

Examples of degradation and destruction

- The tombs, of which there are about 500, are an outstanding example of the blight which is affecting Petra. Many of the facades show evidence of damage from wind and water erosion, as well as from human activity.



- The Nabataean Theatre, which is a unique monument that blends Hellenistic, Roman, and Nabataean architectural elements, is another example of increase of damage at the site. Today this monument displays flagrant evidence of degradation and destruction as a result of human and natural factors. Hundreds of these carved features have disappeared or are in the process of disappearing. These include inscriptions, friezes, and religious, royal and funereal sculptures.

- Other examples of sculptures that have been exposed to vandalism and erosion: the Nabataean Caravan in the middle of the Siq, and the irrigation system, which consists of channels and pipes.



Our responsibilities:

Please contribute to the conservation of Petra by not doing any of the following and by asking others to refrain from:

- Digging names on the columns and rock surfaces
- Buying stones and rocks from the vendors
- Climbing over buildings to take pictures
- Using animals for transport inside the archaeological site.



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Volunteers: Protecting heritage & helping people

Join us to protect the World Heritage Site of Petra



PETRA



Bait Al Anbat
Centre for Development & Tourism Awareness

Introduction

Petra has preserved its natural physical and man-made features for many centuries. The city has suffered from various natural disasters such as earthquakes, fire and floods, throughout its history. It has never been exposed to the level of serious destruction that has happened during the last century because of tourism. One Only need to examine the artists' paintings of the early nineteenth century to see some of the features of Petra that are now gone.

During five centuries of the Nabataean civilization, the Petra city was full of life, with many large buildings, markets and crowded streets. Nowadays, the scene has changed: buildings are destroyed or are hidden under the rubble, while the architectural facades, the theatre and many other monuments are threatened by natural as well as human damage.

Let us imagine this city as it was in its glorious time, full of grandeur and excitement, and even in its current state, it stilles fascinat its visitors.

Threats endanger Petra

First: Natural threats

Petra rocks are composed of fragile sandstone, the nature of which makes it subject to erosion and easy degradation. This material is permeated with minuscule pores filled with air and water vapour and when these pores become larger, the fragility of the stone increases. Petra rock is thus easily fragmented into sand by the expansion and contraction that results from changing temperatures between day and night.



Other natural factors are flowing waters, which have increased during the last 100 years because of the destruction of natural drainage systems in the archaeological site. Windblown sand further contributes to the erosion of the sandstone. Another factor is the degradation of flora in the surrounding areas as vegetation has formed the first line of defence for the archaeological sites by helping to stabilize the landscape.

Second: Human threats

- Business activities
- Animal management
- Graffiti
- Camping and events
- Uncontrolled visitor circulation
- Use of rocks in sand bottles
- Use of caves as rest rooms
- Illegal excavations
- Mass tourism
- Digging and writing on the rocks
- Remnants of food waste
- Aviation over the archaeological site
- Diesel generators
- Urban development



Why does Petra merit being conserved?

Because Petra is:

- A World Heritage Site
- A unique heritage city
- Irreplaceable
- Represents a symbol of the national and cultural identity
- A site with outstanding values
- Conserves magnificent natural assets and majestic geology
- Supports the national economy
- An economic resource for local communities



Cultural heritage is non-renewable. Once it is lost it cannot be regained. It is our responsibility to preserve cultural heritage for our future generations.

