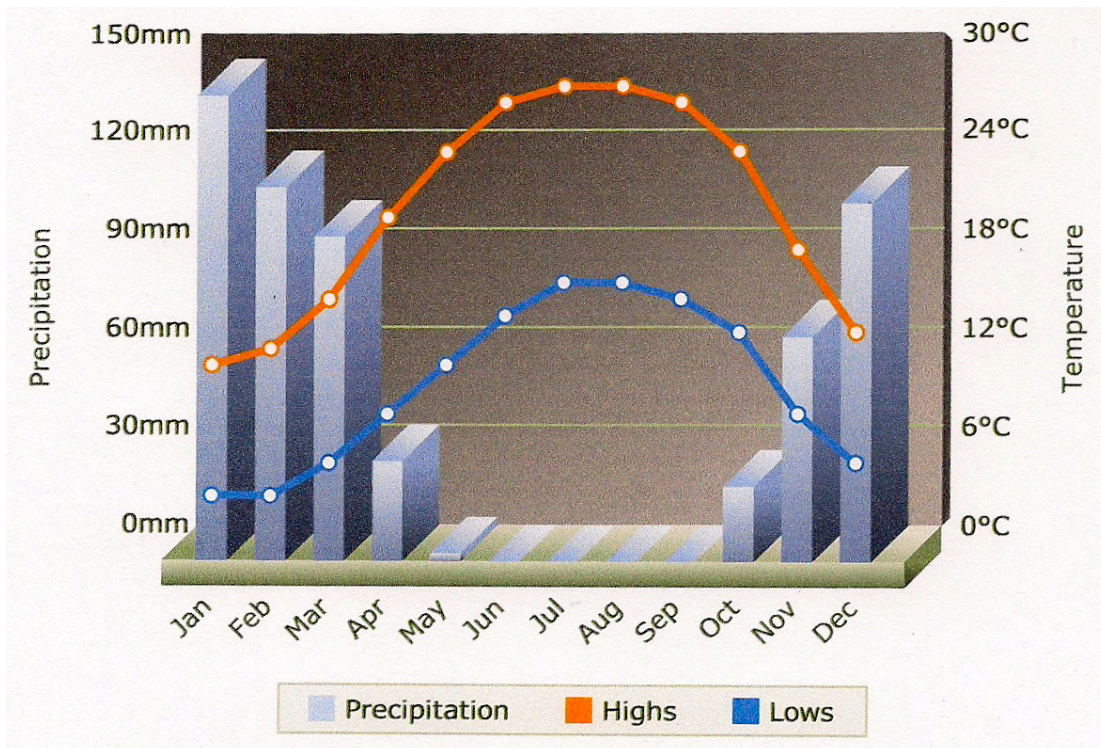


## Practical information

### Climate and weather

Palestine's climate is essentially Mediterranean, with hot summers, cold winters and a balmy spring and autumn. Temperatures can reach 40 degrees centigrade midday in midsummer, but the nights are cool in the mountains and desert. Rainfall in the summer is non-existent (June – Sept), but winter brings snow on the mountains.



The best times of the year for Biking are March to May and September to November. Early spring brings plentiful wildflowers; in late autumn, families are out harvesting the olive trees, and you may well be invited to sit and drink tea with them. If you do visit in the summer, the weather will be very hot but you will start Bike earlier and take plenty of rest stops.

### Accommodation

In Jerusalem and Bethlehem you will be staying in hotels or simple guesthouses with private rooms and ensuite facilities. While on the trail, you will be staying in family

homes in Palestinian villages, meeting the kids, grandparents and extended families, and sharing their fresh, home-cooked food.

The Palestinian homes you will stay in all have electricity and running water. However, Palestine is among the most water-poor countries in the world so you should use water with great care. You will be able to have a quick shower or wash after each walk. There will always be plenty of bottled drinking water.

Men and women usually sleep separately, on mattresses on the floor of the family's main living space. Don't expect a private bedroom, although some families may be able to provide one for older married couples. If this is important to you, please make this known at the time of enquiry, so that you can get appropriate advice. Sheets are not generally used here; if you would like one, bring a cotton sleeping-bag liner.

## Eating and drinking

You will be eating traditional Middle Eastern food. In the villages, this means home cooking, freshly prepared and local. Meals (breakfast too) usually consist of flat bread, cheese, yoghurt, humus, olives and salads. Dinner will include a typical Palestinian cooked dish, often including rice with chicken or meat. The walks include one or two very simple picnics of bread, cheese, and salad.



Palestine is primarily a Muslim country, so alcohol is hard to find and will not be offered during the walk. Be prepared for endless tiny glasses of sweet black tea, often served with mint, and for grainy, delicious Turkish-style coffee after meals.

In Jerusalem and in Bethlehem you can find wine and beer in many restaurants and bars. The trail also passes through Taybeh, home to Palestine's first brewery. Here you can sample a high-quality, organic lager beer brewed in accordance with the German purity laws of 1516! If you pass through in October, you might find the Taybeh version of Bavaria's legendary Oktoberfest in full swing – two days of Palestinian celebration, music, culture, and beer. See here for info on the beer - <http://www.taybehbeer.com> - and here for more info on the Oktoberfest - <http://www.taybehmunicipality.org>

## Getting there

The tours start from Jenin. Travelling to Jerusalem is straightforward for European and US travellers. Several airlines offer cut-price flights from the UK to Tel-Aviv (Ben Gurion International Airport), about one hour's bus ride away. If you are coming from a tour to other parts of the Middle East, you will need to check on specific border crossings and routes. Our tour operators can provide advice on the journey and on where to meet.

## What to wear

For the Bike you will need strong boots, Biking socks, and a hat or headscarf that covers your head and neck. Because the trail goes through rural areas, both women and men are advised dress conservatively to show respect to these communities. We advise women to wear long pants, and either wear long-sleeved blouses or carry a scarf in their bag for covering shoulders and arms as needed. It's also best to avoid low-cut shirts, tank tops, or sheer clothing. Men can wear short-sleeved shirts, but are also advised to wear long pants. If you are Biking in the summer, wearing light fabrics like linen and cotton can help keep you comfortable. In the winter, it can get cold and sweaters and rain gear are recommended. Women are not required to cover their heads except in mosques and other holy places.

*See the packing list below for a definitive idea of what to wear and bring*

## Looking after your health

There are no special health issues concerned with Biking in Palestine. The greatest risks are from heat stroke/exhaustion, sunburn, dehydration and traveller's diarrhoea. Cyclist should take the usual health precautions, carry water at all times, ensure that they drink only bottled water, protect themselves from the sun and carry a small personal first aid kit (*see 'packing list' below*). The UK's NHS Travel Health website offers detailed and reliable information about vaccinations and other travel related health issues (*see 'further information' below*).

## Safety and security

The Palestinians are a friendly and hospitable people with legendary respect for guests and visitors to their land. The path in Palestine has been established just over a year and since then several hundred people from many countries, including the USA and UK, have biked all or part of the route without safety or security incidents of any kind. You will be biking in rural areas, and will be accompanied at all times by a professional Palestinian guide who knows, and is held in great respect and affection by, the communities along the route.

Despite the marked increase in security in the West Bank in recent years, it is clearly not possible for the Siraj Center or its partners to guarantee the personal safety of every traveller to Palestine. There is still an element of political tension and instability, and you will not fail to notice the Israeli military checkpoints and roadblocks, especially close to the settlements. **Travellers are advised to visit the website of their home government for detailed and up-to-date information about the security situation** in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (*see below for relevant web links*).

Petty travel-related crime – theft or pick pocketing - is extremely rare in Palestine, and unknown along the trail. Travellers should exercise normal caution and use common sense in the larger towns and cities.

## Insurance

Travel insurance is your responsibility and you are strongly advised to take out adequate travel insurance before you travel, including emergency health care and repatriation cover.

## Shopping

Street markets abound in all the major towns selling everything from fruit and vegetables to sweets, toys and small jewellery. Every village offers a roadside shop for drinks, food and snacks. Good quality souvenirs and clothes are best sought in Jerusalem's Old City where the covered markets offer hours of great browsing, but prices can be high.

## Equipment

No special Biking equipment is needed, other than strong footwear and head covering ( Helmet ) . Bike , Bike Repair Equipment , Wheel Tears .

## Carrying your gear

Baggage transfer between villages can be arranged, so you do not need to carry all your gear while you are hiking. Bring a small day-pack to carry with you on the Bike, and one other small suitcase. If you're on a long trip and carrying a huge suitcase, it is probably best to leave this in Jerusalem before you begin the walk. If you want to backpack straight through carrying all your gear, that's fine – though we recommend that you keep the weight of the pack to not more than 10% - 15% of your body weight, plus your water bottle and water.

## Contacts and further information

To make a booking, or for further information about the Trip...

**George Snow** ,,, **Information** ????

### About travelling in Palestine...

The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism provides detailed information about the country:  
<http://www.travelpalestine.ps/site/index.php>

Our local partners offer a range of alternative tourism programs in Palestine. More information at <http://www.sirajcenter.org/>

### Safety and Security...

For UK nationals, the Foreign Office provides up-to-date travel information here:  
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/middle-east-north-africa/israel-occupied>

For US citizens, the US Department of State offers up-to-date travel information here:  
<http://www.state.gov/travel/>

### Travel Health...

The following websites provide credible and up-to-date information about travel health issues...

UK's National Health Service

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/travelhealth/Pages/Travelhealthhome.aspx>

*The Center for Disease Control and Prevention* in Atlanta, Georgia

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

Information about Heat Stroke / Exhaustion...

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Heat-exhaustion-and-heatstroke/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Information about Travellers Diarrhoea...

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/travellersdiarrhoea/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

## Recommended Packing List

- Boots or strong shoes, and walking socks
- Flip flops or other lightweight footwear for evenings
- Long sleeved shirts and full length trousers (for protecting limbs against scratches, sunburn etc)
- Hat or head covering , Helmut
- Water bottle
- Sunscreen – strong factor
- Light fleece or sweater, even in summer, for the evenings
- Light rain jacket (not needed in June, July, or August)
- Light pyjamas or suitable nightwear
- Small flashlight or head-torch
- Small first-aid kit (plasters, antiseptic wipes, oral rehydration salts, Compede or other blister treatment)
- Sanitary items and other basic pharmaceutical goods as required (not always available in villages)
- Camera