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General Assembly

Giving emphasis to the mission "To raise the standards of practice in inbound tourism to Jordan" Ayham Fakheralden, the Chairman of the Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association (JITOA), inaugurated the 6th session of JITOA's General Assembly on Tuesday, March 3, 2009.

JITOA Board of Directors, members and JITOA Staff all attended the meeting. In his remarks, Fakheralden indicated that JITOA has broken new grounds in its efforts to enhance the quality of inbound tourism in Jordan. He expressed that during the last year, JITOA faced challenges but overcame many of them to achieve success. This has led JITOA to raise our aims and goals for 2009

Fakheralden presented the 2008 Annual Report, which detailed the achievements of JITOA in different areas including advocacy, membership, human resources, partnership and cooperation, education and training programs, committees and planning for 2009.

During the General Assembly, the membership reviewed and discussed the chartered auditor report, ratified the final financial statement for 2008, approved the draft budget for 2009 and re-elected the account auditors.

Fakheralden talked about the objectives of JITOA's Business Plan for 2009-2010, which is geared towards advocating for better and more



favorable inbound tourism business environment; ensuring financial sustainability of JITOA through implementing revenue producing programs and securing new funds; assisting in tourism marketing to increase exposure and revenue for JITOA members; enhancing human resources capability in the tourism sector through professional training and certificate programs; and, communicating effectively to members, industry stakeholders and government ministries.

Nizar Al Adarbeh, Executive Director, presented the committee chairs that the Board of Directors have established including: Advocacy – Ghada Najjar and Fadi Sayess; Communications – Munir Nassar; Membership/Financial – Ayham Fakheralden; Marketing – Seif Saudi and Ghada Najjar; and Education and Training

– Wendy Botham. It was agreed to establish a new Tour Guides Committee. A Chairperson will be identified shortly. Members are encouraged to join.

Moreover, Al Adarbeh encouraged the members to get more involved in JITOA's initiatives and projects. He noted that membership involvement is aimed solely at creating sustainability and support for the development of more innovative programs and services for the members and towards serving the tourism industry. JITOA is only as strong as its members' involvement.

In complement to Al Adarbeh comments, the Board of Directors called upon all members continuing valuable involvement and participation in maintaining and nurturing such achievements for the benefit of all.

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Jordan Travel Mart 2009: JITOA is a proud participant and sponsor

The second annual Jordan Travel Mart (JTM) took place from February 22 – 24, 2009 at the Dead Sea at the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center. Approximately 100 buyers from the USA, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and South America went down to the lowest spot on earth to meet 180 Jordanian suppliers representing hotels, tour operators, travel agents, transportation companies and other suppliers of travel services in the Kingdom.

JITOA sponsored a "Thank You" reception on the second day of the JTM. It was a great opportunity to market JITOA and its members.

The Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Maha al-Khatib noted that in 2004 Jordan had launched the National Tourism Strategy, which stipulated doubling tourism receipts by the year 2010. She said "today, I am proud to say that we have surpassed that goal and we are in the process of updating our strategy to set new goals."

This year's Jordan Travel Mart seminars focus on the adventure travel segment of the industry. National Geographic Adventure Magazine, The Adventure Travel & Tourism Association and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) conducted a special "Adventure Travel" seminar for attendees.

"We made great contacts and several associations and organizations from North America who want to work with us on Adventure and Religious Tourism," remarked Nizar Al Adarbeh, Executive Director, JITOA.

Twenty-three JITOA members participated including:

- Abercrombie & Kent
- Amin Kawar & Sons Travel & Tourism
- Atlas Travel & Tourist Agency
- Dakkak Tours International
- Daoud Travel & Tourism
- Discovery
- Four Seasons Hotel Amman
- Grand Hyatt Amman
- International Traders
- Jordan Express Tourist Transport Co. (JETT)
- Jordan Marriott Hotels and Resorts
- Jordan Select Tours
- Jordan Tours & Travel
- Karma House Travel & Tourism
- Maltrans Travel & Tourism
- Moevenpick Hotels & Resorts
- Petra Moon Tourism Services
- PRO4 Total Event Solutions
- Royal Automobile Museum
- Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
- Terhaal Travel and Tourism
- Travel One
- United Travel Agency

From the buyers who attended, several participated in a panel about business opportunities and about marketing to the North, Central and South American markets. Some advice included:

- **The importance of specialization in a particular aspect of tourism.** One panel participant offered that when she visits Jordanian tour operator web sites and they say they can do every type of tour—cultural, religious, adventure, etc—it frustrates her because she needs to work with the experts for her clients. She would like to see more Jordanian tour operators specialize to differentiate themselves from others.
- **The importance of communication.** Many panel participants rated that timely communication by email and phone is critical to establish a good buyer-supplier relationship. When buyers do not hear from their suppliers, a level of discomfort and distrust can easily develop.
- **The promise of the adventure tourism business.** Panel participants remarked that the adventure tourist is less likely to change plans due to the economic crisis. These travelers want unique experiences that focus on sight-doing not sight-seeing. Adventure travelers want to experience local culture, test their physical capabilities and stay in unique, comfortable lodging.

The JTM was extremely successful and JITOA welcomed the opportunity to showcase the great work and services the association and its members provide.



Daoud Travel & Tourism



Petra Moon Tourism Services





Travel One



Maltrans Travel & Tourism



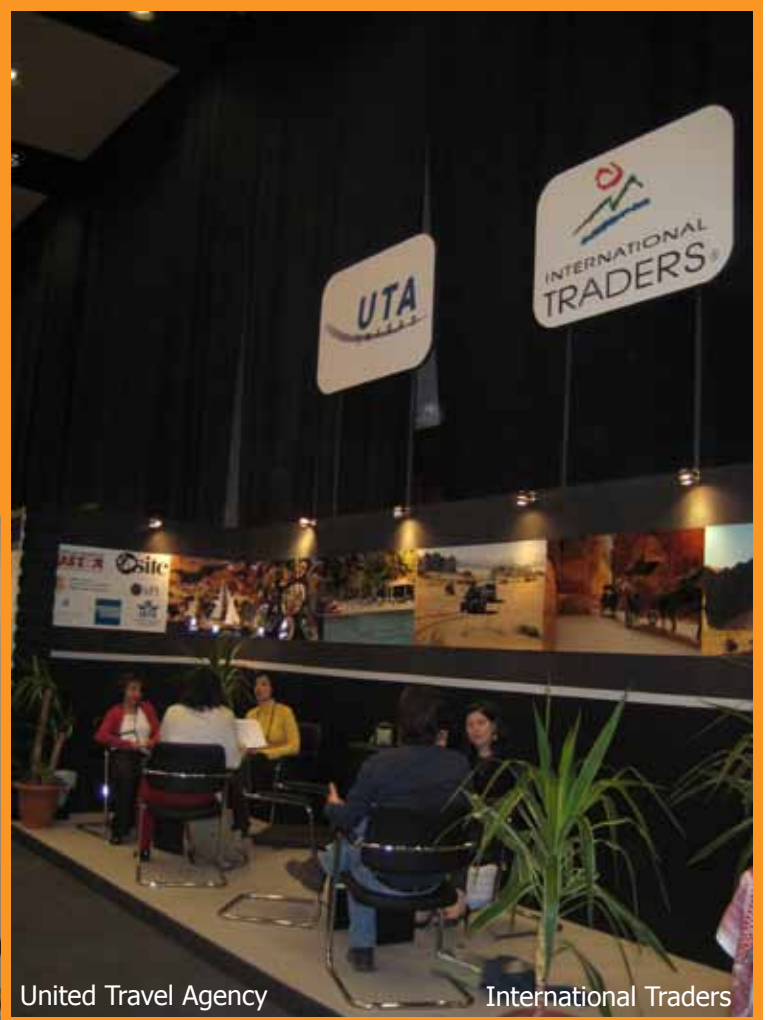
Dakkak Tours International



Karma House Travel & Tourism



Terhaal Travel and Tourism

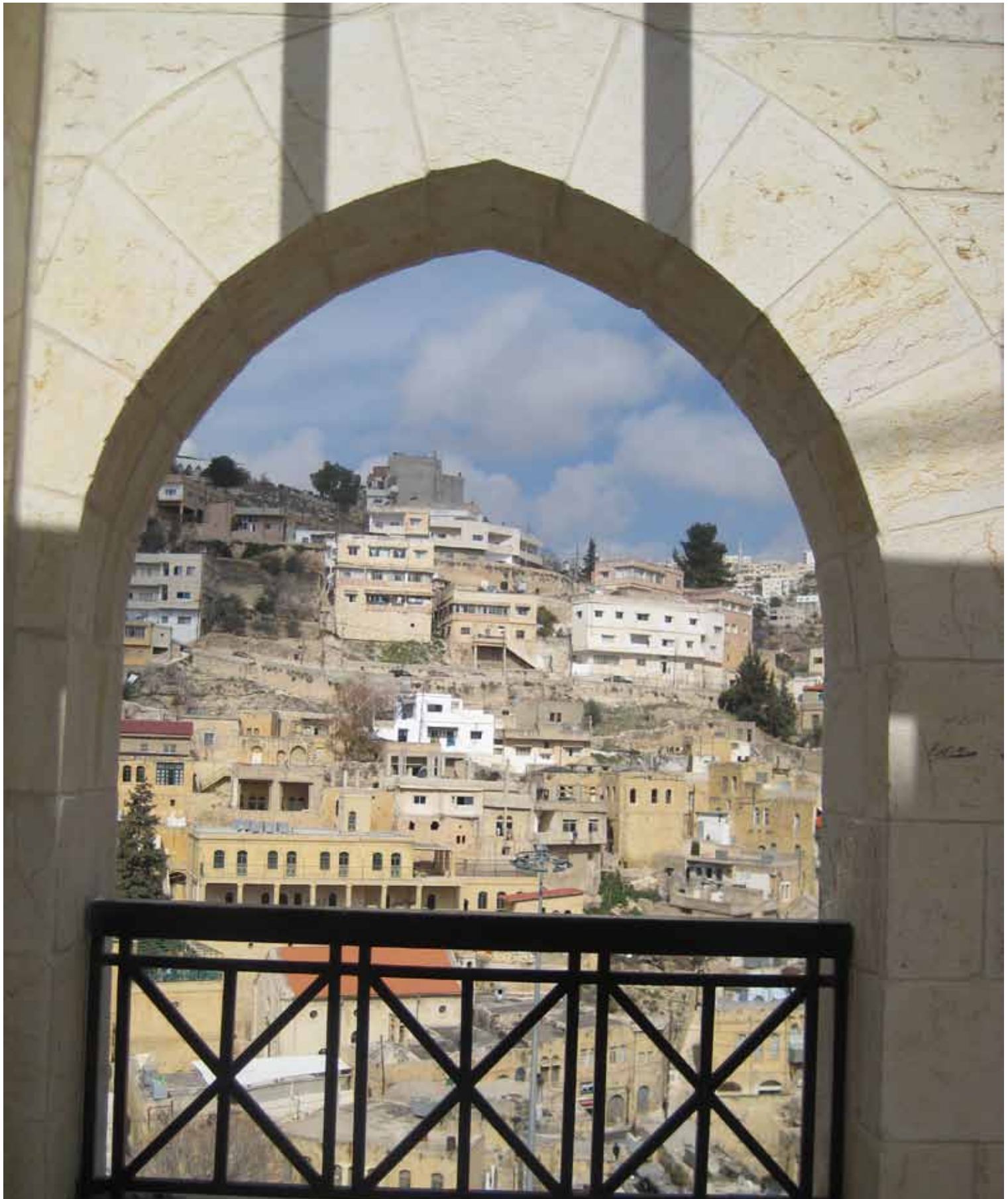


United Travel Agency

International Traders



Royal Automobile Museum



Salt FAM Trips ... are a great success!

Nearly 100 people participated in JITOA's two FAM trips to Salt on February 7 and 8. Besides General Managers and staff from JITOA's members, representatives from the Balqa Governorate and the Tourism Directorate, Municipality of Salt, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), JETT, the Jordan Tourism Development Project II of the U.S. Agency for International Development (JTDP II) and the Tourism Police joined the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities staff in these two events.

Lotus Abu Karaki, Executive Manager of the Tourism Sector Development Project at the Ministry and Ayman Abu-Jalmeh, Director of the Balqa Tourism Directorate gave tours on Saturday and Sunday, respectively, of the Historical Old Salt Museum, located in the newly renovated Abu Jaber House. A big thanks to JETT who generously provided transportation to the two FAM trips.

After participants toured the Museum, they listened to presentations by JICA and Siyaha II about the work that has been completed in Salt and what additional projects are planned.

After the presentations, Abu-Jalmeh, guided the participants through some of the designated city trails, pointing out historical Ottoman homes and giving insight into Salt's rich history.

"This FAM trip was a great opportunity for our members to see the beautiful, renovated museum, which was supported by JICA and to hear about new projects that JTDP II and the Ministry are pursuing," remarked JITOA

Chairman Ayham Fakheralden.

Participants also took a tour of the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf's new training center in the historic, restored old English Hospital. Brother Andrew L. de Carpentier, Director of the Institute, was on hand to give a tour and update participants about the many services, handicrafts training and educational opportunities the Institute offers.

Finally participants walked through Suq al Hammam, Salt's wonderful market street.

"Salt has important classical, religious and voluntourism aspects in its environs. Besides the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf, there are numerous tombs of important Islamic prophets in and around Salt. The architecture is unique and is a welcome addition to any tour. In fact, we encourage our members to visit Salt first and then drive south on the highway to the Dead Sea." remarked Nizar Al Adarbeh, Executive Director of JITOA.



Evason Ma'in FAM Trip! Nature and relaxation



On March 21, 2009, JITOA conducted a Familiarization (FAM) Trip to the Evason Ma'in Hot Springs and Six Senses Spa. Twenty-three members from Creative Tours, Travel One, Abercrombie and Kent –Jordan, Karma House, United Travel Agency, Green Meadows and Maltrans joined the trip and explored the new potentials of the recently renovated and updated resort.

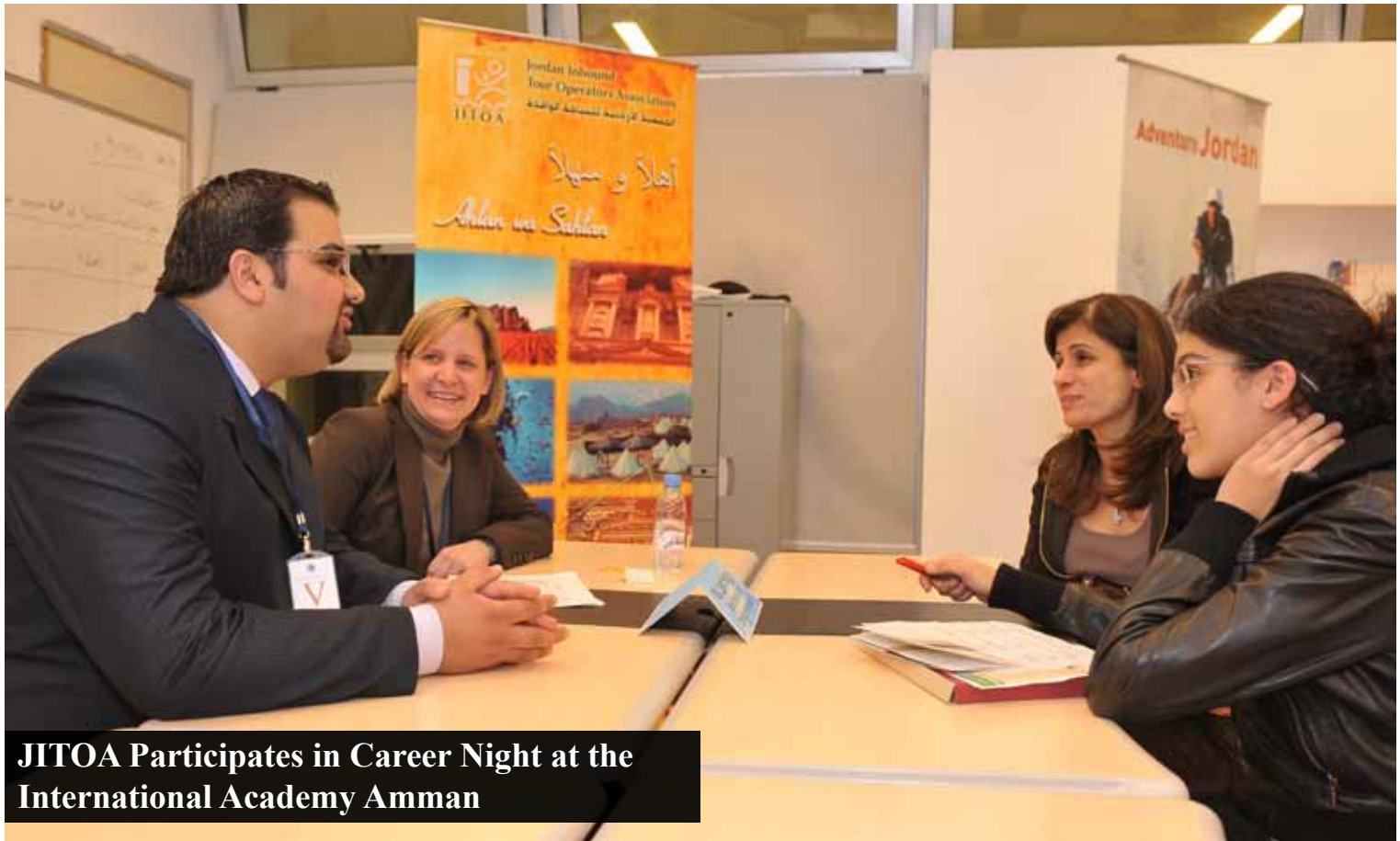
and vegetable gardens. Just ask those who attended the FAM trip – they would agree about the fantastic lunch!

Mr. Puri also emphasized that he looks forward to a fruitful business relationship with the tourism industry in the Kingdom.

Located just 30 kilometers from Madaba and lying 264 meters below sea level, Evason Ma'in Hot Springs is a stunning property that offers many spa and wellness services in a natural, serene environment.

The group was greeted by the General Manager of the resort, Mr. Manish Puri, and his talented team. He presented an overview of all the amenities of the property, including information about the 94 rooms and suites, plus two Royal Suites and one Honeymoon Suite, which is located on the top floor of the resort providing almost 360 degree views of the waterfall. Additionally, Mr. Puri talked about their world class cuisine, which many of the fresh ingredients are from the resort's own organic herb





JITOA Participates in Career Night at the International Academy Amman

On Wednesday March 18, 2009 from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm, JITOA staff members Mahmoud Al-Arab and Laura Hagg participated in the Career Night at the International Academy Amman. The event was targeted towards 9th and 10th grade students and their parents to make them more aware of the career choices in Jordan.

USAID’s Jordan Tourism Development Project II (JTDP II) invited JITOA, Le Meredien Hotel, Jordan Applied University, Moevenpick Hotel, Caspar and Gambini’s and the Royal Academy for Culinary Arts to participate in this event.

This was the first time that IAA had hosted such an event and more than 100 students and their parents

attended. JITOA received many students at their information table who were interested in hearing about what classes and majors are good for a career in tourism. Many parents were surprised to learn of the impact that tourism has on Jordan’s economy, as the second highest contributor to its gross domestic product.

IAA plans to make this a yearly event. IAA was established in August 2004 as a non-profit making ‘Model School of Excellence’ by her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, as part of Her Majesty’s charitable organization, the Jordanian Education Society (JES). IAA currently has more than 700 students, in grades 1-10.





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A word with our new Chairman, Ayham Fakheralden



Title: Executive Manager

Company: Green Meadows Travel & Tourism

Number of employees: 60

1. When did you join JITOA? Why did you decide to join?

GMTT joined JITOA on 22 July 2004. We decided to join it because we believe in its goals.

2. When were you first elected to the Board of Directors?

March 2008

3. What do you hope to accomplish as Chairman? What are your priorities?

I hope to convert the mentality of the members from a member's mentality to an owner's mentality.

4. What are the most pressing issues facing JITOA? The tourism industry in Jordan?

I can name the following challenges: sustainability of association and the international exposure to the local market.

Background information:

How did you decide to get involved in the tourism management business?

Actually, it was by chance. A friend's sister who owned an educational center, continuously told me that I would do well in tourism. So I decided to give myself the opportunity to try this business.

Best compliment received from a client:

It was from Russian Tour Operator who kept telling me that I'm "working like a battery" in the Russian language (Te Batarica).

Funniest moment with a tour group or FIT:

Japanese group who would like to take a picture with Bedouin woman and she agreed to do it for a pack of foreign cigarettes.

Tell us something we may not know about you and your company:

I actively help people with special needs.

What is the best piece of advice you received about working in tourism?

Search for a new markets.

Hobbies: Gardening and reading

Favorite book: Dayantex

Favorite movie: Exorcism of Emily Rose

Favorite restaurant: Cinco de Mayo

Favorite place to visit: Shanghai



Member Profile

Who: Rasha A. Mash'al

Title: Senior Tourism Manager

Company: Creative Tours part of al Munjed Group

Number of employees: 10

Most Popular Tours: Dead Sea and Petra

Years in Business: Around 15 years



How did you decide to get involved in the tourism management business? First it was by good luck. Then I started to take certain courses related to the tourism field (the latest one was Event Management Certificate Program with JITOA). The courses really developed my knowledge and experience so I have a solid background and passion about what I am doing.

Best compliment received from a client:

From the Arab Institute for Arbitration and ADR about a conference and workshop which were held between 19-22/12/2008

Dear Creative:

We are writing to thank the team that helped us for their excellent customer service and flexibility. We especially want to show appreciation to Rasha Mash'al for her commitment and hard work. She represented your company in exceptional light and provided us with everything she promised. Your drivers were punctual, polite and friendly and our guests were very pleased with your service as were we.

Thank you again and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Funniest moment with a tour group: It was not a group tour but FITs coming back from Petra at Night. They fell asleep at the wheel and the car hit a tree! (small accident and no injuries) They did not wake up and did not realize they had crashed. One of the windows broke and only when they felt cold, did they wake up. The next day the only comment they had was that the air conditioning was too cold!

Tell us something we may not know about you and your company: Creative Tours is part of the Munjed Sukhtian Group of companies, which is one of the most influential companies in the Jordanian private sector.

What is the best piece of advice you received about working in tourism?

Keep up the good work; Honesty

Boards or Volunteer Activities: Creative tours has not participated lately in activities but we have scholarships for our employees

Hobbies: Traveling

Favorite book: These days I do not have time to read much but I like Mahmoud Darwish poems.

Favorite movie: Scent of a Woman with Al Pacino

Favorite restaurant: Burj Al-Hammam

Favorite place to visit: In Jordan, Taybet Zaman



