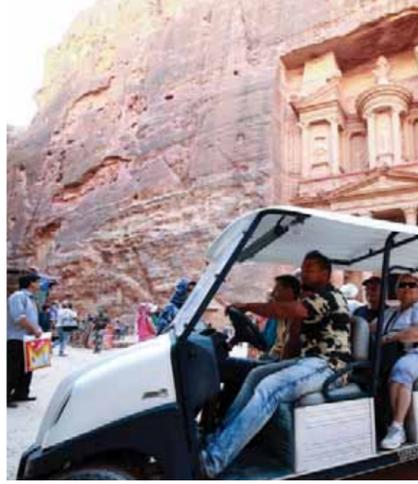


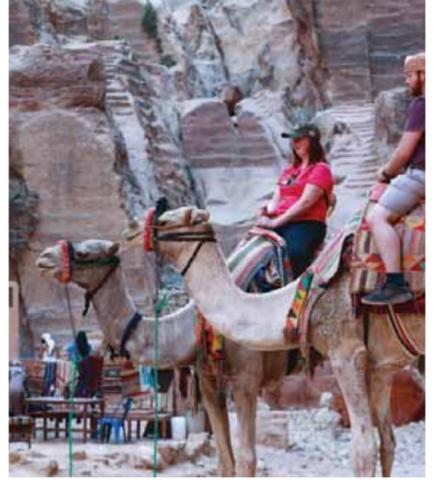
Lifestyle | Features



Jordanian men ride horses as tourists ride an electric cart, during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra, some 230km (143 miles) south of the capital Amman.—AFP photos



Tourists ride an electric cart, during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra.

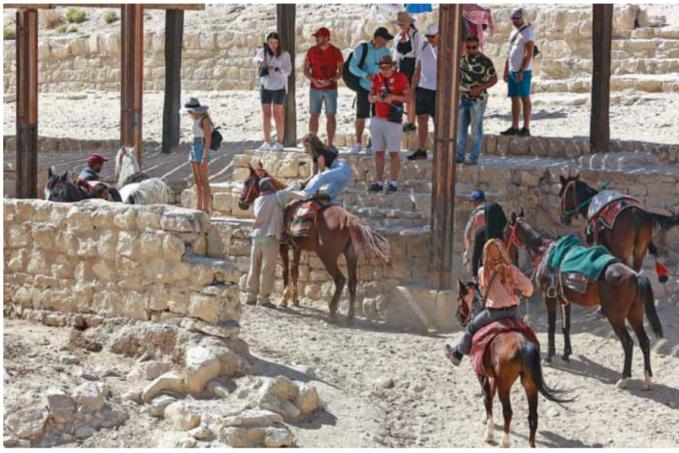


Tourists ride camels during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra.

# E-BUGGIES REPLACE HORSE CARTS AT JORDAN'S PETRA

Horses and mules have long drawn tourist carriages through Jordan's ancient city of Petra, but animal rights concerns are driving a project to start replacing them with electric vehicles. A small fleet of 10 rechargeable e-carts now take visitors through the rose-coloured Siq or gorge leading to the famed capital of the Nabateans, which dates back to the first century BC. "There is no pollution or smoke" and the change has "reduced the cases of animal mistreatment," said Suleiman Farajat, head of the Petra Development and Tourism Regional Authority. The golf buggy-style vehicles have less impact because "sometimes the carriage wheels hit the sides of the Siq ... the horse dung caused a bad smell in the place, and cleaning it was not easy."

"It was an unpleasant experience for the tourists, the horses and us," said Farajat. Animal rights group PETA, which had criticized the use of the often scrawny and overworked draft animals, has described the project as a "major first step to protect working animals". The group hailed the "game-changing vehicles" and added that it hopes to work with officials "toward the day when there will be only animal-free transportation at Petra". For now the Petra authority says it will keep some of the horses "to preserve the character of the place, as it is a world heritage site".



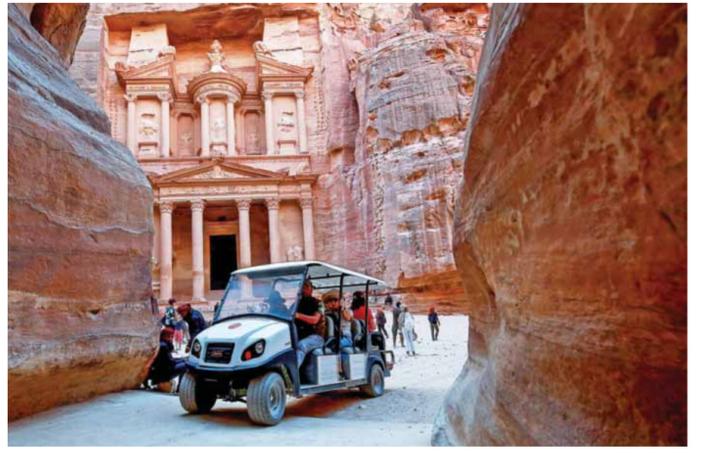
Tourists ride horses during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra.

### 'This amazing place'

The change has however also been hailed for another reason—helping to make the UNESCO World Heritage Site far more accessible to elderly and disabled visitors. Austrian tourist Rudy, 43, who uses a wheelchair, said he had repeatedly postponed a visit because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and was now "very happy" to have made the trip. "Disabled people but also people who have difficulty walking for a long distance

... now have a chance to see this amazing place."

A US tourist named Angie, 60, agreed: "It seems a little bit out of character to have these in a beautiful place like this. But at our age, it was nice to come back in an electric cart." Jordan's tourism industry is recovering from the blow of COVID-19, having previously relied on it for more than 10 percent of its GDP. The pandemic slashed revenues from \$5.8 billion in 2019 to \$1 billion last year.



Tourists ride an electric cart, during their trip to Jordan's famed ancient city of Petra.

Petra, Jordan's most famous tourism site, provides a living for hundreds of families. The move to replace 12 horse-drawn carriages with 10 e-carts was agreed with the horse owners' association.

Foreign tourists pay 25 dinars (\$35) and Jordanians 15 dinars for the round trip from the visitor center to the archaeological site. The association receives 75 percent of the income, while 25 percent goes to the authority, said Farajat. The head of the association, Mohammad

Amarat, said those operating the electric carts earn more than 300 Jordanian dinars (about \$423) per month. One benefit is that the carts can carry five passengers, compared to just two in the horse-drawn carriages. He prefers the new vehicles because previously the horses "were tired, their income was less, and the journey time was longer". — AFP



## This December Dick Whittington at Al-Hmely Theatre

Staged in Kuwait celebrates its 10th anniversary by bringing pantomime back to Kuwait this December. Only five performances under the name of Dick Whittington, a panto for the entire family, will take place exclusively at the Al-Hmely Theatre in Jabriya on December 9 till 11, 2021.

Annual pantomimes are a tradition in Kuwait and have been showering our stages with talented actors, outrageous



costumes and magnificent sets since 1953. Panto brings laughs and giggles and treats for the entire family to enjoy. Children, parents and grandparents can all come together and enjoy the best of British theatre right here in the heart of

Kuwait. New to pantomime? Welcome to the magic! We call it Panto for short, and it is a magical form of entertainment that encompasses drama, music, dance and physical comedy all wrapped around a fairy-tale story. It is a piece of theatre that

interactively engages an audience and fun for the entire family. This year we are putting on a traditional British pantomime production of Dick Whittington! We are fortunate to have the support of Aspire, Pinkberry and SHAKE SHACK, valuable sponsors whose contributions make it possible to bring panto to you this year. Dick Whittington is the purrfect pantomime adventure that follows our hero to seek his fame, fortune and happiness in London Town.

With help from the magical Fairy Bowbells and his trusty feline friend Tommy, what could possibly go wrong? The whole production is a community venture, created by community volunteers under the Staged in Kuwait banner. We are so excited to be back out of the COVID-19 shutdown and ready to rock the stages with family entertainment once again. For those of you concerned, we will still adhere to the health and safety regulations put in place by the ministry of health.

Also, we are wheel chair accessible and have various tiers of tickets so everyone can afford to come! Staged in Kuwait's Founder and Artistic Director, Tim Waddell, also the director of Dick Whittington, is delighted with this year's enthusiasm and commitment from the volunteers, cast and crew adding "What a delight it is to bring the community back together after this long hiatus. The magic of Panto is created by the community and it is this spirit of merriment and joy that makes it great." Staged in Kuwait is ever growing and expanding; our doors are open to the community and we welcome all kinds of hands-on cooperation from back stage to front of house duties. SIK is a place where you can learn, grow, give back to the community and feel safe. You are invited to get in touch anytime by visiting our website and registering. We are looking forward to celebrating the magic with you this December.

