

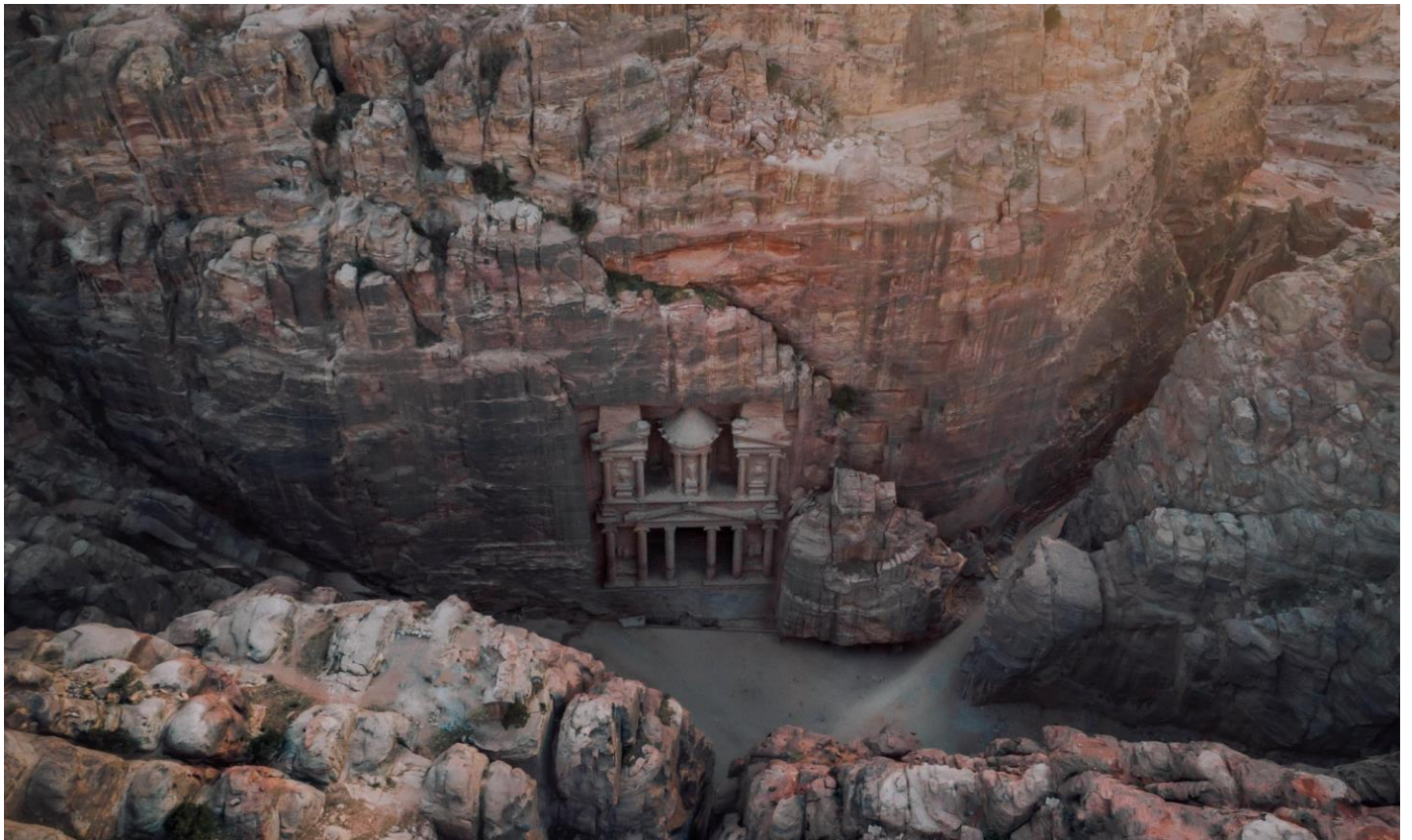


Petra World Heritage Site
State of Conservation Report
Progress and Achievements 2023/2024

Prepared by

The Petra Development and Tourism Regional Authority (PDTRA)

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan



Petra World Heritage Site – Property Data

State Party: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Identification Number: 326

Year of inscription on the List of World Heritage: 1985

Type of Property: Cultural

Geographic Information (Lat/Long): 30° 19' 50" N, 35° 26' 36" E

Area: 264 square kilometers

Government Institutions Responsible for the Property:

- Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA – management jurisdiction). Located in the Governorate of Ma'an, Jordan.
- Department of Antiquities (DOA)/Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA)

Criteria (i), (iii), (iv)

Previous Committee Decisions: 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2021, 2022, 2023

Previous monitoring missions:

2000: ICOMOS Mission

2004: UNESCO Mission

2009: UNESCO Technical Expert Missions

2010: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring

2017: World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/IUCN

Executive Summary

The Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) has made significant strides in addressing challenges and fostering sustainable development at the Petra Archaeological Park (PAP) during 2023 and 2024. Despite setbacks, including a sharp decline in tourism caused by the Gaza war and regional geopolitical tensions, PDTRA has prioritized innovative initiatives, secured alternative funding, and engaged communities to promote economic resilience while preserving and conserving Petra's heritage.

In 2024, foreign visitors to Petra decreased by 75% compared to 2023. The decline is predominantly attributed to the war in Gaza, which has severely affected PDTRA's financial stability and key development projects. To mitigate this deficit, PDTRA secured alternative funding, including a \$15 million USAID Government-to-Government (G2G) grant to fast-track important projects. Additionally, PDTRA sought technical support from other donors, government institutions, and civic organizations.

PDTRA has undertaken transformative initiatives to address pressing challenges and opportunities, balancing conservation with socio-economic development to ensure Petra's sustainability and promote a sense of ownership among the local community in the preservation process. The following report highlights PDTRA's efforts across several areas, including site management, community engagement, environmental stewardship, and sustainable tourism.

Responsiveness to Critical WHC Decisions

PDTRA has actively addressed directives from the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) to preserve Petra's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). Urban growth around the park, particularly Um Sayhoun, has been managed by redirecting expansion away from sensitive areas, mitigating pressures on the site and preserving its visual and cultural integrity.

The "Rule of Law and Development" campaign, launched in December 2023, targeted illegal activities within the park, removing over 100 violations, including unauthorized kiosks and encroachments. These actions have improved site organization, visitor safety, and the overall experience.

Working towards realizing the WHC request to produce an accurate map of the park, incorporating advanced technologies, the PDTRA installed a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) base station and developed GIS mapping, providing precise tools for monitoring and conserving archaeological assets. These efforts enhance documentation, planning, and sustainable heritage management. As a result, an accurate map on a single unified grid will be produced by the end of 2026.

As part of a critical WHC requirement, PDTRA is set to commence a long-awaited crowd management and carrying capacity study (tender issued on November 30, 2024). This initiative will optimize visitor circulation, update carrying capacity limits, and introduce measures like phased visitation, alternative trails, and shuttle services. By alleviating congestion in high-traffic areas, this study will safeguard Petra's integrity while enhancing visitor experiences.

Despite these achievements, PDTRA faces significant challenges in some WHC decisions, particularly regarding the buffer zone and the permanent moratorium on new infrastructure visible from the site. Local opposition to the buffer zone, driven by perceptions of restricted economic opportunities, has created resistance to stricter land use regulations. Additionally, enforcing the moratorium on visible infrastructure presents obstacles in balancing conservation with the need for critical interventions, such as improving visitor safety and site governance. These are discussed in detail below and further follow-on discussions with WHC will be pursued by PDTRA in the coming period.

Community Development and Engagement

PDTRA has undertaken extensive efforts to enhance the socio-economic well-being of local communities while preserving and showcasing their cultural heritage. The Nabatean Cultural Village was established as a hub for legal and organized economic activities, providing structured opportunities for local artisans and entrepreneurs. This initiative has contributed to reducing informal practices within the PAP and has created a vibrant cultural and economic center that appeals to both locals and visitors.

For Um Sayhoun, PDTRA implemented and will continue to implement transformative improvements, including the construction of residential units a few kilometers away, infrastructure upgrades, and initiatives to provide sustainable alternative economic opportunities.

Additional community-focused initiatives include the introduction of Al Dara weekly market and the rehabilitation of cultural spaces like Elji Village, where training programs in handicrafts and creative industries were launched, targeting the engagement of women and youth. PDTRA also introduced community awareness campaigns on topics such as animal welfare and health, alongside capacity-building programs that provide skills for site preservation and tourism services. Collectively, these initiatives reflect PDTRA's commitment to empowering local communities, fostering sustainable economic growth, and ensuring that the benefits of tourism are widely shared.

Environmental and Conservation Efforts

PDTRA has made substantial progress in environmental management and site conservation, prioritizing initiatives that address both immediate and long-term challenges. One of the key achievements was the construction of water harvesting infrastructure, including check dams in high-risk flood zones such as Wadi Al-Sadr, which have significantly reduced the impact of flash floods. In tandem, the deployment of an Early Warning System for flash floods enhances the safety of residents, visitors, and the site itself, ensuring proactive responses to extreme weather events.

PDTRA has also undertaken numerous restoration and maintenance projects across the site, including graffiti removal, erosion control, and structural rehabilitation. These efforts not only preserve the physical integrity of Petra's unique landscape but also enhance its aesthetic and cultural value for visitors. Through these initiatives, PDTRA continues to balance environmental sustainability with the preservation of Petra's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

Tourism Product Development and Visitor Management

In alignment with its long-term vision, PDTRA finalized the 2023–2033 Tourism Development Master Plan, which sets a strategic framework for balancing visitor growth with the preservation of Petra's cultural and natural heritage. The plan emphasizes sustainable practices in visitor management, infrastructure development, and community integration, ensuring that tourism contributes to the socio-economic resilience of the region without compromising the site's integrity.

Key actions have been taken to optimize the visitor experience and reduce the impact of mass tourism. PDTRA has introduced measures to diversify tourist activities, including the identification and marking of secondary trails that will be gradually opened for visitation during the coming two years, and the development of new attractions such as the Nabatean Cultural Village. These efforts aim to disperse visitor traffic across lesser-known areas, alleviating congestion on the main trail and minimizing wear on Petra's iconic landmarks.

Enhanced mobility solutions have also been a focus of PDTRA's strategy. Shuttle services have been launched to connect visitors with key attractions, and plans are underway to deploy an electric bus fleet to further improve transportation within the site, while reducing the environmental footprint. These initiatives, combined with a planned e-ticketing system and crowd management strategies, ensure a high-quality sustainable tourism model that preserves Petra's legacy, while meeting the needs of modern travelers.

Despite its achievements, PDTRA continues to face challenges related to community buy-in, funding limitations, and geopolitical instability. The Authority remains committed to overcoming these hurdles through strategic partnerships, enhanced governance frameworks, robust communication, and innovative tourism products. Moving forward, the focus will remain on balancing conservation efforts with economic sustainability to preserve Petra's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) while fostering local socio-economic development.