



"Water Management seminar" in Jordan – An Unforgettable Experience

Jordan - a country of diversity and richness. It's beauty ranges from that of the arid sandy deserts to the pink sandstone gorges or from the buoyantly therapeutic waters of the Dead Sea to the ancient Greco-Roman and Nabatean cities.

Being a country with very little natural wealth in terms of resources, a great scarcity of water combined with a choking influx of refugees over the past years and a fragile peace with its neighbours, makes it understandable why it was the ideal venue to host a SALTO Youth EuroMed "Water Management seminar". This seminar aimed at exchanging and sharing good practices in the field of the educational management of water.

From 24 June to 1 May 2005, representatives of NGOs from Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Spain, Sweden, Syria, The Netherlands and Turkey met and traveled through Jordan. The make-up of our group was an assortment of cultures, ages, education and beliefs. Israelis mixed with Syrians, Cypriots with Turks.

Organised by the SALTO Youth EuroMed Resource Centre, the seminar was conducted with the assistance, knowledge and expertise of The Jordanian Ministry of Water, Jordan University for Science and Technology and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN). It incorporated visits to schools, universities, nature reserves, wetlands and other water "hot-spots", places where the delicate balance of man and nature is hanging by a thin thread. The problems faced by the Jordanian people regarding water scarcity and degradation were examined and compared/contrasted with the situation in the



Um Quais - Jordan 2005

Participant's point of view



Wadi-Mujib, Jordan 2005

other participating EuroMed countries through round-table discussions and presentations. We had each brought our own countries' experience and ideas and exchanged methods, know-how and good practices to take back with us to our own organisations and local communities.

The RSCN stewardship of Jordan's natural and traditional beauty is trying to moderate the fast pace of large-scale touristic development, in a country, which is said to be the world's third poorest in fresh water reserves.

A tour of the Yarmouk River diversion where Jordan and Israel share their drinking water served to prove how fragile peace was in the region, and how water, or rather the scarcity of it, would shape the fate of future generations unless something is done today.

For me, sitting on the roof of candlelit Feinan Lodge in the middle of Wadi Araba gazing up at a blazing star-lit sky and exchanging geopolitical views with my Turkish counterparts, will forever be marked in my memory. It is there that it beca-

me clear to me how the "powers that be", with their brainwashing and propaganda, have managed to plant the seeds of a deep hatred and fear, which have now grown to large thorny brambles. I believe EuroMed Youth Programme, which bring youths together in similar situations as ours, is the machete that help to cut a clearing through this jungle of misinformation and which bring the concept of the EU closer to local communities.

I think, on the day of our departure we all felt a deep sadness at having to leave behind our new-found friends but were nevertheless comforted with the promises made of follow ups and future cooperation.

If you have not yet been to Jordan it is a must! Go with an open mind and respect for the people, their traditions and their natural wonders. After all, it is these that make a place worth visiting and not the five star hotels.



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