



The Abraham Path (*Masar Ibrahim al Khalil*) is a route of cultural tourism which follows the footsteps of Abraham / Ibrahim through the Middle East. The story of Abraham / Ibrahim's journey, which has been kept alive for some four thousand years in the landscape and memory of this region, records the origin of a spiritual tradition shared by more than three billion people in the world today.

What is the purpose of the path?

By retracing this journey, the Abraham Path provides a place of meeting and connection for people of all faiths and cultures, inviting us to remember our common origins, to respect our cultural differences, and to recognize our shared humanity. The Path also serves as a catalyst for sustainable tourism and economic development; a platform for the energy and idealism of young people; and a focus for positive media highlighting the rich culture and hospitable people of the Middle East.

When will the path be open?

Thanks to the generous welcome which has been extended by host communities along the way, the first walking sections of the Path are now open to travelers. These include beautiful hiking trails in the Jordanian highlands and in the hills of northern Palestine, as well as an Abrahamic cultural route through south eastern Turkey.

The Path includes some of the most fabled historic sites and holy places in the world; but it also runs through villages which are far from the beaten track and almost never visited by tourists. These are the rural heartland communities of the Middle East - places in which the age-old traditions of hospitality are still upheld, giving travelers a unique opportunity to be welcomed into family homes and to meet with local people in a friendly and respectful way.

2009 has seen hundreds of people out walking these paths, and an enthusiastic response from the growing number of families which are beginning to earn income from hosting and guiding travelers. As these walking trails develop, international travelers have begun to make their way along the full length of the route, traveling by car or bus and walking sections where possible.

What is the route of the Path?

The Path follows a constellation of historic places in which Abraham / Ibrahim is an important part of local cultural memory. These are not dry archaeological sites, but living communities in which this story has been a source of meaning and inspiration for millenia. Taken together, these towns and cities trace the arc of Abraham / Ibrahim's journey across the Levant and stand witness to the shared heritage of the Abrahamic faiths.

They include the old Silk Road towns of Sanliurfa and Harran in south eastern Turkey; the great Islamic centers of Aleppo and Damascus in Syria; the pilgrimage city of Jerusalem; the ancient oasis of Be'ersheva in the Negev desert; and the Holy Land town of Hebron or Al Khalil, where Abraham / Ibrahim is buried. For Muslims the most significant place in the story of Ibrahim is, of course, Mecca. There are also major Abrahamic sites in Iran, Iraq and Egypt.

By any measure this forms one of the most outstanding cultural itineraries in the world. Countless millions have travelled this way over the centuries, and the sites along the route continue to attract thousands of people every year. The present project simply brings recognition to a story which has always been part of this landscape, and which has found expression not only in the region's historic sites but also in the faith, folklore, and hospitality of the Middle East.

Who is making this happen?

The Abraham Path / Masar Ibrahim al Khalil belongs to the communities along the way and depends upon the leadership of host families, social leaders, local and national governments, universities, tour operators, and other civil society partners in the Middle East. The project is served by the *Abraham Path Initiative*: an international non-governmental organization whose mission is to inspire and support the opening of this route. The *Initiative* is a not-for-profit entity which has no religious or political alignments of any kind and which honors all faiths and cultures. Founded at Harvard University, the Abraham Path / Masar Ibrahim al Khalil is endorsed by the UN Alliance of Civilizations program and by the UN World Tourism Organization. Funding comes from a range of foundations and individuals, and a complete list of major donors may be seen on the website.

How can I get involved?

As the path unfolds, we invite you to join us in this historic endeavor. If you would like to walk the Path, to lead a group of travelers from your own community, to tell a story, to donate, volunteer, or simply to find out more, please contact us. We especially welcome the leadership of young people and invite enquiries about the youth initiatives, student exchanges, and volunteer service programs which are now happening on the Path - info@abrahampath.org



www.abrahampath.org