

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The exercises above will have given a very good idea of the need to develop an integrated tourism strategy for the Badia. In view of the importance of tourism and the fact that schools can so easily contribute to the planning process we set out some more detailed ideas to help schools to get projects off the ground.

A: Resources:

The Badia has several resources that could and should contribute to a tourism strategy:

1. Its people
2. Its landscapes
3. Its wildlife
4. Its archaeology
5. Its skies
6. Its silence

Elements of these four resources are unique within Jordan and therefore especially worthy of attention:

1. **The People:** It is astonishing that anyone can survive at all in this arid and remote region. The local Bedouin, by virtue of their skills in adapting to this environment, can teach us a great deal about self-sufficiency and sustainability in this modern world.
2. **The Landscape:** Much of the region is coated with stony, black, basalt boulders interspersed with low volcanic peaks and alluvial depressions. This combination of texture, shape and colour provides for an expansive and breathtaking vista worthy of interpretation to general public as much as to specialists (e.g. Al Hazim)
3. **The Wildlife:** The oases act as important foci for migrating bird life and as such the Azraq Basin is already a Ramsar site. The Burqu' oasis should also be considered. Water is a major issue here and this alone is worthy of focus in helping visitors to understand the delicate balance in the web of life. (e.g. Azraq Wetland, Shaumari Reserve, Al Hazim)
4. **The Archaeology:** Standing in the midst of this immense landscape the numerous archaeological remains tell us something of the people and conditions of the past - wetter climate, more abundant flora and fauna, interesting building styles. All of these are very relevant to us all in a time of global crisis. (e.g. Qasr Burqu', Qasr Usaykhim, Jawa.)
5. **The Skies:** There are few places in the world where 180° of sky are visible at one time. The clarity of the air and the absence of cloud and artificial lighting make this an ideal location for astronomers (e.g. Hamzeh Station; Qasr Burqu').
6. **The Silence:** Few can fail to notice the silence. For those who desire some peace and tranquillity where better than the Badia for a contemplative retreat? (e.g. El Hazim, Al-Bqaiawieh)

B: Management Objectives:

Tourism (and Interpretation) can serve many purposes such that any new tourism initiative should, in every case, take stock of the objectives. To have a fine archaeological site that people should see is not reason enough to make it available to visitors. Some of the following objectives seem applicable to the Badia:

1. Providing income to local people
2. Increasing a sense of local ownership
3. Bringing people together (esp those who previously thought they had no interest)
4. Protecting and Managing the site (Preservation)
5. Conservation of both wildlife and human way of life
6. Enhancement of the landscape (removal of unwanted human mismanagement & waste)
7. Educating visitors and locals alike (Interpretation - providing understanding)
8. Research and Educational Studies

See Appendix A for a Case Study of Qasr Burqu'

C: Achieving the Objectives - Fundamentals:

For every site the following need to be considered:

1. **Who is the target audience?** In general the target groups are likely to be:

(i) General interest	(iv) Ornithology
(ii) Natural history	(v) Walking/camping
(iii) Archaeology	(vi) Adventure
2. **To what extent can the visitor be involved?** Looking and seeing plays a part but the experience is enhanced if each of the senses can be exploited. E.g. music, plant or cooking smells, stories etc.
3. **To what extent can the visitor gain a 'hands on' experience?** We learn most by doing. E.g. making bread, milking a goat, trying to weave etc.
4. **What returns can be made from the site?** Local income and involvement.
5. **How do the objectives and themes for this site fit in with the overall Tourism Strategy?** Each site should be a building block within the overall strategy. E.g. it would be no good inviting the tourist to visit a number of Roman sites, however interesting, unless they are tied in to the overall story of the region.

Continued:

D: Achieving the Objectives - Some Methods:

METHOD	SET UP COST?	YIELDS INCOME?	Note
Visitor Centre	Very High	No	1
Ranger services	High (salaries)	No	2
Trails - Self-guided	Medium (printing)	Yes (leaflets)	3
Trails - Guided	Medium (guides)	Yes	4
Publications	High (printing)	Yes	5
Wayside exhibits	High	No	6
Sculptures	Low	No	7
Story telling	Low	Yes	8
Herb garden	Low	Yes	9
Arts & crafts	Low	Yes	10
Hands-on activities	Low	Yes	11
Living History	Mod	Yes	12

Notes:

1. Visitor Centres: The high cost of such centres more often than not exceeds the value that they impart. A centre can often become the centre of attention rather than the site itself. Two good centres already exist (Azraq Wetland and Shaumari Reserve). Both of these are at the point of entry to the region, which is their best location. However, should the fort at Safawi be secured and adapted for visitor use then some interpretation of both the Badia and the site itself (including all of the original buildings around it) could take place. The new Badia Ecological Education Centre at Umm al-Quttayn provides another form of interpretation. Similarly any development at the Hamzeh Station should incorporate some interpretation of the night sky and, possibly some of the local flora and fauna.

2. Ranger Services: Local people should be encouraged to be trained up as rangers with the joint responsibility of overseeing the sites, protecting them and acting as informal interpreters to visitors. Given increased visitation a number of sites will need permanent rangers.

3. Self-Guided Trails: Good self-guided trails can help the visitor to become involved in the landscape and to see it at his or her own pace. Well chosen trails will include a number of sites of interest that will not be harmed by informal visitation (e.g. footpath erosion). One trail already exists at Azraq Wetland Reserve. Visits to the following could be enhanced also by such a trail:

1. **The desert basin of Al-Dahek** - Theme: Desert Elements - rock formations, desert climate, plants & animals.
2. **El-Hazim Basin** - Theme: Desert Survival - salt springs, wells, boreholes, herbs.
3. **Qasr Burqu'** - Theme: Ecology of an oasis
4. **Jawa:** - Theme: Taming the desert (hydrological systems)

4. Guided Trails: The advantage of guided trails is the interpersonal reaction between guide and visitor. It is important that the guide is knowledgeable and local. Sample situations include:

- (a) **Town of Sabha:** The Roman buildings (lived in until 1960's) and their associated water collection and storage systems. The advent of piped water in 1975 and the realisation that the old system was in fact the best. Farming methods. Growth and function of village clusters.
- (b) **Qasr Burqu':** The use of the water by Man, livestock and migrant birds. The annual cycle of life.

5. Publications: A good, well written and well illustrated booklet would not only act as a guide and souvenir but also as something to take away to show to other people. In this way the story of the Badia would be further promoted. As a saleable publication it would yield some income locally. Suggested Theme: Survival (overcoming all odds)

6. Wayside exhibits: These can be expensive to produce and if not well made are susceptible to vandalism or weathering. In general their use is not recommended except in places where other services are not easily provided. E.g.

- (a) **Wadi Rajil** - at the dam. Theme: Changing the desert landscape

7. Sculptures: made of local materials these can often convey the spirit of the environment especially if made by local people. These could be incorporated into the design of selected nodal points e.g. Safawi Fort.

8. Story telling: This requires very carefully scripted stories based on local history, traditions and legends. The locations for these need to convey the spirit of the locality e.g. inside a *beit sh'ar* or beside the pistachio tree at Al-Bqaiawieh. An example of such a story could be the massacre of the Syrdua by the Wa'habia in 1919.

9. Herb Garden: The use of local herbs is very much a part of the Bedouin tradition and a means of survival. The establishment of a herb garden, which also sells its produce, would help to interpret the desert plants to the visitor. This could be set up at the

Prince Hussein Information Technology Centre where the community element of the Centre's work could serve not only to archive this information but also to encourage the students to bring the plants, grow them within the grounds and prepare some IT notes to accompany them. This could then lead to herb sales.

10. Arts & Crafts: Traditional arts and crafts are always popular with visitors especially if there is also the personal touch in the item concerned. Visitor visits to workshops are popular. This is an excellent source of employment and income for local people.

11. Hands-on Experiences: The visitor experience is enhanced by having the chance to have a hands-on experience. For example by lighting a fire with camel dung, baking *arbut*, weaving a camel hair cloth, etc. This should be done in the right setting - within a *beit sha'r*. A number of locations could be selected for this activity but overkill should be avoided. Bedouin produce should be available for sale.

12. Living History: Historical re-constructions are worthwhile and can employ local people. However they need to be well executed to be successful. An example could be the manning and running of the fort at Safawi by people in period costume. A Bedu raid - if appropriate - could form the basis of another.

13. Community Visits: People are fascinated by people and their way of life. Organised visits to a community can be very successful on a small scale. These could include a walkabout, visit to a school, visit to a private house, a traditional meal, music and dancing. The success of such ventures depends entirely on ownership by the community and should not be imposed from outside.

E. Strategy:

1. **Inventory Compilation:** From a touristic point of view an inventory of the principal elements likely to appeal to visitors is required. e.g.

- (a) **Outstanding landscapes** ('Wow' factor - e.g. El-Hazim)
- (b) **Key geological sites** (e.g. Wadi Rajil)
- (c) **Key vegetation sites** (e.g. El-Hazim salt water springs)
- (d) **Key fauna sites** (incl. avifauna e.g. Qasr Burqu')
- (e) **Notable archaeological sites** (e.g. Umm al-Jimal)
- (f) **Key land use sites** (e.g. farms at Sabha)
- (g) **Key Bedu tent sites** (e.g. Qasr Burqu')
- (h) **Existing Accommodation** (e.g. RSCN at Azraq)
- (i) **Prospective accommodation sites** (e.g. Hamzah camp, Safawi fort)

2. **Setting of Priorities:**

Once the inventory is complete a matrix of places against what they offer can be produced so as to focus on the key features at any one site. With this information a pattern of features can be established so as to ensure an overall spread to avoid overkill.

3. Establishment of Themes:

The chosen themes for each site need to be established at an early stage to avoid repetition and to ensure a spread of visitor experience across the Badia.

4. Strategies:

Setting strategies to achieve the needs of each site. What needs to be done where and when.

5. Management:

Setting employment structures to ensure as wide a spread of opportunities as possible within the Badia.

6. Implementation:

Involvement of local NGO's, restoration, design, construction, employment, training etc

7. Monitoring:

Visitor numbers, erosion, rubbish, meeting of original objectives etc.

F: Accommodation Nodes:

In my view any accommodation needs to be small scale and placed to enable access to key areas. This means that the accommodation is best located at several key nodes. Most of the sites are in the west of the original Badia study area, only Qasr Burqu' being out on a limb to the east.

Existing:

1. **Azraq:** RSCN Lodge. Well located at the point of entry.

Potential:

1. **Safawi Fort:** This is under consideration by the BDRP and would be a first class site for accommodation and interpretation. It is more central to the Badia than accommodation at Azraq - especially for field studies. Interpretation of the old pump buildings should be included. However a lot of tidying up needs to be done in the general vicinity.
2. **Hamzah Camp:** Under development. At present this is in a pretty poor state but if completed will be an ideal location for field study groups, astronomical groups, and passing tours. The fact is that it already exists and in time will become an ideal place for over-nighting on the south-north route through Al-Hazim.
3. **Qasr Burku':** If groups are to visit this most easterly location, especially to stay for the sunset some form of accommodation (esp toilet facilities) is required. This could be a tent-based camp or a small centre built of some of the ruined buildings material. Whatever location is selected it should be well back from the oasis and Qasr. A major consideration will be toilet facilities and waste disposal. (see Appendix A)

Fig.H7: Images of Burq'a



CASE STUDY: The Palace of Qasr Burqu'

A: Background:

Qasr Burqu' is located in the north eastern part of the Jordan Badia, 175km north east of Azraq. The site is thought to have been occupied from the Nabatean period through to the 7th Century. It lies at the eastern edge of the Harra (= 'hot') basalt ranges and is underlain by the water-retaining silts of the *hammad* desert, which provides the best rangelands for 1 - 1.5 million sheep. In season it is fed by the water of Wadi Muqat, which drains north through Jordan from Saudi Arabia. The oasis is used not only by single nomadic pastoralists from many different Bedouin tribes, but also by migrant bird populations for whom it is an important site.

The Qasr used to be 30m² consisting of a central courtyard with ranges of rooms along the northeast and southeast sides. It consisted of a central four-storey tower (12m high), surrounding rooms, and a North West enclosure wall gateway. The tower had three rectangular rooms of similar shape at ground level, and two rooms at the upper two levels within an area of about 11m x 8m. The entrance to the tower was a defensive one, window-like, narrow and low on the West side. The tower was built to secure the water supply of the adjacent oasis. A cunningly curved man-made dam (probably Nabatean) holds the water all year around. (adapted from Ref.1)

B: The Resources of Burqu':

The palace and oasis at Burqu' are well worth visiting on a number of counts but it could rapidly lose its value if the management objectives are not taken into account. Assessing the resources of this site we might list the following:

1. A watering hole for Bedouin flocks
2. A beautiful landscape within a sea of rocks
3. A focus for birds, insects and amphibians.
4. A striking building of interesting construction
5. A peaceful oasis

C: Risks:

Increased visitation could result in:

1. Damage to the building
2. Injury to visitors
3. Erosion of the banks
4. Unsightly foot tracks
5. Disturbance of wildlife
6. Disruption to the Bedouin way of life
7. Pollution of the water

D: Management Objectives:

1. **Conservation of the water supply:** The increasing number of sheep and the fact that the Bedouin are so much more mobile than before (vehicles and mobile phones) has brought greater pressure on the water supply.

2. **Conservation of the vegetation:** For the same reasons the soils and vegetation are threatened by overgrazing and wind erosion.
3. **Conservation of the wildlife:** Maintenance of the water supply should automatically retain and enhance the wildlife interest
4. **Conservation of the building and dam:** By making the construction safe for visitors its survival should be assured.
5. **Increased 'ownership' by the Bedouin:** By involving the Bedouin as stakeholders the site should be safeguarded and benefits to them should accrue.

In the light of the above Management Objectives I would suggest:

1. Bedouin should be encouraged to provide visitor services (e.g. rangers; food and drink in a *beit sha'r*). Whether or not this site should include demonstration of e.g. Bedouin crafts should be decided within the wider scheme of things (see Main Report Section F: Strategy).
2. Bedouin should be invited to prepare the management of the site and to oversee its maintenance.
3. The key players should be encouraged to participate in the development of ideas at the site.
4. No vehicles should be allowed within sight of the palace and oasis. Visitors should be stopped out of sight and enabled to walk through to the oasis. Routeways should be decided and waymarked. Visitors should be discouraged from departing from the trails. The palace structure should be sensitively stabilised for the safety of both people and the building.
5. The oasis should continue to be a watering place for Bedouin flocks (except with the possibility of a small no grazing area at the south end); consideration should be given to minimising disturbance to wildlife (see items 4, 7 and 8)
6. Any existing rubbish or modern artefacts should be removed.
7. Some provision should be made to provide *informal* interpretation. Overkill should be avoided. A rock built hide using the local basalt in the style of the palace would be an appropriate means of providing observation and identification of bird life.
8. I cannot comment on research but the site has field study potential for geographers and biologists. This should be strictly controlled in terms of sampling sites and access to the water's edge. (see Field Studies below)

E: Interpretation Themes:

1. **Water in the desert** - its origin, flow and uses. The Bedouin name given to the feeding wadi - Maquat - means 'Tying'. They realised that the wadi ties together

101 separate branches of drainage. This knowledge also neatly draws together the elements of the natural and man-made landscape.

2. **Rhythms of life** - seasonal; diurnal flora and fauna; human activity

Comment: It must be said that the cross-desert drive from the main road is as much a part of the experience as a visit to the site itself - the stony desert (reg), and playas (Qa) form very dramatic landscapes. Also the grazing management project en route is worthy of interpretation.

F: Field Studies:

Some possible study topics:

1. Desert landforms - stony reg desert and playas (Qa)
2. Desert hydrology - oases and ephemeral channels
3. Ecology of oases
4. Man-Land relationships

G: General Note:

The establishment of any permanent structure is not considered to be appropriate in the close vicinity of the oasis. It is felt that the visitor experience ('Wow Factor') will be enhanced by 'coming across' the water and palace having approached across and around the basalt desert.

Subject to discussion the exceptions to this general principle would be:

1. Provision of a helicopter landing pad for emergencies
2. Provision of toilet facilities (self composting?) subject to advice on type and waste disposal
3. Provision of reception and interpretation facilities (within a basalt stone/goat hair tent structure of minimal cost)

Reference:

1. Salem Al-Oun and Majd Al-Homoud 2000 (?) "A proposal draft for new tourism network. Jordan Badia Tourism." Jordan Badia Research and Development Programme.