

Petra stairs and strips

Animals climbing on monuments in Petra, such as theatres, stairs, and walls greatly contribute to erosion of the antiquities. This is especially true when they carry people.

Our responsibility

We are all responsible for conserving the human and natural heritage in the Petra Archaeological Park. Taking the following actions will help to reduce the negative impacts of using animals in the tourism industry:

- It is preferred not to ride the animals up the sandstone stairs to the monastery and high place of sacrifice.
- Reject using animals led by children as this promotes the use of local child labor.
- Stick to specific trails for these animals.
- Match your size to that of the animal and ensure that your weight is evenly balanced when riding.
- Avoid using animals with sores and wounds and don't support the mistreatment by the owner.
- Follow the principal of "one wheel per person" when riding in a carriage – there shouldn't be more than two visitors in a carriage.
- Emphasize the importance of responsible treatment of animals used in tourism activities.
- Please report any instances of severe animal mistreatment at the Visitor Centre (every animal is signed with a number which will simplify the identification).

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Volunteers: Protecting heritage & helping people

Animals in Petra Archaeological Park



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Petra



Introduction

Both wild and domesticated animals such as camels, horses, donkeys, goats and sheep usually live in harmony with nature. Unfortunately, the over-use of these domesticated animals is one of the direct causes of deterioration for the archaeological sites in Petra. Damage is caused by the presence of hundreds of animals with hard hooves such as horses, mules and donkeys. Gradual destruction of the natural and historic environments occurs every time these animals carry tourists. This is especially true when the animals are used on the ancient carved stairways to the high places inside Petra (i.e. the Monastery, High Place of Sacrifice, al-Khubtha, etc.).

Returning to history

Different civilizations around Petra have used animals in their daily way of life, and sometimes their economy even depends on these animals. The Nabataeans who built Petra in this respect were in the forefront of these civilisations.

Petra has always been a natural habitat for many species. Animals are a crucial part of the environmental context of the Petra Archaeological Park, and the preservation of this natural and biological diversity needs to be a component of conservation efforts at the site. The growing use of the park by tourists, scientists, and the local populations has had an increasing impact on this wildlife. For example, in the last century, some 122 different kinds of birds were recorded in park. Petra was even home of the ostrich. In contrast, today only two kinds of predatory birds can still be seen – the king vulture and the falcon. Observations of past travellers to Petra tell of the existence of other animals such as wild cats, rabbits, wolves, lynx, tiger, deer, ibex and others. Unfortunately, most of these wild animals have now disappeared due to over-hunting and the steady increase of human activity in the park.



The insensitive use of animals in tourism has contributed to the gradual deterioration of the archaeological site.

Some impressive facts

- Hard hooves of animals leave marks and cause fragmentation of the soft sandstone in Petra.
- The damage caused by animals is extensive. Camels weigh about 500 kg, horses 350 kg and donkeys 250 kg. These animals walk through the rock formations and donkeys in particular climb up the staircases to the High Place of Sacrifice and the Monastery.
- Animal urine and faeces causes fragmentation of the sandstone as well as having a harmful impact on the natural environment and hygiene in general.
- The use of animals in tourism has contributed to the degradation of the environmental balance in the region. The botanic cover has deteriorated as a result of over-grazing.

