

# JORDAN CAPITALIZING ON ITS ECO RICHES



Jordan has a lot to offer to tourists. It has three UNESCO world heritage sites, a well-preserved desert castle Quseir Amra, the Umm ar-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa"") archeological site and naturally the famous Petra. The Kingdom, however, longs to diversify its tourism industry.

Jordan bets on the growing popularity of eco tourism and hopes to lure as many eco tourists as possible. Last year 3.4 million people visited Jordan and 66,000 of them were eco tourists. Environment conservation is supported by the royal family. They supported for instance the creation of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature in 1966. The organization runs educational programs, sets up protected areas and conducts other activities to protect Jordan's eco heritage. They have managed to establish and maintain seven nature reserves so far. The conservationists hope that eco tourism will provide them with funds for further work in this field. The Jordanian reserves feature not only wonderful landscape; they are also an ideal place for wildlife watching. For example the Jordan's biggest reserve, **Dana** is home to the Syrian wolf and 215 kinds of birds. As much as 700 plant species could be found in here, the black iris is among them.

Jordanians connect the nature protection with socio-economic development. They have for example resurrected a local village by offering the Bedouins to work for the reserve. The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature helps to sell traditional products to support local communities. The society is also involved in running sustainable grazing program for Bedouins.

Other interesting reserve is **Wadi Mujib**. It is a gorge that enters the Dead Sea. It is also the lowest nature reserve in the world. **Wadi Rum** reserve is popular with climbers and it is also known as place where the "Lawrence's of Arabia" story took place. **Shawmari Wildlife** reserve is a breeding center for endangered animals.

Date: 2009-03-09

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/jordan-capitalizing-on-its-eco-riches-news1456>