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E-Newsletter

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Experience Jordan Now!

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Dear Friends,

Please find below a selection of articles from the press on Jordan we would like to share with you.

Many thanks,
JTBNA Team

Support Jordan Now!

Published on: November 11, 2005
Travel Plus Daily

The bombings that hit Jordan on Wednesday evening represent the first major success by terrorists in that country. The Jordanian security and intelligence officials have a reputation for being thorough and all knowing. In recent years they've stopped many of these incidents before they happened. As a major hub for the cargo heading into Baghdad from the Red Sea port of Aqaba, Amman has long been on the terrorist hit list.

As the president of American Express Vacations, Michael Stolitsky says: "Jordan has long been seen as an island in a sea of terrorism; well now they're connected by this experience to their neighbors in Israel and Egypt."

Veterans of Middle Eastern travel have seen such events happen all too regularly, but they've also seen that this region, even with all of its troubles, is extremely resilient. According to Ady Gelber, president of Isram World of Travel, however, it's not necessarily the region that's resilient, it's the market. "People are less and less likely to let these kinds of incidents control their plans," he says. "I've got people arriving in Jordan today. Nobody called to cancel. They called to ask about the situation, but they went ahead with their plans."

That they go ahead with their plans is important for a country that relies so much on tourism. Jordan is not an oil state. Tourism accounts for about 12 percent of the country's gross domestic product. This year, tourism revenues were enjoying an 11 percent increase, and according to Jordanian press accounts were expected to reach \$1.4 billion. For those of us who have been lucky enough to travel throughout Jordan, it's easy to see why.

Jordan 's many attractions leave dramatic memories to those who have visited them. Jerash and Petra are among the most powerful landscapes in the Middle East, a region rich in wonderful destinations. The simple bend in the Jordan River where John baptized Jesus resonates inside you long after you have seen it. And the vast expanse of the Wadi Rum desert is a place where visitors can call on Bedouin to drink tea in their tents. These are the beauties that these terrorists would deprive us of. They would also deprive us of knowing the Jordanian people.

Two years ago I traveled throughout Jordan with my uncle who is well into his 70s. Everywhere we went we were received with warmth and respect, until he tried to pet a Bedouin's camel in the Wadi Rum and the camel tried to bite him. He leapt about three feet and all of us, including the Bedouin men sitting around their campfire, had a good laugh. Then they jumped up to be sure that he was alright. Another man, who was of Palestinian descent, took the two of us to his mother's home in Amman where

we met his family. We had tea under photos of Mecca, Jordanian King Abdullah, his father Hussein and former President Bill Clinton.

You won't be reading any articles in your newspaper about these Jordanians, but you should know that these people consider Americans their friends. The people who bombed those hotels bombed them precisely because they knew they were symbols of America in Jordan. These days Americans have friends and enemies just about anywhere you go. These days there also are people who kill innocent people just about anywhere you go, even in America. Nobody thinks of Oklahoma City or Atlanta as unfriendly dangerous towns, though they were both stained by terrorist incidents in the past decade.

Still, travel agents have to guard the well being of their clients carefully and keep them informed about the risks they take when they travel. It would be dishonest to do anything else. The Middle East is always going to be a little more risky for American travelers than other destinations. On the other hand, because it's the Middle East there are few other destinations that can match it when it comes to dazzling, rich experience.

Jerusalem, Cairo, Aswan, the Nile and yes, Petra and Jerash are touchstones of civilization that you avoid seeing at your own peril. All of our histories run from the Nile and the Jordan. In all of us there is a place where we can intimately imagine the caravans of the Middle East moving oasis to oasis. That picture is part of us.

"How will this incident impact my business to Jordan? What will I do?" asks Stolorowsky. "I'm going to put Jordan in my brochure right next to Egypt and Israel. In three months no one will remember this and we'll all move on."

A wonderful statistic crossed my desk last month. It showed that American visits to London in August went up despite the fact that there were bombings in the London Underground in July. Colin Marshall, chairman of VisitBritain, told me that he believed Americans were almost defiant about standing next to London when things were tough.

Wouldn't it be nice if we stood defiantly by all of our friends who are under attack, just because they are our friends? Jordan was attacked because of its friendly relationship with us, so it's incumbent on us to support the country in its hour of need.

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Leading tourism organisations switch conferences to Amman in show of support

Revenues generated by tourism in the first half of this year reached JD420.1 million, compared to JD379.5 million in the same period of 2004

By Dalya Dajani – Jordan Times

AMMAN — Two of the world's leading tourism and travel organisations plan to relocate their conferences to Amman in a unified show of support for the Kingdom following Wednesday's triple suicide attacks, an official said Sunday.

Minister of Tourism Alia Hattough-Bouran said the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) plan to shift the two conferences, originally slated to take place in Europe, to the capital early next year.

"These organisations have shown tremendous support and confidence in our industry by rerouting the venues of their upcoming conferences to the Kingdom," Bouran told The Jordan Times yesterday.

According to Bouran, the WTTC will be relocating its executive council's upcoming meeting in Italy on April 28 to the capital.

The WTO will also be shifting a major conference on sustainable development and tourism from Spain to Jordan in March.

The WTO, a leading global entity supporting tourism worldwide, condemned the terrorist attacks on three of the capital's hotels last Wednesday and emphasised its full support for the government.

In a letter to Bouran, WTO Secretary General Francesco Frangialli expressed his sympathy to the victims and the government and promised the minister any assistance the country may need in “assessing the situation or support that could help Jordan recover from this tragic incident.”

WTO Regional Representative for the Middle East Amr Abdel Ghaffar also expressed his support to the Kingdom's tourism sector, adding that Jordan had a positive track record in recovering rapidly from instabilities.

Observers in the industry have said they do not expect the attacks to have a substantial impact on the tourism industry.

Hospitality officials and travel agents have reported minimal changes in the travel plans of visitors since the attacks.

Five ships carrying 1,600 European and American tourists are scheduled to dock in Aqaba beginning this month until the end of November.

Another three ships carrying 1,000 visitors are also scheduled to arrive in the Port of Aqaba in December. Bouran said the greatest morale booster came after two cruise ships, the Discovery and the Silver Shadow, maintained their plans to dock in Aqaba with nearly 1,000 visitors the day after the attacks.

The minister said she was confident that tourism would continue to grow.

According to the latest official figures, tourism arrivals rose by 9.5 per cent in the first six months of this year, reaching 2.367 million visitors compared to 2.162 million visitors during the same period last year. Revenues generated by tourism in the first half of this year reached JD420.1 million, compared to JD379.5 in the same period of 2004.

The Kingdom will be intensifying its tourism promotional efforts over the coming weeks to ensure the sector continues to build on its accomplishments.

Plans include setting up more press trips for the international media to the Kingdom and ongoing participation in major trade and travel exhibitions around the world.

Bouran said her ministry is making all the necessary arrangements for an initiative that entails allocating empty seats on flights from Barcelona and Italy to travel writers and journalists specialised in tourism.

WTTC President Jean-Claude Baumgarten also condemned the terrorist attacks on Jordan in a press announcement in London on Saturday, adding that the council would provide the country with any assistance to come to terms with this tragedy.

“Our hearts go out to all Jordanians at this difficult time. It goes without saying that we fully condemn this attack which was not an attack on travel and tourism but an attack on humanity itself — as shown by the fact that a wedding was targeted,” said Baumgarten.

“I call upon all sectors of the travel and tourism industry, both globally and in Jordan, to come together and work to ensure that the significant economic and social benefits of our industry in Jordan are sustained,” he added.

Hotels step up security in wake of attacks

By Rana Husseini - Jordan Times

AMMAN — Hotels and major institutions in the Kingdom have begun beefing up security measures, installing metal detectors and other equipment, in the wake of last week's triple suicide bombings at major Amman hotels, officials said on Saturday.

“Metal detectors and security equipment are being installed in hotels in Amman, the Dead Sea and Aqaba, government buildings and major shopping centres,” Deputy Prime Minister Marwan Muasher told reporters.

Three suicide attacks targeted the Radisson SAS, Days Inn and Grand Hyatt hotels on Wednesday night claiming the lives of 57 victims and injuring more than 90 others.

Director of the Public Security Department (PSD) Lieutenant General Mohammad Aitan met on Saturday with representatives of hotels, banks and other major establishments from around the country to discuss adopting precautionary security measures to prevent similar attacks in the future.

“It was agreed in the meeting to install inspection equipment for people, luggage and vehicles in these entities,” PSD media office chief Major Bashir Daaja told The Jordan Times yesterday.

He said the managers and proprietors of these establishments agreed to upgrade their electronic surveillance systems and recruit retired army personnel to operate the equipment because “they are experienced and efficient in this field.”

Security was more visible in Amman on Saturday, with police units of the PSD manning major thoroughfares and intersections. People were out in large numbers at the weekend going about their business.

Restaurants and cafés around the capital have remained busy.

The government had, prior to the attacks, announced that Sunday instead of Monday, Nov. 14, would be a public holiday in observance of the birthday of the late King Hussein.

The government pledged to increase security measures around the country immediately after the attacks. Access to the entrances of the capital's hotels has been restricted. Visitors, their luggage and parcels are being searched by police officers.

“These strict security measures at hotels will be applied until we make sure that these premises are no longer targeted,” Muasher told The Jordan Times.

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