

A Hike in the South an alternative tourist trail

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1 Kherbat Bani Dar

2 Khirbat Birin

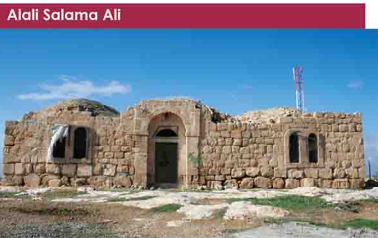
3 Khirbat Um Al Zaituna

4 Hellenistic Roman Tombs

5 Byzantine Ruins (Um Al-Amad)



6 Qubur Kesra (Kesra tombs)
18 54 00'09 82 03, 640 MASL
31.470467, 35.056339



7 Ailal Salama Ali (Al Bishri Dura)
14 32 13 09 33 19, 640 MASL
31.431455, 34.828363

People believe these to be the tombs of Kesra, the King of Persia. Kesra may be a diminutive of Kars (small palace in Arabic). These tombs are two burial sites on the lower slope to the north of Khirbat Al Joof from the early Roman period. A water channel leads to a nearby cistern in the south. Next to the cistern lies a press and bare rock. The tombs lie from south to north and cover an area of 10m x 20m. The building techniques date back to a certain period but differ in type. There are three main categories:
The main external open courtyard is surrounded by seats on the sides carved into the rock. Burial rituals were performed in this courtyard, where priests, relatives of the deceased and visitors would sit, and offerings to the deceased were made.
The *riwaq* (corridor, passage) is an area carved in the rock leading to the burial chamber. This element was innovated and later excluded from subsequent classical Roman and Byzantine classifications.
The burial chamber this tradition started in the Greek era and other famous tombs in this tradition are the tombs at Beit Jlore, known as the tombs of Sidon trader saint, who inhabited in the town. This tradition of the burial chamber originated with wealthy and prominent individuals. The decorations on the tombs at that time reflected the wealth of the deceased.
The first tomb (the upper or northern). This is smaller in size than the second tomb, but similar to it in design. It differs in its internal design with an uncovered yard 9m x 9m in size. Passing through one entrance, there is a rectangular yard (4m x 3m) carved into stone. It is relatively small and leads to the square burial room (2m x 2m) with one square tent (2m x 2m) at its north-eastern edge.
The second grave (the lower or southern). This is an uncovered rectangular yard (9.5m x 8.5m) leading through three entrances to a smaller rectangular yard (4m x 2.5m) carved into stone. From here it leads to the square burial chamber (4m x 4m) with six rectangular niches, each approximately (0.5m x 2m) with two niches on each side. On the western edge, there is a cavity carved into the stone for collecting bones. These tombs belong to Khirbat Al Joof.

Ailal is a building named thus because it is higher than the surroundings, although it consists only of one floor.
The Ottoman feudalist Salameh Ali Duden Al Darabeh, previously from Dura, lived on the vast area of land on a shallow hill which is almost flat. His all overlooks large areas of land around it, from Jabal' at the northern edge of Bethlehem to the north, to Bir Al Sabar' in the south, and from Masar in the east to the Mediterranean in the west. Around the Ailal to the east and north, there are the remains of Jordanian trenches built following the Nakba of 1948. Checkers and local games have been carved onto its rocks.

It seems that the Ailal was built towards the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century. It is a square building (10m x 10m x 3.5m) from the outside. Its beautiful entrance is from the east. Inside there are four different-sized rooms and two corridors (one livan divided into two parts), with each part having two rooms on its sides. The first part may have been a reception hall for men, and the internal western part was for women and was called Al Marwan. The rooms have double windows, except for the southern part.

Inside, to the right of the entrance, there may have been a staircase leading to the roof. Only the upper entrance remains and from here the outlines of the rooms and corridors are visible. Among the domes is a medium-sized room that may have been an upper ditch or a place for storing grain.

The building was constructed with old stones that had been used previously. Many decorated stones can still be seen in the internal and external walls, most of them large stones. It is certain that they were brought from the nearby hamlet of Al Bishri to the north. There are many archaeological features and a shed around the building to the east and west, including of presses and quarries.

A Hike in the South: An alternative tourist trail

The development of the southern trail is part of a project by RIIWAQ to revive tiny historic towns, including Bani Na'im, Yatta, Es Samu', and Adh Dhahiriyyeh, which are located along the trail. Tourism can serve as a tool for regeneration that creates job opportunities and expands the incomes of local residents in the targeted areas. Passing through a diverse landscape of hills, valleys, and plains, tourists will have the opportunity to see a number of archeological and scenic locations in the southern region of the West Bank. They will also pass through population centers in hamlets and towns, with stops in the historic centers to enrich the tourism experience.

The trail includes places to rest. There is potential for guesthouses to be created in the future for tourists in the populated centers through which the trail passes. The trail is about 67 km in length and is divided into three days, during which 17 main locations are explored. These locations are Maqam Yaqin in Bani Na'im (1), Aristobolia (2), Khirbat Tuwan, the Roman pool in Al Karmel (3), Al Karmel (4), the historic center of Yatta (5), Khirbat Magdal Baa (6), Es Samu' (7), Khirbat Simiya (8), Khirbat Raboud (9), Adh Dhahiriyyeh (the fort, the mosque, the caves, the market, the Qaisariya) (10), Khirbat Anab Al Kabira (11), Ruin Juraida (12), Al Burj (13), Ailal Salama Ali (14), and the Qubur Kesra (Kesra tombs) (15).

Day One: From Bani Na'im to Yatta (20 km)

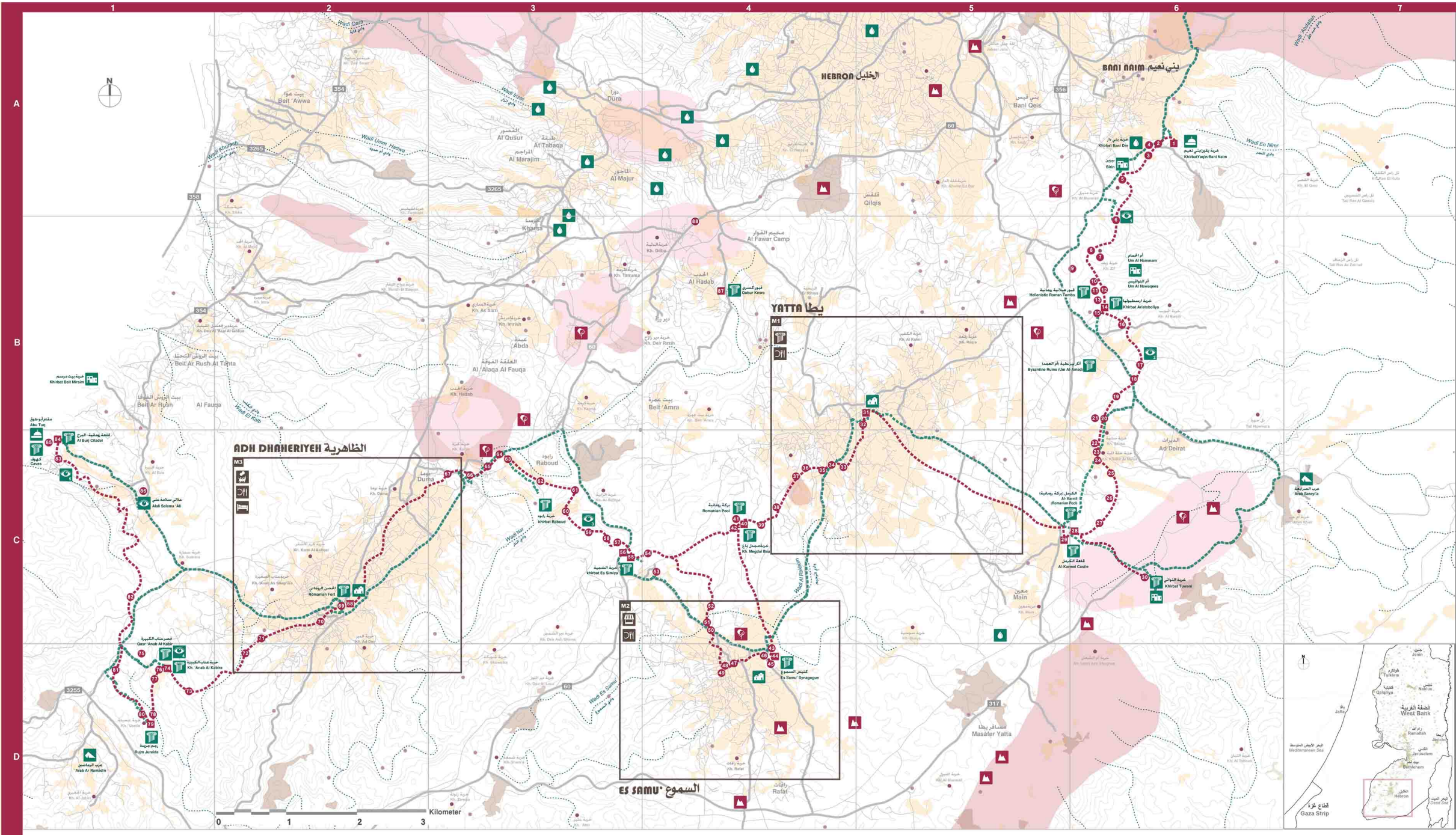
The trail starts at Maqam Yaqin (Yaqin shrine) (1) located in the south of Bani Na'im town, and travels south, bypassing the paved street (2) to arrive at a small hill containing the antiquities of Bani Dar (3) old wells, a grape press at the top of the hill, and a water spring (4) near the paved street. Leaving the hill and heading south-west for one km, you reach a housing complex named Khirbat Birin (5) where you may be invited for a cup of tea. Continue walking along a narrow dirt road; on the nearby hill at a distance of 1.1 km, look to the east and enjoy the beautiful view (6). Descending down the valley towards the south-west, and then ascending the nearby hill, the trail arrives at Khirbat Um Al Zaituna (7) an archeological site that dates from the Byzantine era. Ascending the valley towards the west, you reach a water spring (8) cross the valley on the dirt road towards the southern mount known as Tel (9) which contains some ancient Roman remains. This site is closed by the Israeli occupation. Halfway up to the summit, follow the dirt road towards the east for about 170 meters, then start the ascent towards a forested area. After around 300 meters towards the valley, an ancient Hellenistic grave lies on the left side of the trail (10). From the location itself another grave can be seen at the foot of the opposite mountain (11). Continue to walk towards the dirt road adjacent to the forested area (12) and on the top of the mountain, close to the wood (13) lies the ancient archaeological church of Aristobolia and its Khirba (hamlet) and caves (14). From the location of the caves and the olive press at Aristobolia (15) ascend towards the eastern valley. On the top of the opposite hill (16) change the direction to the south towards a hill planted with trees (17). From there, continue west on the dirt road to the main paved road (18). Cross the street and continue walking along the top of the hill adjacent to the valley from a southern direction. After 350 meters, there is a line of trees (19) and the direction changes downwards to the valley. Continue to descend, with the valley to the left, for 350 meters to a paved access road (20). Walk for 100 meters towards the west, then the direction changes towards the south on the paved road (21) to complete the descent with the valley itself. The valley ends and joins other valleys after 450 meters. The direction then changes to the east, where another dirt road (22) cuts across a paved road (23) running through a large valley (24). The trail continues towards the east and starts to ascend the southern hill of the valley; after passing some houses (25) the trail reach the hilltop (26). At the top of the hill, the route heads south-west towards the southern hill opposite (27). Behind this hill lies the Roman Karmel water spring and pool in the valley (28). Al Karmel fortress lies at the top of the hill (29). Continue for 3.5 km to the old city of Yatta (30) through the agricultural fields between Al Karmel and Yatta. It is possible to use public transportation for part of the paved roads. There is a guesthouse available in Yatta. Continue east for 1.5 km on the paved road to the hamlet of Khirbat Tuwan (31).

Day Two: From Yatta to Adh Dhahiriyyeh through Es Samu' (27 km)

The trail starts in the old city of Yatta (32) and heads south for 800 meters on a paved access road (33) to a hill out of the town (34) parallel to the west towards Khirbat Birin (35) towards the valley (36) towards the main street (37) and continue walking south for 170 meters. Then start the ascent on a paved access road (38) heading west to the top of the hill (39) where the trail is in the natural terrain and leads south-west down the valley (40). Continue to walk along the valley until you reach an old agricultural dirt road (41). From this, another dirt road branches (42) to the west upwards to Magdal Baa (43) Roman archeological site, Khirbat (hamlet) and the pool of Magdal Baa (44). Continue to walk from the pool along the dirt road for 150 meters until the road branches into two (45) the first heading south to Es Samu' (46) and the second to the west towards Khirbat Simiya (47). At 1.3 km to the south, the dirt road joins the paved Yatta-Samu' road (48). Ascend the street to the south until the trail arrives at the center of Es Samu' town (49) where you can visit the synagogue of Es Samu' (50). To leave Es Samu', follow the paved access road (51) parallel to the main Es Samu' street the south for 600 meters (52). Then descend the valley (53) in the same direction to a dirt road (54) at the foot of the mountain. Head north to the main street (55) and follow the valley northwards on the dirt road to the west (56) for 550 meters, where the ascent starts to the mountain to the west. At the top of the mountain lies a population center called Ras Shana' Al Butm (57) continue to walk west down the valley (58) to an ancient Hellenistic grave. 100 meters (59) from the main street. The trail cuts across the main street (60) and starts up to Simiya (61) Continue the ascent to the west up to the flat top of the mountain with its outstanding view (62). After around 700 meters, continue along the southern valley (63) of the hill, which joins another valley (64). At the intersection, ascend to Abul Engan (65) on the dirt road towards the north. Passing by Abul Engan to the west, Khirbat Raboud (66) and the archaeological site on Raboud hill becomes visible. Descending west, Raboud, the route passes by Abul Ghoutan (67) and arrives at the main street (68). Continue west until the route crosses a stream in the valley (69) then head south through agricultural land and ascend along the old paved street (70) cross the main street at the intersection and continue the trail to the west for 150 meters. Then turn south along the dirt road (71) remaining at the periphery of the valley until you reach the old city of Adh Dhahiriyyeh (72). Public transportation can be used from the main street (84) to the historic center of Adh Dhahiriyyeh (73).

Day Three: From Adh Dhahiriyyeh to Al Burj (the tower) (23km)

The trail starts from the old town in Adh Dhahiriyyeh (74) and heads south, passing through the old market (75). Continue for 1.4 km along the street to the top of the hill (76). Then follow the valley (77) towards the olive orchards, arriving at an agricultural dirt road (78). Follow this road to the south and walk along the valley for 1.4 km until the road changes direction and ascends to the west (79). Up the hill lie the remains of the great Anab church (80) and the great Khirbat Anab (81). Continue walking from the church to the valley, crossing the valley amidst the fields on the dirt road (82) that lies between old stone terraces. Take a dirt road parallel to the valley (83) for 600 meters, then proceed upwards (84) to the hilltop to the west. On the hilltop lies Ruin Juraida (the stone ruins of Juraida) (85). From Ruin Juraida follow the dirt road (86) to the west up to an area close to the main street. Cross the street (87) and walk next to it to the north for 1.4 km, when an ascent starts with one hill after another (88) towards the west, finally reaching the hill opposite Al Burj to the south (89). From the valley to the north and the trail now ends at Al Burj citadel (90) and Maqam Yaqin (91). On the way back, it is possible to pass by Ailal Salama Ali (92) near the paved street that links Al Burj with Adh Dhahiriyyeh. It is also possible to access the Kesra tombs (93) near Al Daba spring (94) and Al Fawar refugee camp.



- View Point
- Historic center
- Qubur Kesra (peasant-washovers)
- Magan (holy shrine)
- Archaeological site
- Bedouin community
- Natural spring
- Archaeological feature
- Cave
- Towers
- Mountain
- Seasonal festival
- Restaurant
- Accommodation
- Old market

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