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RESTORING THE JOURNEY

Reviving travel to Jordan and Egypt



Giza Pyramids / Image via memphistours.com

Apr 22, 2011

LEXINGTON, Kentucky — On April 22, a delegation of US travel leaders will embark on "Restoring the Journey: Support Travel to Egypt and Jordan," a six-day visit of the tourism infrastructure of Egypt and Jordan.

These leaders within the United States travel industry are undertaking a major project to support their colleagues in Jordan and Egypt, where earlier political reform has reduced the normal torrent of tourists to a trickle. They are on a mission to review the region's timeless appeal and assess current travel conditions.

The delegation includes leaders of top outbound-producing travel associations — NTA, United States Tour Operators Association, American Society of Travel

Agents, and Adventure Travel Trade Association — along with tour operators and travel journalists, including a representative of the Society of American Travel Writers.

The trip provides an avenue for industry leaders to reach out to the region, according to Lisa Simon, president of NTA. "Together with our partners, the Egyptian Tourist Authority, Jordan Tourism Board, and USTOA, we determined the best way to show that the tourism industry cares is to go there," said Simon, "We want to see the destinations for ourselves, meet with Egyptian and Jordanian tourism officials, and then share our story when we return."

"Restoring the Journey" is conducted in partnership with the tourism ministries of Egypt and Jordan. The trip will include visits to popular sites in the two countries, including the Pyramids at Giza; the Egyptian Museum and Tahrir Square in Egypt; and the Citadel, the Archeology Museum, and the ancient city of Petra in Jordan.

Weeks of civil turmoil in Egypt this winter changed the nation, but they also changed the travel plans of thousands around the world. And while order has been restored, curfews lifted, and travel restrictions eased, tourism to Egypt has not recovered. As a result, Jordan and other nearby countries have also suffered. The delegation hopes to bring back tourists, and with them, jobs for the region and business for US travel professionals, said Terry Dale, USTOA president.

"We want to assist the 2 million Egyptians who work in tourism-related jobs, and we seek to minimize the impact of recent events on travel to neighboring Jordan," Dale said, "In doing so, we hope also to restore business for US tour operators and travel agents."

Malia Asfour, director of the Jordan Tourism Board, agrees. "US travelers are vital to our economy, and the decline in tourism is hurting our people," she said, "Members of this delegation will experience true hospitality at its best while visiting some of Jordan's iconic sites including the world wonder of Petra."

Tourism officials from Egypt also welcome the delegation. "When travel industry leaders came to us with this idea, we welcomed it immediately," said Mohamed Hegazy of the Egyptian Tourism

Authority in New York, "Our aim is to show the new version of Egypt — a new society and a new people — in addition to our rich heritage."

Simon added, this project is not the first time travel associations have responded to situations where tourism — and the people who conduct it — were affected by external events. "When travel professionals and the regions they serve are threatened, we feel compelled to respond," she said, "We are all together in this industry."

ABOUT NTA:

Now celebrating its 60th year, NTA is the leading business-building association for travel professionals interested in the North American market — inbound, outbound, and within the continent. Formerly the National Tour Association, the organization became NTA when its global membership (more than 40 countries) and focus exceeded its name. For more information, visit <http://www.ntaonline.com/> .

ABOUT USTOA:

Founded in 1972, USTOA member companies have met the travel industry's highest standards, including participation in the association's Travelers Assistance Program, which among other things protects consumer payments up to US\$1 million in case the company goes out of business. USTOA is the premier association of companies providing vacation packages, tours, and custom travel itineraries for more than 11 million people yearly.

Source: ntaonline.com

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