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**Experience
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TOURISM ON THE RISE IN JORDAN

Despite ongoing regional instability, Jordan remains a peaceful land. This was acknowledged by a surge in tourism activity. The tourism industry in Jordan is experiencing a 7.1 percent growth in the number of tourists visiting the country during the first five months of this year, versus the same period last year.

Tourism revenues have increased by 8 percent accordingly reaching JD 359.1 million. The increase in tourism in the Kingdom this year - total of 1 million and 982,000 tourists compared to 1 million and 850,000 in the same period of last year- is the direct consequence of extensive marketing efforts aimed at the United States, the Gulf and the Eastern European countries. Arab visitors lead the tourism activity in Jordan this year knowing that a noticeable increase in visitors from the US and Europe is also noted. In fact, the number of tourists from the US rose by 36.4 per cent, reaching 55,012 visitors compared to 40,327 during the stated period of 2005.

The Ministry of Tourism has been implementing national surveys in an effort to provide accurate tourism data helping in national investment forecasting and planning.

60.000 TOURISTS VISIT THE BAPTISM SITE IN 2006'S FIRST HALF. A TREND IN DEVELOPMENT?

Around 60,000 visited the venerated Baptism site in the first half of 2006. The tourists were mostly American and European visitors on package tours to the country.

“We have 18,000 tourists in April and May alone,” says Dia Madani, the director of the Baptism site Commission. According to him, the figures indicate that the number of visitors will be higher by the end of 2006 than the total arrivals in 2005.

The Bethany Beyond Jordan Baptism site continues to be one of the most sacred places in the whole world attracting pilgrims, visitors and archeologists.

The site’s infrastructure underwent a series of development including building new facilities and now features a visitors’ centre, restaurants, a small museum, shops selling handicrafts and a VIP lounge. Madani said that, a promotion unit will be launched soon and will be working closely with the Jordan Tourism Board on both international and local level.

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