

Jordan Shaping Its Destiny



Having been through a quantum leap in terms of development in recent years, Jordan's tourism industry is vying for the international recognition it deserves.

Jordan is fast emerging as a tourism powerhouse in the Middle East, according to managing director, Jordan Tourism Board (JTB), Nayef Al-Fayez, who told TTG: "It is the host of world-class facilities and some of the most amazing tourism attractions, in addition to being the host of one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, the ancient Nabatean Kingdom of Petra."

Priding itself on the ability to cater to a full gamut of tourism experiences, Al-Fayez summarized the categories constituting the country's diverse tourism product: history and culture; religion and faith; fun and adventure; eco and nature; conferences and events; and leisure and wellness.

"Historically and archaeologically speaking, Jordan is very rich," agreed manager, Toledo Hotel, Hakam Barakat. "Medical tourism is huge here, with many facilities and experts. But it still needs to be tweaked. Likewise, I think that only 20 per cent of Petra's potential has been discovered – it is still under-serviced at the moment and so we are considering another Toledo property there. Jordan as a whole is very much under-appreciated, and under-marketed," he told TTG.



While all of these categories hold equal weight, JTB – more than aware of the need to market the destination and its tourism potential – is currently focusing on prospecting business from the high-end niche market.

"We are marketing Jordan as a boutique destination to serve a high-end niche, which therefore dictates the strategy we have," he confirmed. While JTB drives forward with its online marketing activities, it is simultaneously committed to maintaining a strong presence at crucial trade exhibition events.

"Furthermore, our tourism offices and representatives abroad are continuously working with international

tourism organisations, hotels, tour operators and travel agents in order to provide high quality services that will help Jordan raise its travel destination image internationally,” Al-Fayez said.

Given the country’s proximity to many of its source markets such as Syria, Lebanon, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, most of the arrivals to and almost half of the departures from Jordan are carried out by land. However, with interest climbing on an international level, the country’s aviation sector is enjoying success too. “The air transportation category is also booming thanks to the increasing number of arrivals from and departures to long-haul destinations. The increase of business tourism to Jordan also means that air travel will gain an increasing importance,” said Al-Fayez.



Arrivals to Jordan have indeed been on an upward spiral, according to Al-Fayez, who confirmed that in 2008, Jordan received 7.1 million international tourists with overnights of 3.7 million and a revenue growth of 27 per cent over 2007.

Aside from maintaining strong figures from within the region, JTB is actively pursuing business from further afield. “The tourism board is promoting itself in 11 international countries, namely the UK, the US, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Benelux, Switzerland/Austria, Russia, and the GCC countries.” JTB is also tracking the development of new markets such as China and South America, while India marks the first destination in the Asian market where Jordan is being promoted.

“Talking specifically about the Indian market, JTB is looking to position itself as a short-haul niche destination. It plans to attract leisure, wellness, adventure, MICE, history and culture, as well as religious traffic from India,” Al-Fayez told TTG.



Confident of JTB’s efforts in boosting visitor numbers, the country’s hotel sector is poised for substantial growth, with international chains such as Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, and

InterContinental Hotels Group all looking to solidify their presence. Commenting on why such hotel giants are spreading their Jordanian footprint, Al-Fayez commented: “Jordan is considered a very safe destination for foreign travellers and acknowledged as safe by most of the travel advisories. For centuries, Jordan has always proved to be a stable and safe tourist destination that is quickly becoming the jewel of the Middle East, with a great diversity of attractions to offer the foreign visitors. Its strategic location makes it a favourable business and tourism hub for neighbouring and international markets.”

Supporting this sentiment, chairman, National Corporation for Tourism Development, H.E. Mazen Al-Saket told TTG: “We want to promote Jordan worldwide as a safe destination. We want people to understand our culture. From medical tourism to religious tourism, from leisure to business, from history to archaeology, Jordan has much to offer.”

(Text shortened)

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