



CONNECTING IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

ABRAHAM PATH INITIATIVE
2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Dear Friend of the Path,

We hope you have found moments of comfort and gratitude in this time of pandemic, despite the grief and losses of the past year. Like you, we at the Abraham Path Initiative have also felt the impact of COVID-19 in almost all aspects of our lives and work.

2020 brought uncertainty as well as new connections to API. We were saddened to lose staff, shelve walks for UNRWA students, and cancel well-planned journeys. Yet we have reinvented our organization, creating online programming that will last long after our masks come off. We reached new audiences worldwide, forged new local partners, engaged with new funders, and welcomed new board members.

My friend Stephen Heintz, President of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, once observed, "While many in the world are building walls, API is building paths – pathways of hope."

As we move into 2021, we continue building bridges of global connection even as we remain physically distanced. We are bringing the paths to the world and the world to the paths across the ever-challenging divides of our times.

Walking with you on pathways of hope,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "William Ury".

William Ury

Founder and Chair Emeritus

ABRAHAM PATH INITIATIVE (API)

The **Abraham Path Initiative** promotes walking in Southwest Asia as a tool for economic development, intercultural experiences and fostering friendships across the challenging divides of our times.

Despite the pandemic, API is bringing people to the region and the region to people through interactive webinars, live online tours, and electronic postcards. **Fellows** continue to scout trails and engage in cultural heritage preservation projects.

API envisions a future in which this region becomes known for its spectacular walking trails and warm welcoming people.

LEFT: Rolling hills in Jenin. Photo by F. Meyst.
RIGHT: Spring in Jenin. Photo by E. Bryant

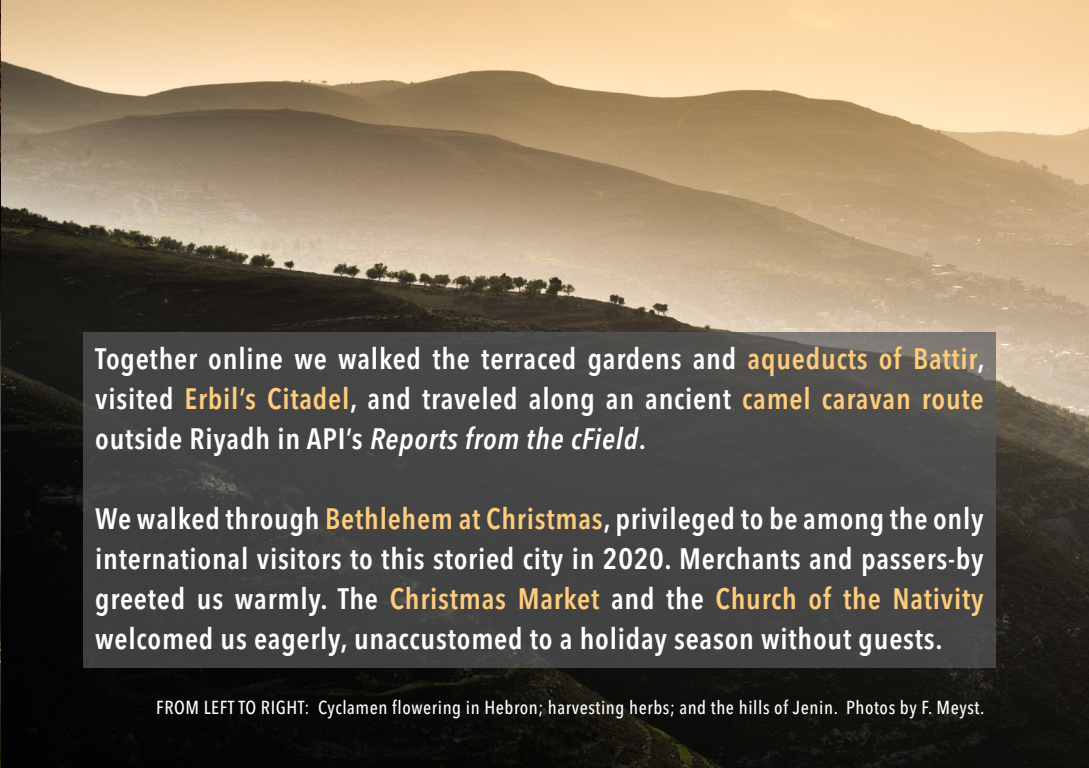


ON THE GROUND

DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The global health crisis has been a challenging time for everyone.

While facing unemployment, scarcity, illness, and mortality, our partners on the ground and our global community have stepped into cyberspace with API to stay connected and motivated.



Together online we walked the terraced gardens and **aqueducts of Battir**, visited **Erbil's Citadel**, and traveled along an ancient **camel caravan route** outside Riyadh in API's *Reports from the cField*.

We walked through **Bethlehem at Christmas**, privileged to be among the only international visitors to this storied city in 2020. Merchants and passers-by greeted us warmly. The **Christmas Market** and the **Church of the Nativity** welcomed us eagerly, unaccustomed to a holiday season without guests.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Cyclamen flowering in Hebron; harvesting herbs; and the hills of Jenin. Photos by F. Meyst.

CYBER PROGRAMMING: INNOVATIONS

TOGETHER ONLINE:

In our pivot to cyber programming, API takes you on live, online walks and shares reports from the field.

Our webinar series, *Meet Us on the Abraham Path*, introduces local guides, farmers, environmentalists, historians, and trail blazers from across Southwest Asia.

Reports from the Field:



OLIVE HARVESTING IN THE WEST BANK

Hassan Muamer

It's a beautiful day to lay down a blanket with your family and harvest Nabali olives from trees native to Palestine.

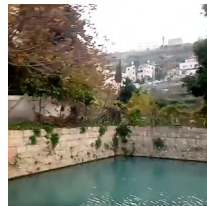


CAMEL CARAVAN IN SAUDI ARABIA

Salwa Al Qunaibet

Join Salwa as she walks along the path that once carried goods between Jerusalem, Riyadh and Mecca.

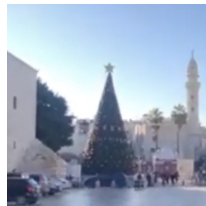
API LiveOnline:



BATTIR'S ANCIENT AQUEDUCTS

Hassan Muamer

Known for its reservoirs, aqueducts and terraces, Hassan walks us through this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

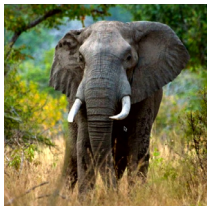


BETHLEHEM AT CHRISTMAS

Hazem Bannoura &
Noor Hodaly

Stroll the streets in an unseasonal quiet, meeting townsfolk ready for the holidays.

Meet Us on the Abraham Path:



THE WORLD TRAILS NETWORK

Galeo Saintz

"We essentially grew-up on trails," says Galeo, citing elephants as historic pathmakers and the value of walking worldwide.



PERILS TO MIGRATORY BIRDS

Osama Al Nouri

Birds, and the endangered flyways of the Jordan Rift Valley, have always played an important role in the local history of the region.



API TRAIL DEVELOPMENT IN TURKEY

Joshua Weiss

Hear stories of the early days of API and relationship-building in South Central Turkey.



CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Stephanie Saldaña

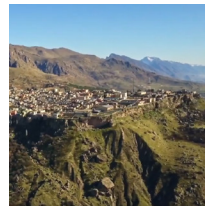
Treasure the recipes, lullabies, sweets, and stories of your parents and community.



TOUR GUIDES AND THE PANDEMIC

Zaid Azhari & Eisa Dweekat

Two guides bring visitors into the nature and history of their favorite geography: home.



SCOUTING TRAIL IN NORTHERN IRAQ

Laween Mohammed & Leon McCarron

"This whole thing is about love, which is why anyone is welcome. In a region like this, it's an important message to hear." - Leon

API IN THE NEWS

Access to the out-of-doors and the cross-cultural ties that bind our economies have become all the more important as we navigate the pandemic.


This difficult year shows that API's mission is more vital than ever: catalyzing economic development through trails and community-based tourism, and promoting the health benefits of walking to foster connection.

International media have recognized API's important contributions as well.

"Walk with guides in Turkey to Abraham's birthplace...connecting with locals and fostering cultural understanding along the way."

Kathleen Rellihan, "Sacred Journeys Around the World"
Newsweek Magazine, February 18, 2020

A stream in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Photo by E. Garthwaite.



The *World Trails Network* magazine features an article by API Executive Director Anisa Mehdi in which she wrote that, as the pandemic hit, "API was compelled to aid our local colleagues in the short and the long term."

"The world now seemed to be asking only one thing of us," observed API Fellow Stephanie Saldaña in *America Magazine*: "that we hurt one another as little as possible."

API "believes that by building cultural capital in rural communities, the path will encourage economic development and further peace-building. I have also witnessed the desire to experience meaningful, authentic trips to places that few have gone before becoming an increasing trend in global tourism."

Emily Garthwaite
"A Long Walk to Freedom in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq"
Suitcase: The Culture of Travel, September 4, 2020

An evening in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Photo by E. Garthwaite.

API FELLOWS: THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

A man with a beard and a patterned headband is hiking through tall, golden-brown grasses. He is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved button-down shirt, dark grey pants, and brown hiking shoes. He has a blue backpack and is using a black trekking pole. The background shows a clear blue sky and distant mountains.

LEON McCARRON:

"We began 2020 in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, scouting new routes in January and February as news of the unfolding pandemic still seemed far away. We returned in October, PPE in place, walking, sharing meals and finding the fellowship that was absent for so many of us during much of the pandemic.

To be with people again, face-to-face, was the greatest privilege of the year for me, this year more than ever."

LEFT: Leon in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Photo by E. Garthwaite.

MIDDLE: Emily along the trail in Iraq. Photo by L. McCarron.

RIGHT: Stephanie in Jerusalem. Photo by A. Mehdi.

A portrait of Emily Garthwaite, a woman with long brown hair, smiling slightly. She is wearing a dark blue scarf and a light-colored shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor landscape with mountains and trees under a warm, golden light.

EMILY GARTHWAITE:

"After working remotely during the beginning of the pandemic, I was soon back in the field: first in Iran, walking with the Bakhtiari tribe and photographing the annual Kooch migration. Then in Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, documenting trail development and preparing for a 2021 expedition down the Tigris River: paddling from the river's source to the sea."

A black and white photograph of Stephanie Saldaña. She is wearing a dark coat and a scarf, looking down at a lit candle in a holder. The scene is dimly lit, with a bright light source in the background creating a strong glow and lens flare. There are other candles and objects on a table in the foreground.

STEPHANIE SALDAÑA:

"The early months of 2020 found me in Jerusalem and Taize, France, giving lectures on refugees and the disappearance of cultural heritage. As the pandemic broke, in-person presentations morphed into webinars. Back home in Jerusalem, I continue with my writing, and am currently researching and archiving photographs of the traditional costumes of the Nineveh Plains of Iraq."



Photo by A. Qutairy

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In 2020, our theme was reinvention; our motivation was to stay connected.

The pandemic halted travel to Southwest Asia, so we brought Southwest Asia to you, shifting from on-the-ground programming and into the airwaves, overnight. Our webinars, *API LiveOnline*, social media, and e-postcards reached hundreds of thousands of people.

With tourism at a standstill, our local partners faced unprecedented economic struggles. Together, we helped sustain them.

Thank you for maintaining the support and connection we all needed in this difficult year.

API remains resilient and creative, pledging to bring you more of the extraordinary people we meet along the Abraham Path in 2021.

We are so grateful to you.

Warmly,

Anisa Mehdi
Executive Director

OUR THANKS TO API'S GENEROUS 2020 SUPPORTERS

TRAIL BLAZERS (\$5,000 and above)

Are You Still Learning?
Cynda & Marcel Arseneault
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Flora Family Foundation
Paul & De Gray
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DONATION IN MEMORY OF:

¹³John Anthony Farkas, Jr.

*Monthly donor

LEFT: Jenin. Photo by E. Bryant
RIGHT: Spring flowers. Photo by F. Meyst

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2020

GROWTH TRENDS:

13%

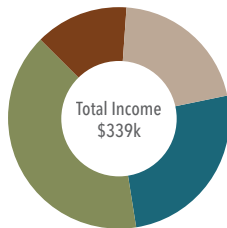
INCREASE IN NUMBER OF DONORS
FROM 2019

47%

INCREASE IN MONTHLY DONORS
SINCE 2019

24%

MORE FIRST-TIME DONORS
THAN IN 2019

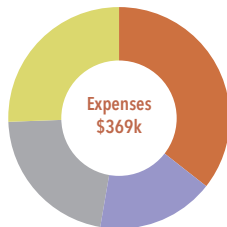


EDUCATION & PROGRAMS: 13%

FOUNDATIONS & GRANTS: 21%

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS: 26%

BOARD DONATIONS: 40%



COVID-19 RESPONSE: 17%

OUTREACH & EDUCATION: 35%

FUND DEVELOPMENT: 22%

ADMINISTRATION: 26%

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

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James Sebenius

Karima Zedan

"Your webinars have kept us connected to a part of the world we love while we are quarantined inside. They are a silver lining to this year!"

Paul & Sally Dobinson, UK



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

USA MAILING ADDRESS:

Abraham Path Initiative
PO Box 86
Maplewood, NJ 07040

COVER PHOTO: Poppies on the *Masar Ibrahim*. Photo by E. Halabi.

BACK COVER: Photo by E. Bryant.

API PARTNERS:

PROGRAM ON NEGOTIATION
HARVARD LAW SCHOOL



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GRAPHIC DESIGN