

# THE WORLD'S OLDEST CITY AIMS TO ATTRACT MORE TOURISTS



Tourism professionals in Jericho, a Palestinian city located in the central West Bank, are optimistic about the future after the inscription of an archaeological site as the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Jericho is known as the world's oldest city.

Despite the summer heat, by the end of 2023, many visitors are expected to flock to the prehistoric site of Tell es-Sultan. This site, older than the Egyptian pyramids, is an oval-shaped mound in the Jordan Valley. **It contains prehistoric deposits providing evidence of human activity between the ninth and eighth millennium BC, as reported by UNESCO**, the United Nations agency responsible for education and culture.

Almost unnoticed from the outside, Jericho received significant recognition in September as the fourth site inscribed on the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List for the State of Palestine. As the residents celebrated this distinction with fireworks, they hoped the new distinction would bring them better times.

Mr. Abdoukarim Sider, the mayor of Jericho, expects this will increase the number of tourists visiting the world's oldest city. There are countless reasons to visit Jericho for Christian pilgrims.

The surrounding landscape has biblical locations, including the Monastery of Temptation on the mountainside. According to Christian traditions, this is the site of an episode in the Gospel account of Christ's temptation. The palace of the Umayyad caliph Hisham Ibn Abdel Malik, located on the outskirts of the thousand-year-old city, boasts one of the most prominent mosaic ensembles in the world.

Following various restoration and protection campaigns, some individuals here hope the pavement will be the next to receive recognition from UNESCO.

**Although Jericho is culturally rich, it receives relatively few tourists.** According to the PCGS (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics), only 32,535 people stayed in hotels in the area during the first quarter of 2023. In contrast, Bethlehem, a nearby pilgrimage site, hosted 221,377 visitors during the same period.

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