INNOVATION AHEAD
ABRAHAM PATH INITIATIVE
2019 ANNUAL REPORT
abrahampath.org
“Hope,” the great playwright Vaclav Havel once observed, “is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense regardless of how it turns out.” Hope is the quality we need in today’s times. And the Abraham Path is a path of hope.

The story of Abraham’s journey has lasted in cultural memory for thousands of years and inspired millions of people around the world. Abraham (Ibrahim in Arabic) is known for his hospitality and kindness to strangers and that, astonishing as it may seem, is what you find when you walk in his footsteps. I often reflect on what deep lessons we can take from this region and share with our own neighbors and friends.

While the walking paths themselves have sometimes faded, and are divided by multiple borders, it is API’s privilege to highlight these ancient paths and the local people with their warm-hearted hospitality.

Your encouragement and support helps turn strangers into friends.

With gratitude for bringing hope into our world,

William Ury
Founder and Chair Emeritus
The Abraham Path Initiative promotes walking in Southwest Asia, commonly called “the Middle East,” as a tool for intercultural experiences and fostering friendships across the challenging divides of our times.

With local partners, API catalyzes economic development, community-based tourism, and cultural heritage preservation. Our Fellows recount stories about the peoples and cultures of this region to a global audience.

API envisions a future in which this region may become best known for its spectacular walking trails and its warm, welcoming people.
ON THE MASAR IBRAHIM

ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2019

In Palestine, Abraham’s journey continues in cultural memory and on the ground as the Masar Ibrahim, as the Abraham Path is known in Arabic. The route runs 330 kilometers along the spine of the West Bank.

In 2019, the Masar Ibrahim was again named one of the top ten walking trails in the world by National Geographic Traveller.
This year, we sponsored 100 students from the Al Fawwar and Al Arrub UNRWA refugee camps to walk on the Masar Ibrahim, under the leadership of API project manager Odate Hanna.

For teenagers who rarely get a chance to roam freely, walking in the Palestinian countryside and connecting with their heritage was memorable. API seeks funds to renew this program.

“I wish all UNRWA students in Palestine could have the same chance we had to discover our beautiful county.”

Tala
Since its inception, the Abraham Path Initiative has aspired for the Path to serve as a vehicle for meetings, unexpected encounters, and cultural exchanges.

In 2019, we created new online platforms to facilitate walking journeys on the Path. Book a Guide currently allows walkers to connect directly to certified guides in locations throughout Palestine.

Guides lead walks and share their knowledge and insights while helping visitors navigate language barriers, cultural sensitivities, and political situations.

We look forward to expanding this tool to additional locations in the region.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Web: www.abrahampath.org
Email: experience@abrahampath.org

SHATHA BANNOURA
Location: Beit Sahour
UNIQUE INTERESTS: International Relations, Birding

ZAID AZHARI
Location: Nablus
UNIQUE INTERESTS: Cuisine, History, Landscapes
In 2019, we launched Abraham Path Experiences to bring international and local participants together to explore subjects such as climate change, negotiation, and the arts.

Guided by product manager Jessica Menasce, API facilitates educational alumni journeys, retreats for boards, and family reunions. Local tour operators implement the walks.

NEW COURSES IN CUISINE, CULTURE & NEGOTIATION:

**BOARD & FRIENDS WALK**
Jerusalem & Southern Palestine
March 27-April 1, 2020

**LEADERSHIP & NEGOTIATION**
Southern Jordan
October 10-15, 2020

**IRAQI KURDISTAN EXPERIENCE**
Northern Iraq
October 16-22, 2020

**PALESTINIAN CUISINE & CULTURE**
Jerusalem & Northern Palestine
October 23-30, 2020
API has broadened our geographic scope into the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, where Abraham is called “the father of the Kurdish people.”

The Kurdish venture began with our Fellows, Leon McCarron and Stephanie Saldana, who generated a network of people, places and stories with their work in Iraq over the course of several years. API Director of Operations Ben Barrows built upon these relationships to lay the groundwork for today’s partnerships.

In 2019, API scouted a 200 kilometer trail that follows the Zagros mountain range from the Silk Road-era city of Amedi to the snow-capped peaks of Choman, near the border with Iran. Our network has grown to include local guides, homestay providers, and tour operators.

In November, we pioneered an Abraham Path Experience in Iraq. Walkers met civic leaders and explored the new route. A second Abraham Path Experience is scheduled for Iraq in October 2020.
Our time in the field revealed the Kurds’ deep connection to the mountains and sincere spirit of hospitality.

Leon McCarron reminds us, “Our footsteps in Iraq follow centuries of other walkers that have sculpted these landscapes.”
API Fellows bring uncommon stories about the peoples and cultures of the region to global audiences that benefit from insights on farming, textiles, music, mountaineering, and resilience.

After the scourge of ISIS, API Fellows opened doors for new trail and community development in Iraq.
Leon McCarron made exploratory visits to the environs of Karbala and Erbil to meet Muslims, Kurds and Zoroastrians. In 2019, he partnered with local trekking pioneers to scout 200 kilometers of new trail in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq.

Leon says, “Working in this region brings great promise and hope to a place and people that have suffered greatly, and are keen to open to a brighter path for the future.”

Stephanie Saldaña undertook cultural heritage research with Christians and Yazidis in Erbil and Mosul. She completed the first draft of Anwar’s Clementine: What Refugees Can Teach Us About Hope, Compassion, and Our Common Humanity in 2019.

We are grateful for the expertise and experience they bring to our projects.
Dear Friends and Supporters,

Kudos to the Abraham Path Initiative’s staff, board members, and to you, our donors, for advancing API’s mission in 2019.

With new digital tools we are expanding visibility, functionality, and access to on-the-ground experiences. API brings professional opportunities for people living along the path, and joy to its visitors and those that welcome them.

Our financial report shows promising organizational growth trends. API is strengthening connections with our global community and streamlining communications with donors using Network for Good, a customer relationship management program.

We appreciate the support you’ve given to API’s bold vision. You are making a difference in the region through your investment in the Abraham Path Initiative.

Warmly,

Anisa Mehdi
Executive Director
OUR THANKS TO API’S GENEROUS 2019 SUPPORTERS

**TRAIL BLAZERS ($5,000 and above)**
- Aaron Marks Foundation
- Cynda & Marcel Arsenault
- Ken Baca & Isabelle Guy
- Peggy Dulaney
- Bob & Joan Doeller
- Flora Family Foundation
- Paul & De Gray
- Tim & Frances Hester
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- Schmidt Family Foundation
- James Sebenius
- Elizabeth Ury
- William Ury
- Gregory & Regina Weinberger
- Karima Zedan & Suzanne Rotondo*

**EXPLORERS ($500-$4,999)**
- Ramin Asgard
- David Baum
- Leo D’Aciero
- John & Norma Davidson
- Tarek Eldin & Helene Sroat
- Sybil Fields
- James Patrick Finerty

**WALKERS ($50-$499)**
- William & Patricia Flumenbaum
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- Michael & Anne Gorman
- Nohad Harati
- Forsan & Reem Hussein
- William Jefferson*
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- Miriam Orwin
- Zack Petersen*
- Arabella Philimmore*
- Judy Raifia

**RIGHT: Akre, Iraq. Photo by A. Qutairy**

**LEFT: Photo by A. Garthwaite**

*Monthly donors

In honor of the marriage of Thomas Modern & Kelsey Smith

Anonymous
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2019

GROWTH TRENDS:

- 44% INCREASE IN FIRST TIME DONORS
- 52% INCREASE IN NUMBER OF DONORS
- 212% INCREASE IN FOUNDATION & GRANT REVENUE

EDUCATION & PROGRAMS: 2%
FOUNDATIONS & GRANTS: 18%
INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS: 22%
BOARD DONATIONS: 58%

PROGRAMS: 54%
PUBLIC AWARENESS: 7%
ADMINISTRATION: 39%

Our financials are audited annually. Details available on GuideStar.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

William Ury, Founder & Chair Emeritus
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PHOTO: Mountains in Iraqi Kurdistan by E. Garthwaite.
"I started walking these hills when I was seven, collecting wild honey with my father. I still love to walk. It's in my head, in my heart. If I have a problem, a big thing to think about, I come here and walk."

Habib Dawabshe, retired Masar Ibrahim guide
National Geographic Traveller, April 8, 2019

The Abraham Path Initiative is a US based nonprofit, non-religious and non-political international NGO registered as a 501(c)(3) organization.

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Maplewood, NJ 07040

WITH GRATITUDE FOR FOUNDATION SUPPORT FROM:

COVER PHOTO: Students on the Masar Ibrahim. Photo by M. Baghdadi.
BACK COVER: Wadi Qelt on the Masar Ibrahim. Photo by M. Baghdadi.