

Enhancing Site Management at Petra Archaeological Park, Jordan

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About 90% of revenue from tourism in Jordan stems from visitation to Petra, a World Heritage Site that was recently designated as an archaeological park by the government of Jordan. Tourism now constitutes the largest segment of the Jordanian economy. Petra, then, is of major economic importance to this moderate and progressive Arab state. But Petra is even more than this to the people of Jordan. Petra is a national icon, second only to the royal family as a symbol of Jordan to those who live there, and, increasingly, to the rest of the world.

Figure 1 Petra is located in southern Jordan.



Visitation to Petra, long renowned for its extraordinary scenic quality and the importance of its archaeological treasures, has increased dramatically over the past decade, following construction of a modern highway from the capital city of Amman to the region of the site. A half day after landing at the airport in Amman, travelers can find themselves among magnificent

Nabataean tombs, cut into the sandstone walls of the canyons that protected the ancient trading city. Al Khazna, seen here, is the best known of these, but more than 800 other named tombs can be seen within the Petra Archaeological Park. These cultural treasures are set in a dazzling landscape. One enters Petra through the Siq, a spectacular rock crevice more than a kilometer long.

Figure 2 Al Khazna, the most famous of the Petra tombs.



Figure 3 The Siq, entrance to Petra.

Recently excavated and stabilized archaeological sites in the ancient city core provide additional attractions. And excellent accommodations have become available just outside Petra.



Figure 4 Excavating the Great Temple in the core of the ancient city of Petra.

threat to the condition of the monuments and archaeological sites there, and exceeds the current capacity to provide adequate visitor protection, comfort and interpretation.

For this reason, the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities requested the assistance of the United States National Park Service in upgrading the management structure of the site.

The mechanism by which this assistance was provided was a Memorandum of Agreement signed between the United

States National Park Service/Department of the Interior and the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), in February of 2000. Immediately following this, the National Park Service began cooperating in the preparation of an operating plan for Petra Archaeological Park. Production of the Petra Archaeological Park Operating Plan is Annex 1 of the Memorandum of Agreement.

Consequently, both numbers of visitors and duration of visitor stay have increased. The number of tourists coming to Petra in 2000 approached 500,000, a 100% increase since the early years of the 1990s. Average length of stay has increased about 50%. While one can expect that visitation will fall off while tensions in the Middle East are high, visitation can be expected to reach even greater levels when times become more settled.

While revenues from this visitation comprise a highly valuable source of income for the country, the number of people now touring Petra presents a real



Figure 5 The Great Temple rises from the rubble of buildings toppled by earthquakes over the past two millennia.

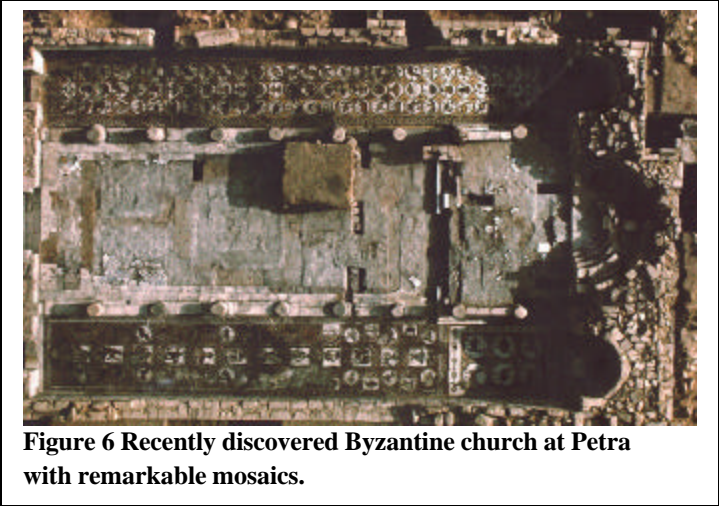


Figure 6 Recently discovered Byzantine church at Petra with remarkable mosaics.

States National Park Service/Department of the Interior and the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), in February of 2000. Immediately following this, the National Park Service began cooperating in the preparation of an operating plan for Petra Archaeological Park. Production of the Petra Archaeological Park Operating Plan is Annex 1 of the Memorandum of Agreement.

Figure 7 Stakeholders at the Petra Archaeological Park Operating Plan workshop.



The preparation of the operating plan for Petra is being conducted an exercise in democracy building by involving a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including local communities, ethnic groups, and non-government organizations. Douglas C. Comer, principal of the nonprofit organization Cultural Site Research and Management (CSRM), worked under contract to the National Park Service as team leader for the Petra Archaeological Park

Advisory Team that was tasked with the preparation of the operating plan. Among key representatives of the Jordanian government on the team were the Director-General for Antiquities, Dr. Fawwaz Khraysheh; Fouad Aghabe, Assistant Minister of Tourism and Antiquities; and Sulieman Farajet, who is acting as the Petra site manager. Project manager for the NPS participation was Brooke Shearer, Senior Special Assistant to the Director of the National Park Service. Other NPS team members included Lawrence Belli, Superintendent of Cape Hatteras National Park Group; Anna Marie Fender, Chief of Strategic Planning for the National Park Service; and Fred Fagergren, Superintendent of Bryce Canyon National Park. The operating plan is a detailed presentation of the organization and operation of the park, and includes:

- A detailed organization chart;
- Descriptions of each position in the park;
- Minimal requirements for each position, to be used during selection of personnel;
- Recommended training for each position, once filled;
- Policies and regulations for Petra Archaeological Park;
- Operating procedures for management units and key positions;
- Essential facilities and equipment; and
- A schedule of implementation.

The NPS team produced the Petra Archaeological Park Operating Plan in three phases. The first phase, begun in February of 2000, was the preparation of a draft that was

Figure 9 Reviewing the operating plan at the summer 2000 work session.



distributed to as many as possible of the key stakeholders at Petra. These stakeholders include:

- The Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA),
- The Jordanian Department of Antiquities (DoA),
- Bait Al-Anbat (The Arab Forum for Cultural Interaction),
- Brooke Hospital for Animals,
- Petra National Trust (PNT),
- Friends of Archaeology (FoA),
- The American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR),
- UNESCO,
- The Guides Association,
- The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN),
- The Tourist Police,
- Petra Regional Planning Council (PRPC)
- Petra Archaeological Park
- The Amareen (Bedouin) Association, and
- The Bdoul (Bedouin) Committee
- The World Bank
- The United States National Park Service

Phase II, completed in the summer of 2000, was an intensive work session involving all of the above organizations. The workshop, along with the prior review of the operating plan, was the first experience most of the participating organizations had had with public involvement in planning and decision making. The workshop constituted a detailed review of the draft operating plan. It culminated with a presentation to the Jordanian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities on August 2, 2000.

The third phase of this first annex to the Memorandum of Agreement was the integration of the input received at the work session

Figure 8 The Obelisk Tomb, One of the approximately 800 named tombs at Petra.



into the operating plan. All input was integrated into the document by December of 2000, at which time the plan was printed, copied to CDs, and sent to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Jordan. It was also uploaded to a project web site from which it could be downloaded and printed at any time by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. MoTA then distributed copies of the plan to the work session participants. On January 17, 2001, the operating plan was approved by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, following a final review of the plan by the stakeholders.

Figure 10 The Petra landscape includes thousands of ancient water management features, such as this cistern and channel, which must be kept in repair in order to prevent damage to tombs.



The stakeholders have provided a detailed list of actions that must be taken during the implementation of the plan.

A detailed program for implementation of the operating plan will be formulated in early 2002. This program will incorporate the actions recommended by the Petra Archaeological Park stakeholders. Implementation will require the participation and support of many non-government organizations (NGOs), universities, and other interested organizations. All of these organizations will report to the Director of the Petra Archaeological Park, soon

to be appointed. The Director of the Petra Archaeological Park will report to the Director-General of the Department of Antiquities. The United States National Park Service will provide training and other technical support through the existing Memorandum of Agreement. The basic management framework for the Petra Archaeological Park, including staffing, training of positions, and finalization of essential planning documents, should be in place in five years.