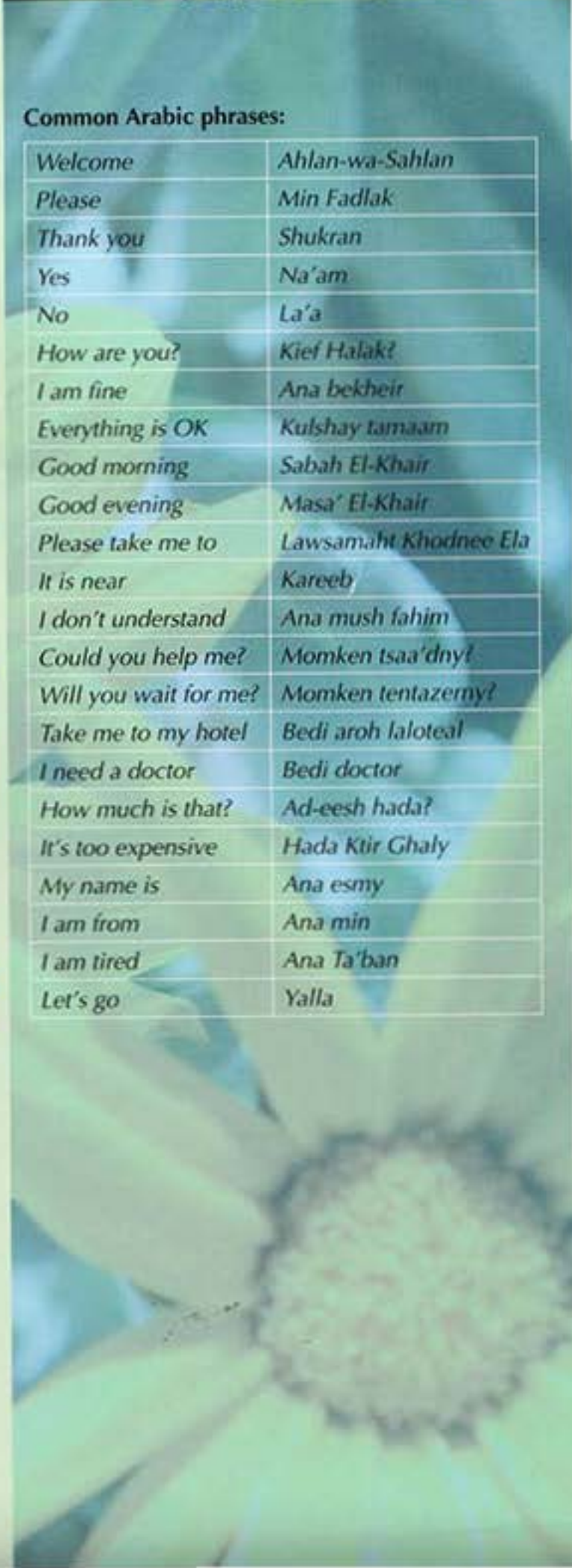
Rahat

Beer Al



Common Arabic phrases:

Welcome	Ahlan-wa-Sahlan
Please	Min Fadlak
Thank you	Shukran
Yes	Na'am
No	La'a
How are you?	Kief Halak?
I am fine	Ana bekheir
Everything is OK	Kulshay tamaam
Good morning	Sabah El-Khair
Good evening	Masa' El-Khair
Please take me to	Lawsamaht Khodnee Ela
It is near	Kareeb
I don't understand	Ana mush fahim
Could you help me?	Momken tsaa'dny?
Will you wait for me?	Momken tentazemy?
Take me to my hotel	Bedi aroh laloteal
I need a doctor	Bedi doctor
How much is that?	Ad-eesh hada?
It's too expensive	Hada Ktir Ghaly
My name is	Ana esmy
I am from	Ana min
I am tired	Ana Ta'ban
Let's go	Yalla





Japan International Cooperation Agency

PSTP

Project For Sustainable Tourism Development
Through Public – Private Partnership In Palestine



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Editor: Dr. Hamdan Taha

Archeological History of Palestine – Dr. H. Taha

Palestinian Cities – MOTA

Holy Land Churches and Mosques – MOTA

World Heritage – Nada Atrash

Cultural Festivals – Turbo Design

Wildlife / Flora & Fauna – Imad Atrash

Hospitality – Sami Abu Dayyeh, Sonia Najjar

Palestinian Cuisine – Chef Ahmad Ashayer

Palestinian Handicrafts – Shirabe Yamada, MOTA

Experiential Tourism in Palestine – Raed Saadeh

Palestinian Traditional Interior – Fida Touma

Map – GSE, Good Shepherd Engineering

Photo Credit

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Edward Said National Music Conservatory

El-Funoun Dance Troupe / Popular Art Centre

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