

## Taybeh, the Home of Goodness

*Courtesy of VisitPalestine.ps*



Twelve kilometers northeast of Ramallah, Taybeh is home to approximately 1,500 people. From its elevated location on a rocky hill of 869 meters, the village overlooks the wilderness, the depression of the Jordan Valley, Jericho, and the Dead Sea.

The history of Taybeh goes back more than 5,000 years, to the time when it was first settled by Canaanites. The

Hebrew Bible calls the place Ophrah; however, in the time of Christ the place was already known as Aphram, which is believed to be its original Canaanite name. According to the Evangelist John (11:54), Jesus found refuge there after performing the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead.

The Crusaders fortified Aphram with the Castle of St. Elias. It is believed that the fortress was attacked in 1187 by Saladin, who had his encampment at Tell Al Assur, an elevated point that dominated the region. Saladin is also regarded as the person who changed

the name of the village to Taybeh. Local legend says that the leader was affected by the kindness and goodness of Aphram's inhabitants. The name, however, sounded much like "afra," which has a negative meaning, "full of dust." Saladin thought that the village name contradicted the character of its inhabitants. From that day on, the village was called Taybeh (goodness).

### Taybeh is definitely worth a visit!

The people of Taybeh belong to three Christian denominations: Latin (Roman Catholic), Greek Orthodox, and Melkite (Greek Catholic). All the communities celebrate Christmas according to the Western calendar, on December 25, and Easter is celebrated together according to the Eastern calendar. Each denomination has its own church in the village, which is usually open for Sunday morning services.

There is also a fourth church ... or more precisely, its ruins. The prominent Byzantine building known as *Al-Khader* (or Saint George) is situated east of the town. Visitors can still see two chapels an entrance portico, a stairway, and a well-preserved cruciform baptistry.

Another interesting site is the 250-year-old house that stands in the courtyard of the Latin church. The house was inhabited until 1974. It is known as Palestinian House or Parable House, as its domestic and

agricultural furnishings illustrate the context of many Biblical parables and offer a possible configuration of the Nativity cave in Bethlehem. The ancient structure has rooms on three levels to accommodate the family, the large animals, and the smaller animals.

Taybeh has become famous for being home to the first Palestinian brewery, Taybeh Brewing Company. Since 2005, the town has risen to prominence every September/October, when it hosts the annual Oktoberfest, which attracts numerous local and international visitors. The event aims to promote not only the famous beer but all local products made in the village. This year the festival is scheduled for September 24 and 25, and will include various music and dance performances, and a wide selection of local food.

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