Light Will Overcome Darkness
It is that time of the year again; Christmas has come with all its joy, happiness and cheering. People have started to prepare for Christmas decorations, shopping, festivities and special food. Unfortunately Christmas for many of my people is a time of sorrow and sadness due to the Israeli occupation and their measures against the land, the people and the holy places.

We believe that the real meaning of Christmas is to spread the message of the Baby Jesus Christ in Peace and Justice to the entire world. It is also praying and acting to end wars and conflicts and to stop killing of innocents and children. Christmas is about enlightening the darkness of our hearts and love one another.

In the second half of the year 2016 the Palestinian tourism has witnessed a remarkable increase in comparison with the same period in 2015. This comes as result of the intensive efforts of the Ministry and the private sector with the support of the international community to promote Palestine in many traditional markets, penetrate new ones and approach new target groups. Palestine is proud of its developed tourism infrastructure, modern facilities and unique service and hospitality that offer an unforgettable experience to all visitors. We call upon all believers to come to Bethlehem; Palestine to experience the true Christmas and share the excitement of the angels, the shepherds and the wise men, and meet the hospitable Palestinians; the guardians of the holy sites. Come to Palestine and lighten a candle for peace, prosperity and freedom to all people on this planet. As Jesus Christ has taught us LIGHT WILL OVERCOME DARKNESS.

From the birthplace of Jesus Christ I wish you all great health, happiness and prosperity

Merry Christmas

Rula Ma’ayah
Minister of Tourism & Antiquities
Palestine
Welcome to Bethlehem!

Christmas in Bethlehem is a wonderful experience for tourists and Palestinians alike. To be in the place where Jesus Christ was born; to take in the same night sky that the Shepherds and the Wise Men saw on Christmas Eve; to observe people from many lands and nations coming together to celebrate this most meaningful of Christian holidays is a defining moment in anyone’s life. Most of all, Christmas in Palestine is a living story; a story that you, as a pilgrim and guest, are now part of.

Major Sites in Bethlehem

The Old City
Pope Paul VI Street, which is in the center of the town, leads down to Manger Square in the heart of the Old City. The numerous convents and churches built by European religious congregations have firmly marked the urban landscape, but Bethlehemites above all an oriental city. The neighbourhoods around Paul VI Street, and the popular Star and Farahiya Streets offer visitors a model of Arab architecture typical of the Ottoman era. Dar Mansour, the "House of Mansour" (Star Street), is a good example of the architectural style of bourgeois homes at the end of the nineteenth century. Contrasting with the activity of the town’s main arteries, the sleepy narrow side streets run between houses arranged in close clusters on the steep slopes around the Old City. Most of these alleyways have stone stairs that are sometimes overhung by passageways in order to connect two dwellings belonging to the same family. One of the distinctive features of the houses in Bethlehem is their orientation. Despite the fact that the houses are arranged around a closed space, the traditional interior courtyard often has a liwan (a vaulted living room open on one side) looking out over the cultivated land. The tremendous variety of architectural openings, doors, windows and the liwan greatly adds to the picturesque charm of old Bethlehem.

Church of the Nativity
This is the oldest church in the Holy Land still in use. The original church was constructed under the patronage of Constantine’s mother, Helena, who came on a pilgrimage to Palestine in 325 AD to investigate the sites associated with the life of Jesus Christ which had been revered since the early days of Christianity. Helena chose the Grotto of the Nativity, the traditional birthplace of Jesus, as the site for the huge basilica which was completed in 339 AD.

Inside the Church, two sets of stairs on either side of the altar lead down into the Grotto, the site where Jesus was born. A silver star embedded in white marble and bearing the Latin inscription “Here of the Virgin Mary Christ was born” marks the site.
Milk Grotto
According to tradition, the Milk Grotto is where Mother Mary nursed baby Jesus while hiding there from Herod’s soldiers before going to Egypt. Located southeast of the Basilica, it is an irregular Grotto hewn out of soft white rock. It is believed that some drops of Mary’s milk trickled, turning the rock white. Revered by Christians and Muslims alike, the milk-white rock is famous for its healing powers and reputed ability of making nursing easier for women.

Manger Square
A historic plaza outside of Nativity Church, it is the hub of Bethlehem and the focus of Christmas celebrations. Manger Square has been the site of numerous important moments in the history of Bethlehem. The primary city mosque is located directly across from Nativity Church.

The Mosque of Omar
Located at the corner of Paul VI Street and Manger Square, the mosque was built in honour of the second Caliph, Omar Ibn al-Khattab. A companion of the Prophet Mohammed and his father-in-law, he entered Bethlehem after taking Jerusalem and prayed in the southern aisle of the Basilica of the Nativity. However, he guaranteed that the Basilica would remain a Christian place of worship in the Pact of Omar, which stipulated that Muslims would be allowed to pray here only individually and which prohibited calling for prayer (al-Azan) from the church walls.

King David’s Wells (Biyar Daoud)
Located north of Bethlehem, David’s Wells mark the site where David’s men broke through a Philistine garrison to bring him water.

The Bethlehem Peace Center
Located at the Manger Square, it serves as the interpretive center, a concert hall and a station for the Tourism Police. The ground story has an expansive model of Bethlehem, a gift store and coffee shop, while the second story of the building has a permanent exhibit of Manger Scenes from around the world ( The Nativity Cribs Museum -Tel: (02) - 2766677/ Fax :( 02)-2764670 . Opening hours: daily from 10:00-18:00 except Sundays from 10:00-16:00). www.peacenter.org

Riwaya Museum-Peace Center Building-Manger Square
Tel: (02)-2766677. Opening hours: daily from 9:00-18:00 / except Sundays. info@peacenter.org / www.peacenter.org
The International Nativity Museum
An initiative of the Salesian Brotherhood of Bethlehem, the museum is housed in a former orphanage along Star Street. It contains a fantastic display of over 200 crèches, nativity scenes, and panoramas from around the world, ranging from modern works of art to classical depictions in the tradition of the 8th century style of Naples, Italy. Its centerpiece is a pictograph diorama of twenty scenes of the Nativity story. (Opening hours: daily upon request/ a previous appointment is recommended. Tel: (02) – 2742421/ (02) – 2747161). Adjacent to the museum is the Church of the Sacred Heart, a beautiful example of 19th century Italian craftsmanship. Opposite the museum is the Salesian Arts Center, a local crafts school that provides training for woodcarving, mother of pearl, and ceramics. For more information you may visit the following website: www.salesianbethlehem.com / http://artcentre.bethlehem.edu

Dar Annadwa Addawliyya Institute & the Christmas Lutheran Church
Lies in the heart of Bethlehem’s souq, or marketplace at Paul VI St. The church is best identified by its distinctive conical spire. The Dar Ad Naddwa Institute is multi-faceted facility, used as a trade school, conference center, hostel, exhibition center and a museum (Al – Kahf Gallery/Museum ). Tel: (02)- 2770047/ Fax: (02)-2770048 ). www.annadwa.org

Baituna al Talhami Museum (Folklore Museum) Arab Women’s Union Museum
Located on Paul VI Street up from Manger Square in Bethlehem. In this museum you will find recreated a diwan (a traditional living room) and displays of traditional clothing, jewelry, old photos, and personal items from the British Mandate era. A tour of the museum offers a taste of the gracious refinement Palestinian families enjoyed in the pre-1948 era. Telefax: (02) – 2742589 / Opening hours: daily from 8:00-13:00/14:00 – 17:00 except for Sundays and Thursdays afternoon.

The Palestinian Heritage Center
It offers the most complete ethnographic display of traditional Palestinian handicrafts and historical items dating back hundreds of years. Each year, its founder, Maha Saca, leads a group of young women dressed in traditional Bethlehemite costumes to participate in the Christmas processions as a reminder of Palestine’s rich cultural heritage. It is open Monday through Saturday, with extended hours during December. Telefax: (02) -2742642 / Tel: (02)-2742381 / www.phc.ps
Al–Bad Museum for Olive Oil Production
Situated in the Old City of Bethlehem. The building which houses the museum dates back as far as the 19th century. The museum houses many ethnographic and archaeological artefacts featuring the entire process of oil production. Furthermore, the exhibit also shows the many uses for oil such as lamps, medicine, food, soap and even cosmetics.
Tel: (02) -2741583/ Opening hours: 8:00-14:30-Monday through Saturday.

The Murad Castle Museum
The Murad’s Castle once served as a garrison for soldiers in the Ottoman Empire, now renovated to host one of the largest ethnographic collections of Palestinian history and culture. The Museum features over 1000 of these precious artifacts that draw from the many chapters of the Palestinian story. The often tumultuous, always fascinating history of Palestine is coming alive through impressive displays of handicrafts, amulets, Bedouin tents, utensils, pottery and more, in addition to a unique collection of Archeological items covering different periods of the history of Palestine.
Tel: (02) -2770376 / (02)-2743530/ Fax: (02) – 2770377
Opening hours: daily from 8:00-16:00
Email: solpools@solomonpools.com
Website : www.solomonpools.com

The Natural History Museum
The Natural History Museum is one of a kind in Palestine and includes various types of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish that have been preserved to attract viewers and generate a sense of curiosity and respect for the natural environment. The museum also protects our natural heritage and preserves examples of several extinct animal species.
Telefax: (02)- 2765574
Opening hours: daily from 8:00-15:00 except Sundays.
Email: info@eecp.org
Website: www.eecp.org

Bethlehem Museum
The Bethlehem Museum is dedicated to fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the role Palestinian Arab Christians play in preserving Palestine’s heritage, identity, and culture. It is considered a touristic and archaeological landmark that reflects the Palestinian identity of Bethlehem, and its humanitarian, spiritual, historical, and cultural legacy.
Address: Jerusalem - Hebron St., Bethlehem - Palestine
Tel: (02)-2751408 Fax: (02)-2751437
Opening hours: daily from 8:00-17:00 except Saturdays & Sundays.
SAINT JOSEPH’S HOME ON MANGER STREET

Is the center for the small but historic Syrian Catholic community. In the lobby of the hostel is a cave with a well, held to be mentioned in the Book of David in the Old Testament. A midnight Christmas service is held in a mixture of Arabic and Ancient Aramaic.

AROUND BETHLEHEM

Beit Jala
Approximately two kilometers west of Bethlehem is Beit Jala, a town set among olive groves and vineyards with stunning stone masonry and a spectacular view of Jerusalem. The town's unique location and moderate weather make it a popular summer destination for visitors in search of a clean, peaceful environment and beautiful scenery. In recent years, Beit Jala has become well known for its modern hotels and good restaurants, which offer a variety of food to please different tastes. Olive oil is one of the town’s main products. It has a unique taste characteristic of the trees in the area. One of the most important sights in Beit Jala is the Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas, established in 1925 and named for the patron saint of Beit Jala.

Beit Jala Heritage Home/Museum
Al-Moghtarebeen Street / Next to Dar Al-Shyoukh Association – Beit Jala.
Tel: (02) - 2766370. Opening hours: daily upon request (From 9:00-13:00 / 14:00-18:00) a previous appointment is recommended.
Email: info@bjscs.org.ps

Cremisan Monastery
Located to the immediate northwest of the city of Beit Jala. The monastery has been in existence for over one hundred years. Visitors are welcome to attend daily mass in Italian, walk around the garden of the monastery, take in the breathtaking view overlooking southern Jerusalem, and visit the gift shop, where a delicious assortment of wine, brandy, olive oil and other delicacies produced by Cremisan can be purchased.

St. George’s Church– Al-Khader
It was built in 1600 AD and rebuilt in 1912. The pilgrimage is in honour of Saint George (in Arabic al-Khader), the soldier monk who slew the dragon; he is venerated for being able to ward off the evil eye. Islamic tradition has it that he left his native Lydda, where he
was born, and settled here in this village which bears his name. Muslims and Christians come together annually on St George’s feast days (5 May-6 May), to celebrate their common protector, to whom many different blessings are attributed. Saint George is also the patron saint of farmers, travellers and the mentally sick. According to a popular belief, lunatics were chained to a ring in the walls of the courtyard here in order for them to be delivered from their insanity due to the intervention of Saint George. (Jerusalem-Hebron Road, al-Khader Gate; Tel: 02-274 3233, daily 8:00-12:00 and 15:00-19:00. Free entry).

**Solomon’s Pools**

Hidden among very tall pine trees in a small valley 4km south of Bethlehem, Solomon’s Pools consist of three huge rectangular reservoirs of stone and masonry that can hold 160,000 cubic meters of water. Although tradition attributes these to King Solomon, the pools almost certainly date from the time of Herod, and may have been conceived by Pontius Pilate. In the past, the reservoirs collected spring and rainwater and pumped it to Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

**Qalat al-Burak** an Ottoman fortress dating back to the 17th century is located near the pools. The fortress was built to protect Solomon’s Pools water source.

**Wadi Artas**

Wadi Artas is a fine example of the fertility of Palestinian valleys. The name Artas, more recent, is derived from the Latin hortus, or “garden”. Nowadays, the Convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Garden and the Convent Hortus Conclusus symbolically associate the image of Mary with her virginity and fertility.

Located just above the mosque, is The Artas Folklore Centre (Tel/Fax: 02-276-7467) which was created to preserve the local rural heritage and contributes to the preservation of customs and traditional practices, by producing documents on Palestinian culture and collecting archives. The Palestinian Ethnographic Centre (museum) is a fascinating part of the project. It is responsible for several old houses, recently renovated, on a site inhabited for thousands of years. In addition to a tour of the homes and museum, the Centre will also serve a traditional Palestinian meal and organize an evening with folk music and dancing (for a minimum of 10 people).

**Battir**

Battir is a village located to the west of Bethlehem and seven kilometres to the south of Jerusalem. The site and its surrounding agricultural terraces including its irrigation system, represent an outstanding example of human settlement near the sources of water and the adaptation of land for agricultural purposes. The village and its surrounding cultural landscape features through its valleys (widian)
that extend from Wadi al-Makhour near BeitJala, to the village of Husan, extensive agricultural terraces, springs, irrigation systems, olive presses, ancient ruins (khirab), and stone agricultural watchtowers (manatir), which are locally known as palaces (qusoor). In 2014, the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir was inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List as a pilot site of Palestine, Land of Olives and Vines. The site is a key feature of the larger Palestinian Central Highlands landscape, which stretches from Nablus in the north to Hebron in the south.

**Beit Sahour**

Beit Sahour is located southeast of Bethlehem. It is the scene of the fields of olives, well-known as Shepherd’s Field, the place where the angel announced to the shepherds the birth of Jesus Christ. There are two points of interest here: a Franciscan chapel, and a Greek Orthodox Church that was built over a cave in the fifth century. There are also some exceptionally old olive trees in the field. While in the town, be sure to ask about the Beit Sahour Municipality Folklore Museum.

**The Shepherds’ Fields**

The Fields are identified since ancient times with the shepherds who saw the Star of Nativity and followed it to Bethlehem. There are two places considered as Shepherd’s Fields. One is considered by Catholic Church – You can see there an ancient Byzantine stone mosaic! The second site belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church. There is a small Greek Orthodox Church. All its walls are covered by icons showing life of saints. The place is like a fairytale. While there do not miss the olive trees, many are over 2000 years old!

**Beit Sahour Municipality Folklore Museum**

Dar Dakarat behind the Municipal Building, Tel: (02) - 2773666/7. Opening hours: daily from 8:00-14:00 / except Sundays.

www.beitsahourmunicipality.com

**St. Saba Monastery**

A drive of about 6 kilometres east of Shepherd’s Field down a winding road takes you to the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Mar Saba. Built into a cliff, it has a spectacular view overlooking the gorge of the Kidron Valley and was part of the grand tour of Palestine during the 19th century. The founder, St. Saba, came from Cappadocia in the fifth century. There are legends about St. Saba having lived in a cave with a lion for many years. St. Saba died at age 94, and his corpse is still preserved in the Church at the monastery. The monastery has 110 rooms, though today there are only a few monks residing in it. The monks are friendly and hospitable, but long-established tradition prevents the entry of women, who must enjoy the scenery from outside.
Herodion (Jabal Al-Furdais)
Built in a circular shape on top of a hill 6km southeast of Bethlehem, this fortress includes the remains of a huge palace built by King Herod in 37 BC. The palace contained a luxurious, round-walled building, fortified chambers, baths, and terraced gardens. Herodion fort hill dominates the landscape of the area, and offers an impressive view of the Dead Sea from its peak.

Saint Theodosius’ Monastery
Built by Theodosius in 500 AD, the monastery is located west of the historic village of Ubediyyeh, 12 km east of Bethlehem. A white-walled cave marks the burial site of Saint Theodosius, and tradition has it that the wise men rested here after God warned them in a dream that they should not return to Herod.

Your Stay in Bethlehem
Bethlehem is a safe, relaxing place to visit during your trip in the Holy Land. The following is a list of hints and guides to make the most out of your stay in Bethlehem.

Visitor Information Centers
• The Tourist Information Office of the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities located inside the Peace center Building in Manger Square. It provides tourists with the needed essential information & a collection of the Ministry Tourist promotional publications. Tel: (02)- 2766677. Opened daily from 8:00am-3:00pm except for Fridays/Sundays and Holidays.

• Abu Jarour Tourist Information Center: Star St. - «Hosh Abu Jarour”. Tel: (02)-2749069. Opened daily from 9:00am-5:00pm except for Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays from 9:00am-4:00pm.

• The Visitor Information Center (VIC) is run by the John Paul II Foundation, with its primary function being to help inform tourists of the many different places and possibilities to explore Palestine. The center is located on the northwest corner of Manger Square. www.vicbethlehem.wordpress.com
Gift-Shopping

During your stay in Bethlehem, purchasing gifts can be a rewarding and a memorable experience, with customers and merchants often good-naturedly haggling over prices. The city's main streets and market are filled with shops selling local and imported items. Especially appealing to tourists are the numerous shops selling souvenirs and handmade items, aromatic Middle Eastern spices, jewellery, tasty oriental sweets, and much more.

The Church of the Nativity

During peak hours, please plan for no less than a one hour wait to reach the grotto. Visitors in the grotto are welcome to pray, take photos, or sit on one of the adjacent stone seats provided that there is room. The grotto will be closed to visitors during morning services. During peak hours, the flow of visitors to the grotto is from the left side of the elevated section of the church, down the stairs to the grotto, and exiting to the right side where the Armenian, Syriac and Coptic altars are located, where exits are located through the entrance to Saint Catherine’s Church and the courtyard.

Candles and holy oil can be bought within the Church of the Nativity. Please be thoughtful and courteous when bringing in items such as religious items or personal affects to place in places of worship around the church. The respectful taking of photographs and video is allowed at all times unless otherwise noted. The catacombs of Saint Jerome contain spaces that are used for services and also have functioning altars that are considered sacred by the Catholic Church. Please respect their sanctity as with all other Holy Places.

Please note that the Church of the Nativity will be closed from 8:00 AM to the mid-afternoon for one day between December 27th, 28th or 29th for the annual cleaning. It will re-open in the late afternoon of the day of cleaning or the following day. The adjacent church of Saint Catherine and the catacombs of Saint Jerome will remain open during this period. The Milk Grotto located behind the southeast corner of the Church of the Nativity, is also open during this time. To confirm which day the church will be cleaned, please contact the Representative office of the Greek Orthodox Jerusalem Patriarchate at 02-274-8049.

Mar Saba (St. Sabbas Monastery) and Mar Theodosios are closed to the public on Wednesdays and Fridays, and will not be available for either private or group tours. For more information, please contact the Jerusalem Patriarchate at 02-627-4941. Before visiting Mar Saba, please remember that women are not allowed inside the monastery under any circumstances.
Visiting Holy Places

At all times, please remember that most of the holy sites of Palestine are still functioning places of worship, and that many are cared for by varying monastic orders who have taken vows of chastity and personal poverty. It is not always possible to visit or take photos of all the places of a church or monastery, or to request a meeting or visit with the priest, abbot, monks or sisters. During the Christmas season, normal visiting hours may vary outside the posted dates and times due to the availability of their caretakers. Please be respectful of the practices and traditions of each faith by dressing modestly and wearing inoffensive clothing. We ask that visitors remember that the Christmas season is a busy, often hectic time for members of all various religious communities and orders, and that a decline for a visit or entrance to a specific location for whatever reason is not a personal insult aimed at you, your gender, or your religious persuasion.

Medical Service and Pharmacies
Medical clinics and pharmacies are open in Bethlehem district seven days a week. Specialized doctors and dentists operate private clinics across Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, and can be contacted through the assistance of your hotel.

Post
The Bethlehem post office is located on the north side of Manger Square, by the Visitor Information Center. Some larger hotels are also equipped to handle postal services.

Electricity and Communications
Palestine uses a 220-volt system. Adaptors are available at electronic shops in all major cities. Most shops, cafes, and restaurants have public phones for making local calls, and public phones are available in most hotels. Direct dialing is available to most Western countries; you may call overseas from your hotel room. Telephone, fax, and internet facilities are available at most hotels, hostels and cafes.

Taxi Services and Car Rentals
Taxis are available at all hours of the day, seven days a week. Your hotel or hostel can arrange for a pick-up at any time, and taxis can be hailed from the main streets of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour from the early morning to the late evenings. Taxis can be paid to bring you to a specific destination, or can also be rented by the hour. Car rental agencies in Bethlehem have vehicles that can only be used in the West Bank, but difficult to find during the Christmas season. Before using a taxi or car rental service, speak to the management of your hotel to determine what a fair price for your destination should be.
Currency
U.S dollar, Jordanian dinar, Euro and the New Israeli Shekel (NIS) are accepted in Palestine. There are currency conversion offices across Bethlehem. Tourists paying in foreign currency are exempt from value-added tax (VAT) at their hotel. Most hotels accept major international credit cards. Personal checks are generally not accepted.

Essential common Arabic phrases:
I don’t understand  Ana mush fahim...
Could you help me?  Momken tsaa’dny?
Will you wait for me?  Momken tentazerny?
Take me to my hotel  Bede aroh Laloteal
I need a doctor  Bedi doctor
How much is that?  Ad-eesh hada?
It’s too expensive  Hada Ktir Ghaly
My name is...  Esmy..
I am from...  Ana min...
I am tired  Ana ta’ban.
Let’s go  Yalla
Welcome  Ahlan-wa-Sahlan
Please  Min Fadlak
Thank You  Shukran
Yes  Na’am
No  La’a
How are you?  Kief Halak?
I am fine  Ana bekheir
Everything is OK  Kulshay tamaam
Good morning  Sabah El-Khair
Good evening  Masa’ El-Khair
Please take me to  Lawsamaht khodnee Ela...
It is near...  Kareeb...

Tourism Major Organizations & Useful Websites
Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities
www.travelpalestine.ps

The Palestinian Society of Tourist & Travel Agents
www.pstta.org.ps

Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association
www.holylandoperators.com
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Faith Events

December 15th, Saint Catherine’s Church- Bethlehem. Holy Rosary prayers at 4:00pm. Holy Mass & the Christmas Novena, at 4:30pm, except for Sunday as the Novena will be prayed during the 9:00 A.M. Mass.

December 16th-17th, Aboud. The Feast of Saint Barbara in Aboud village, Ramallah district, begins with a vespers service at 3:00 in the Greek Orthodox 4th century Church of the Dormition in the afternoon of the 16th, followed by a procession to a uninhabited Byzantine monastery. A service in is held at 9:00 on the morning of the 17th. For more information, please contact Fr. Emmanuel by phone at 0597952779.

December 17th, Feast of St. Barbara & St. John of Damascus at all the functioning Greek Orthodox Churches except Mar Saba Greek Orthodox Monastery. Services start in the early evening of December 16th until the early hours of December the 17th.

December 17th-18th, Mar Sabbas. The Feast of Mar Sabbas in the Kidron Valley is held from the afternoon of the 17th until the morning of the 18th, with an all-night service conducted by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. An adjacent church tower holds a service for female pilgrims during this period of time.

December 18th-19th, Beit Jala. The feast of Saint Nicholas begins with a vigil in the early evening of the 18th, followed by the main liturgy on the early morning of the 19th that runs concurrently with a procession of pipe and drum scout troops through Beit Jala’s Old City. For more information, please contact Fr. Boulos Al Alam by phone at 0598935957.

December 22nd, Saint Catherine’s Church- Bethlehem. A Prostration Prayer followed by a Mass, at 4:00pm.

December 23rd, Saint Catherine’s Church- Bethlehem. The Holy Rosary prayer followed by a Mass terminating the Novena, at 4:00pm.

December 24th -25th, Bethlehem.

December 24th: The Latin Patriarchate Christmas procession begins by mid-morning, with scout troops starting from the Catholic Action Center along Star Street, marching to Manger Square.

1:30PM: Manger Square, The Latin Patriarch arrives, entering Nativity Church and proceeding to Saint Catherine’s Church to celebrate an afternoon service.

The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church, Paul VI St. Bethlehem : Christmas Service, at 5:00pm.
9:00 PM: Saint Catherine’s Church will open its doors for those who have free(reserved seating cards. Services will begin shortly at 11:15PM, leading up to midnight mass in Arabic which will last until 1:30am.
1:30 AM: The Patriarch leads the traditional procession to the Grotto of the Nativity.
2:00 – 8:00 AM: Multiple services in various languages are held at the Nativity Church (without tickets).
10:00 AM: Christmas Day Solemn mass at Saint Catherine’s Church in Arabic. Services are also held at Christmas Lutheran Church, Saint Joseph’s Syrian Catholic Church and all other Bethlehem-area Christian communities considered to be on the Western Calendar. For further information on Christmas celebrations at Nativity Church, please contact the Latin Patriarchate at 02-274-3372. For information on non-denominational Christian Church services in Bethlehem district, please contact the Bethlehem Bible College at www.bethbc.com.

December 24th, Beit Sahour. A Carol service will be held at the Shepherd’s Fields (YMCA), at 4:00 pm.
The Greek Orthodox Chapel of St. George inside the Nativity church -Bethlehem: A Service of Lessons & Carols will be also held at 9:00pm. (To book a place on the buses to Bethlehem, please call 02-6272133 /0532461005 or email: dean@jdiocese.org. Buses leave the Cathedral of Saint George The Martyr in Jerusalem at 7:00pm, and return following the Service Midnight Mass of the Nativity (A/E), at 11:30pm.

December 25th.
• 7:30 Am. St. Spyridon’s Feast at the Nativity Church/ Greek Orthodox in Bethlehem. The feast is also celebrated at Jerusalem Old City in the morning, at the Greek Orthodox Monastery dedicated to the saint’s name, near the Gate of Damascus.
• The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church, Paul VI St. Bethlehem Christmas Service, at 10:30am.
• Afternoon visits by the Latin Patriarchate to both the Catholic and the Orthodox Shepherds’ Field monasteries will occur, starting at 2:00PM.
• Cathedral of Saint George the Martyr - Jerusalem. A Holy Eucharist (E), at 8:00am. A Holy Eucharist (A/E), at 11:00am. A Solemn Evensong, at 6:00pm.

December 26th:
• Saint Catherine’s Church. Feast of St. Stephen at 7:00 AM.
• Cathedral of Saint George the Martyr - Jerusalem. Saint Stephen’s Feast: Holy Eucharist (E), at 7:00 am. Evening Prayer (E), at 6:00pm.
December 27th:
Saint Catherine’s Church. Feast of St. John the Baptist, at 7:00am.

December 28th,
Chapel of the Innocents in the Church of St. Catherine. A Mass in Arabic, at 7:30 am.
Chapel of the Innocents in the Church of St. Catherine. A Latin Mass commemorating the Slaughter of the Innocents (referring to King Herod’s decree) will be held at 10:00am.

December 30th, Shepherds’ Field Church /Grotto-Beit Sahour. Mass for the Feast of the Holy Family at 4:00 pm.

Jerusalem:
Cathedral of Saint George the Martyr - Jerusalem. Holy Eucharist (E), at 8:00am. Evening Prayer (E), at 6:00pm.

December 31st, Saint Catherine’s Church. Mass at 7:00 am. A Prostration prayer at 4:00pm. A Thanksgiving Mass marking the end of the year 2016, and the Blessing of Holy Communion, at 5:00pm.

January 1st, 2017:Cathedral of Saint George the Martyr – Jerusalem. The Naming & Circumcision of Jesus. Holy Eucharist (E), at 8:00am. Holy Eucharist (A/E), at 11:00am. Evensong (E), at 6:00pm.

January 1, 2017: Saint Catherine’s Church. Mass for the Feast of Holy Mary & the International Day of Prayer for Peace at 10:30 AM, followed by the Procession to the Milk Grotto with the Icon of Virgin Mary.

January 5th:
• Saint Catherine’s Church. A Mass, at 7:00am.
• Manger Square. Reception of the Custodian of the Holy Land (Franciscan Order) at 11:30 AM.
• Saint Catherine’s Church. Solemn Vespers, at 1:45pm. Office of Readings and the traditional procession to the Grotto of the Nativity, at 3:30pm.

January 6th-7th, Nativity Church and Bethlehem. Scout processions will begin mid-morning, ending with the arrival of the Ethiopian Orthodox Archbishop.
9:00 AM: Reception of the Syrian Orthodox Bishop at Nativity Church.
9:30 AM: Reception of the Coptic (Egyptian) Bishop at Nativity Church.
1:00-2:00 PM: Reception of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem at Nativity Church.
2:00-2:30 PM: Vespers for the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, officiated by the Patriarch.
3:00 PM: Reception of the Ethiopian Orthodox Archbishop at Nativity Church.
Services for the Eastern Calendar denominations at the Church of the Nativity begin at midnight and last until 8:30am, with an hour break from 1:00 am until 2:00am. Concurrent services in the Greek Orthodox parishes of Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and the Melkite monastery in Bethlehem are also held. To contact the Greek Orthodox Jerusalem Patriarchate regarding services at Nativity Church, please contact the Patriarchal Representative to Bethlehem at 02-274-8049, or Father Spyridon Sammour at 0569221489 or Father Issa Thaljiyeh at 0598001238.

January 6th: Saint Catherine’s Church-Bethlehem. A Mass at 7:30am. The Feast of the Epiphany, or the Adoration of the Magi. Services will start by a Solemn Mass at 10:00am, to be followed by the Solemn Vespers & Solemn Traditional Procession to the Grotto: Veneration of the Infant Jesus with the Gifts of Gold, Incense & Myrrh, at 3:30pm.

Cathedral of Saint George the Martyr – Jerusalem. Epiphany Day. Holy Eucharist (E), at 7:00 am. Holy Eucharist (A/E), at 6:00pm.

January 8th, Bethlehem District. Services at Greek Orthodox churches and monasteries will commemorate the Synaxis of the Virgin Mary. This is also a primary feast day for Shepherd’s Field Greek Orthodox monastery.

Cathedral of Saint George the Martyr – Jerusalem. The First Sunday of Epiphany. The Baptism of Christ. Holy Eucharist (E), at 8:00am. Holy Eucharist (A/E), at 11:00am. Evensong (E), at 6:00pm.

January 9th, The Greek-Orthodox St Stephen’s Church- Jerusalem (Old City). The Feast of St. Stephen’s is held in the morning in this church built on the site where he became the first martyr of Christianity.

January 18th- 19th, Bethlehem. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Armenian faithful celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem. Armenian scouts will accompany the Armenian Patriarch to the Nativity Church. Early afternoon: solemn entry of the Armenian Patriarch in the Basilica of the Nativity, followed by Liturgy. Later that evening Midnight Christmas Divine Liturgy is celebrated.

January 19th, Divine Liturgy in the Grotto of the Nativity. Blessing of the Holy Water & Episcopal High mass. For more information on services, please visit www.armenian-patriarchate.com and https://www.facebook.com/ArmenianPatriarchateJerusalem/ or call 02- 6282331.

January 24th, Mar Theodosios. Mar Theodosios celebrates its feast day with a morning liturgy, followed by the opening of the cave of the Magi and a fish dinner.
Civic Events

Bethlehem

December 2nd, Layali al-Milad Festival at Bethlehem Convention Palace. The event will be held by the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music / the Arabic Music Ensemble, under the auspices of the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Mrs. Rola Ma’ayaa, and in the presence & participation of Mohammad Assaf, at 6:00pm. For more information please visit: http://ncm.birzeit.edu/en/mohammad-assaf-opening-layali-al-milad-festival.

December 4th, Dar Annadwa-Madbaseh Square. A Christmas Performance by Diyar Dance Theatre in partnership with the Palestinian Bible Society, at 5:30pm, for the cost of 15 NIS.

December 8th, Ararat Hotel (Beit Sahour Road). A Christmas Performance by Diyar Dance Theatre, at 5:00pm.

The Russian Centre for Science & Culture. Music Ceremony, Sergi Albercofiav Birthday, at 5:00pm.

Bethlehem Peace Centre. A Musical Concert by Aisha’s Team from America and Bethlehem Academy Choir, organized by Bethlehem Academy of Music, at 6:00pm.

December 9th, The Elderly Club Health Work Committees - Wade Hanna Saad - Beit Sahour. A Concert by “Anat Band”, organized by the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, at 6:00pm. For more information you may call the Club by phone at: 02- 2774449.

December 11th, A Christmas Parade will roam the Manger Street, starting from PADECO Bus Stop all the way to Gijon roundabout, at 5:00pm. For more information about the Christmas Parades please visit: https://www.facebook.com/ParadesinPalestine/?fref=ts

Santa’s Village will be launched in December in Bethlehem City to meet and greet the characters of the Christmas Parade. Please follow us on our Facebook page for the dates and location: https://www.facebook.com/ParadesinPalestine/?fref=ts Please note that the dates of the tours are subjected to changes depending on the weather conditions.

December 13th, Bethlehem Peace Centre. A Concert by the Young Musicians European Orchestra conducted by Maestro Paolo Olmi in cooperation with Bethlehem Municipality, at 6:00pm.

December 14th, Bethlehem Peace Centre. Slovack Tecknik Choir organized by the
Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, at 6:00pm

December 15th, the Russian Centre for Science & Culture. Exhibition of Fine Art by the Palestinian Artist Adnan al-Zubaidi, at 4:00pm.

December 16th, Edward Said National Conservatory Hall, Bethlehem. Brass Band Show organized by the Edward Said Conservatory of Music, at 6:00pm.

December 22nd:
Bait Al-Raja Association. Christmas Celebrations, at 5:00pm. www.hohbethlehem.org

December 24th,
• Manger Square. Christmas Carols organized by Bethlehem Municipality, at 10:00am.
• Christmas Eve: Choirs & Christmas Carols including a performance by the Italian Choir
• “Cima Tosa “from Trento, at 6:00pm.
• St. Catherine Chruch. The Inauguration of a Life-Size Nativity Scene Carved by Master Craftsmen from the Val Di Fiemme in St Peter’s Square in Rome at Christmas, on the request of the Holy See and with the Collaboration of the “Amici del Presepio“ Association in Tesero, at 11:00pm.

December 27th, Mary Dotty Park. Christmas Activities with Gifts for Children, at 5:30pm.

December 28th, the Russian Centre for Science & Culture. New Year Celebrations, at 4:30pm.

December 29th, Dar Annadwa-Madbaseh Square. American Festival Choir & Bethlehem Bible College Choir at 6:30pm, Free Entrance.

December 30th, Dar Annadwa-Madbaseh Square. A Special Music Concert by 140 Musicians hosted by the Holy Land Trust, at 6:00pm.

Beit Sahour
December 5th -10th, at the Orthodox Church Hall/ Greek Orthodox Church, from 4:00pm to 8:00pm.

December 9th-11th, Christmas Bazaar hosted by the Beit Sahour Municipality at the Municipality Mini- Center, in collaboration with the Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans. The event will include musical concerts by Suwwan Musical Group, at 5:10pm, Baqoun Folklore Dance Group, at 6:30pm, and Mafar Band, at 7:30pm.

December 10th, The Beit Sahour Municipality will hold its annual Christmas Tree Lighting, at the city square (Ararat Circle), at 5:00pm. The event will begin by
launching the Shepherds’ March led by the Scouts from Ararat to Souq Alshaeb Square. A musical concert will be also held by Nagham Band, from 7:30pm to 10:00pm.

**December 11th**, A Show by Al-Harah Theater, from 11:00am to 12:00noon, Injaz Band, from 6:00pm to 7:30pm, Diamond Dogs Band from 7:30pm to 9:00pm.

**December 17th**, Our Lady of Fatima Parish/Latin Convent - Beit Sahour. A Christmas Concert entitled (Family is a Grotto of Love & Peace) in cooperation with the Shepherds’ Band, at 5:00pm. For more information please call the Latin Convent at 02-2772733.

**December 23rd - 24th**, Shepherds’ Nights Festival, at the Greek Catholic School Square, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

On **December 24th**, a special children program will be held at the Greek Catholic School Square, from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.

**December 25th**, Our Lady of Fatima Parish/Latin Convent - Beit Sahour. Christmas Mass at 10:00am.

The Annual Candle Procession starting from the Shepherds’ Church, at 4:00pm. This event is organized by the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People in cooperation with Beit Sahour Municipality.

**December 27th**, Kids’ Celebration by the Beit Sahour Council of Churches at Avenue Hall, at 4:30pm.

**January 5th, 2017**, A Christmas Parade will tour in Beit Sahour City, from Souq Al Sha’ab all the way to the Shepherds’ Field. For more information please visit: https://www.facebook.com/ParadesinPalestine/?fref=ts

**Beit Jala**

**December 17th**, Municipality Square ( Al Manshiyyeh)
- The Beit Jala Municipality will hold its annual Christmas Tree lighting, at 5:30pm.
- St. Nicholas Feast celebrations will start with a special Carol and a collection of Christmas & Folklore songs by Rula Azar from Nazareth, at 6:30pm.

**December 18th**, Municipality Square ( Al Manshiyyeh)
- Kids’ show by Al-Harah Theatre, at 11:00am.
- A musical concert by the singers Steve Hanna & Wasim Abu Gharfeh, at 6:00pm.
- A show by Baladi Centre for Culture & Arts, at 7:00pm.

**December 19th**, St. Nicholas Feast ( Hosh Mar Jeries )
- (St. Nicholas feast activities are organized under the patronage of al-Ihsan
Arab Orthodox Benevolent Society in cooperation with the Beit Jala Arab Orthodox Scout Troop). The Celebration includes:

• A Scout Show celebrating St. Nicholas feast, at 12:00 noon.
• A reception, Christmas Carols & Activities for kids by Inad Theatre.
• The Christmas Parade organized by Media Plus will tour in Beit Jala City starting from St. Nicolas Church all the way to Al Sahel Street. For more information please visit: https://www.facebook.com/ParadesinPalestine/?fref-ts

• Ramsallah:
  December 4th:
  Rashid Al-Haddadin Square: Christmas Market, from 12:00 noon to 20:00pm.
  Yasser Arafat’s Square: A musical Performance by Rana Khoury and her band, at 5:00pm.
  The Ramallah Municipality will hold its annual Christmas tree lighting at, at 6:00pm.
  • December 5th-7th, Christmas Bazaar at the Lutheran Hall/ Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope, at 6:00pm.
  • December 8th-10th, Christmas Bazaar at the Holy Family Church Hall, at 7:00pm.
  • December 8th-11th, Christmas Bazaar at the Orthodox Club Hall, at 6:00pm.
  • December 10th, Christmas Tree Lighting Event at the Holy Family Church (churchyard), at 7:00pm.
  • December 16th, Christmas Carols Choir from Haifa, at the Lady of Annunciation Greek Catholic Church, at 7:00pm.
  • December 18th, Christmas Baby Event & Christmas Children’s play at the Ramallah Recreational Compound, at 5:00pm.
  • December 22nd, Christmas Parade at the City Centre, at 5:00pm.
  For more information please visit: https://www.facebook.com/ParadesinPalestine/?fref-ts
For more information about events in Bethlehem, Beit Jala
Beit Sahour & Ramallah during the Christmas season, please contact these organizations!
The Bethlehem Peace Center, Manger Square. Phone: 02-276-6677. www.peacenter.org
The Visitor Information Center, Manger Square. vicbethlehem.wordpress.com.
Dar Ad Naddwa Institute: Christmas Lutheran Church, Bethlehem. Phone: 02-2764576. www.diyar.ps.
Bethlehem University, Bethlehem. www.bethlehem.edu.
Siraj Center, Beit Sahour. Phone: 02-274-8590. www.sirajcenter.org.
Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Inc. Al A’atan Street – Bethlehem. Phone: 02-2750093. www.HCEF

For service times of parishes in other locations in Palestine, please contact the following church offices.
Christian Information Center -Jerusalem www.cicts.org

Note: The Ministry of Tourism would like to thank the various municipalities, religious institutions and civic organizations of Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Beit Jala and Ramallah for their assistance in compiling this information. All events may be subject to change or cancellation pending unforeseen events.