

The 6+ Quick Guide to Bethlehem

What can I do? How can I help?

1. Research and get more information. There are many sources of information about Bethlehem and the Occupied Territories. Below are four of 6+'s favorites:

Open Bethlehem <http://openbethlehem.org> admin@openbethlehem.org tel. 011+970-2 277 7993

"Open Bethlehem is an international public relations campaign set-up to address the state of emergency in Bethlehem. It aims to bring world attention to the crisis facing the city by reaching out to decision-makers, church leaders and the media and acting as a route into Bethlehem for initiatives of all kinds. Above all, we aim to build a positive legacy for Palestine and the wider region by reasserting Bethlehem's unique historical character as a living example of an open and multi-faith Middle East." -from organization's website

Dar Annadwa International Center of Bethlehem <http://annadwa.org> info@annadwa.org tel. 011+972-02-277 0047

"As a member of the Diyar Consortium, the ICB is a Lutheran-based, ecumenically-oriented institution, serving the whole of the community "from the womb to the tomb", with an emphasis on women, children, youth, and the elderly. Participants and program users are Christian and Muslim, male and female, and come from towns, villages, and refugee camps." from organization's website

Bethlehem Peace Center <http://peacecenter.org> info@peacecenter.org tel. 011+972-2-276 6677

"Bethlehem Peace Center is a cultural center located in the City of Bethlehem next to Manger Square between the Church of the Nativity and the Mosque of Omar. It is owned and operated by Bethlehem Municipality and has a Board of its own. Mission: The Center shall promote and enhance peace, democracy, religious tolerance and diversity. Palestinian culture shall be demonstrated in the art and decoration of the Bethlehem Peace Center and reflected in the programs and activities. The Center shall not be affiliated to any religion, faith or belief, nor any political party or faction or ethnic group." -from organization's website

Israeli Committee Against Housing Demolition (ICAHD) <http://icahd.org> ICAHD-USA <http://icahdusa.org> tel. 011+919-02-277 0632

"ICAHD is a non-violent, direct-action group originally established to oppose and resist Israeli demolition of Palestinian houses in the Occupied Territories. As our activists gained direct knowledge of the brutalities of the Occupation, we expanded our resistance activities to other areas - land expropriation, settlement expansion, by-pass road construction, policies of "closure" and "separation," the wholesale uprooting of fruit and olive trees and more." -from organization's website

2. Go and see for yourself! "There really is no substitute for first-hand experience."--Dar Annadwa

Tours in English <http://toursinenglish.com> tel: 1-800-809-7913 011+972-54-693 4433

"Tours in English is a social enterprise that works with several organizations providing alternative tours that are informative and analytical, covering the political geography of the region. The wide range of itineraries visit areas that embody the history and current status of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem, and between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens." from Tours in English's website

Tours in English offers a collection of alternative tours in Israel and Palestine from the following organizations: Alternative Tourism Group, Bethlehem, Daila: A social and cultural outreach center in Jerusalem, Dikium: Negev Coexistence, Forum for Civil Equality, Holy Land Trust, Bethlehem, ICAHD: The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Siraj center for Holy Land Studies Bethlehem, West Bank Tours, Nablus

But how will I GET THERE, where will I STAY, and where will I EAT?

1. TRAVEL: Bethlehem is accessible via 2 airports, Ben Gurion International, Israel and Queen Alia International Airport, Jordan. If you are going on one of the tours above, the organization will help arrange your transportation. Here is how 6+ travels to the O.P.T.:

From Ben Gurion Airport , Tel Aviv, Israel:

Bethlehem is an hour from the airport, either direct by taxi or via Jerusalem by train or shuttle bus. Most travelers connect in Jerusalem. Taxis from Jaffa Gate or Damascus Gate in the Old City take little more than ten minutes to get to Bethlehem.

You can take a taxi all the way to the Bethlehem Checkpoint (60 to 80 min), pass through on foot, and take a quick taxi into the heart of Bethlehem (4 min).

For those on a budget (like all of 6+) it is easier than you think! You will take a minibus from the airport to the Jaffa Gate or Damascus Gate in Jerusalem (30 to 40 mins), then transfer to a minibus to the Bethlehem Checkpoint (15 min). From the checkpoint you can take a quick taxi into the heart of Bethlehem (4 min). Estimated cost??

Yes, you will have to pass through a checkpoint, but 6+ has had many trips through this checkpoint and we see it as just part of the Palestinian experience. Believe us, Bethlehem is more than worth it!

From Queen Alia Airport, Amman Jordan:

Most likely, upon landing you will take a taxi from the airport into Amman and spend the night at a hotel, then wake up early to continue the journey the next day. In the morning you will travel to the Jordan-Israel border.

You will cross into Palestine via the King Hussein Bridge (also known as the Allenby Bridge). This is the shortest route, midway between Amman and Jerusalem at Jericho

A taxi ride from the center of Amman to the bridge will take 30 minutes and cost around \$30 or you can take a minibus from the Abdali Bus Station. A second taxi ride from the bridge directly to Bethlehem will take 45 minutes and cost around \$90, or you can make a minibus connection at Jericho and be in the Holy City just in time for dinner!

The journey from Amman to Bethlehem is much longer, however it offers the full Palestinian experience, since this is the only way Palestinians can get into and out of their homeland.

2. SLEEP: If you are going on one of the tours above, the organization will arrange the accommodation for you, typically with local families. This is truly the most intimate way to experience Bethlehem's hospitality. However if you are visiting Bethlehem on your own there are many options:

6+ highly recommends staying with the Sisters at *Mary's House*. We have collectively spent over 40 nights there! Tel: 011 972 02 275 0360, Fax: 011 972 02 275 0363 \$35 per person. Fantastic breakfast with great coffee included.

Other accommodation to check out:

Bethlehem Star Hotel (011+972-02-277 0702) htstar@hally.net from \$40.

Grand Hotel (011+972-02-274 1602) khalid9933@hotmail.com. From \$50.

The Nativity Hotel, Beit Jala (011+972-02-277 0650) nativity@nativity-hotel.com single \$40, double \$70.

The Shepherd's Valley Tourist Village (011+972-02-277 3875) Camping, \$15 per person.

The Alternative Tourist Group (011+972-02-277 2151) info@atg.ps arranges Bed & Breakfast with local families

Abu Gubran Guest House, Dar Annadwa, info@annadwa.org

If you plan on spending time visiting the Dheisheh Refugee Camp, you may want to stay at the *Ibdaa Cultural Center* guesthouse. Phone/Fax: (011+972-2-277 6444) <http://ibdaa194.org/> info@ibdaa194.org \$20

3. EAT: The websites listed above provide excellent recommendations for dining in the Holy City, and we have some of our own!

The Tent Restaurant, Shepherd's Field, Beit Sahour. (011+972-02-277 3875) A trip to the O.P.T. isn't complete for 6+ without a couple meals here. "A Bedouin's dream of low tables and carpet-covered divans, serving grilled meats and salad's and specialising in shisha (flavoured tobacco smoked through a hubble-bubble pipe)." -O.B. The Tent also features enchanting views across the valley, including an up-close-and-personal-view of Har Holma settlement.

Abu Shanab, Ring Road, Bethlehem. (011+972-02-274 2895): "The best grills in town, served by two brothers with impressive moustaches. Fresh ingredients and the meat is chopped and prepared in front of you using traditional methods. The restaurant issues certificates stating that you have eaten there." -O.B.

Afteem, Manger Square, Bethlehem. (011+972-02-277 0157). "Probably one of the best Falafel shops in Palestine. The falafel is so good shops come from as far away as Haifa to buy the raw mix." -O.B.

El Mariachi. located beneath the Grand Hotel, Bethlehem's only Mexican restaurant features traditional south-of-the-border cuisine with middle-eastern variations. The fresh fish dishes won our hearts.

Dar Jdoudnah, off Manger Square, Bethlehem. (011+972-02-274 3212): "A fine bar with excellent snacks, particularly the Sambusek (wild thyme-and-cheese pastries). The name means, Our Grandfather's House, and the walls are filled with evocative photographs of old Bethlehem." -O.B. Conveniently located a block from Mary's House.

Cosmos, Beit Jala. Rumored to be the only true disco in the West Bank, you will have to see it for yourself!