



Abraham Path

**LET'S WALK!**

**ABRAHAM PATH INITIATIVE  
2022 ANNUAL REPORT**



Dear Friend of the Path,

Walking is our common heritage. It sustains and inspires the human spirit.

Stories about the legendary Abraham, or Ibrahim as he is known, imagine him walking with his family through the region that today we call "the Middle East," befriending others and offering hospitality to strangers. These traditions of kindness and welcome are alive today throughout Southwest Asia.

Sixteen years and counting into the life of the Abraham Path Initiative, hospitality thrives along ancient walking paths throughout the region. In the Zagros Mountains of northern Iraq, a new/old trail is emerging, highlighting Kurdish culture, history, and landscapes.

In today's turbulent times, the Abraham Path Initiative builds unlikely connections and inspires hope. As travelers from near and far walk together, they experience ancient heritage and traditional cultures, providing incomes and jobs for the families who live along the path.

Walking together moves all of us closer to a more welcoming, hospitable world.

With gratitude to you for making it possible,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "will ury". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

William Ury  
Founder and Chair Emeritus

A group of four hikers, seen from behind, are walking along a dirt trail in a rugged, mountainous landscape. They are wearing backpacks and dark clothing. The terrain is rocky with patches of green grass and small trees. In the background, there are steep, rocky hillsides. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

# ABRAHAM PATH INITIATIVE (API)

Abraham Path Initiative (API) nurtures economic growth, cross-cultural communication, and heritage preservation in Southwest Asia through community-based tourism, research, and online programming.

We envision a future in which Southwest Asia is known worldwide for hospitality and walking trails – a place where people connect through conversation, change perceptions, and transform relationships.

PREVIOUS: A gorge between Saran and Rwanuz, Iraq. Photo by L. McCarron.  
ABOVE: Walking near Akre, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Photo courtesy of L. Mohammad.

# KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2022

A man in a grey long-sleeved shirt and olive green pants is sitting cross-legged on a rocky ledge, looking out over a vast, rugged mountain range. The mountains are layered and extend into the distance under a clear blue sky. The foreground is filled with light-colored rocks and some sparse green vegetation.

With your support, 2022 was a busy year for the Abraham Path Initiative online, with a new website, and on the ground, where we began walking again.

We completed a technical through-hike of the Zagros Mountain Trail with partners in Iraqi Kurdistan, and launched cultural heritage research projects in neighboring Nineveh.

API's digital programming continued to make Southwest Asia's peoples and cultures accessible to you online, where our global audience grew by more than 15%.

Near Akre, Iraqi Kurdistan. Photo by D. Ophel.

# API IN THE NEWS

In the wake of “re-openings,” people are traveling with gusto, and the news media continues to report on walking trails inspired by the Abraham Path Initiative.

The *New York Times* and *CNN Arabic* cover our organization and multiple regional trails. *Making Peace Visible*, a podcast, highlights the human experiences that come from walking in the region.

API Fellow Leon McCarron and former-fellow Emily Garthwaite bring the ancient capital of Assur to life in *Smithsonian Magazine*. API and the Amersi Foundation supported Leon and Emily's research for this article.



## “BUILDING THE FIRST LONG-DISTANCE HIKING TRAIL IN KURDISTAN”

Ben Mauk, *The New York Times Magazine*

*“A trail only exists because people value it,” he said as the citadel fell out of view. “We’re not ‘building’ any trails that don’t already exist. Nobody owns it; no one person builds it.”*

*For more articles about API in the news, please visit [www.abrahampath.org](http://www.abrahampath.org).*



## “AT THE IRAQI SITE OF ASSUR, ANCIENT HISTORY STANDS AT RISK OF DESTRUCTION”

Emily Garthwaite & Leon McCarron  
*Smithsonian Magazine*

*“My relationship with this place is above a job,” he told me. “It is like family. I think of this place like my grandmother. Come, and I’ll introduce you.”*

*For more articles about API in the news, please visit [www.abrahampath.org](http://www.abrahampath.org).*

# ON THE GROUND IN IRAQI KURDISTAN



Stella Martany and Lawin Mohammad, team members in Iraqi Kurdistan who are working to register a new local NGO to manage the trail, tell us:

“2022 was an exciting year for the Zagros Mountain Trail (ZMT). With API support, we completed the first through-hike of the trail in May. The hike confirmed that the trail is feasible, and brought together local homestay hosts and guides.”

PHOTO: Taking a break in Saran, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.  
Photo by B. Barrows.

# WALKING THE ZAGROS MOUNTAIN TRAIL

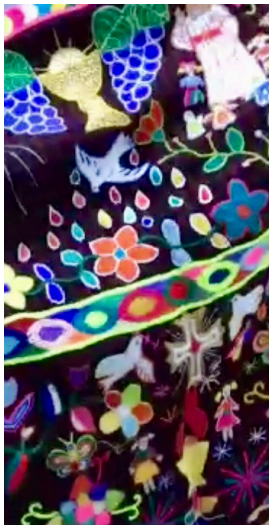
*"In the fall, we started a 'weekly walks program.' The first five hikes had 138 local and international participants. It was a great opportunity for everyone to connect on the trail surrounded by the beauty of the Kurdish mountains."*

Stella Martany and Lawin Mohammad

On the trail between Rezan and Choman, with Mount Halgurd in the distance. Photo courtesy of J. Atick.

Lawin and Ahmed Rezani on the trail between Dargala and Rezan. Photo by L. McCarron.

# CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION



## DOCUMENTING CEREMONIAL EMBROIDERY IN QARAQOSH, IRAQ

For centuries, Syriac Catholics have embroidered ceremonial dresses. Before ISIS invaded, the dresses were mostly adorned with geometric shapes.

Now they show ceremonies and buildings, becoming tapestries of times lovingly remembered. The Assyrian Aid Society in the Nineveh Governorate is working with API to produce films about this tradition in the community of Qaraqosh, Iraq.

LEFT: Photo courtesy of R. Nenwaya Qaraqosh.

RIGHT: Embroidery featured in an upcoming film. Photo by A. Mehdi.





Portrait of Sister Makrina by N. al Salem.



Arno at the annual Yazidi Cemaya festival in Lalish, Iraq.  
Photo by M. Finlay

## **XÊR: REGENERATING SHINGAL WITH GOOD DEEDS**

In Shingal (Sinjar), Iraq, API Researcher Sister Makrina Finlay, Ph.D., explores the Yazidi practice of *xêr*, best understood as good deeds that bring blessing to the recipient and the giver.

She engages with Yazidis as they move back to villages they fled during ISIS's 2014 invasion. *Xêr* is a source of strength, religious comfort, and unity.

# CYBERSPACE: EDUCATING AND CONNECTING

## TOGETHER ONLINE:

Since 2020, API has introduced global audiences to the people and places of Southwest Asia with interactive online programming.

With ten widely diverse episodes from across the region, we presented Season Three of "Meet Us on the Abraham Path."

People shared their thoughts and dreams with you in twelve "Postcards from the Path," hoping to turn strangers into friends.

Here are some of them.

## Postcards from the Path:



### HIKE JORDAN

Eisa Dweekat

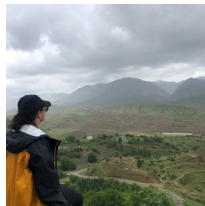
*Eisa shares his knowledge of people, places, and nature to offer unforgettable experiences to visitors in Jordan.*



### A PASSION FOR FILMING

Noor Hodaly

*Film production is Noor's dream, and she won't give up pursuing it in Palestine.*



### THE RESPITE OF NATURE

Stella Martany

*Stella has hiked in Iraqi Kurdistan since she was young, so when the mountains call, she answers!*



### ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Lionel Sauvage

*Hiking in Jordan with friends and colleagues brought API's mission to life for API Board Chair, Lionel.*

## Meet Us on the Abraham Path: Season Three



### BETHLEHEM FAIR TRADE ARTISANS

*Suzan and Salam Sahori*

*A mother-daughter duo uses fair trade policies to connect Palestinian craftspeople to global markets amid politics and pandemic.*



### WOMEN OF SOUTHWEST ASIA

*Woroud Sharabati (pictured), Arzu Yilmaz, Mayyada Abu Jaber*

*Women from Palestine, Turkey, and Jordan share successes and hurdles on the road to their goals.*



### THE ZAGROS MOUNTAIN TRAIL

*Leon McCarron and Lawin Mohammad*

*API partners McCarron and Mohammad report on May's technical through-hike and lay out what's next.*



### SAVING PALMYRA

*Dr. Isber Sabrine*

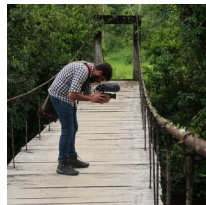
*Saving world heritage sites is more than restoring monuments. He advocates promoting and respecting the people of the city, as well.*



### BLESSED: YAZIDI RESILIENCE, A BENELECTINE NUN, AND XÊR

*Dr. Makrina Finlay*

*What is Xêr? A path of blessings, given and received, and a cultural heritage, imperiled.*



### PALESTINIAN FILMMAKER, BRIDGING GAPS

*Sameer Qumsiyeh*

*Filmmaking has been a form of therapy for this young filmmaker, helping make sense of realities in Palestine.*



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Do you know what makes me proud? That we've asked and you've answered. Foundations place their faith in us with grants for meaningful projects. Partners feel our support and yours.

Together we steadfastly advance shared goals in trail-blazing, pioneering cultural heritage research, and relentless commitment to our common humanity.

You make a difference by investing in the Abraham Path. Thank you for boosting our bold vision again this year.

Warmly,

Anisa Mehdi  
Executive Director

## OUR THANKS TO API'S GENEROUS 2022 SUPPORTERS

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

Are You Still Learning?  
Cynda & Marcel Arsenault  
Isabelle & Kenny Baca  
Peggy Dulany  
Paul & Dedrea Gray  
Prem & Susan Manjooran  
Anisa Mehdi & Peter Zimmermann\*<sup>4</sup>  
Oliver Pospisil  
Neil & Trudie Prior  
Robert & Ann Ronus  
Lionel & Ariane Sauvage  
William Ury  
Gregory Annenberg Weingarten  
& Regina Weingarten

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

Anonymous<sup>6</sup>  
Kay & Laila Al-Askari  
Ann Andrus\*  
Jeremy & Kristin Andrus  
Samia Bahsoun  
David Baum  
Mark & Karen Biddle  
Alexandre Chade  
Urs & Louisa Chan Boegli  
Diedre Combs  
Leo D'Acerno  
Dave D'Angelo<sup>2</sup>  
John & Norma Davidson\*  
Athina Dessypri & Theodore Avlonitis<sup>12</sup>  
John A. Farkas<sup>3</sup>

Benina Gould<sup>7</sup>  
Marcia Greenblatt & Bob Kovacs  
Susan Hackley & Paul Henry  
Nohad Toufic Harati  
Rosa Campa & Tim Hearne  
Tim & Frances Hester  
Raymond Jallow Family Foundation  
Anna Kunzler & Bruce Scott\*  
Katie Lunday  
John & Susan Collin Marks  
Jean & Gregory McCreary  
Elizabeth Mirante  
Melanie Nezer  
David Ophel  
Organization for Islamic Learning<sup>9</sup>  
Jean & Barbara Runel  
Johnathan Sandler & Eliud Kauffman  
James Sebenius<sup>9,14,15</sup>  
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Elaine Teo  
Peter & Barbara Thornton  
Mark & Elizabeth Tinglof  
Carl & Tinbet Tinstman  
Elizabeth Ury  
David Watkins<sup>11</sup>  
Joshua Weiss & Adina Elfant\*  
Jerry White  
Barry Wind\*  
Karima Zedan & Suzanne Rotondo

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

Elias Amidon (Sufi Way)\*<sup>1</sup>

Jonesportcasa Autiello  
Joe Bamberg  
Benjamin Barrows\*  
Laura Bogardus\*  
Jules Bois  
Charles Boteler  
Philip Bryce  
Myles Caggins  
James Carty\*  
Janan & Paul Chandler<sup>5</sup>  
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Paul & Sally Dobinson\*  
Karen Donelson & Bob Benno  
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Julia Duin  
Diane Dulin\*  
Douglas & Priscilla Eakeley  
Margaret & Pablo Escobar\*  
James Patrick Finerty  
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Morton Goldfein  
Delinda C. Hanley\*  
Stewart W. Herman  
Alix Hopkins  
Jenna Hornsby\*  
Carla Houben  
Rabbi Irwin Huberman  
William Jefferson\*  
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Guy Lasnier\*  
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Teresa Legregni & Dan Swanson\*  
Marty Linsky & Lynn Staley  
Miriam & Nabil Marshood  
Rick Marx  
Jim Metzger & Deborah Baldwin  
Matthew Moore  
Paul Newfield<sup>13</sup>  
Judy Ng  
Iffet Özgönül  
Nazli Parvizi<sup>10</sup>  
Martha Patrick\*  
Christie Platt\*  
Talib Qizilbash  
Zeyba Rahman  
David Rapkin\*  
Lynn Reyman & David Campeas<sup>7</sup>  
Bruce Rosen  
Shelley Ruddock\*  
Elish Sari\*  
Patricia Stocker  
Stefan Szepesi  
Mary Georgas Tellefsen  
Tammy & Steve Weinfeld  
Erin Willard<sup>8</sup>  
Mark Yolleck & Shirley Li\*  
Jae Mehdi Zimmermann\*

### DONATION IN MEMORY OF:

<sup>1</sup>Fr. Paolo Dall'Oglio  
<sup>2</sup>John D'Angelo  
<sup>3</sup>John Anthony Farkas Jr.  
<sup>4</sup>Beverlee Turner Mehdi  
<sup>5</sup>Dr. M. T. Mehdi  
<sup>6</sup>Paul Sorvino

### DONATION IN HONOR OF:

<sup>7</sup>Stefani Berger  
<sup>8</sup>Lucy Daoust  
<sup>9</sup>Anisa Mehdi  
<sup>10</sup>Azar Parvizi  
<sup>11</sup>Neil & Trudie Prior  
<sup>12</sup>Lionel and Ariane Sauvage  
<sup>13</sup>Soldiers  
<sup>14</sup>William Ury  
<sup>15</sup>Joshua Weiss

\*Monthly donor

BACKGROUND: Iraqi Kurdistan. Photo by D. Ophel.

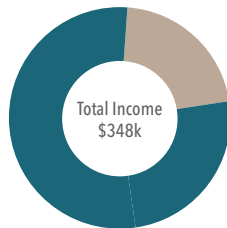
# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

## KEY INVESTMENTS OF 2022

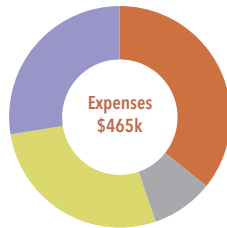
We are grateful to our board and supporters for the success of API's 2022 matching grant. Funds went to our pioneering projects in northern Iraq.

API has inspired walking trails in Turkey, Jordan, Palestine and Sinai. Seeding early stages of trail development includes investing in the local teams that maintain community engagement, supporting strategic planning processes, and funding the registration of NGOs to manage trail development going forward.

Committing to the Zagros Mountain Trail project raised an important question for API. Were we willing to draw from reserve funds to continue this part of our mission? Should we support the project in Iraqi Kurdistan? The answer was "yes." Thus the difference between income and expenses in 2022.



**FOUNDATIONS & GRANTS: 22%**  
**INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS: 78%**



**OUTREACH & EDUCATION: 36%**  
**FUND DEVELOPMENT: 9%**  
**ADMINISTRATION: 27%**  
**TRAIL DEVELOPMENT: 28%**



Our financials are audited annually.  
Details available on GuideStar.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



**William Ury, Founder & Chair Emeritus**

**Anisa Mehdi, President & Executive Director**

**Lionel Sauvage, Chair**

**Samia Bahsoun, Vice Chair**

**Oliver Pospisil, Secretary**

**Marcia Greenblatt, Treasurer**

**David Baum**

**Deidre Combs**

**Leo D'Acierno**

**Dave D'Angelo**

**Susan Hackley**

**Joshua Weiss**

PHOTO: Palmyra, Syria. Photo by L. Delikiz.

API PARTNERS:

PROGRAM ON NEGOTIATION  
HARVARD LAW SCHOOL



UNAOC  
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations



WITH GRATITUDE FOR FOUNDATION SUPPORT FROM:



*"Walking is a tool for fostering friendships  
and touching the community in our region."*

*-Iffet Özgönül, Peten Travels (Turkey)*



Abraham Path

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:** In the Great Zab River valley, Iraqi Kurdistan. Photo by D. Ophel.

**BACK COVER:** An artisan in Palestine. Photo courtesy of Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans.

PONTIUS-COURTNEY  
GRAPHIC DESIGN