Sebastia

Sebastia (Sabastiya) is located around ten kilometers northwest of Nablus at the junction of two main historical routes, the northern Nablus-Jenin route, and the western route from the Jordan Valley to the Mediterranean coast. The site offers a magnificent view of the surrounding farmland. Christian and Islamic traditions indicate that the tomb of John the Baptist (Prophet Yahya) is in the town. Numerous archaeological excavations carried out at the site since the beginning of the twentieth century, showed that the oldest archaeological evidence dates back to the Early Bronze Age (3200 BC), and a part of Sebastia landmarks of the second Iron Age (which dates back to the ninth and eighth centuries BC) were also revealed. It included the upper city, the Acropolis, and the walls surrounding the site were also revealed. The walled area contains a central square and a palace, in which carved ivory decorations were found.Sebastia became a fortified city during the Iron Age (c. 900-538 BC). Then the city fell in 722 BC under the control of the Assyrians and later under Persian rule in the year (538-332 BC). Sebastia continued its administrative role during the Hellenistic period (332-63 BC) after its submission to Alexander the Great. After the continuous occupation of the city, massive fortifications were built around the upper city, the Acropolis, and surrounded by circular towers. After Sebastia came under Roman rule (63 BC to 324 AD), the city became part of the province of Syria. Emperor Octavian granted it to King Herod in 30 BC to rule it in the name of Rome. Then after Octavian obtained the title of Augustus from the Roman Senate in 27 BC, Herod gave it the Greek name "Sabasti," which means "venerated," to honor him. Emperor Septimius Severus granted it the name "Colonia" in 299 AD. An extensive construction program was carried out during the Roman period, including the city wall, a gate, a colonnaded street with 600 columns, the basilica, the forum, a theater, a temple for Augustus, a stadium, an aqueduct, and cemeteries.Sebastia became an episcopal center associated with the presence of the tomb of John the Baptist (the Prophet Yahya, peace be upon him) during the Byzantine period (324-636 AD). Two churches were erected there, one of which is located to the south of the hill of the archaeological site. While the other was built in the present town of Sebastia. In 636 AD, the Muslims conquered the city and the rest of the region, led by Amr ibn al-Aas.During the Crusader period (1099-1187 AD), a massive cathedral was built on top of its ruins. After the Ayyubids, led by Husam Al-Din Muhammad bin Omar Lashin, liberated Sebastia from the Crusaders, the church was converted into a mosque between (1187 AD-1225 AD). The Ayyubids added a tribune to the mosque, the Prophet Yahya Mosque.Then, in 1892 AD, an Ottoman mosque was built on the eastern part of the cathedral, and Sultan Abdul Hamid added a minaret to the mosque. In the late Ottoman period, one of the local leaders, Al-Mashaqi, added two rooms and a liwan which were used as a school, then as a public office. Finally, it was rehabilitated into an antiquities museum in cooperation between the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and the Municipality of Sebastia. The establishment of this school had a significant impact on the early educational movement of the townspeople, as the first school was established in 1882 AD by the Protestants. In 1903 AD, the Ottomans established another school for boys and girls. At the end of the Ottoman period, Sebastia was one of the Throne villages that appeared in different parts of Palestine. Where they built majestic high palaces that reflect the social and political distinction owned by influential families, such as; the Al-Kayed Palace of the Kayed family as well as the Al-Hawari Palace belonging to the Al-Hawari family, these palaces are characterized by the distinguished architecture and its outlines, as the palace consists of two floors, in the middle of which is an open yard. The ground floor was used for guest services, while the sheik and his family used the upper floor as a sleeping area. The attention was on the main facade of the gates palace by highlighting the architectural and artistic styles. On both sides of the gate, stone seats were built, and above the arch of the entrance was a foundation inscription mentioning the date of construction, and the builder's name.The historic town, with its narrow streets and alleys, is considered a model for the traditional Palestinian architecture of theThrone villages that prevailed at the end of the Ottoman period. Restoration operations were carried out in the town's center, including the mosque, the tomb of the Prophet Yahya, the Cathedral of John the Baptist, the Roman cemetery, the olive press, the Kayed Palace, and traditional buildings, in addition to the tourist path. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities implemented the Information Interpretation Center project in cooperation with the Sebastia Municipality, and with the support of the Spanish government, in addition to the rehabilitation of Al-Baidar Square, the current town of Sebastia. The archaeological remains, the historical town, and the cultural scene are significant tourist attractions in Palestine; it was included on the Tentative List Inventory of Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine.

Sites & Attractions: Type

- An archaeological hill and a populated village

Address

It is 10 km to the northwest of the city of Nablus and close to the right of the street heading north from the city of Nablus to the city of Jenin; this town has taken a location on a high hill that overlooks the junctions of

historical roads that co...
Sebastia - in the center of the village - near the old mosque.
PS-NBS
Palestinian Territories

32.27966,35.19885
View in Google Maps

Booking On Site

No

Booking Online

No

Booking via Phone

No

Advance booking required

No

Agent Voucher Accepted

No

Fee: Special Group Rate

No

Handicap bathroom

No

Stairs

No

Wheelchair Friendly

No

Stroller Friendly

No