

# Palestine





— MASAR IBRAHIM

## Who are the Switchers?

The Switchers is a community of inspiring green entrepreneurs and changemakers in the Mediterranean region.

It is also a place where entrepreneurs of a similar passion for the environment can meet. The Switchers are green and circular businesses that contribute to sustainable and fair consumption and production models. They are active in a variety of fields, such as organic farming, sustainable textiles, eco-tourism, renewable energy, or waste management.

The platform [theswitchers.eu](https://theswitchers.eu) tells their stories of sustainable transformation and change. We aim to contribute towards a more differentiated picture of the Mediterranean region, and shine a light on the people who are working on a greener economy.

The Switchers platform has been developed by the [Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production \(SCP/RAC\)](#) in the framework of the [SwitchMed](#) Programme with the support of the European Union. For more information, please see page 32.

— SPOTLIGHT

# The Switchers in Palestine



Palestine and beauty — of land, of people, of spirit — go hand-in-hand, no matter what some news headlines may have you believe. But the tiny nation faces enormous, ever-increasing challenges to observing sustainable consumption and production practices.

At present, many environmental obstacles stem from Palestine's restricted access to essential resources. The country's limited water supply poses a direct threat to life, while also contributing to soil degradation and desertification. The lack of proper waste management sites has led to increasingly desperate practices — in 2016, 67 percent of rubbish was openly dumped and just 0.5 percent was recycled.

Palestine has developed a national action plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production, becoming one of the first countries in the world to do so. But state-led programs alone cannot pave the way to a more sustainable future.

This reality makes the work of Palestine's Switchers, with their sustainable and circular economy projects, especially vital.

This catalogue is just a small sample of the more than 30 Palestinian Switchers in our community. All are determined to build a new Palestine, where people can achieve a higher quality of life while living in greater harmony with the environment.

Happy reading!  
The Switchers

Switching to sustainable consumption can be challenging, so we kept this catalogue simple. It is separated into seven sections:

— IN THE SEVEN SECTIONS YOU WILL FIND:



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– H2O FARM

We have also created a [Google Map](#) featuring each location mentioned, and underlined text can be clicked to access relevant websites.



[Access Palestine Google Map >](#)



# Sustainable Tourism

Tourism has offered a source of much-needed employment for Palestinians in recent years. Palestine was the world's fastest growing destination for travellers in 2017, reporting a 57.8 percent increase on the previous year's tourist numbers. These Switchers are working hard to ensure that more tourism reinforces — rather than denigrates — Palestine's exquisite natural beauty.





# Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil

Fans of sustainable tourism will want to throw on their hiking shoes and follow the Masar Ibrahim (“Abraham’s Path”), a walking trail that bends and twists throughout the Palestinian countryside. Responsible for maintaining the 330 kilometer attraction is Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil (MIAK), a non-profit tourism initiative that arranges collaboration between 52 different villages. Visitors are invited to experience Palestinian natural and cultural diversity, support rural communities along the trail, and respect the environment by following the [Leave No Trace](#) principles closely.

## – HOW MUCH

For €135-€180 per day, MIAK can provide you with a tour guide to lead you on a customized experience of Masar Ibrahim.

## – HOW TO BOOK

Use MIAK’s [Facebook](#) or contact [info@masaribrahim.ps](mailto:info@masaribrahim.ps) to book a personalised journey itinerary, which can run for anywhere between one and 21 days.



[Facebook](#)



[info@masaribrahim.ps](mailto:info@masaribrahim.ps)



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— DAR ABU HASSAN GUEST HOUSE

# Dar Abu Hassan Guest House

## Battir



Use Dar Abu Hassan Guest House as your base for exploring Battir, the proud farming village known in Jerusalem as “The Basket of Vegetables” for its abundant grapes, olives and figs. You will feel worlds away from the city when you enter Battir’s stunning valley, famed for its centuries-old agricultural terraces. Dar Abu Hassan hosts the [Palestinian Heirloom Seed Library](#), created by Vivien Sansour to preserve ancient seed varieties and ensure the survival of traditional farming practices. You can wind down from exploring the area in an ancient Roman bath and spring — an especially welcome respite on warm summer days.

### – ACCOMMODATION

Dar Abu Hassan provides neat, comfortable rooms with a locally sourced breakfast included. Prices vary, depending on the season and availability.

### – GETTING THERE

Battir is easily reachable from Bethlehem by shared or private taxi, and should take just around ten minutes on the road.

### – HOW TO BOOK



[+972-522-050-858](tel:+972-522-050-858)



[hassan.muamer@gmail.com](mailto:hassan.muamer@gmail.com)



[Facebook](#)



# Sustainable Textiles and Clothing

Did you know that the global textile industry generates 92 million tons of waste annually, with less than 1% of textile fibres being recycled? Unfortunately, these numbers keep increasing in the wrong direction, not least due to “fast fashion” consumption habits.

Thankfully, our Switchers are breaking the mould by creating beautiful garments and accessories from sustainable sources. These two entrepreneurs are also proudly empowering female artisans in Palestine, where women still have a relatively low presence in the labor market.





# Aisha Design

## — WHAT IS IT

Aisha Dweikat learned the importance — and potential — of upcycling fabric from an early age. She now sells sustainable fashion products through Aisha Design. The company started out making jewelry from silver and discarded olive wood, before expanding into accessories based on salvaged fabric, from tote bags to table runners. All designs feature aspects of classic Palestinian artwork. “My design is about environment meeting heritage,” says Dweikat. This marriage produces the perfect souvenir for the curious and environmentally conscious shopper.



## — HOW MUCH

Contact Aisha via [Facebook](#) for specific prices but, as an example, embroidered tote bags cost around ILS 150 (€39).

## — WHERE TO BUY

Use Aisha Design’s [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) to purchase products, which can be shipped to the United States and Europe. A dedicated online store is coming soon.



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# Taita Leila

## — WHAT IS IT

In 2015, Noora Hussein quit her job as a chemical engineer to become a designer — and fashion lovers everywhere were thrilled. Her Ramallah-based, high-end women's label, Taita Leila, takes traditional Palestinian embroidery as its central focus, bringing the famed handicraft to a vast range of trendy skirts, dresses and shorts. Hussein is proud that her studio empowers local female embroiderers with a stable source of income, while also working around their family commitments. Pick up some memorable clothing items adorned with Palestinian artwork that, according to Hussein, is now reserved for dresses inside museum cases.



## — HOW MUCH

Prices start from £85 (around €100) per item.

## — WHERE TO BUY

Purchase through the Taita Leila [website](#). The company arranges shipping to all locations, which occurs via Amman, Jordan.



[www.taitaleila.com](http://www.taitaleila.com)

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# Organic Cleaning Products and Cosmetics

Cleaning and cosmetic products have long wrought havoc on the planet, with their tendencies to create especially harmful pollution. These Palestinian Switchers are helping to address these alarming issues, from the global struggle against microplastic waste to regional concerns about the Dead Sea's mounting degradation.



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# Dead Sea Pearls

## – WHAT IS IT

Support the environment, local women and the Palestinian economy all at once by purchasing organic beauty products from Dead Sea Pearls. Nasser Al-Khatib founded the company with his father, Nader, as an entry point for Palestinians into the lucrative market for cosmetics sourced from the Dead Sea's legendary salt and mud. Customers can treat themselves to high-quality soaps, skin creams and bath salts, safe in the knowledge that Dead Sea Pearls operates on firmly sustainable principles. According to Nasser, the company sources salt and mud responsibly, brings much needed

money into Palestine, and proudly employs eight local women — even giving them a stake in the company's overall profits.

## – HOW MUCH

Packets of mud and salt can start as low as €2, while higher-end creams may cost over €13.

## – WHERE TO BUY

Buy online through the Dead Sea Pearls website, or get in touch directly.



+972-592-123-657 or  
+972-592-750-809



[info@deadseapearls.com](mailto:info@deadseapearls.com)



[www.deadseapearls.com](http://www.deadseapearls.com)



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# Palovina

## – WHAT IS IT

Since the dawn of time, Palestine and olives have gone hand-in-hand. So how come other countries benefit from olive-based, castile soaps, while Palestinians typically use imported, chemically enhanced products? Elham Zaben established Palovina to set this situation right. Zaben taught herself how to manufacture a 100 percent organic skincare range, which she now produces and markets in and around Ramallah. Zaben deliberately hires local women at Palovina, noting the limited jobs available for females

in Palestine after university. Palovina's bright business model has piqued the interest of Palestinians and foreigners alike, with Japanese embassy staff encouraging Zaben to explore the Far Eastern market. Come and see what the fuss is about!

## – HOW MUCH

At present, cleansing gels retail for just under €10 per bottle. Body balms cost slightly more.

## – WHERE TO BUY

You can visit Elham at her store on Irsal Street, Ramallah (perhaps contact Elham in advance). Alternatively, you can purchase products through the store on Palovina's [Facebook](#) page.

 [+970 592 188 900](tel:+970592188900)

 [Facebook](#)

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# Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Waste Management

Around the Mediterranean, many Switchers are tackling the urgent task of improving resource efficiency to avert further environmental destruction. This mission is especially urgent in Palestine, where waste management challenges range from a lack of available disposal sites to suspected toxic dumping in the West Bank.





# Palglass

## — WHAT IS IT

Discarded glass takes on a second life on the streets of Bethlehem, courtesy of Mervat Jackaman, the owner of the upcycled handicraft initiative Palglass. Jackaman spearheads a family operation that takes leftover pieces of glass — usually empty bottles or unneeded materials from factories — and fashions them into artistic pieces, Christmas ornaments and more. Jackaman wants to continue raising awareness about the benefits of upcycling in Palestine, where businesses like hers maximize value from the community's available resources.

## — HOW MUCH

Most of Palglass' decorative pieces — including the bestselling angel figurine — can be picked for ILS 35 to ILS 55 (around €10 to €15) per item.

## — WHERE TO BUY

You can visit the shop on Al Qanater Street, Bethlehem each day (except Sundays) from 8am to 6pm. Alternatively, buy through the Palglass website or call.



[+970-598-229-665](tel:+970-598-229-665)



[www.palglass.com](http://www.palglass.com)



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# The Walking Tech

## – WHAT IS IT

While studying in the midwest United States, Palestinians Reham Abuolwan and Saeed Quraib went for a jog and came home with an idea — to develop shoe insoles that can track a runner’s progress using artificial intelligence. The pair co-founded startup company The Walking Tech, which makes futuristic athletic products by extensively using recycled materials. Abuolwan and Quraib adopted this business model to help combat Palestine’s various waste management problems. When The Walking Tech’s first commercial line goes

on sale — hopefully before 2020’s end — runners can support both their own health and Palestine’s fragile environment.

## – HOW MUCH

While final prices have not been set, The Walking Tech’s products should range from €75 to €125, depending on the insole’s design and number of features.

## – WHERE TO BUY

The products will be available for purchase online. In the meantime, curious visitors can reach Reham by phone, [Facebook](#) and email.



+970 592 188 900



[riham.elwan@gmail.com](mailto:riham.elwan@gmail.com)



[Facebook](#)



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# Organic Food and Agriculture

Palestinians face daily issues of access to land and water, which hugely constrain the agriculture industry's capacity to provide healthy, sustainable produce. These two Switchers are working to ensure that Palestine can enjoy sustainable, farm-to-table ingredients — a critical element of the nation's proud culinary tradition.





# Hosh Jasmin

## Souq El Makhrou

### — WHAT IS IT

Hungry travellers will savor a trip to [Hosh Jasmin](#), a well-known organic restaurant (and farmers market every Saturday) in the countryside between Battir and Bethlehem. One house specialty is [musakhan](#), a simple oven-baked dish of chicken, onions, spices and pinenuts, all served over bread. At Hosh Jasmin, you can agonize over whether to order the musakhan or the zarb (meat cooked with vegetables in an underground oven). Or, of course, just order both! Owner Mazen Saadeh grows most vegetables used in Hosh Jasmin's dishes, without resorting to chemicals or pesticides — no mean feat in Palestine, where agriculture faces serious logistical challenges.



### — HOW MUCH

The price of main meals ranges for lamb (80 INS / €21), chicken (50 INS / €13) and vegetarian (30 INS / €8) options.

### — GETTING THERE

You can reach Hosh Jasmin by taking a taxi from nearby Bethlehem (15 minutes, and pay no more than 25 INS / €6.50).



[Facebook](#)



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# H2O Farm

## — WHAT IS IT

Basel Amarna, H2O Farm's founder, became a pioneer of water-efficient, hydroponic agriculture in Palestine by overcoming enormous obstacles. Chief amongst these was the unavailability in Palestine of the "nutrient solution" required to keep hydroponic plants healthy. Undeterred, Armarneh spent six years developing his own formula from scratch. He now shares his knowledge — and his nutrient solution — with other Palestinian growers, guiding the development of at least ten hydroponic farms in the West Bank. The agricultural technique addresses Palestine's twin shortages of land and water availability — using hydroponics, H2O Farm produces 8,000 plants monthly over 340 square meters, whereas normal watering would yield just 500 to 1,000 plants.



## — HOW MUCH

H2O Farm produces peppers, mint, basil and lettuce, along with other seasonal products. Check for the current prices.

## — GETTING THERE

You can arrange a visit to H2O Farm, which is located on Amarna Street - Yabad - Jenin. Make sure that you contact the team in advance via [Facebook](#) to confirm that the farm is open.



[Facebook](#)



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# Sustainable Housing and Construction

Housing and construction is no exception to Palestine's need to shift towards more sustainable production practices. In addition to the country's existential resource challenges, the building industry has imposed its own environmental burden on the Palestinian landscape — not least through the long-held practice of irresponsibly excavating rocks for construction materials.



# Shtayya

## — WHAT IS IT

Ahmad Shtayya, director of the sustainable architecture firm Shtayya, wants to bring more eco-friendly buildings to his native Palestine's skylines. After working on green building projects around the region for years, Shtayya is currently constructing a residential complex that boasts water treatment facilities, solar panels, and high-efficiency insulation. The firm's designs tackle unsustainable traditions of Palestinian building — including the overuse of local rocks — by sourcing cutting-edge, eco-friendly materials from other countries.

Shtayya's ambitious portfolio aims to show future customers that, all at once, they can help the environment and drastically reduce their energy bills.

## — FIND OUT MORE

Shtayya is still yet to complete its first sustainable housing project in Palestine. However, Ahmad can arrange for interested visitors to check out [The Palestinian Museum](#), the country's first-ever LEED-certified green building.



[ahmad@shtayya.com](mailto:ahmad@shtayya.com)



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# Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

As countries across the world increasingly need to develop renewable energy sources, Palestine finds itself right near the front of the queue. The nation faces a litany of challenges: it possesses no natural resources, has a high-density population, and relies primarily on imports to meet its electricity needs. Our energy-focused Switchers are helping Palestine to find a sustainable way out.



# Msader

## — WHAT IS IT

Abdelnaser Dwaikat, founder of Palestinian solar energy company Msader, believes that his compatriots view renewables as crucial to Palestine's future. At present, Palestinians pay around 10 percent of the average household income towards energy bills — that figure drops to an estimated 2 percent in Jordan. Furthermore, as Dwaikat points out, harnessing the sun's power reduces reliance on Israel's electricity grid, an arrangement that is notoriously unreliable for Palestinians. Msader claims to have more than half the market

share for solar energy in Palestine; the company has installed solar panels across 83 schools, and developed huge projects at Jericho and the Dead Sea.

## — FIND OUT MORE

You can contact Msader via [Facebook](#). The team also runs information sessions through the Msader Academy, which explains the environmental and economic benefits of Palestinians switching to solar.

 [Facebook](#)

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# Credits and Disclaimer

To see the location of all businesses and sites mentioned, visit our custom map.



[Access the Palestine Google Map](#)

All photo and statistics credits can be found in this [Document](#).

The Switchers catalogue for Palestine was created by David Wood and Ananda Alonso. Layout and design of this catalogue was done by [Loop: Design for Social Good](#).

Have comments or questions? We would love to hear from you at



[theswitchers@scprac.org](mailto:theswitchers@scprac.org)

A special thanks to the Switchers in Palestine, whose knowledge, talents, and innovations made this catalogue a reality!

Follow the stories of Mediterranean changemakers online:



[Switchers Website](#)



[Switchers Facebook](#)



[Switchers Instagram](#)

– DISCLAIMER

*The Switchers is a community of inspiring green entrepreneurs and changemakers in the Mediterranean region.*

*The Switchers Community has been developed by the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) in the framework of the SwitchMed Programme.*

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*SwitchMed works to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Mediterranean via:*

- *Capacity building for resource efficiency in manufacturing*
- *Training for start-ups in eco-design, business plan, marketing and financing of sustainable products and services,*
- *Engagement with policymakers to establish a boosting legal framework*
- *An action network of interested parties to connect and scale-up activities.*

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Well.**

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**Switchers**  
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