



# 15 YEARS ALONG THE PATH

**ABRAHAM PATH INITIATIVE**  
**2021 ANNUAL REPORT**



Dear Friend of the Path,

This year the **Abraham Path Initiative (API)** celebrates our 15th anniversary. Against all odds, our bold vision continues to inspire connections. Every step along the Path connects us across the yawning divides of culture, language, politics and religion. Every hello, every welcome, every meal, every story, every smile connects.

As we begin to accustom ourselves to a "new global normal," API maintains precautions on the ground while shining light on hospitality and kindness to strangers. Our core values of respect, humility, curiosity, and service are essential to our relationships, programs, and burgeoning online events.

We are catalyzing enthusiasm for new trails in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and for intangible cultural heritage preservation in the "cradle of civilization." People we've met in the Kurdistan Region inspire us by exemplifying the kind of hospitality attributed to the legendary family of Abraham.

Together with you on this journey of adventure, joy, and hope,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "will ury".

William Ury  
**Founder and Chair Emeritus**

# ABRAHAM PATH INITIATIVE (API)

**Abraham Path Initiative (API)** promotes walking in the Middle East as a tool for economic development and fostering friendships across the challenging divides of our times.

API highlights timeless traditions of hospitality and the spectacular landscapes of this highly complex region. We introduce global audiences to local people through interactive online programming. Our **Fellows** scout trails and advance cultural heritage preservation.

We envision a future in which this region is known as a place to walk, connect, and converse.

LEFT: Mountains in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Photo by B. Barrows.  
RIGHT: Spring in Nablus. Photo by A. Mehdi.

# 15 YEARS OF CONNECTION

BRIDGING SOCIAL DISTANCE

Abraham Path Initiative (API) is a bold and noble approach to transforming perceptions of one another, while generating social and economic development for an oft misunderstood region.

## SOME OF OUR FAVORITE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Catalyzed 2,000 km regional walking trails
- Scouted 170 km in Kurdistan Region of Iraq
- \$3.3 M investment in Palestinian community-based tourism
- \$50,000 investment in Sinai trail development
- 75 guides trained in mapping, wilderness first aid, and language skills
- Cyber programs are generating a global community

# TRAIL DEVELOPMENT IN IRAQI KURDISTAN

*"We've walked around 800 miles, stitching together ancient footpaths that have borne traders, pilgrims, armies and shepherds through the Zagros Mountains."*

Leon McCarron, "A different view: How has the pandemic affected people and nature in Iraqi Kurdistan?" [Adventure.com](#), September 3, 2021

Erbil-based Fellows Leon McCarron and Emily Garthwaite, along with our key Kurdish ally Lawin Mohammad and expert volunteer David Landis, achieved important goals for trail development in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq by walking existing trails, scouting new trails, and establishing connections with key communities and local outdoor clubs.

LEFT: Enjoying a break, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Photo by B. Barrows.  
RIGHT: Hiking in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Photo by L. McCarron.

# CYBER PROGRAMMING: STAYING CONNECTED

## TOGETHER ONLINE:

Our founding dreams of 2006 have not been deferred by the pandemic. Rather, our focus 15-years on, has sharpened. We bring people together online for expanded stories of the region through webinars and "postcards."

We launched our first online course this year, "Negotiation Wrapped in the Abraham Path." Board Chair **Dr. Joshua Weiss** shared his professional expertise throughout the program.

## Postcards:



### COOKING TOGETHER

Sabah "Umm Muhammad" Adkidik

*Umm Muhammad creates delicious, local fare in her kitchen, making sure Jerusalem is a part of each bite.*



### TO SYRIA AND BACK

Lawin Mohammad

*Lawin visits his family in Syria for the first time in nine years, then comes down with COVID-19 after returning to Erbil.*



### A WALK IN SAUDI ARABIA

Fahed "Abu Ali" Al-Muqbil

*Abu Ali invites you to walk with him on Darb Asir in southern Saudi Arabia.*

## API LiveOnLine:



### BETHLEHEM AT CHRISTMAS

Hazem Bannoura & Noor Hodaly

*Hazem and Noor lead us through the streets of Bethlehem in API's Second Annual LiveOnLine tour. Sponsored by PAX sapiens.*

## Meet Us on the Abraham Path: Season Two



### OLIVE FARMING

**Karmel Abufarha**

*Canaan Palestine farms olive trees the Fair Trade way, while coping with water shortages, occupation, and the pandemic.*



### SEEKING SEEDS, SOURCING RESILIENCE

**Vivien Sansour**

*This artist and ecological sleuth collects, propagates, and recovers threatened varieties of fruits and vegetables.*



### THE POWER OF WALKING

**David Baum**

*API Board Member David Baum on the emotional, intellectual and physical benefits of walking.*



### SAILING THE DEAD SEA: SEAFARING BELOW SEA LEVEL

**Dr. Joseph A. Greene**

*The Dead Sea is more than a satisfying soak for the soul. Dr. Joseph A. Greene explains its past as a route of commerce.*



### WHY WALK THE MIDDLE EAST?

**Alix Hopkins, Lawin Mohammad, Hassan Muamer, Noé Schouker, Louise Sibley**

*Walkers share experiences along the path, give advice for interested travelers, and show fun photos.*



### MAKING ART WITH MOTHER-OF-PEARL

**Mo'taz Hamoush, Salma Al Qatawneh**

*Syrian artisan and war refugee Mo'taz Hamoush walks us through his studio in Amman.*

# API FELLOWS

## EMILY GARTHWAITE AND LEON MCCARRON THE TIGRIS RIVER EXPEDITION

For 70 days, API Fellows Emily Garthwaite and Leon McCarron paddled the length of the Tigris River, documenting its beauty as well as the devastating impact of war and present-day environmental threats. A book and film about the journey are in production.

PHOTO: The source of the Tigris River.



PHOTO: Ending the journey at the mouth of the Tigris River.  
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Claudio von Planta (filmmaker), Salman Khairalla (environmentalist),  
Leon McCarron (writer), Hana Ibrahim (translator), Emily Garthwaite (photographer).





**DANIEL MAISSAN AND LISA DUPUY  
THE COMPANY OF MANY**

While walking in Iraqi Kurdistan, Fellows Lisa Dupuy and Daniel Maissan scouted opportunities for API, walking potential trails, meeting new guides, and connecting with local adventurers. Their journey proved crucial in deepening the concept behind their independent journalism project, the "**Company of Many.**"



**STEPHANIE SALDAÑA**

**Stephanie Saldaña** retired her API fellowship in 2021. She is now completing a book on the intangible cultural heritage of Syrian and Iraqi migrants and refugees based on research conducted during her years as an API Fellow.

LEFT: Lisa and Daniel in Erbil, Iraq. Photo by L. Mohammad.  
RIGHT: Stephanie in the Old City of Jerusalem. Photo by A. Cederberg.

# API IN THE NEWS

In the midst of a global pandemic, API Fellows and partners keep us connected to the out-of-doors, sharing stories beyond the headlines.

This year, too, API celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Turkey-to-Palestine study tour that set the stage for future trail development and the founding of API. We **produced a film** with footage from that journey to celebrate 15 years on the path.



## "FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS: THE INAUGURAL JOURNEY OF THE ABRAHAM PATH INITIATIVE"

Abraham Path Initiative

*"Through deeper understanding and through respectful tourism and economic development, this path may, at least in a small way, contribute to justice and peace in this region."*

- William Ury



## "IBRAHIMS ON THE ROAD: ENCOUNTERS WITH SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY"

Daniel Maissan (Photography)  
Lisa Dupuy (Text)  
Washington Report on Middle East Affairs

*"There is a future and a past to each Ibrahim we encounter. Their communities bring us in, take hold of us."*



## "A DIFFERENT VIEW: HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED PEOPLE AND NATURE IN IRAQI KURDISTAN?"

Leon McCarron | Adventure.com

*"One of the universal truths we can take from this is that everything has changed, and that our existence is fragile. When we stop moving, the earth beneath us heals."*



## A SHORT WALK ALONG THE TRAIL WITH WAAR TV

Lawin Mohammad & Leon McCarron | Waar TV

*"As a Kurd, I'm proud to have hiking trails in our area. We have great landscapes and mountains, and it's a shame that we don't have trails to show our beautiful land."*

*- Lawin Mohammad*



## "THE LAST OF THE MARSH ARABS:"

*"What happens to a community and ecosystem at the nexus of geopolitical tensions and climate change? Can 6,000 years of history save them?"*

Emily Garthwaite (Photography)  
Leon McCarron (Text) | Noema

*"I was born here, and my father was born here,"  
Abu Hasan tells me with pride...  
'We've always been Marsh Arabs.'"*



Photo by A. Qutairy

Dear Friends and Supporters,

The challenges of the pandemic in 2021 have required resilience, persistence, and creativity from API, our partners, and our global community. Together we are charting a new course for mission-delivery.

With your support we're developing trails in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and bringing the people and cultures from the region to a growing global audience online. API's Facebook and Instagram subscribers are up 54% compared to 2020. Our webinars are rich with visuals

and film footage. Postcards from the Path – complete with postage stamps – honor your curiosity about the real people of the region.

Welcome to the 40 new donors of 2021, a shout out to our new monthly donors, and gratitude to all that helped boost our revenue this year over last. You make all the difference.

Warmly,

**Anisa Mehdi**  
Executive Director

## OUR THANKS TO API'S GENEROUS 2021 SUPPORTERS

Photo by E. Garthwaite

### TRAIL BLAZERS (\$5,000 and above)

Cynda & Marcel Arsenault  
Capitol Group  
Bob & Joan Feitler  
Flora Family Foundation  
Paul & De Gray  
Peggy Delaney  
Prem & Susan Manjooran  
Anisa Mehdi & Peter Zimmermann<sup>7,8,13\*</sup>  
Oliver Pospisil  
Neil and Trudie Prior  
Robert & Ann Ronus  
Lionel & Ariane Sauvage  
Schmidt Family Foundation  
James Sebenius<sup>10,12,15</sup>  
Elizabeth Ury  
William Ury\*  
Gregory Annenberg Weingarten  
& Regina Weingarten

### EXPLORERS (\$500-\$4,999)

Ann Andrus\*  
Are You Still Learning?  
Samia Bahsoun  
Anne Bartley<sup>9,14</sup>  
David Baum  
Urs & Louisa Chan Boegli  
Barbara Cohn  
Diedre Combs  
Leo D'Acierno  
John & Norma Davidson\*  
John A. Farkas<sup>2</sup>

James Patrick Finerty  
Marcia Greenblatt & Bob Kovacs\*  
Julie & Marc Kummel  
Susan Hackley  
Nohad Harati  
Tim & Frances Hester  
David Lax & Ilana Manolson  
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Elaine Teo  
Peter & Barbara Thornton  
Mark & Elizabeth Tinglof  
Carl & Tinbet Tinstman  
Betsy Vanleit  
Joshua Weiss & Adina Elfant\*  
Jerry White\*  
Rick & Rebecca White  
Barry Wind\*  
Karima Zedan & Suzanne Rotondo\*  
John & Marcia Zweig<sup>12</sup>

### WALKERS (\$50-\$499)

Salwa Al-Qunaibet  
Solveig Anderson  
Jarratt Applewhite  
Sergio Atallah  
Jonesportcasa Autiello  
Philip Bakelaar  
Joe Bamberg  
Benjamin Barrows\*  
Leonardo Batalha de Oliveira  
Clark & Susana Bernard  
Mark & Christina Biddle  
Sergio Bondi  
Laura Bogardus  
Ellen Brock & Larry Kaptein  
Christa Bruhn  
Marsha Bruhn<sup>6</sup>  
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James Carty\*  
Janan & Paul Chandler  
Amy Chapman  
Margaret Chleboski  
Linda Cohen  
Katie Coleman  
Rachel Cooper  
Eva Curtis  
Angela Dribben\*  
Paul & Sally Dobinson\*  
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Michael & Elizabeth Dwyer  
Doug & Priscilla Eakeley  
Margaret & Pablo Escobar\*  
Kate Fisher  
Linda Giambone  
Stephen Goldberg & Jeanne Brett  
Morton Goldfein  
Randy Goodman  
Andrew Gordon  
Benina Gould<sup>4</sup>  
Reggie Gray

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Alix Hopkins  
Jenna Hornsby\*  
Jeff Howry  
Forsan & Reem Hussein<sup>1</sup>  
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Betsy Vanleit  
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Maggie Walsh\*  
Elisa Wells  
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Nina Woodson  
Mark & Shirley Yolleck\*  
Lauren Zeltzer  
Jae Mehdi Zimmermann\*

### DONATION IN MEMORY OF:

<sup>1</sup>Prof. Simon Benninga  
<sup>2</sup>John Anthony Farkas Jr.  
<sup>3</sup>Devon Jefferson  
<sup>4</sup>Casi Kushel  
<sup>5</sup>C. Judith and J. Loren Rosenberg

### DONATION IN HONOR OF:

<sup>6</sup>Karmel Abufarha  
<sup>7</sup>API Board of Directors  
<sup>8</sup>API Fellows  
<sup>9</sup>David Friedman  
<sup>10</sup>Susan Hackley  
<sup>11</sup>Raymond Halabi  
<sup>12</sup>Anisa Mehdi  
<sup>13</sup>Lionel Sauvage  
<sup>14</sup>William Ury  
<sup>15</sup>Joshua Weiss

\*Monthly donor

# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2021

### GROWTH TRENDS:

**66%**

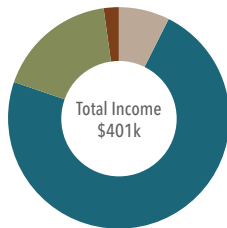
INCREASE IN YOUTUBE  
SUBSCRIBERS DURING 2021

**47%**

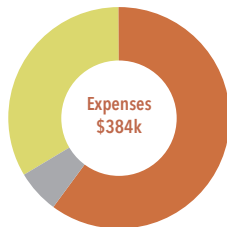
INCREASE IN API'S MAILING LIST  
DURING 2021

**24%**

INCREASE IN MONTHLY DONORS  
DURING 2021



**INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS: 73%**  
**COVID RELIEF GRANTS: 18%**  
**FOUNDATIONS & GRANTS: 7%**  
**EDUCATION & PROGRAMS: 2%**



**OUTREACH & EDUCATION: 60%**  
**ADMINISTRATION: 34%**  
**FUND DEVELOPMENT: 6%**



Our financials are audited annually.  
Details available on [GuideStar](#).

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**William Ury**, Founder & Chair Emeritus

**Anisa Mehdi**, President & Executive Director

**Joshua Weiss**, Chair

**Samia Bahsoun**, Vice Chair

**Lionel Sauvage**, Treasurer

**Oliver Pospisil**, Secretary

**David Baum**

**Deidre Combs**

**Leo D'Acierno**

**Marcia Greenblatt**

**Susan Hackley**

**Forsan Hussein**

**David Lax**

**James Sebenius**

PHOTO: The Kurdistan Region of Iraq. By B. Barrows.

*"You've really kept me in touch  
with the world."*

*Jean McCreary, USA*



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

FIND US AT: <https://www.abrahampath.org/>

**USA MAILING ADDRESS:**

Abraham Path Initiative  
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Maplewood, NJ 07040

**COVER PHOTO:** Project Manager Lawin Mohammad.  
Photo by L. McCarron.

**BACK COVER:** Hiking in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.  
Photo by E. Garthwaite.

PONTIUS-COURTNEY  
GRAPHIC DESIGN

**API PARTNERS:**

PROGRAM ON NEGOTIATION  
HARVARD LAW SCHOOL



**WITH GRATITUDE FOR FOUNDATION SUPPORT FROM:**

