

## WHERE TO GO?

### Sufi Trails

Courtesy of Visit Palestine

Sufism is a mystical path in Islam that leads to an intimate contemplation of God through specific spiritual rituals and practices, including dance, music, and meditation. The term *ṣūfi* was first used to describe Muslim ascetics who clothed themselves in simple garments made of wool (*ṣūf*). From it also came the word *taṣawwuf*, which means mysticism.

In the context of Palestine, the divinity of the Holy Land influenced the gradual spread of Sufism in the area. Although Sufis had already begun forming religious orders (*turuq*) in the eighth and ninth centuries, their popularity reached its height in the fourteenth century, under the Mamluk Sultanate (1250-1517). During that time, Sufi lodges or *zawiyas* grew widely in number, mainly in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Nablus.

It was believed that Sufi teachers or *sheikhs* were given special powers and were capable of arbitrating with God. These mystics were said to be able to exalt the divine grace and direct it towards granting welfare or healing. After their deaths, their graves were venerated as shrines that the faithful flocked to so they could hold festivals and pray for miracles.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, which lasted from 1517 to 1918, and with the influence of European cultures, Sufism in the Holy Land declined, and only a few Sufi groups remain here today. However, many Sufi sanctuaries are still hidden among ancient trees, usually on the outskirts of villages, where they adorn the highlands of Palestine. The shrines were often built in proximity to various significant sites: the ruins of Byzantine churches, Roman garrisons, or prehistoric caves, and overlook breathtaking views of the surrounding landscapes.

The Sufi Trails, an initiative of the Rozana Association, invites you to explore these beautiful landscapes, to walk paths through oak forests and olive groves and discover the story of the forgotten shrines while meeting the hospitable people who live in nearby villages. A number of one-day hiking trails have been designed to introduce these places that have been hidden from most travelers until now.

For more information visit:

- <http://www.visitpalestine.ps/en/tours/hiking-and-walking-trails/sufi-trails-tour>
- [www.rozana.ps](http://www.rozana.ps)
- [www.sufitrails.ps](http://www.sufitrails.ps)

