

HOLY LAND INCOMING TOUR OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

HLITOA's key mission is to support a sustainable development of tourism across the wider Holy Land and to promote the tourism services of our members.

newsletter



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A short communiqué from HLITOA President

Holy Land Incoming Tour Operator Association

"HLITOA"
Jerusalem

info@holylandoperators.com

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Executive Director

Ihab Jabari



Dear HLITOA Friends and Colleagues,

It has been three months since our new board was elected and it is a great honor to be entrusted with the presidency of the Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association. I thank you all for placing your confidence in me. On behalf of the newly elected Board of Directors, I would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation. We look forward to strengthening our relationships as friends and colleagues with all HLITOA members.

As tour operators, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to introduce incoming tourists to the best the Holy Land has to offer. We must work together to maintain the high level of service and commitment we are known for. As President, I hope to continue the trend of increasing tourism in the Holy Land, as well as bringing in new members to HLITOA.

To pursue and achieve these goals, I encourage the open sharing of ideas and suggestions, and promise to advocate for the best interest of all members. We must continue to offer high quality services in the Holy Land not only by drawing from each other's strengths and experiences, but also by being open to adopting ideas and methods proven successful by our colleagues in other markets.

Our new board will strive to sustain the tempo of the last term, and continue to advance our industry with your support.

Tony Khashram

HLITOA / MoTA

The newly elected Board met on Saturday, 24 March 2018, with the Palestinian Minister of Tourism & Antiquities Her Excellency Rula Ma'aya who welcomed us and wished our Board success in our mission. She also expressed thanks and appreciation to the former President Mr. Sami Khoury and the previous administration. The two sides discussed the importance of continuing cooperation and joint action to activate the channels of communication/coordination between the Ministry and HLITOA. The Minister stressed on the importance of participation in the world tourism exhibitions in order to promote the programs promoted by the Incoming Tour Operators in Palestine. **HLITOA team.**



Adventure NEXT Near East:

Conference attended by HLITOA from 7 to 9 May 2018 in Dead Sea – Jordan & B2B meeting in Bethlehem

The aim of the conference, organized by Adventure Travel Trade Association "ATTA", was to promote adventure tourism in the Near East region by connecting the international travel trade with regional suppliers.

The conference was attended by a delegation from HLITOA, whose goal was to create cooperative relationships with international buyers. The intention was to promote the advancement of tourism that values the conservation of nature and culture in Palestine.

The agenda of *Adventure NEXT Near East* included professional speakers and workshops that offered valuable information on product development and marketing. The conference also featured a marketplace in which HLITOA focused on connecting with potential partners, holding business meetings, and promoting the brand of our members to international buyers and media. This was a great opportunity for HLITOA to start business relationships, develop new network connections, and initiate new business globally.

After the conference, HLITOA successfully arranged a B2B meeting (business-to-business) in Bethlehem with several buyers from USA, Canada, South America, and Europe, to open new channels for their products and promote Palestine.

One of the key aims of attending this conference was to connect with people and businesses, using fundamental sources, in order to promote a vision for the future of tourism in Palestine. HLITOA was able to create a cooperative power and joint sense of purpose in endorsing adventure tourism that values cultural and natural conservation. **By Suhaila Yousef – Golden Globe Tours.**



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GIZ assisting our members

During the last three years, HLITOA has contacted several donor organizations and international development agencies in an effort to help our members increase their capacity and to assist our members get the right support and assistance particularly to reach new markets. Most recently, HLITOA met with the Canadian Development Fund, US Economic office in Jerusalem, and JICA to see the possibilities of cooperation.

I would like to mention that the German Development Agency "GIZ" has committed to help HLITOA and its members reach out to new niches and destinations. We are currently working on a plan of intervention and how our members might benefit from this intervention. The GIZ assistance most likely will be focused on

opening new markets but with specific selling themes that gather a group of our members (with the same interests). For example, a group of our members who like to focus on selling soft adventure to specific markets might be selected as one group to support. Another group could be cultural and culinary themes, or a mix of history (religious) and soft adventure (hiking). HLITOA will make sure to ask our members for such themes and how they like us to proceed with this program.

In addition to these planned activities and roadshows, HLITOA will continue participating in the major international exhibitions such as WTM, ITB, and special exhibitions, such as CMT in Germany.

We are looking forward to continue working with our members and providing all of the assistance we can. Please do not hesitate to contact us for any assistance or help. **Ihab Jabari – Executive Director.**



HLITOA & Masar Ibrahim AlKhalil

HLITOA and Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil have made great steps in promoting unique programs through Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil by selling travel packages that offer an exclusive experience for travelers on the Masar while giving the visitor a deeper view on Palestinian lifestyle, culture, and landscape. The partnership began with the signing of the memorandum of understanding between both parties on December 2016 at HLITOA's Gala Dinner. Together, the two parties have initiated multiple events to make a progress in the Palestinian tourism industry. HLITOA members hiked on Masar's Trail, in Burqin and again in Jericho, and attended several workshops that were held in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Another milestone in the history of Masar Ibrahim and HLITOA's cooperation was the sponsorship of a post-adventure trip to Palestine for the Adventure Next in Jordan in May 2018. Fifteen tour operators and five media figures agreed to take a tour after having an international meeting in Jordan to discover the Masar, exploring the Holy Land for five days. The group was met with great hospitality, rich and refined culture, and walked through the rugged terrain used by people for thousands of years. Such cooperation has brought tourism in Palestine to new levels and will continue to inspire tourists and agents all over the world. **Michel Awad – Angels Tours.**



The Palestinian Tourism Law

The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities is still using the 1965 Jordanian tourism law and its bylaws of 1966. In Jordan, this law has been changed and modified several times in line with the changes and challenges facing the industry during this period. The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities identified the need to reform the law and has undertaken large consultations to create a new Palestinian Tourism Law. The challenges we encountered with the development of this law were numerous. Our tourism industry is in need of powerful regulations and laws that can secure and protect this essential business and encourage the partnership between the public and private sector, as well as the relationship between the private sector associations and unions. The analysis of the abovementioned criteria and needs instigated the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to inscribe the new tourism law – beginning the process of creating a legal framework suitable for the new realities and to fulfill most of the changes and development that happened to this industry worldwide, and of course in the surrounding countries. We have engaged in consultation with all private sector representatives (AHA, HLITOA, ATGU, UOSSP) and the draft for this law has been ready for presentation to the Council of Ministers for quite some time. **By Tony Khashram – Acolus Tours.**



The Basilica of Gethsemane, The church of All Nations

Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, is the place that witnessed the Passion, the Betrayal and the Arrest of Jesus Christ. The Gospels attest that Jesus was arrested while he was "on the other bank of the Kidron stream, where there was a garden" (John 18:1), "a place called Gethsemane" (Mt 26:36). **Next to the Garden of Olives** at the foot of the Mount of Olives, where thousand-year old olive trees can be found, the Church of Gethsemane welcomes an average of about five thousand visitors per day, thus becoming one of the most visited places in the Holy Land. The church was built in 1924 through the generous contribution of various nations, which gave her the name "Church of all Nations". It suffered severe damage in the earthquake of 1927 and has never been properly repaired. To be able to preserve this important memorial and spiritual area of Jerusalem, it is necessary to proceed with an immediate restoration of the roof and the mosaics inside the church and on its façade, which are seriously damaged. The restoration and preservation project will be carried out over an 18 month period, coordinated by ATS pro Terra Sancta and the Mosaic Center of Jericho, and will benefit from the coordination and scientific supervision of an appropriate commission from the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. It is worthwhile to mention that this work is being carried out by local young men and women, trained at the Mosaic Center of Jericho as mosaic restorers. This will strengthen the bond between this important Holy Site and the local population and will increase awareness of the local community with the rich historical and artistic heritage of the "Holy City". This paragraph is based on an article published on the website of Pro Terra Sancta. **By Rizek Petro – Petro Logos Tours.**



we look forward to receive your comments, feedback and articles

HLITOA newsletter team