THE CASE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM: JORDAN
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The case for community tourism

Tourism is a powerful tool that can be used to mitigate and solve some of our world’s greatest challenges, such as creating food sovereignty, promoting gender parity, conserving resources as assets, and preserving and celebrating cultures, traditions, and languages.

However, many forms of conventional tourism do not mitigate these challenges, and many cause negative impacts or alterations to the sense of place, the people or the fragile environment of a destination. Sustainable tourism on the other hand, takes into full account its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts – addressing the needs of its visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities equally. And it is the travel industry’s responsibility to look for more meaningful and sustainable options in order to leave a destination better off as a result of tourism. This benefits not only the destinations we profit from, but also the visitor experience.

The ability to partner with community leaders and amplify local narratives, history, and cultural context allows for tourism to support healthier communities that are not only great places to visit, but also to live. In order for tourism to thrive in destinations, communities in those destinations must also thrive.

As consumers become more conscious travelers post pandemic, 72% of respondents of a 2019 Booking.com survey agree that they are passionate about traveling to destinations to help boost tourism revenue and the local economy. Research shows that while quality, convenience, and price still very much matter to consumer choice, factors like sustainability, trust, ethical sourcing, and social responsibility are increasingly important to the way consumers select their products and services.
The tourism industry’s interconnectedness and interdependence creates opportunities to foster transformative change in communities. Forming strong partnerships with local community leaders is crucial in this process. Non-profits, social enterprises, community-owned tourism organizations, and B Corp organizations are social-centric by design — with the networks, procedures, and solutions in place to ensure people’s needs are met and social issues are addressed. Those partnerships help tourism companies gain a cultural context and solutions-based approach to local issues – critical for companies to operate sustainably in destinations, and not often understood by visitors.

Investing in community-led tourism is good for business. By putting communities at the center of tourism development, resident sentiment improves with more local people and ecosystems benefiting. The experience for the traveler is also more authentic, creating a more differentiated product for the travel business. This creates a full circle of prosperity for all involved in the tourism value chain.

As demand for sustainable travel experiences grows, Impact Travel Alliance’s 2018 Bringing Sustainable Tourism to the Masses study found that “of those who want to travel sustainably, more than one third (35 percent) found it difficult, and half didn’t know how.” Booking.com shared similar results stating “lack of knowledge and available or appealing options when trying to practice (sustainable travel)” were barriers to travelers making more sustainable choices. The tour operator and travel advisor segment, specifically, has incredible power to build connections from the consumer to the local community. By building collaborative partnerships between destinations, businesses, and community leaders, consumer demand can be addressed, and a new model of impact tourism introduced.

This report demonstrates these concepts in action at the 2018 Tourism Cares with Jordan Meaningful Travel Summit. The Summit was attended by 70 travel professionals to explore social enterprise throughout the country, expand existing product development and leave behind a ripple of impact for local communities.
ABOUT TOURISM CARES

We are the people and places of travel dedicated to the people and places of travel.

Tourism Cares, a 501c3 non-profit organization, unites the travel industry and is a catalyst for positive social, environmental, and economic impact for the people and places of travel. To achieve this, we work to enact lasting change in the way we do business for the people and places we serve.

Since its inception, Tourism Cares is known for bringing the most prominent names and companies in the travel industry together, mobilizing them to create change. What started with relief and revitalization volunteer efforts has grown into involvement and investment in social and environmental impact organizations that provide real and sustainable change, and many direct economic benefits for communities worldwide.

By doing what’s right for travel, we create opportunities, empower communities, amplify culture and protect the environment while fostering diverse perspectives and building inclusivity and understanding. www.tourismcares.org

Image: A group celebrates in Jordan at Little Petra
Caption: A tourist stands at Petra, Jordan
The Meaningful Travel Summit is an event connecting top travel industry professionals with local changemakers in tourism destinations around the world. By coming together in-destination, we harness the power of travel to create opportunities, empower local communities, amplify culture and protect the environment, while fostering diverse perspectives and cross sector collaborations.

The Summit stands out as an innovative travel event with the primary goal of creating long-term economic impact for tourism communities by curating deep and immersive connections through unlikely and little known partnerships. Through meaningful conversations and experiential community visits, the Summit explores how tourism creates dignified livelihoods and provides economic investment to curtail the negative social and environmental impacts on the destinations we all depend on for our own livelihoods. Attended by many of the largest US-based tour operators, top travel advisors, trade media, and influential industry ambassadors, attendees of the Meaningful Travel Summit spend 4-5 days experiencing unique offerings by local change agents in-country. Our goal is to inspire participants to integrate local social enterprises and impact experiences into their product, and demonstrate how they can drive sustainable tourism and provide travelers with an authentic, immersive cultural or conservation experience.

For the destination, the Meaningful Travel Summit provides an opportunity to not only source and develop new sustainable tourism products, but to tell their story of sustainability to the US market through Tourism Cares’ vast industry network. The returns for the destination are immense, as involving more local stakeholders into the tourism supply chain creates opportunities to foster transformative change. Tourism is one of the largest employers in the world; it has a low barrier to entry and optimizes on many transferrable, home-grown skills. The tourism industry is the largest employer of Indigenous communities and women than any other global industry. It helps tackle “urban migration”—generations of youth moving to city centers with the hopes of finding meaningful employment.

Tourism allows for dignified and prosperous job and training opportunities, for individuals to have a choice to stay in their community to work, or choose to
move with a portfolio of transferable skills. Distribution of the wealth of tourism creates more dignified livelihoods, happier communities, authentic demonstrations of cultural capital, and overall provides a better place to live. And the best places to live are also the best places to travel.

The long-term impact product of the Meaningful Travel Summit is the Meaningful Travel Map, a product development tool designed in collaboration with Tourism Cares and the host destination that showcases community-led nonprofits and social enterprises country-wide. This expands the audience from those attending the Summit to a global audience of sustainable travel product buyers, providing more pathways to economic development for the featured experiences and more opportunity to meet growing consumer demand for authentic travel moments.

The Meaningful Travel Summit is the culmination of many months of collaboration between Tourism Cares, destination managers, travel businesses, and local communities, but it is only the beginning. At Tourism Cares, we view the Meaningful Travel Summit as the beginning of our sustainability journey with a country, not the end. The benefits of the program can impact destinations for years to come, distributing the economic benefits of travel & tourism through a destination, empowering local communities, and enhancing visitor experiences. You’ll be able to see these effects by studying the outcomes from our 2018 event in Jordan.

www.tourismcares.org/meaningful-map
Tourism Cares with Jordan

Tourism Cares with Jordan brought 70 of the most influential tour operators and travel association leaders to the destination in February 2018.

At the time of the Summit, tourism was accelerating in Jordan, with an annual tourism increase of 2.6%, to 3.86 million visitors, and the group overnight visitor market up a resounding 20% in 2018. Petra and UNESCO World Heritage Sites remained the top attractions for visitors, but more and more visitors were attracted to draws such as the epic traverse of the Jordan Trail.

Tourism Cares with Jordan outlined 3 goals:

Engage government and industry leaders on sustainable tourism

Tourism Cares with Jordan created connections between stakeholders that had not previously worked together in a collaborative way. By establishing a new partnership with the Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association (JITOA) and the Jordan Tourism Board, the foundation was set to build a working relationship on future initiatives benefiting communities through responsible tourism development.
Discover social impact experiences and introduce to the greater travel industry trade

By exploring Jordan beyond Petra and highlighting the power of activities that directly engage travelers with the community, the Summit provided an inspiring travel experience interwoven with social impact. From the wonder of Petra to the desert, the Dead Sea, the Jordan Trail and connections with local leaders from the community and from travel. The Summit developed an environment to listen, smell, taste and feel what it’s like to travel responsibly in Jordan. The program ensured that community hosts had a voice in the conversation and benefited from the presence of visitors in the way they want to offer tourism.

Boost corporate social responsibility (CSR) and share knowledge.

Through facilitated dialogue and “CSR Roundtables,” the global trade and Jordanian leaders found the space to share their passion and knowledge, leading to new partnerships, cross-sector sharing of best practices, and better cultural understanding.

“Any trip to Jordan wouldn’t be complete without a visit to Petra and Wadi Rum – and one or two of these enterprises that offer a unique insight into the spirit and people of Jordan. Our people and communities have as much to offer as our heritage, and the good news is that you don’t have to choose. You can make a special difference just by coming”.

Ms. Lina Annab, Jordan’s Minister of Tourism & Antiquities
Social Enterprises & Experiences

Montreal Hotel
Historical Hotel
Experiences starting at 20.00 JD

Ammarin Bedouin Camp
Petra Area
Experiences starting at 17.00 JD

Summagga Cafe
Authentic cuisine
Lunch starting at 8.5 JD

Feynan Ecolodge
Jordan’s "Great Escape"
Rooms starting at 95.33 JD

Ammarin Bedouin Camp

Any stay at this camp founded and owned by the local Bedouin promises living heritage and impact in the shadow of Petra.

A 10-minute walk from Little Petra (signposted off the approach road), this camp is in Siq Al Amri, hidden in a spectacular amphitheatre of sand and hills, and run by the local Ammarin tribe. Accommodations are comprised of hot showers, real beds and clean bedding in goat haired tents, and electricity.

At the Ammarin Bedouin Camp, they work on combining history, nature, heritage, and culture in one of the most beautiful areas in Jordan. They offer activities especially for their guests to bring them closer to the nature and history of the area as well as the local inhabitants of this

Caption: The Meaningful Map of Jordan
The Summit marked the launch of Jordan’s Meaningful Travel Map, an innovative, experiential product development tool, showcasing twelve social enterprises across Jordan. The number of social enterprises along the map is expected to grow to more than 50 within five years, and all are expected to be sustainably supported by the tourism industry while providing exciting and authentic new experiences for inbound and local operators.

Each of the twelve experiences is offered by a non-profit organization or social enterprise that, in addition to providing a quality cultural experience for travelers, also has a program for directly benefiting marginalized or underrepresented populations.

The potential of these enterprises is illustrated in the story of Halima Al Qa’aydeh, who started with the Bani Hamida Women’s Weaving Project as a volunteer, rose to supervisor and project manager, and now is one of six women elected in municipal elections. Another is Eisa, a hiking guide who, since the 2017 launch of the Jordan Trail, has seen a business boom, so much that he has added a second floor to his home to host guests. Um Khalid has a longer story: As a baker of shrak bread for the Feynan Ecolodge since its founding, she has built a tourism business that has allowed her to buy solar panels, electrify her goat hair tent, and purchase a washing machine.
The Meaningful Travel Map of Jordan is distinctive for two reasons: the extensive due diligence and research behind each of the twelve listings, which is made available to travelers; and being designed explicitly as a resource for both travelers and the travel industry. With continuing distribution and great recognition of the Meaningful Travel Map, these quality experiences will benefit from increased visibility and visitation, creating a win–win–win for the community, travelers, and companies.

Sites include:

- Al Numeira Environmental Association: bike, snack and get dirty in their gardens and other projects, learning with one of the Rift Valley’s newest social startups
- Ammarin Bedouin Camp: any stay at this camp founded and owned by the local bedouin promises living heritage and impact in the shadow of Petra
- Bait Khayrat Souf: this tranquil kitchen and garden serves up local breakfast, goods, and cooking lessons while providing training and jobs to local women
- Baraka Destinations: the perfect detour for the social traveler – experience this cluster of local tourism experiences and businesses in villages off the beaten path
- Bani Hamida Women’s Weaving Project: try your hand at traditional weaving, boosting women’s rights and livelihoods
- Feynan Ecolodge: go green and local at this award-winning lodge at the Dana Biosphere – and build local jobs and conservation
- Iraq al Amir Women’s Cooperative: learn traditional papermaking, pottery and more with your family at this renowned center for local training and knowledge
- The Jordan Trail Association: hike any stretch of its 650 unique kilometers and drive communities forward with every step
- Montreal Hotel: re–enact the battles of Saladin and the Crusaders, and support the veterans of today
- Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature: explore, and shop, with Jordan’s environmental champion, with things to do and impact everywhere
- Summaga Café: take a break in your visit to Ajloun Castle to dine on 100% organic fare from a women-led farmers’ cooperative
- Syrian Jasmine: celebrate multicultural Jordan by learning soap-making and crochet, helping their newest residents and women entrepreneurs.
“At the time of our visit to Jordan, Collette only offered extensions to Petra off our Israel product. We are delighted that beginning in 2020, we will be offering a small group Jordan and Egypt tour under our Explorations brand. We are using the Meaningful Travel Map in the development of our product and have already been in contact with several of the Jordanian organizations we met on our trip – for example, the Ammarin Bedouin Camp for example where we had dinner in Petra and the Iraq Alameer women’s cooperative we met for lunch, to note a few. Collette is committed to partnering with organizations participating in ‘the map’ whenever and wherever possible.”

Diana Ditto, Collette
Program Outcomes

Tourism Cares with Jordan saw incredible ripple effects, both for the destination and host communities.

Community Social + Economic Impact

More than $62,000 was invested in community projects in Jordan through Tourism Cares grant funding. Attending tour operators also made the following commitments to social enterprise in Jordan as a direct result of the Meaningful Travel Summit:

Iraq Al Amir:
The Iraq Al Amir Women’s Cooperative Association was founded by the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation over two decades ago. It aimed to make the women financially independent and to raise their standard of living by increasing their income and preserving local heritage. The cooperation exists to keep their culture alive, protect the environment, and to provide meaningful employment for local women in the village.

Caption: The women of Iraq Al Amir prepare a meal in their kitchen for guests.
The workshop is organized into three domains; handmade paper production, pottery, and a hand weaving mill with three handlooms. In addition, the women at Iraq Al Amir are renowned for their fresh and delicious produce, often catering for visitors and clients!

After Tourism Cares with Jordan visited Iraq Al Amir, the co-operative received $37,500 in grant funding from the Treadright Foundation and the Tollman family to renovate their showroom and kitchen. The Iraq Al Amir team also received a grant from United Travel Agency to support their operations and their expansion. More importantly, they’re on the path to financial sustainability as they hosted 2,643 tourists in 2019, through The Travel Foundation Brands (summit attendee) - Trafalgar, Insight Vacations, Contiki, Uniworld, Adventure World, African Travel, and Lion World.

**Al Numeira Environmental Association:**
Al Numeira Environmental Association was created after a group of people from the community finished a hike in a nearby wadi. They were disheartened by all the trash and pollution in their beautiful village and decided to form an Environmental Association to counteract it. Al Numeira Environmental Association’s mission is to promote innovative water conservation methods and environmental education to build a more sustainable future and improve human well-being in the Jordan Valley.

The Planeterra Foundation (summit attendee) supported Al Numeira Environmental Association to provide training on experience development, food hygiene and safety, and guiding as well as a grant to rebuild their kitchen after an unfortunate fire. Thanks to this partnership, Numeira has signed a contract with G Adventures bringing them over 2,300 guests in 2019 alone, with additional annual growth expected. They have even been able to hire an additional 12 employees from the community.
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**Wadi Araba Cycling:**
Locally owned and operated, Wadi Araba provides bicycle tours in the greater Wadi Feynan area. Customers can explore the region sustainably, with many tour options that highlight different aspects of the rich natural and anthropological history of the region.

Operated by Ahmad Gawasmeh since 2017, a donation of 169 bikes from A&K Philanthropy and the Bob Whitley Fund (summit attendees) was made as a result of the Summit. Ahmad has sold and rented bikes to the local community, and from the revenue, he has reinvested in his shop for upgrades and has bought tools for repair, and accessories to sell. He has solved a big problem for the farmers in the area that now use their new bikes for transportation. Wadi Araba Cycling has also been hosting groups of 15–20 pax coming from Feynan Ecolodge, both tourist and local, and has been able to work with 12 locals from the village as assistant guides and drivers.

**USAID Jordan Local Enterprise Support Project**
A summit partner, is also funding an additional 6 enterprises from the Meaningful Travel Map to ensure they meet the standards of international travel operators by developing their business structure and increasing market readiness.

Additionally, trade and consumer media coverage drove incredible attention to the Summit and social enterprise partners. Please see page 23 for a complete list of post-program media hits.
Destination Return on Investment

The Jordan Tourism Board saw the following returns as a result of hosting Tourism Cares with Jordan:

- An average of one additional night added to Jordan itineraries from every North American tour operator who attended, increasing tourism revenue annually significantly country-wide

- 301% growth on MyJordanJourney.com, home to the Meaningful Travel Map of Jordan; increasing awareness of sustainable community-led experiences country-wide

- Highlighting of Jordan social enterprise product at more than 30 leading industry conferences on average per year, averaging an audience of an estimated 10,000 travel professionals annually.

- Media circulation of the Meaningful Travel Map of Jordan and social enterprise to an estimated audience of 1.2 million through Tourism Cares media partnerships and earned media.

"By adding the Jordan Meaningful Travel Map destinations to [our] itineraries, Big Five Tours experienced a 40% increase travelers to Jordan"

Ashish Sanghrajka, CEO, Big Five Tours
Charities, non-profit organizations, and social impact organizations exist all over the world and are creating value, allocating equitable resources, and transforming societal needs. Every traveler eats, sleeps, shops, tours, and needs transport. And every one of these touchpoints is an opportunity to create a more sustainable future for every destination while also creating a unique experience for visitors.

The Covid-19 pandemic only enhanced the need, and the demand, for tourism to become a driving force for systemic change around the world. The time is now for the industry to challenge traditional norms; invest capital into existing and new places; support diverse and dynamic entrepreneurs; find more creative ways to ensure financial returns that prioritize people and the planet, and move industries stuck in old paradigms into a future that enhances well-being for us all.

“We know that the #1 draw from international travelers coming to Jordan is history and culture. New trends tell us North Americans are more likely to book sustainable, off-the-beaten-path experiences. Jordan is uniquely positioned in this segment because of the reputation of Jordan and being a destination where travelers can immerse themselves in the culture. Jordan launched the Meaningful Travel Map in conjunction with Tourism Cares with TC delegations in Feb 2018 the team has been very active in promoting that aspect of the estimation and it has been successful in marketing activities.”

- Jordan Tourism Board, 5-Year Report
Tourism Cares hosts its global Meaningful Travel Summit annually, with Tourism Cares with Colombia held in November 2021 (postponed a year due to COVID19 pandemic). The goals of the Summits center around community tourism development and spreading positive economic, social and environmental impacts through tourism in countries across the globe. As we look ahead, we ground our work in the following:

- All tourism is community tourism. It is first and foremost about relationship-building and not simply transactional, so we must give communities a voice and ask how they want tourism to work in their homes.

- The travel experience becomes more beneficial for locals and visitors when destination stakeholders – both in the public and private sector – build partnerships with intention.

- Working with local leaders and forging unlikely partnerships can create social transformation and a prosperous business.

For more information on Tourism Cares and our portfolio of impact, visit www.tourismcares.org/meaningful-travel-summits

If you are interested in hosting a Meaningful Travel Summit in your destination contact community@tourismcares.org

Caption: Summit attendees interact with the community in Colombia.
Appendix: Tourism Cares with Jordan

Attending Companies

USTOA
NTA
ATTA
ASTA
SYTA
US Travel Association
Department of Commerce - National Travel + Tourism Office
The Travel Corporation
Goway
Alexander + Roberts
Viking Vacations
TRIP Foundation
Tauck
Sports Leisure Vacations
The Group Travel Company
Abercrombie & Kent USA
Micato Safaris
Avanti Destinations
Bridges + Holman Worldwide Travel
American Marketing Group
Collette
Quality Travel Solutions
Emirates
Air Canada

Delta Airlines
Royal Jordanian
G Adventures
Planeterra Foundation
Hosteling International
Booking.com
AirBnB
Rovia LLC
Beckham + Associates
Eric Friedheim Foundation
Google Travel
Jacobs Media
MaCher
Myght, Inc.
Travel Relations
Trip Mate
NYC + Company
Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority
National Geographic
Travel Weekly
Travel Age West
Insider Travel Report
NTA Courier
The Group Travel Leader
Full Media Coverage: https://www.one-tab.com/page/tsEhx6tRCoBoNo2R_newhQ

- MY EXTRAORDINARY JORDAN JOURNEY: SUPPORTING LOCAL WOMEN WITH OUR NEW TREADRIGHT HERITAGE PROJECT – PART 1 – BRETT TOLLMAN
- MY EXTRAORDINARY JORDAN JOURNEY: Part 2 – BRETT TOLLMAN
- Tourism Cares and Jordan Promote Local, Sustainable Travel
- Jordan launches map of sustainable tourism to enrich touristic experience – Travelandtourworld.com
- Dispatch | Dispatch, Jordan: Why are you here?
- The King of Jordan talks tourism: Travel Weekly
- Sorting out the meaning of meaningful: Travel Weekly
- Dispatch | Dispatch, Jordan: A meaningful map
- Tourism Cares Announces Jordan Project for 2018 – The Group Travel Leader | Group Tour and Travel Destinations, Attractions & More
- The Group Travel Leader | Group Tour and Travel Destinations, Attractions & More
- Insider Travel Report | Jordan, Tourism Cares Debut Meaningful Travel Map of 12 Experiences
- Insider Travel Report | Insider Video: Tourism Cares Trip to Jordan
- Tourism Cares Partners With Jordan | TravelAge West
- Sustainable Travel: It’s Not Just About the Environment – The New York Times
- Travel Right: Jordan Releases New Sustainable Tourism Map | Al Bawaba
- Discover the Country of Jordan with Clayton &dash; Travel Guys Radio
- Sorting Out the Meaning of Meaningful
- Tourism Cares with Jordan delegation launches list of 12 social enterprises ·ETB Travel News America
- Tourism Cares Partners With Jordan | TravelAge West
- Dispatch | Dispatch, Jordan: Why are you here?
- Tourism Cares with Jordan Delegation Launches List of 12 Social Enterprises for Travelers and the Travel Industry
- Jordan launches sustainable tourism map | Jordan | Hospitality | ArabianIndustry.com
- Jordan launches map of sustainable tourism to enrich touristic experience – Travelandtourworld.com
- Jordan launches map of sustainable tourism to enrich touristic experience – Travelandtourworld.com
- Tourist Cares and Jordan Promote Local, Sustainable Travel
- Connect with locals and travel Jordan with a purpose using this new map
• Feynan Ecolodge, Jordan: A sustainable hotel in the Dana Biosphere Reserve
• In northern Jordan, a community-based tourism project wakes the sleepy village of Umm Qais – The Washington Post
• Impactful Travel with USTOA | TravelPulse
• https://planeta.com/jordan-meaningful-map/
• https://greenloons.com/2018/06/12/jordan-travel-tips/
• https://www.travelpress.com/jordan-puts-meaningful-travel-on-the-map/?fbclid=IwAR1pqc2-xgXp7cHYpAEdSHuwuFKi2mUl8UPhjZAyR5Z83OrECyG7ha0xR8#.
• https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/should-some-of-the-worlds-endangered-places-be-off-limits-to-tourists?fbclid=IwAR1pqc2-xgXp7cHYpAEdSHuwuFKi2mUl8UPhjZAyR5Z83OrECyG7ha0xR8
Meaningful Travel Map of Jordan:
https://www.myjordanjourney.com/experience-meaningful-travel

Meaningful Travel Map of Colombia (2021 Summit Host):
https://colombia.travel/en/tourism-cares

Tourism Cares Summit History:
www.tourismcares.org/meaningful-travel-summit

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