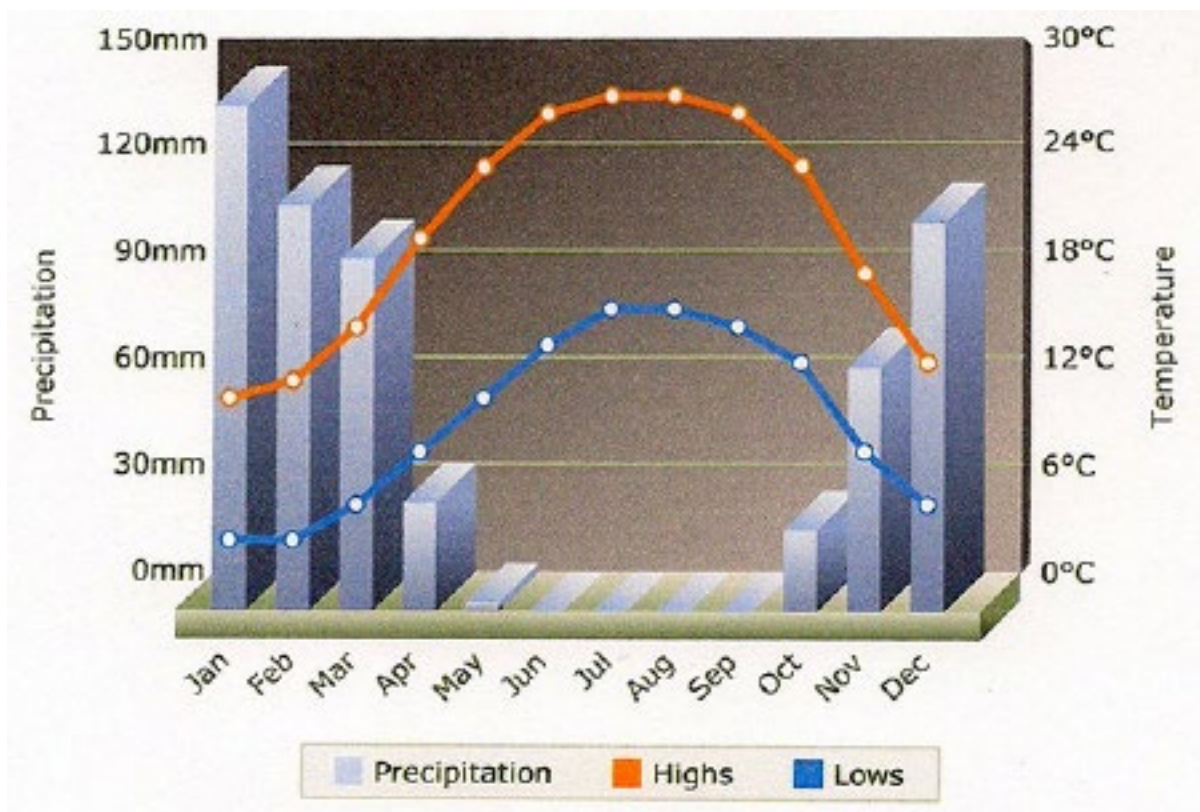




## GENERAL ADVICE FOR OUR RIDERS

### Climate and weather

Palestine's climate is essentially Mediterranean, with hot summers, cold winters and a mild spring and autumn. Temperatures can reach 40 degrees centigrade midday in midsummer, but the nights are cool in the mountains and desert. There is no rainfall in the summer (June – Sept), but winter brings rain as well as snow to the mountains.



The best times of the year for biking are March to May and September to November. Early spring brings plentiful wildflowers; in late autumn, families are out harvesting the olive trees, and you may well be invited to sit and drink tea with them. If you do visit in the summer, the weather will be very hot but you will start bike earlier in the day, and take plenty of rest stops.

## **Accommodation**

We'll be staying in different hotels in Palestine. With Middle-Eastern cuisine in the Hotels and when we are on the road. On one evening we will be eating with a local family so you'll get a chance to converse directly with the cook! If you have asked for vegetarian food please make a point of it on arrival.

Palestine does its best to comply . Palestine is primarily a Muslim country, so alcohol is hard to find and will not be offered during the ride. Hotel in Bethlehem Taybeh , and Jerusalem we stay at offer wine and beer. Be prepared though for endless tiny glasses of sweet black tea, often served with mint, and for grainy, delicious Turkish-style coffee after meals. In Jerusalem and in Bethlehem, you can find wine and beer in many restaurants. The trail also passes through Taybeh, home to Palestine's first brewery. If you pass through in October, you might find the Taybeh version of Bavaria's legendary Oktoberfest in full swing – two days of Palestinian celebration, music and culture

## **Getting here**

The cycling starts from Jenin but we meet at the Jerusalem Hotel, midday, on the first day of the tour. Traveling to Jerusalem is straightforward for European and US travelers. Several airlines offer flights from the UK to Tel-Aviv (Ben Gurion International Airport), and about a one hour's bus ride away from Jerusalem. If you are coming from a tour to other parts of the Middle East, you will need to check on specific border crossings and routes. Our tour operators can provide advice on the journey and on where to meet. There is a shared taxi that you can take from Airport to Jerusalem , or we can arrange a private transfer for you to Jerusalem which cost each direction 120 USD. To save money you may consider the 485 bus direct from the airport to the central bus station in Jerusalem. It costs a mere 17 shekels.

## **What to wear**

For the bike ride, you will need appropriate shoes, a helmet and your cycling clothing. Optionally a scarf to cover the back of your neck, to protect it from sunburn. Because the route goes through rural areas, both women and men are advised to dress accordingly to show respect to these communities. Wearing light fabrics like linen and cotton can help keep you comfortable. Women are not required to cover their heads except in mosques and other holy places. We advise women to wear  $\frac{3}{4}$  or full length pants, and either wear long-sleeved blouses or carry a scarf in their bag for covering shoulders and arms as needed. It's also best to avoid low-cut shirts, tank tops, or sheer clothing. As broad advice I suggest covering the shoulders and the knees and changing into jeans when in the cities in the evening. You may notice, from the website, that many riders do not follow this advice to the letter.

## **Looking after your health**

There are no special health issues concerned with biking in Palestine. The greatest risks are from heat stroke/exhaustion, sunburn, dehydration and traveler's diarrhea. Cyclist should take the usual health precautions, carry water at all times (this will be provided), ensure that they drink only bottled water, protect themselves from the sun, and carry a small personal first aid kit. The UK's NHS Travel Health website offers detailed and reliable information about vaccinations and other travel related health issues.

## **Safety and security**

The Palestinians are a friendly and hospitable people with legendary respect for guests and visitors to their land. Our cycle route in Palestine has been developed over 10 years and several hundred people from many countries, including the USA and UK, have biked all or part of the route without safety or security incidents of any kind. You will be biking in rural areas, and will be accompanied at all times by a professional Palestinian guide who knows, and is held in great respect and affection by, the communities along the route.

Despite the increase in security in the West Bank in recent years, it is clearly not possible for the Bike Palestine to guarantee the personal safety of every traveler to Palestine. There is still an element of political tension and instability. That said; in 10 years of running the tour we have never come across any violence or confrontational situations. We attribute this to the fact most of our cycling is on quiet country roads. Travelers are advised to visit the website of their home government for detailed and up-to-date information about the security situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Petty travel-related crime – theft or pick pocketing - is extremely rare in Palestine, and unknown along the trail. Travelers should exercise normal caution and use common sense in the larger towns and cities.

## **Insurance**

Travel insurance is your responsibility and you are strongly advised to take out adequate travel insurance before you travel, including emergency health care and repatriation cover.

## **Shopping**

Street markets abound in all the major towns selling everything from fruit and vegetables to sweets, toys and small jewelry. Every village offers a roadside shop for drinks, food and snacks. Good quality souvenirs and clothes are best sought in Jerusalem's Old City where the covered markets offer hours of great browsing, but prices can be high.

## **Equipment**

No special biking equipment is needed, other than appropriate footwear and helmet. Bike Palestine will take responsibility for punctures and mechanical failure.

## **Carrying your luggage**

Your baggage will travel with us in one of the support vans. At most you'll need a small backpack to stow water, sunscreen and whatever else takes your fancy.

## **Other minor issues**

There are plenty of ATM machines in Palestine. They dispense ,mostly shekels, Dollars or occasionally Jordanian currency. The electricity supply is 230 watts.

George Snow

george@bikepalestine.com

