

Tulkarem

Courtesy of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities



The Ottoman railway tunnel (Al-Kharq), Tulkarem.

Tulkarem is located between the coastal plain and the central mountain range, in the northern part of the West Bank, bordering the Nablus, Jenin, and Qalqilya governorates. Throughout its history it was a connecting point between the land and the Mediterranean Sea. In 1908, Tulkarem was a major rail junction on the Hejaz Railway line and was the administrative center of the Bani Sa'b subdistrict in the late Ottoman period, later becoming a municipality in 1892. The city of Tulkarem is the center of Tulkarem's governorate with a land area of 268 square kilometers. It has a population of 172,800 inhabitants.

Tulkarem Governorate contains 32 villages and eleven municipal cities. The modern name of Tulkarem is derived from the Aramaic name Tur Karem, which means the mount of vineyards. In the Roman period it was known as Berat Soreqa. The current name was revived after the Islamic conquest of Palestine. Archaeological surveys indicate that Tulkarem was inhabited continuously from the Bronze Age to modern times, with evidence also from the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods. During the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, Tulkarem was controlled by the Zaydan family.

In the late Ottoman period, Tulkarem appeared in the Ottoman tax registers as part of the Qanun *nahiya* (a regional or local type of administrative division that usually consists of a number of villages and/or sometimes smaller towns), which was a part of the *sanjak* (district) of

Nablus. It was the largest village in the *nahiya* and had a population of 176 households (roughly 968 persons), and paid taxes on wheat, barley, summer crops, olives, goats, beehives, and a press for olives and grapes. During this early period of Ottoman rule, there were five neighborhoods that surrounded the present Old Mosque.

Its climate is Mediterranean subtropical:

relatively warm and humid due to its proximity to the seashore, making it a perfect spot for various agricultural products, beekeeping, and livestock.

Tulkarem has vast agricultural areas and is famous for its fresh vegetables and fruits, which include citrus, melons, olives, olive oil, tomatoes, potatoes, wheat, sesame, peanuts, eggplant, peppers, green beans, cucumbers, and



Palestinian Dishes



Chicken Musakhan

Musakhan (مسخن), a Palestinian favorite, is traditionally eaten with one's hands. The name means "something that is heated."

It will always turn out delicious as long as you use good olive oil, *taboon* bread or *markook* (also known as *shrak*), which is baked on a *saj*, quality chicken, and sumac. The name sumac is derived from the Aramaic *summaq*, which means "dark red berry" that grows wild in the Mediterranean region, and especially in Salfit, a Palestinian city in the central West Bank.

Ground sumac has a nutty texture and a sour and lemony taste. Chicken *musakhan* is garnished with roasted pine nuts and served with plain yogurt on the side.

thyme. It is also known for its dried fruits. Tulkarem is famed for its folkloric dance, *dabka*, which is distinguished from *dabka* in other cities by its quick movements. The city is also distinguished by its beautiful colorful traditional dresses and handicrafts that include pottery, embroidery, and straw-woven crafts.

Tulkarem hosts several annual festivals and cultural events such as the Wadi al-Shair Festival, held in Anabta, which boasts Tulkarem's most important cultural activities. Tulkarem is also known for its

sports events that take place in the municipal football field and multi-purpose sports hall, in addition to its popular markets where one can find antiques, souvenirs, and vintage handicrafts, and enjoy cafés, delicious food, and sweets. Last, but not least, Tulkarem is most famous for its vast green spaces, its parks, its swimming pools, and its open, natural scenery.

The Ottoman Saraya or the old building of Tulkarem Municipality is a historical and architectural masterpiece that was built by the Ottomans in 1890. The Ottoman Tunnel (Al-Kharq) in Bala'a, which was part of Hejaz Railway, is a model of beautiful architecture and has a splendid view. The interior of the tunnel has pedestrian space and sufficient lighting for walks or for trains that arrive at night. Significant Ottoman historical buildings can also be visited in Shufa and Kufr al-Labad. In addition, two castles in Kufr al-Labad and Shufa were recently restored in order to conserve the historical buildings and enhance the preservation of cultural heritage.

Within the Tulkarem vicinity lies Beit Leed, which has five Roman water pools hewn in the rock. There is a Mamluk monument on the road to the water pools and a stunning natural cave carved from water drops that leak through the rocks. Irtah is home to the Maqam of Banat Yacoub (Jacob's daughters) and a small park in which a Roman water system, an old Ottoman building, and a small pottery factory is located. In Irtah you can also see a Roman grape press.

Tulkarem has been developed during the last two decades as a main attraction for local tourism. Some of its features include Al-Mintar Resort, which contains a restaurant and is located in Bala'a, at the top of Tulkarem's highest mountain,

from which one can see the Mediterranean. The complex also features numerous recreational activities, including a small ethnographic museum of traditional Palestinian life. Another attraction is the Bajjora Resort and Turkish Bath, where one can enjoy a luxurious Arabian spa-like experience in Deir al-Ghousoun Village, north of Tulkarem. If you're a gym-goer or like to lift weights, go to Best Life Gym and Spa, where you can also have a Turkish bath.

Al-Waha Resort and Swimming Pool is one of the biggest resorts in Palestine and boasts a huge swimming pool and a number of entertainment facilities for the whole family. Mega Land is yet another attraction known throughout Palestine. It has a theme park and enjoyable activities for children and adults. Do not miss the Tulkarem Municipality Guest House, which is essentially a hostel within the old Ottoman building located in the old city. The ground floor consists of souvenir shops, where one can buy handmade and local products, and a



Tulkarem Museum.

restaurant that serves traditional food. It also has a tourist information center.

Tulkarem Museum is an archeological and tourist attraction that was built in 1908. It used to be the Ottoman postal and telegraph office in the last days of the Ottoman Empire. The museum consists of two main parts: the first exhibits archaeological finds that date from the Chalcolithic period to the Islamic period. These materials were obtained from excavations that were conducted by the Department of Antiquities at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. The second part is a collection of historical manuscripts and ethnographic materials. The tourist information center promotes domestic and international tourism in Tulkarem and provides useful information regarding accommodation, food, local products, and entertainment.

Article photos courtesy of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

Palestinian Dresses

Tulkarem

The women of the north used to work with their husbands in the field, and therefore they lacked sufficient time to embroider their dresses.

The garment is made of three pieces: the white dress, the pants, and the overcoat.

The overcoat is made of felt *joukh* and is part of the bridewealth. It is decorated with silk pieces but contains no embroidery. The headdress is made of beautiful silk fabric that is tied with a green bandana.

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