



Alternative Tourism Group

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Palestine is a unique country from many perspectives, especially its history, religions and cultures. What has made this country so famous from ancient time until today is its rich human history together with the fact that it is the home of the three monotheistic world religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Unfortunately, the never ending wars that this country experienced and still experiences make it a focus of attention.

We in Palestine and in ATG would like to invite you all to come here, learn about all the history, religions, conflicts, culture, traditions and so forth. Here, in this very special place, you will have a life experience that you will never find anywhere else.

The Alternative Tourism Group (ATG) is a Palestinian NGO specializing in tours and pilgrimages that include critical examinations of the history, culture, and politics of the Holy Land. Established in 1995, ATG operates according to the tenets of "justice tourism", that is, tourism that holds as its central goals the creation of economic opportunities for the local community, positive cultural exchange between host and guest through one-on-one interaction, the protection of the environment and political/historical education. ATG works to encourage all tourism operators to abandon exploitative mass tourism and to adopt practices that positively affect the host population. Through these methods, ATG seeks to promote a positive image of Palestine and its people and to contribute towards establishing a just peace in the area.

Our Objectives

- To modify the tendencies of mass tourism in "The Holy Land" to establish a more human-oriented tourism.
- To put foreign tourists in direct contact with the Palestinian population so as to help them develop a better understanding of Arab-Palestinian culture and history.
- To break down the negative stereotypes of Palestine and its people that predominate in the West.
- To achieve a balance between the revenues of the Palestinian and Israeli tourism sectors by using Palestinian infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, transportation, guides, etc.)
- To augment the number of tourists visiting Palestine and increase the length of their stay in Palestinian areas.
- To develop amongst tourists a knowledge of Palestinian culture and the socio-political situation in Palestine.
- To encourage instructive and authentic meetings with the Palestinian people and to develop amongst tourists an objective understanding of everyday realities of the Israeli Occupation.
- To offer tourists the opportunity to share unique experiences with Palestinians through volunteer work with non-governmental organizations (olive harvesting, planting trees, etc.).



Highlights

In 1997, ATG managed to rehabilitate 30 rooms in local houses in the Bethlehem area. Those houses have, since then, served as places to accommodate tourists and pilgrims with local families, where tourists may interact with local people, enrich their understanding of Palestinian culture, extend the circle of friendship, appreciate Palestinian hospitality, taste local traditional food and, finally, enjoy folkloric music.

Since its establishment in 1995, ATG has provided its services to thousands of people from all over the world, which is considered ATG's great success; it proves that the concept of alternative tourism is extremely interesting to people.

ATG published the first comprehensive Palestinian guidebook ("Palestine and Palestinians"). The Guidebook is available in two languages, French and English. The book provides an in-depth, updated journey through the entire range of Palestinian culture: ancient and modern history, archaeology, religion, architecture and politics. It also offers a great variety of documentary material and practical information, making it an invitation to discover Palestine.



Our programmes are both critical and experiential in nature. They include

- Tours led by our specially-trained guides to key sites: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, Tel Aviv/Jaffa, Haifa, Nazareth and other cities and towns; villages, Palestinian refugee camps, Bedouin communities and the Israeli West Bank settlements (colonies), working class communities, centres of commercial life and religious sites.
- Encounters with Palestinians and Israelis, academics, political leaders, government officials, NGO staff members, and local people.
- An opportunity to experience local life and interact with families through accommodation in Palestinian homes.
- Interfaith encounters including meetings with Muslim, Jewish and Christian personalities.
- Special programmes planned in co-operation with Palestinian and Israeli academic institutions, including opportunities to engage in research projects.
- Special tours designed around specific issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, pre-1948 Palestinian society, refugees, the status of women, conflicts of religion and state, conflicting historical narratives, development issues, pilgrimages and the like.

A pilgrimage for justice

To promote Justice Tourism among faith-based groups and social movements, ATG is developing an initiative called 'Pilgrimages for Transformation' ("PIFT"). This programme seeks to bring people to the Holy Land as 'tourists with a difference'. Tourists will be orientated as pilgrims on a spiritual journey seeking to be instruments of transformation in the Holy Land.

Pilgrimages for Transformation aim at challenging the perceptions of both pilgrims and local hosts through immersion into the realities of people. In addition to visiting the holy sites and following in the footsteps of Jesus, pilgrims will have the opportunity to meet members of local Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities. By listening to their stories, their hopes, aspirations, and fears, pilgrims would hopefully return to their homes as advocates for a just peace and reconciliation.

We believe that a pilgrimage has the power to transform individuals and, through them, the religious, social, and political spheres in ways that will help bring to an end the tragic violence and conflict that defines the Middle East. Justice Tourism aims at creating opportunities for both travellers and hosts and at transforming tourism into a mutual exchange between visitors and local communities.

PIFT is not merely a touristic adventure. It is, rather, one which is spiritual in content. Travellers will learn more about local traditions and heritage and will rediscover, at the same time, their own cultural background.

ATG works with a wide range of groups and delegations, including

- International solidarity groups
- Academic and fact-finding delegations
- Church groups concerned with issues of social justice
- Diplomats, journalists and researchers
- NGOs and political organizations
- Tourists and pilgrims' groups

By choosing ATG you will gain:

1. A fair trip to the Holy Land.
2. A personal, unforgettable experience where every individual request is granted.
3. A meaningful encounter with the local communities.

How to contact us:

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