

JORDAN VALLEY PERMABLITZ, OCTOBER 9-18TH 2015

THE PROGRAM:

We have put together an exciting 10-day program of activities designed to give a comprehensive introduction to what life in Palestine under occupation is like and to create a way of actively supporting affected communities. We hope it will be both enlightening and fun: giving space to appreciate the physical beauty of the Palestinian landscape and cities, and the inspiring resilience and heart-warming hospitality of Palestinian communities, as well as learning about how the occupation affects them.

The program will start in Bethlehem, with educational tours in the city and surrounding area coordinated by Baha Hilo, an experienced and popular political tour-guide. We will then be moving down to the Jordan Valley to learn about the situation of Palestinian communities living there from Rashed Sawaftah, who is the coordinator of the Jordan Valley Solidarity Project; and to undertake a program of practical activities in support of their ongoing earth-building and restoration work. We will also be installing a few systems to 'green' their centre in Fasayil under the direction of Alice Gray: an experienced permaculture teacher and consultant and long-time Palestine-based activist. The final phase of the program will include a tour of Hebron and a wind-down in Bethlehem with hiking in the beautiful Battir Valley and a debriefing and reflection session.



GETTING THERE:

The program will begin at 6.30pm on the evening of the 9th, when participants will assemble at the Hosh al Sober guesthouse in Beit Sahour near Bethlehem. There are 2 possible routes to arrive to Beit Sahour – both involve passing Israeli border-control and we strongly recommend that you claim to be a tourist, interested in visiting the historic and religious sites in Jerusalem and the Galilee. People who are honest about their intention to visit the Palestinian Territories have a tendency to be deported on arrival.

Route 1:

Fly in to Tel Aviv international airport, take a minibus from outside the airport to Jerusalem (get dropped off at Damascus Gate), and then take bus 24 to Bethlehem. Cross the checkpoint and take a taxi to Beit Sahour. This is the easiest and most direct route, and probably also the cheapest. However, your airport taxes will be paid to Israeli companies and so if you feel strongly about the boycott you might want to consider Route 2.

Route 2:

Fly in to Queen Alia international airport in Amman and take a taxi to the Allenby crossing into Palestine (which is controlled by Israeli authorities). Cross the border and take a minibus to Jerusalem, change to bus 24 to Bethlehem, cross the checkpoint and take a taxi to Beit Sahour. If you want to combine a visit to Jordan with our program then this route is a good bet. There is a 40 JD visa fee into Jordan and a 10 JD exit tax, so this will add expense.

WHAT TO BRING:

- Work clothes that you don't mind covering in earth and clay and a strong pair of shoes. It can be cold at night in October but still quite hot during the day especially in the Jordan Valley so bring a warm jacket and plenty of T-shirts. Women should be aware that in Palestinian culture it is considered modest to cover the shoulders and chest and knees – so don't bring vest-tops, shorts or short skirts
- Tidier clothes to wear on tours and in the evening and a spare pair of shoes or sandals to wear indoors
- A sleeping bag
- A torch
- A hat or scarf to wear on your head while working in the sun
- A mosquito net and/or mosquito repellent
- We will not be swimming during the program, but if you plan on visiting any beaches in your own time, bring swimming stuff
- There are quite a few children living near the centre in Fasayil who are frequent visitors – maybe a few little presents like balloons, pens, drawing books etc. might be appreciated if you feel so inclined

THINGS TO BE AWARE OF:

- The program is taking place in the West Bank, the area of the Palestinian Territories that borders Jordan and the Dead Sea. This area has been under military occupation since 1967 and is being actively colonized by Israeli settlers.
- The Jordan Valley is one of the areas under the greatest pressure, with many military bases and industrial agricultural settlements. Palestinian communities in the area are under huge pressure to leave and do not have access to basic services like water and electricity. They are also subjected to frequent harassment by both the military and settlers and there are a lot of house demolitions and evictions.
- Encounters with the Israeli military and settlers are an inevitable part of life in the West Bank, however, we will not be aiming to get into any confrontations with them during the program and are extremely unlikely to be caught up in any violence.
- Conditions at the JVS centre in Fasayil are pretty rough and ready. We will be sleeping in shared rooms (men and women separately). The main living area where we will take meals is up a steep flight of steps, and we will be working quite hard during the day: mixing adobe and making bricks.
- The Palestinian people have a very hospitable and welcoming culture – expect to eat a lot of amazing food and drink a lot of tea!

HOW AND WHEN TO PAY:

Convinced? Good! To secure your place please pay a 150 GBP deposit to our UK bank account (Lloyds Bank, Gillingham, Account Number 3259868, Sort Code 30-65-21 (for international transfers IBAN GB84 LOYD 3065 2132 5938 68, BIC LOYDGB21677). Alternatively you can send a cheque made out to GREAN Palestine to The Old School, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4NJ.

You can pay the balance electronically at any time up to September 30th or in cash upon arrival (please let us know which).

We look forward to seeing you in Palestine in October!

