



***"All I Want
For Christmas
Is Justice"***

Dear Friends, colleagues and visitors,

On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the tourism sector and the many host communities across our destination, we welcome you to Palestine and extend our warm season greetings.

The year 2015, proved to be another challenging year for our industry. The ongoing Israeli Occupation continues to be the biggest obstacle hindering our ability to fully capitalize and exploit one of our greatest assets; tourism. However and despite these challenges, our stakeholders and partners continue to prove their resilience and steadfastness. Our industry continues to show signs of growth with infrastructure improvement continuously underway. From developing new hotels and attractions, to renovating and restoring key sites and old town core, Palestine continues to develop and diversify its tourism offering and experiences.

One of the main highlights of 2015, was Palestine hosting the United Nations World Tourism Organizations' conference on Religious Tourism. This was the first time a UNWTO conference takes place not only in Palestine but across the wider Middle East. The event was a complete success and attracted foreign visitors and delegates from across the globe including Ministers, religious leaders and multinational companies. More notably, the event also positioned Palestine on the global map as a viable tourism destination capable of claiming its spot on the global tourism stage.

The year 2015 also saw a continuation of our marketing and promotion activities with Palestine participating in several international fairs across the world. This year, we are extremely proud to be the official sponsors of the International Travel Show TT Warsaw in Poland, which is one of our key source markets, in addition to participating at new Asian and Islamic markets which the Ministry has already added to its annual list of tourist fairs. Moreover, the Ministry has been recently keen to promote Experiential Tourism by developing new experiential and cultural routes that showcase the diversity of Palestine Life.

In terms of visitor arrival and overnight stays, the sector continued to show signs of steady growth. Unfortunately, the last round of ongoing political unrest has had a negative impact on visitors to the region in the last quarter of the year.

This overview report highlights some of the main accomplishments and activities of the Ministry and its partners across the tourism value chain.

Once again, on behalf of the Palestinian government and our constituents, we wish you Merry Christmas and a blessed new year.

Rula Ma'ayah
Minister of Tourism and Antiquities

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Conference on Religious Tourism, Bethlehem, Palestine (15 to 16 June 2015)

In June of this year, the UNWTO held its conference on Religious Tourism in Bethlehem Palestine. Hosting the event in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ was a milestone event as Palestine had the honor to host the event for the first time not only in Palestine but in the Middle East at Large. The benefits of hosting this event had multiple layers including political, economic and tourism promotions. The event included participants from across the world including Ministers, religious leaders, and representatives from multinational private sector corporations. The event also featured a small exhibition showcasing Palestine rich and diverse offer as well as a series of cultural activities and tours across the destination. The overall success of the event proved that Palestine is capable of hosting large international events with state of the art conference facilities, strong supporting infrastructure, reliable safety and security apparatus and professional tourism professionals and stakeholders.



Hosting and organizing the 10th conference of Polish media in Palestine

The Polish Media Association held its 10th annual conference in Bethlehem, Palestine. A large number of Polish travel journalists and media agencies participated in the event. Attendees had the opportunity to tour various destinations in Palestine and to experience the many layers and services our destination has to offer. Hosting the conference in Palestine was just another testament to the solid and Polish - Palestinian relations.



For the last several years, Poland has been one of Palestine's top source markets in terms of both day visitors and overnight stays. The positive feedback and coverage following the conference solidified the image of Palestine as a safe and secure destination that is rich in religious, historical and cultural treasures.

Building on this strong relationship, Palestine is also proud to be the official sponsor of this year's International Travel ShowTT Warsaw in Poland.



Preserving and Restoring Palestine's Archaeological Treasures

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has prioritized the preservation and restoration of key archaeological sites in efforts to enhance and diversify Palestine's offer. Several agreements have been signed with various partners and donor to secure necessary funding to safeguard these key assets. Preserving our archaeological and cultural heritage is another effort in preserving the testament of Palestinian history and roots of Palestinian in the land of Palestine. For example, the Ministry has secured the needed financial funds to support the implementation of one of the main archaeological projects; the unearthing of the largest mosaic floor in Hisham's Palace.

Furthermore, several agreements have also been signed with the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee aimed at preserving and restoring various archaeological sites in the Hebron area.

Another Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between the PA Ministry of Tourism and the Italian Ministry of Heritage and Culture. The MOU aims to support in the development of needed legislation to safeguard Palestine's archaeological sites

Inaugurating and Opening of various Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Sites:

The year 2015 witnesses the opening and unveiling of various preservation and rehabilitation projects across Palestine. The Al Dur Tree Press Museum in Hebron which now serves a tourism facility was officially opened this year. The Ministry also began work on renovation works at the Nabi Musa archaeological site.

Developing and enriching the range of museums in Palestine has also been a priority of the Ministry. The Tulkarem Museum, the Khan Al Bireh Museum and the Bethany Museum are some example of recently opened or soon to be opened new attractions.

The Ministry is also continuing its work on project that started in 2014 and before. Different projects are at various stages of completion such as the rehabilitation of Tel Abu Zard and the Al Duke Garden. Tel Balata in Nablus, the Jarar Palace in Jenin and the Shepherds Field in Beit Sahour are just some of the projects being rehabilitated and restored.

Finally the Village of Battir which was recently listed in the World Heritage Sites is also seeing various development works including the rehabilitation of the main street leading into the village.

Palestine the winner of the best promotional tourism film

This year, Palestine had the honor of winning the UNWTO competition for best promotional tourism film in the Middle East. The announcement came as part of the closing ceremony of the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) General assembly meeting which was held from 12-17 September 2015 in Medellin Colombia. The event was attended by his Excellency Mr. Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of the UNWTO. Also in attendance were more than 900 members from 120 countries including over 70 ministers of tourism.

The winning video "Spirituality of Palestine" was produced by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.



Palestine's Participates are key International Tourism exhibitions:

Palestine has been participating at key international tourism fairs in strategic source markets. Participating in these fairs, has been a key component of the sector marketing strategy aimed at showcasing Palestine as a viable tourism destination which is rich in religious, cultural, historical and natural treasures.

This year Palestine was an official sponsor at the International Travel Show TT Warsaw in Poland .The event was quite successful with various meetings and audiences with tourism professionals, travel media and governmental officials from Poland and various Eastern European countries.

Another milestone event was Palestine's participation at the Halal Tourism Exhibition in the United Arab Emirates. This was Palestine's first time participating at this event and this participation is part of a wider strategy aimed at developing and promoting Islamic tourism to Palestine. The sector also participated in several tours to Turkey in an effort to capitalize on and grow Palestine's share of the Turkish market.

Finally, Palestine also participated in other traditional fairs such as Fitur Madrid , EMITT Istanbul, BIT Milan, ITB Berlin, ITM Moscow, CousCous Fest Sicily, JATA Tourism Expo Japan - Tokyo, UITM Ukraine, ABAV San Paulo, TT Romania, WHTS Abu Dhabi, WTM London.

Publishing of new Promotional Materials and Travel Guides:

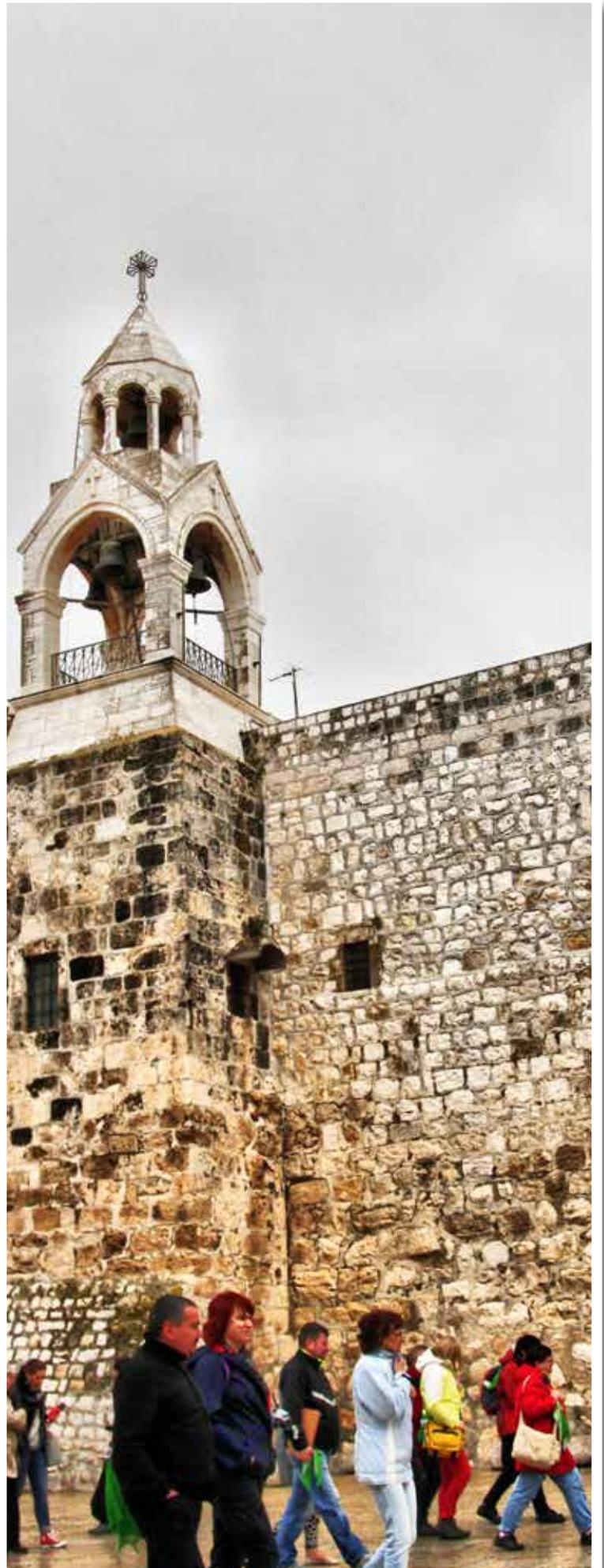
A key component of the Ministry's marketing and promotional strategy is the continuous updating and production of key promotional publications aimed at promoting Palestine as an independent destination rich in religious, historical, archaeological and natural resources. For example, the newly published "Palestine Travel Guide" was produced in Russian, Romanian, Spanish, Italian, French and Polish. Work on producing this vital guide in other languages such as Arabic and German is already underway.

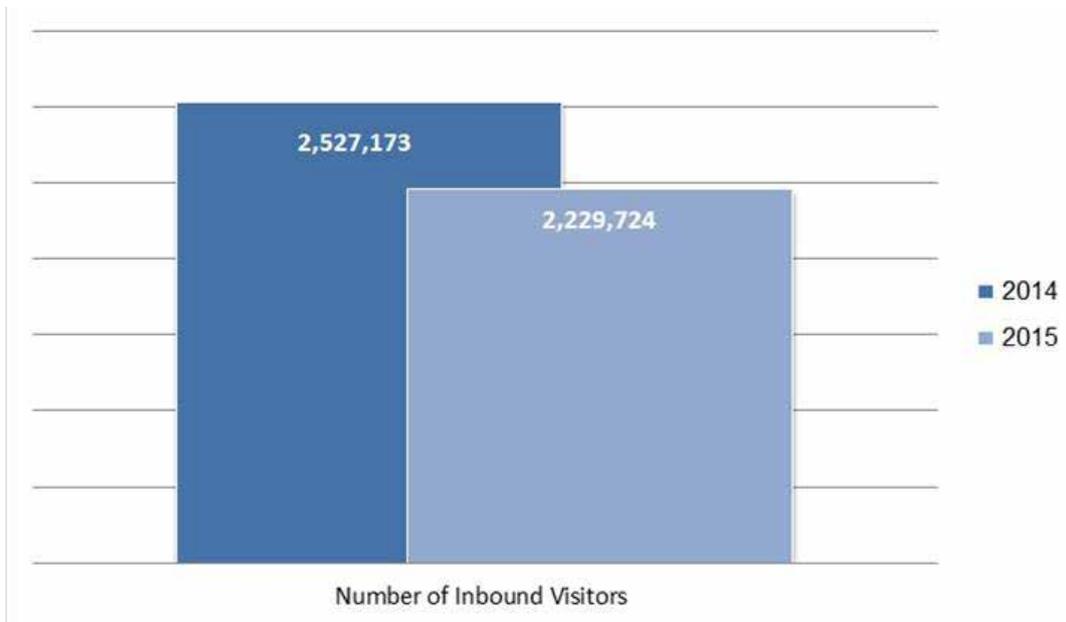
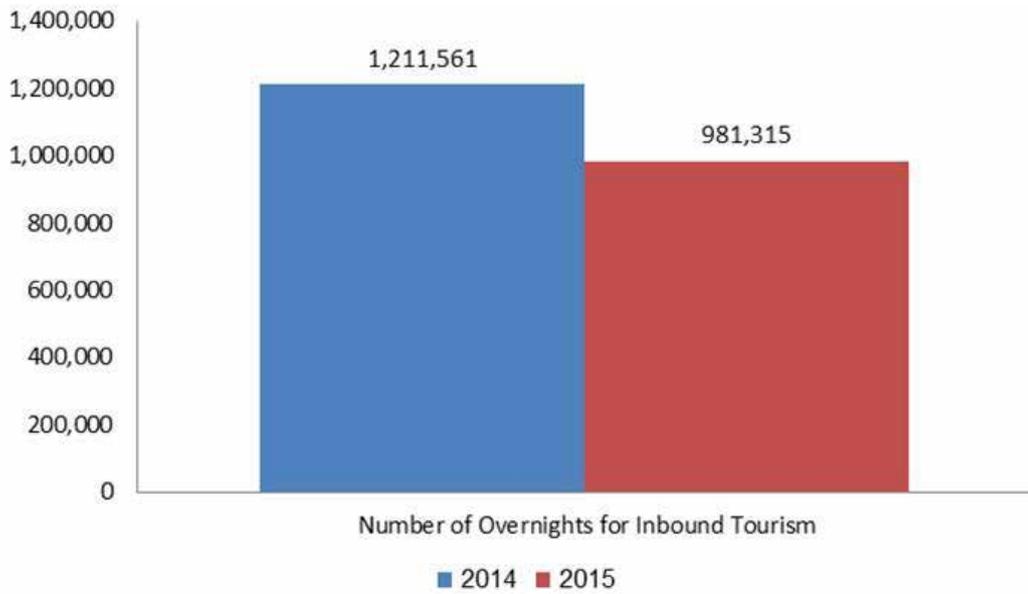
The Ministry is also working with its partners and supporters on producing additional publications aimed at highlighting Palestine's diverse culinary experiences, its unique natural landscapes and rich religious and cultural heritage. These publications are aimed to enhance the needs of all visitors; both foreign and domestic.

Visitor Arrivals and Overnight Stays:

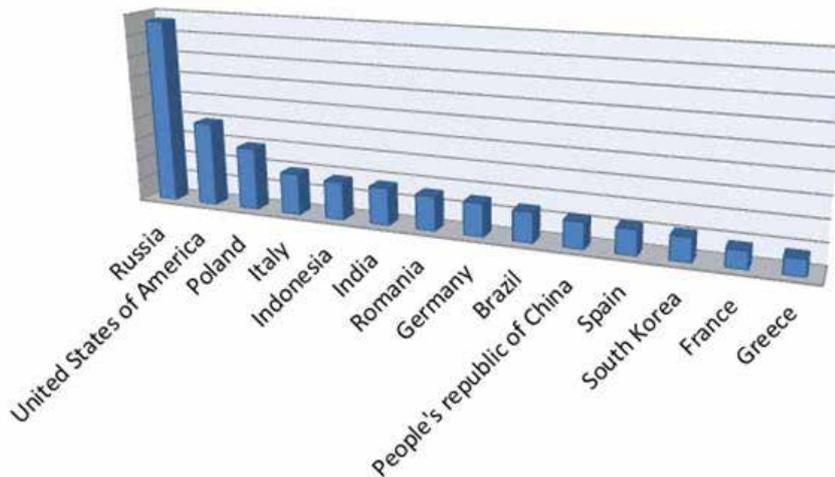
Despite the latest round of political unrest, the tourism industry continued to show signs of stability. While the months of October and November were impacted by a reduction in visitors and overnight stays, the industry maintains a steady flow of visitors. The charts below illustrate predictions for final figures in 2015, show a small decrease in both overnights stays and day visitors to Palestine.

In terms of source markets, Poland, Russia, Romania, India and the United States were the top source markets for visitors to Palestine in terms of overnight stays. Similarly, in terms of visitors, Russia, Poland, Italy, Indonesia and India topped the charts of visitors to Palestine.

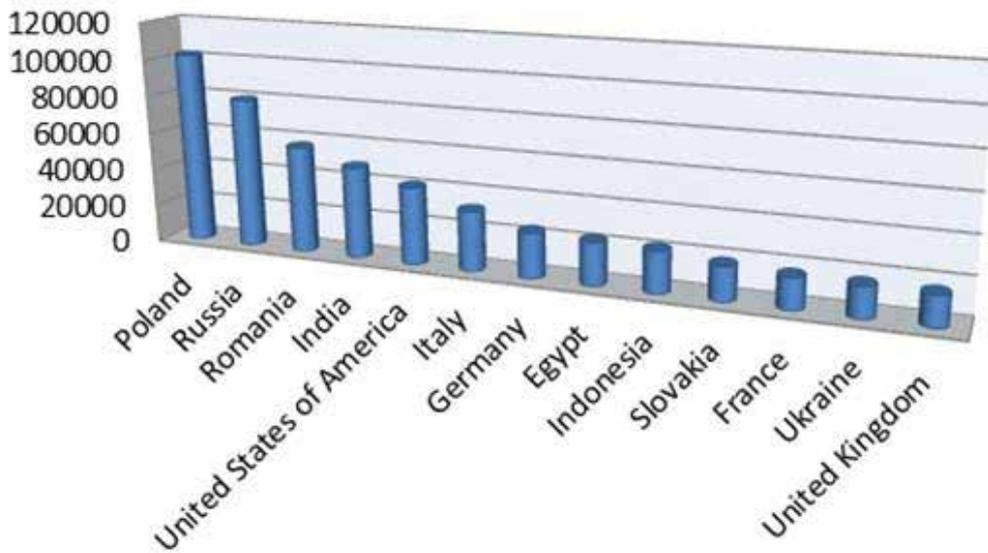




Number of Inbound Visitors According to Nationalities



Number of Overnights for Inbound Tourism According to Nationalities



Tourism investment in Palestine

A clear indicator proving the resilience of the sector and the positive growth and optimistic future is the size of investment in the sector. In 2014 tourism investment reached USD 13,996,223 with an increase of nearly %42 compared to 2013. In fact, comparing 2014 with the base year of 2010, investment increased by %88.37.

