River Jordan
A Vision – Nature & Eco Tourism
River Jordan: An International Tourist Destination?

Etymologically "a rival" is derived from Latin „rivalis“ which originally means "one who uses the same stream" (or "one on the opposite side of the stream"), from rivus "brook". The notion is of the competitiveness of neighbours.

This competitiveness (i.e. armed confrontations, diversion for irrigation purposes, sewage disposal) has driven the River Jordan to the brink of collapse.
Yet Christian pilgrims plunge into the polluted river thereby risking infection. Only the Pope kept away as do most of the common tourists to the region.

Photo: © Gali Tibbon, The Catholic Weekly, Sydney
A couple of years ago nomad tried to create a bicycle tour along both sides of the River Jordan – and failed for political reasons.

In our opinion:

- there is a general interest of tourists in Jordan River – and its ecological situation.

- This interest would increase dramatically if the River Jordan was ecologically revitalized.

- There will be no tourism in the valley itself unless a political environment is established that allows tourists to follow the River without restrictions.
Prerequisites

- Restoration of the river Jordan
- Ease access to the river to allow for all kind of tours
  (i.e. biking, trekking, agriculture, birdwatching, volunteering)
Petra as Paradigm

- nomad's first regular six-days-trekking-tour with pack animals started as early as 1997. At this time german tourists would stay at most one day at Petra and few people only explored the environments of the archaeological site.

- Today trekking tourists are a familiar sight in the region. Traditional tent camps have been permanently installed. Trekking tourism provides a reliable source of income especially for the Bedouin population of Petra.

- The Jordan government has accepted trekkings around Petra and elsewhere as vital factor of the sustainable tourism boom.
Vision for the Future

The river Jordan is an integral part of transnational tourism in the near east. The people living on its shores will benefit from socially and environmentally responsible tourism.

- People on both sides of the river are included in this process: there is reciprocal understanding and trust
- Tourism will create new jobs in areas that use less water than agriculture
- All involved will profit financially from this situation
- Education is the key to ensure a more sustainable use of natural resources (water, landscape)
Future Goals

- Creation of a new market focused on hiking and trekking in the Jordan river valley and nearby areas
- Supporting sustainable culture-tourism
- Supporting tourism of people with special interest in f.e. agriculture, birdwatching, volunteering...
  - Guests will stay longer
  - Guests will re-visit the region, choosing another area and/or theme
  - Increases value for the local stakeholders as it supports the goals of community based tourism
Realization in Jordan: Accomodation

- Besides the existing RSCN-Resort in Adjln a second resort in the valley could offer a broad range of activities for birdwatchers and nature tourists.
- One or two conventional hotels in the north of Jordan would allow tourists to spend more time in the area instead of driving to Amman every evening.
- Promotion of Homestays in the villages will help the local families to benefit directly from all kinds of tourism.
Realization in Jordan: Sightseeing

- Renovation and promotion of less well known attractions like Gadara, Pella, Salt, Tell Mar Elias, Graves of the Companions of the Prophet Mohamad, Dolmen and Caves will increase the time groups are spending in the area.

- A museum cum information centre in the valley could inform foreigners and locals about the ecosystem of the river.
Realization in Jordan: Nature Tourism

- Additional regional protected areas (f.e. in the wadis feeding the River Jordan) including corridors that connect these areas would increase the interest of nature tourists.

- Development of (transnational) hiking trails including necessary infrastructure (signs, places to stay, transfer between trail heads (as well public transportation), bike rentals) would support nature tourism of all kind.

- See Abraham‘s Path: (www.abrahamspath.org)
Realization in Jordan: Community Based Tourism

- Promotion of local initiatives focused on community based tourism and that subscribe to sustainable tourism will generate income in the villages, f.e. through homestays, preparation of lunches, and the sale of locally manufactured products.
- This will be integrated with the education of stakeholders and empowering of women.
- See Ayoun Trail, to which the villages of Rasun, Arjan and Ba‘un in the Municipality of Ayoun, Northern Jordan, contribute.
There is only one kind of travelling that contributes to our personal benefit: the journey to the people.

(Paul Nizan, Aden 1931)