



WE ARE

Palestinian

A CELEBRATION OF CULTURE AND TRADITION



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Geography

There are so many beautiful places in Palestine that it would be impossible to cover them all. So in this section, we're going to explore some of the most famous cities and find out what makes them so special. Some of these cities are now in Israel, but they still have big Palestinian populations, and our culture and rich history flourishes in the landmarks and traditions.



Jerusalem

Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities on Earth; traces of civilization there go back 6,000 years. In that time, it has been destroyed, captured and recaptured – but it has survived, and remains a very special place. One reason is that it is the holy city for the three major Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The major landmarks for these religions – the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden Tomb and the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa – are all in Jerusalem.

Did you know?

Jerusalem is the most visited city in the world. Over three million tourists go there each year!

Although Jerusalem is a big city today, its core is the Old City of Jerusalem which is surrounded by a giant wall that was built around 500 years ago, during the Ottoman Empire.

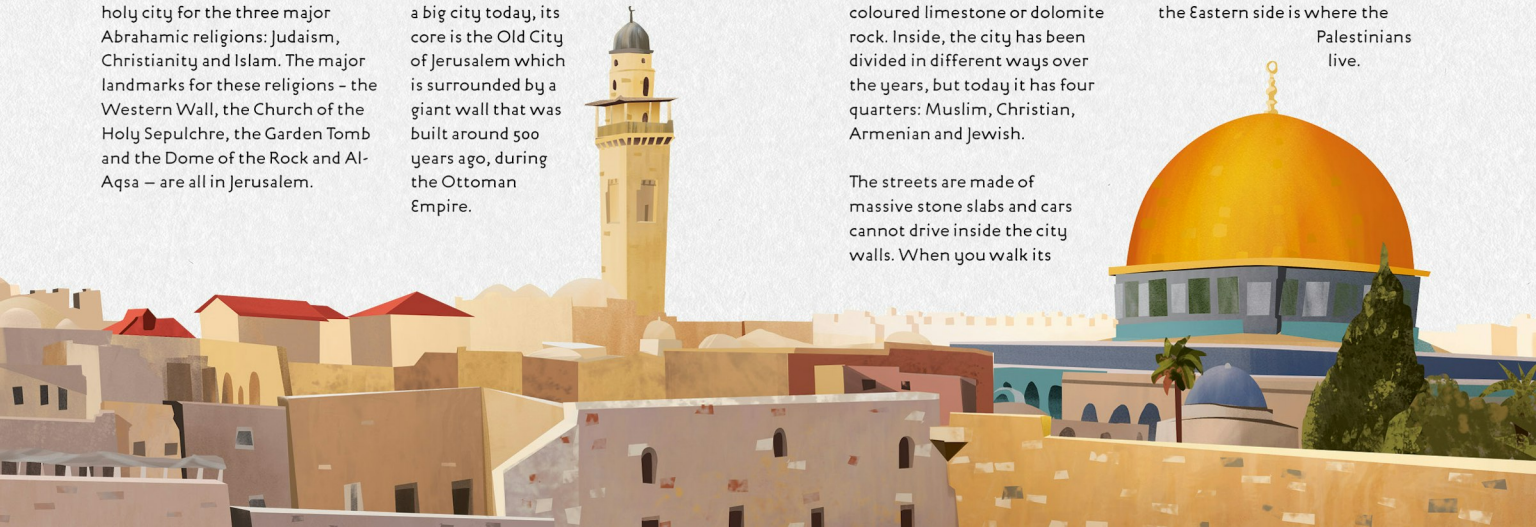
Fun Fact

The wall surrounding the Old City is about 4,000 meters long - that's about 12 Eiffel Towers lying on their side!

The wall has 34 watchtowers and seven gates made of beautiful Jerusalem stone – strong, cream-coloured limestone or dolomite rock. Inside, the city has been divided in different ways over the years, but today it has four quarters: Muslim, Christian, Armenian and Jewish.

The streets are made of massive stone slabs and cars cannot drive inside the city walls. When you walk its

streets, you see beautiful artisan craft and antique stores lining the sides, owned by the same families for generations. You can smell fragrant spices and buy delicious food, from *ka'ak al quds* to falafel and *knafeh*. Outside the city walls, Jerusalem is now divided into East and West Jerusalem. The Western side is where most of the Jewish Israelis live, and the Eastern side is where the Palestinians live.



Gaza

Gaza is a Palestinian territory that borders Egypt on one side and Israel on the other. It is made up of five main areas, the largest of which is Gaza City. It is also one of the most densely populated places on Earth. This means that there are many people living in a very small space.

Did you know?

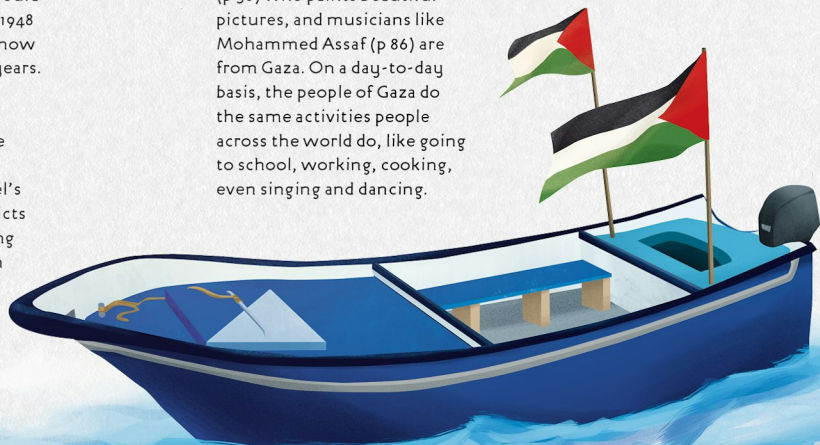
There are about two million people living in Gaza, a place the same size as the US city of Detroit, which has a population of 672,000.

Most of the people in Gaza are refugees – people who fled their homes because of war. They came from other places in Palestine, like Yaffa and Ramla and even far north like the Galilee. They hoped they would be able to go back after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, but have now been displaced for over 70 years.

Gaza was once famous for its beautiful beaches on the Mediterranean Sea and its fishing industry. Now Israel's control of the waters restricts Gazan fishermen from going far out to sea to fish, which means it's increasingly difficult to make a living as a fisherman. Unfortunately, Gaza is also practically sealed off from the rest of the country, making it almost impossible for anyone to visit or leave it.

While these things are sad, the people of Gaza are strong and hopeful, and we can learn many lessons from them about how to live life in the face of hardship. Famous artists like Malak Mattar (p 50) who paints beautiful pictures, and musicians like Mohammed Assaf (p 86) are from Gaza. On a day-to-day basis, the people of Gaza do the same activities people across the world do, like going to school, working, cooking, even singing and dancing.

Supported and empowered by their families, their faith and by each other, the people of Gaza continue to live their lives.



Jericho

People believe that Jericho is the oldest city in the world. It is also the lowest city on earth, sitting 258 meters below sea level.

To understand what that means, picture yourself walking away from the beach and hiking down a valley – you would have to go down about 80 flights of stairs to reach Jericho.

Did you know?

When archaeologists explored Jericho, they found remains of early settlements going back 11,000 years!

The name of the valley it sits in is Wadi Qelt, which itself sits in the larger Jordan Valley in the West Bank.

People have always lived in Jericho, from the age of hunter gatherers to the present day. It's also one of the first places in the world to have agriculture and probably where irrigation, the process of supplying water to plants, was invented. It is the kind of city you call an oasis, or a fertile land in a desert environment. Ein es-Sultan (or The Sultan's Spring), which produces about 1,000 gallons of water per minute, is what waters the whole area.

Jericho can get hot in the summer, but its winters are quite mild, rarely dipping below 10°C. This pleasant weather makes it a very popular place to visit for

both Palestinians and tourists. People from all over the world visit Jericho to see its rich history, and visit landmarks like Hisham's Palace, an ancient castle built over 1,200 years ago during the Ummayyad Dynasty.



Fun Fact

More than 40,000 people visit Hisham's Palace each year.