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# UNESCO Amman Office

## CULTURE

Culture's power to transform societies is clear. Its diverse manifestations – from our cherished historic monuments and museums to traditional practices and contemporary art forms – enrich our everyday lives in countless ways. Heritage constitutes a source of identity and cohesion for communities and creativity contributes to building open, inclusive, knowledge societies.

UNESCO Amman office is leveraging culture for sustainable development and as a source of resilience in Jordan. In parallel, it is working on the ground to support governments and local stakeholders to safeguard heritage, strengthen creative industries and encourage cultural pluralism.

# World Heritage

Positioned on the historical trade routes of the Middle East, Jordan has been home to a mix of cultures and religions throughout time. UNESCO is focused on enhancing the management framework at Jordan's World Heritage properties and further protecting the country's heritage, in line with the 1972 Convention. This work includes supporting national capacities to engage in the World Heritage nomination process. There are currently five sites in Jordan inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List:

## **Petra** (1985)

Wonder of the world where ancient Eastern traditions meet Hellenistic architecture through the marvelous remains of the Nabataean civilization.

## **Qusair Amra** (1985)

Exceptional testimony to the Umayyad civilization.

## **Um Er-Rasas** (2004)

Ancient Byzantine churches and mosaic floors representing a masterpiece of human creative genius.

## **Wadi Rum** (2011)

Stunning desert landscape witness to 12,000 years of human interaction, famous ancient petroglyphs and inscriptions.

## **Baptism Site "Bethany Beyond the Jordan"** (2015)

Roman and Byzantine churches and chapels testament to deep religious character.



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Qusair Amra



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# UNESCO's Work



*UNESCO promotes cultural diversity, creativity and innovation as a vector for dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding. The Amman office works towards ensuring sustainability through projects focused on resilience building.*

*Jordan possesses tremendous cultural assets, including remarkable archeological and historical sites and rich intangible cultural heritage. UNESCO's renowned cultural conventions provide a unique global platform for international cooperation and establish a holistic cultural governance system based on human rights and shared values. These international treaties endeavour to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage including ancient archaeological sites, intangible cultural heritage, museum collections, oral traditions and other forms of heritage, and to support creativity, innovation and the emergence of dynamic cultural sectors.*

*These cultural assets also offer a unique opportunity for the promotion of both sustainable and socio-economic development with the potential to strengthen social cohesion in Jordan, especially amongst marginalized groups.*

## Current Projects

### EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN IN MAFRAQ AND THE JORDAN VALLEY

UNESCO recognizes that rural women are among the most marginalized group and commits to increasing employment opportunities for them. In line with the resilience-based approach informing the response to the Syria crisis, the UNESCO Amman office is implementing two income-generating projects targeting rural women and capitalizing on Jordanian cultural assets in Umm el-Jimal (Mafraq) and Ghor el Safi (the Jordan Valley), both located in poverty pockets of the kingdom.

In Umm el Jimal, Jordanian and Syrian women have been using the Basalt stone typical to the region to create a stunning collection of carved objects while learning life skills and promoting heritage education.

In Ghor el Safi, UNESCO is supporting a women's cooperative working to improve their lives by enhancing the production and promotion of their vibrant, hand-dyed textiles using naturally sourced colors. Through this initiative, the women have re-introduced the cultivation of the indigo plant in Jordan.



## THE PETRA "SIQ STABILITY" PROJECT

The 'Siq' canyon, a 1.2 km gorge serving as the main entrance of Petra, has been exposed to natural hazards over time. The "Siq" is particularly exposed to geological risks including landslides, flashfloods, earthquakes which pose a major threat to monuments, visitors and the local community. Since 2009, alongside key partners, the UNESCO Amman office has been striving to mitigate the immediate hazards of rock falls and floods with the goal of preserving this natural wonder and ensuring its safety. The project has undertaken steps to develop a strategy towards prevention and mitigation of instability phenomena in the "Siq" and is contributing to the management and conservation of the site. This project is aligned with efforts to enhance the management of Jordan's cultural and natural heritage sites in line with the Sendai Framework for Action (2015-2030) and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction at World Heritage properties, working to counter the impact of natural hazards at heritage sites.

## SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The UNESCO Amman office has been providing technical support to the Government of Jordan to safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH), working to strengthen the capacities of national authorities, local communities and cultural actors. Following consultations with relevant stakeholders and UNESCO's preliminary field assessment surrounding the state of preservation of ICH in Jordan, the need to adopt appropriate safeguarding measures became very clear. Responding in line with the "2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH", implementation of capacity enhancing trainings were initiated based upon UNESCO's global capacity-building strategy.



## PRESERVING DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE IN JORDAN

Based on a needs assessment on the state of conservation of documentary heritage in Jordan, UNESCO Amman is providing technical support to improve the state of preservation of archives to ensure that this precious heritage is preserved, according to international standards

## STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITY TO COUNTER ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

In the framework of the "Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property" (1970), the UNESCO Amman office and the Department of Antiquities have joined forces to address the illicit trafficking of cultural items. Under the guidance of the Government of Jordan, UNESCO has undertaken a needs assessment to enhance responsiveness to this phenomenon.



## The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda marks a substantial step forward for sustainable development across many fields and particularly for culture as it is the first time that the international development agenda refers specifically to culture. UNESCO believes that no development can be sustainable without a strong culture component. Culture contributes to human and socio-economic development, quality education, social inclusion, sustainable cities, environmental sustainability and peaceful societies.

The UNESCO Amman office Culture team is striving to mainstream the SDGs into ongoing projects, focusing on the following targets:

### **SDG 4: *Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.***

- **Target 4.7:** Contributing to sustainable development and conservation of natural and cultural heritage, recognizing that the active engagement of children and youth is essential to UNESCO's work. Promoting heritage education to students, enabling long-lasting preservation and enhancement of the history and identity of Jordan and its people.

### **SDG 5: *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.***

- **Target 5.5:** Engaging women from all sectors of society in the creation of improved livelihood opportunities that capitalize on the country's cultural assets as a source of recovery and resilience.

### **SDG 8: *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.***

- **Target 8.9:** Investing in the rich cultural heritage of Jordan to create income-generating opportunities for rural women.

### **SDG 11: *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.***

- **Target 11.4:** Providing technical assistance to the Government of Jordan to adopt resilient management practices aimed at the preservation and protection of cultural and natural heritage. Focusing on the application of Disaster Risk Reduction strategies at the local level and the implementation of education and awareness raising activities for the enhanced preparedness and mitigation of disaster risks and adaptation to climate change phenomena.



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Wadi Rum



## Stay in touch

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