



Tangible and intangible cultural assets as drivers for development: the growing significance of heritage tourism in Jordan

MBTA, Paestum, 1 November 2024 (10:00-11:30) | Dr EMAD HIJAZEEN

Speaking points

Expected duration: 10 min

- In recent years, Jordan's tourist-cultural system has grown in terms of volume, and the growing inbound tourism has made it possible to achieve an extraordinary result by driving the growth of services offered by tour operators, agencies, hotels, local transport, and other companies operating in the sector and distributed throughout the Country.
- Importance of cultural tourism: major tourist attractions in Jordan include ancient sites and monuments, such as UNESCO World Heritage sites including Petra and Wadi Rum, which have topped all the rankings of favourite destinations and made Jordan an increasingly popular destination for travelers worldwide. Cultural tourism as an enabler for income generation and job creation in the sector.
- Strategic documents: reference to “*Jordan National Tourism Strategy 2021-2025*” and “*Jordan Economic Modernization Vision*”.
- Importance of inclusion of local communities: social dimension of cultural heritage on development models in which communities play an active role and cultural assets are a driving force of socio-economic development, especially in the marginal or most vulnerable areas of the country.
- Italy continues to support Jordan in advancing its sustainable development and in strengthening the capacities of Jordanian institutions, in line with the objectives of national development plans and consistently with the strategic priorities established with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), including the enhancement of cultural heritage and sustainable tourism.
- **TRAINING**: The Italian Cooperation - in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities - launched in 2019 the ambitious project of setting up a [Regional Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage based in Jerash](#). The aim was to provide an interdisciplinary platform for future professionals in the Region, to increase the quality and capability of the labour market in the field of cultural heritage. Italy and Jordan share indeed the privilege of being territories that have hosted ancient civilizations, and therefore share the responsibility of preserving and enhancing the expressions of their cultural heritage. The building hosting the centre was completely rehabilitated and furnished with specialist equipment, and the University of Roma Tre is delivering a two-year training programme on scientific and conservation topics to staff from the Department of Antiquities, who will be the future trainers of the Centre.
- **RESTORATION and SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**: The initiative completed by the University of Perugia at the end of 2023 aimed to protect and enhance the [cultural heritage of the city of Madaba](#), that in some urban archaeological areas was facing problems of conservation and stability of the structures, accessibility and correct use by visitors, in order to increase the city's attractiveness towards local and foreign tourism. Archaeological excavation, restoration and conservation interventions were carried in five archaeological areas of the city: the Western Archaeological Park, the Eastern Archaeological Park, the area in front of the Archaeological Museum, the area of the “Cathedral” of Madaba and the park of the Church of the Apostles. In addition, 17 specialized courses on conservation, enhancement and management of cultural heritage and sustainable tourism development, aimed at 15 people from the local institutions were completed.
- **VALORIZATION OF HERITAGE AND URBAN LANDSCAPE**: almost concluded (in December 2024) initiative in Shobak in support of the [socio-economic recovery of the Shobak protected area](#) and of the promotion of inclusive and sustainable local development. The initiative was implemented by UNOPS and University of Firenze in response to the impact of COVID-19 in rural areas, to improve

the living conditions of local communities, with objectives of elevating the level of tourism in the area. Interventions entailed restoration of selected areas of the archaeological site to increase visitor accessibility, as well as training of local staff in the cultural heritage sector, to ensure proper management and conservation of the site. Four built units in Al-Jaya village were also rehabilitated to host new community-owned micro-businesses managed through a local CBO, so that heritage tourism-related activities would support community's livelihoods, women's economic empowerment, and reinforce inclusive and sustainable development in the areas around Shobak Castle.