



A Promise of Peace

THE JORDAN RIVER PEACE PARK

EcoPeace
Friends of the Earth Middle East

*Friends of the Earth Middle East's Jordan River Peace Park initiative
is founded upon partnerships with numerous leading local, national, regional and international visionaries.
We are indebted to these early visionaries for their courage and belief
in shaping a new reality for their communities and the region.*



Jordanian Armed Forces

Marouf Al Bakhit, Prime Minister, Jordan

Ali Hussein Al-Delki, Former Mayor, Muaz Bin Jabal Governorate, Jordan

Khaled Irani, Former Minister of Environment, Jordan

Mousa Jamaani, Former Secretary General, Jordan Valley Authority, Jordan

Yoram Karin, Mayor, Valley of Springs Regional Council, Israel

Alan Plattus, Founder and Director, Yale Urban Design Workshop, USA

Abdullah Al Salaman, Former Mayor, Muaz Bin Jabal Governorate, Jordan

Aviad Sar Shalom, Environmental Planner, Israel

Yael Shaltieli, Former Mayor, Valley of Springs Regional Council, Israel

Dani Tamari, Former Mayor, Valley of Springs Regional Council, Israel

Yossi Vardi, Mayor, Jordan Valley Regional Council, Israel

Andrei Harwell, Architect, Yale Urban Design Workshop, USA





INTRODUCTION



Regional map of shared water resources and FoEME's Good Water Neighbors communities.

On October 26, 1994, the awe-inspiring landscapes and unique natural environment of the Lower Jordan River Valley were transformed from an arena of conflict to a peaceful border. On that day the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the State of Israel signed a historic peace treaty ushering in a new era of peaceful relations between the two states. In this rich and detailed treaty, Jordan and Israel agreed to embark together on a new future by advancing cooperation in the fields of trade and tourism as well as natural resource management.

The shared management of the Lower Jordan River features prominently in the treaty as both a border and as a shared water source. The treaty calls upon both parties to work towards "ecological rehabilitation" of the Lower Jordan River, prevent "pollution, contamination, harm or unauthorized withdrawals" of the shared waters and undertake joint monitoring of the Jordan River's water quality.

Furthermore, tourism initiatives - specifically in the Jordan River Valley - are identified as a strong framework to advance peaceful relations between the people of Jordan and Israel. The treaty affirms "the parties mutual desire to promote co-operation between them in the field of tourism" and attaches "great importance to the integrated development of the Jordan Rift Valley area, including joint projects in the economic, environmental, energy - related and tourism fields."

With the promise of peace laid out by the governments of Jordan and Israel - the citizens were charged to endorse its tenants by working together every day to advance its vision.

EcoPeace/ Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) is an Israeli, Jordanian, Palestinian environmental peacemaking organization established in 1994. As the region's only tri-lateral organization, it holds a unique perspective and years of experience realizing the vision of the historic peace treaty through national advocacy and grassroots community engagement. Since its founding, FoEME has focused on the rehabilitation and safeguarding of the region's shared environmental resources with particular emphasis on the Jordan River.

A River Neglected



With just 2% of its historic flow - the Lower Jordan River requires the adoption of an urgent regional rehabilitation strategy.

Despite the prominence of the Jordan River and the commitments made to rehabilitate the River, the Jordan River has continued to suffer from the diversion of 98% of its fresh water flow and the discharge of untreated municipal and agricultural wastes as well as saline water into its banks. Furthermore, communities on both sides of the Lower Jordan River are some of the most economically weak in the region - having long based their economies on the production of agricultural produce made possible by unsustainable water subsidies.

In recent years, as national support for agricultural subsidies has diminished, local communities on both sides of the border have sought to diversify incomes through the development of area tourism opportunities. This change in approach offers new hope for the rehabilitation of the Jordan River as local communities partner together across the border to create new economic initiatives. This approach of combining environmental sustainability and tourism serves as a foundation of FoEME's vision for the region and the 28 local communities in which our Good Water Neighbors program operates.

First step towards establishing the Jordan River Peace Park



Area mayors from Jordan and Israel endorse the establishment of the Jordan River Peace Park.

On January 10, 2007 mayors from the three neighboring communities of Muaz bin Jabal in Jordan, Valley of Springs Regional Council in Israel (formerly known as Beit Shean Valley Regional Council) and the Jordan Valley Regional Council in Israel, all partners in the Good Water Neighbors program, endorsed a Memorandum of Understanding declaring their support for the establishment of a transboundary peace park at the convergence of the Jordan and Yarmouk rivers. This important document recognized the "value and importance" of protecting the Jordan River and the area's unique potential to bring benefits to the area residents and officially launched the Jordan River Peace Park initiative.

Shared Natural and Cultural Heritage

FoEME and the area mayors are not the first to recognize the unique potential of this area. The Jordan River Valley has played central stage throughout history as a gateway and crossing point linking Europe, Africa and Asia. The numerous sites of natural and cultural heritage that line both banks of the Lower Jordan River are valued the world over and justify the valley's description as a cultural landscape of universal significance.



The Jordan River – a cultural landscape of world value.

From the Sea of Galilee, the Lower Jordan River flows through some of the narrowest areas of the Great Rift Valley to the lowest point on Earth – the Dead Sea. The River serves as an important wetland habitat sustaining diverse vegetation and fauna and operating as a migratory flyway for over 500 million birds twice annually. The Jordan River Valley served as the pathway of early human migration out of Africa. It provided the environmental framework in which humans began building fortifications and harnessing water resources to irrigate wild wheat, enabling the first human settlements and leading towards the agrarian revolution. Later, the Jordan River Valley served as the Eastern Frontier for the Roman Empire as testified by the numerous Roman cities and Crusader castles built along the valley.



Hydroelectric power plant and artificial reservoir, circa 1940.

The Jordan River is perhaps best known for its deep religious significance. The Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and Islamic references associate the Jordan River with the prophets Moses and Elijah, the baptism of Christ and the Companions of the Prophet Mohammed. With hundreds of references to the river as a crossing point and symbol of liberation the Jordan River continues to bear strong resonance for over half of the world's population.

The proposed area of the Jordan River Peace Park offers visitors both a look back at the area's rich history as well as exemplary examples of the River Valley's more contemporary heritage. The Jordan River and its most important tributary, the Yarmouk River, join together at the heart of the park providing a spectacular natural landscape for visitors to explore. These two once mighty rivers join together to craft a remarkable mixture of flora and fauna habitats from three distinctive ecosystems creating a rich tapestry of species in a relatively small area.

Arching over the Lower Jordan River, three bridges provide historical testimony to the area's importance as crossing point. A Roman Bridge, built over 2000 years ago was erected to connect



Symbolic of the unique cross border venture. King Abdullah and Pinchas Rotenberg inaugurated the hydroelectric power station together in 1932.



Naharayim Train Station on the Hejaz Railway, circa 1932.

the area's Decapolis Cities. Next to it the Ottoman's constructed a railway bridge to service the Hejaz Railway line's crossing over the Jordan. And finally, the British added a third bridge for vehicular and bus transportation during the Mandate period.

Twentieth century industrial remnants found throughout the park are no less impressive. In 1927, Pinchas Rutenberg, a Russian immigrant and founder of the Palestine Electric Company, reached a unique agreement with His Majesty King Abdullah I of Jordan to construct a hydroelectric power station at the convergence of the two rivers. Canals and dams were built, creating a man made island and an expansive artificial reservoir that harnessed the flow of the two rivers to produce electricity. By 1932 the hydroelectric power plant began operations - supplying electricity to communities on both sides of the river until 1948. In 1994, with the signing of the Peace Treaty by Jordan and Israel, the "Peace Island" created by the hydroelectric power station, was returned to Jordan but was leased with special usage and crossing status to Israeli and international tourists. This cross-border tourism initiative and legal precedent provides an important foundation for the effort to establish the Jordan River Peace Park.

The same year that the hydroelectric power station was inaugurated, a new train station was constructed at the site linking it to the region's Hejaz Railway and enabling passengers and goods to reach Constantinople, Haifa and the holy city of Mecca within days.

Renewing the Promise of Peace

Since the initial endorsement of the Jordan River Peace Park by the area mayors, FoEME has spearheaded a variety of initiatives to strengthen public awareness and understanding of the area's unique value for Jordanians, Israelis, Palestinians and the international community. In May 2008 FoEME partnered with Yale University and the Yale Urban Design Workshop to undertake a unique design workshop bringing together leading international and regional architects to propose a master plan for the site. A week long intensive workshop with community visits, meetings with stakeholders and site visits led to the production of the area's first master plan. Shortly thereafter in July 2008, FoEME published the Jordan River Peace Park pre-feasibility study which undertook an analysis of the current environmental, socioeconomic, and water resources in the area, addressed the management and security issues for the operation of the



First master plan of the Jordan River Peace Park.



Vision of rehabilitated wetland - a habitat supporting 500 million migratory birds.

proposed Peace Park, and through a financial analysis, indicated the project's strong feasibility.

These plans truly unlock the park's potential. Centered around a rehabilitated Jordan River, the site's historic buildings are adapted for reuse: the hydroelectric power station transformed into a visitor's center, the train station servicing a reestablished train line transporting visitors throughout the park, the power station's former reservoir transformed into a wetland for the millions of migratory birds, the former power station's worker's homes converted into eco-lodges for overnight visitors with interlinking walking trails and bike paths throughout the park.

The images selected for this book present a glimpse of a unique space where cultural and natural treasures come together with political and environmental opportunities. A space where Jordanians, Israelis and international visitors can meet and mingle together – enjoying the shared splendor of the beautiful Jordan River Valley while renewing a commitment to a common future. We offer it to you as a symbol of partnership. Let it inspire you to join us in the shared effort to realize the promise of peace.

EcoPeace/ Friends of Earth Middle East

IMPRESSIONS



The Jordan River Valley is an important wetland habitat sustaining diverse vegetation and fauna, a natural home to a remarkable mixture of diverse flora and fauna species.



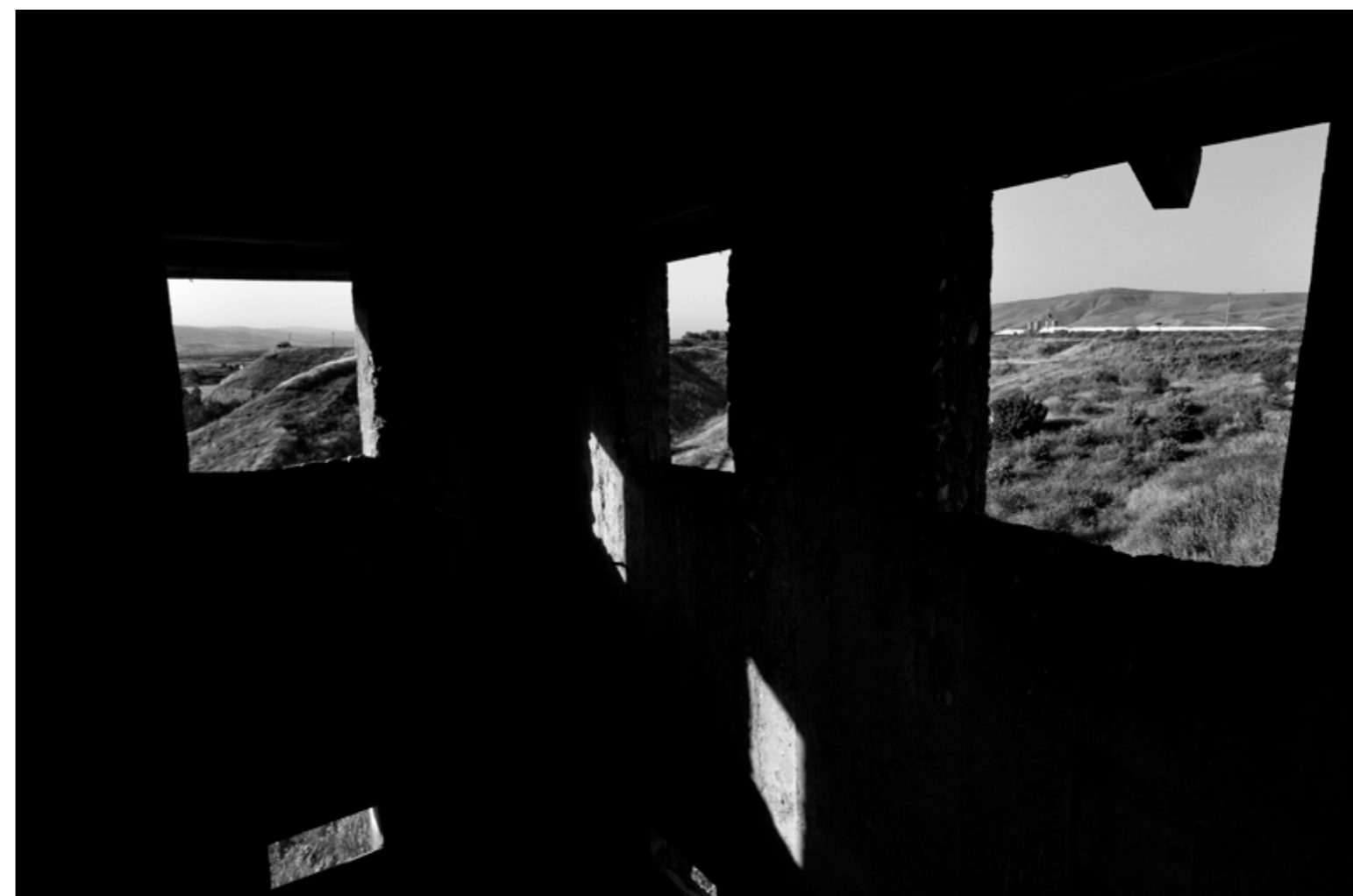
The Lower Jordan River slowly meanders through the heart of the Jordan River Peace Park.



Majestic white storks migrate through the Jordan Valley by the thousands; alongside hundreds of other species including numerous globally and regionally threatened species.



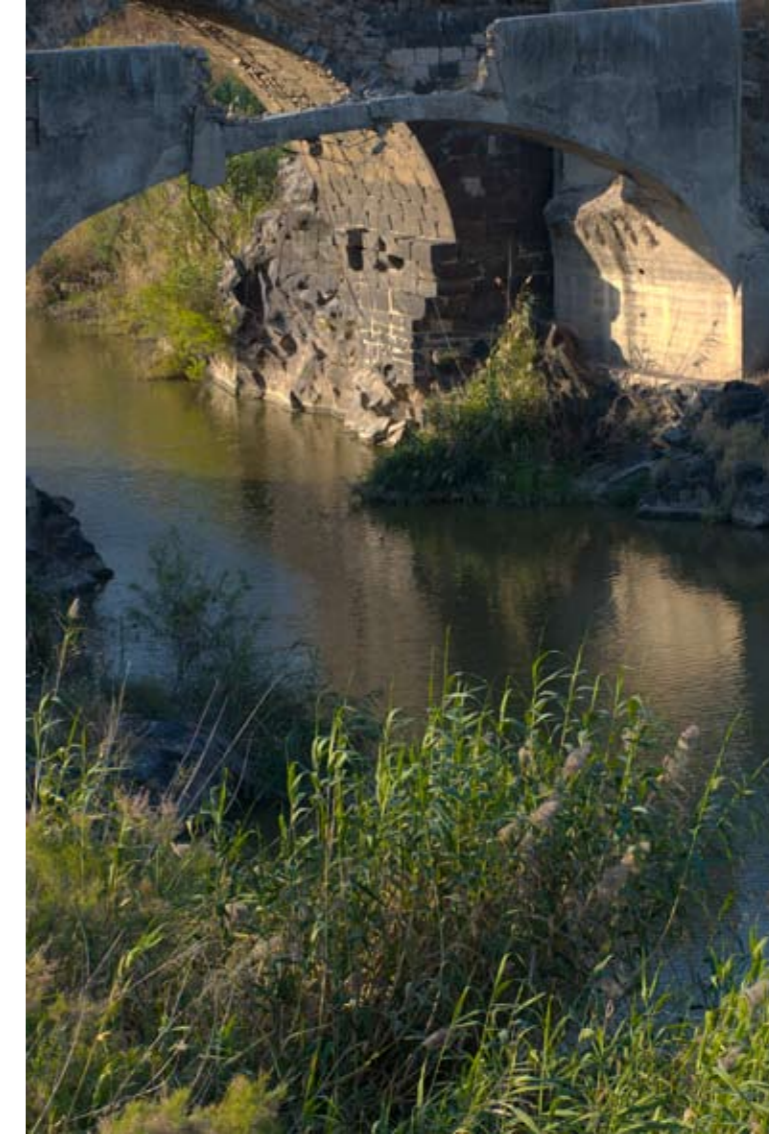
Abandoned structures throughout the Park give visitors a sense of stepping back in time.



Lookout points allow bird watchers to catch a glimpse of some of the millions of birds that cross the site on their migration from Africa to Siberia and back.



Three bridges traverse the Lower Jordan River including a 2000 year old Roman Bridge built from black basalt stones.



A concrete road bridge was built over the Jordan River by the British in 1925.



The Ottoman Railway Bridge was built in 1904 as part of the Hejaz Railway line linking Haifa and Damascus.



Park planners aim to rehabilitate the Hejaz Railway line to transport visitors throughout the area.



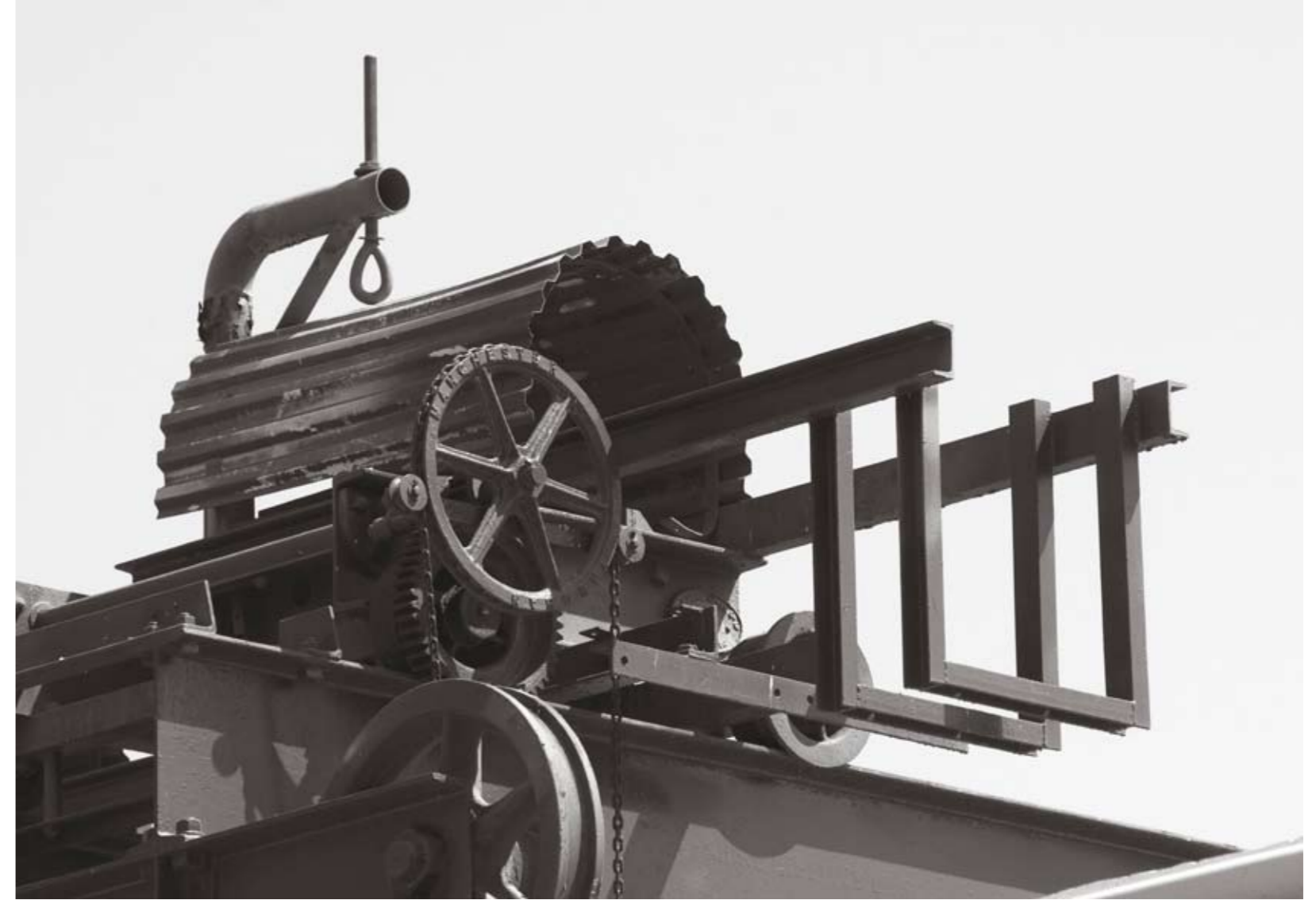
Visitors to the Peace Park will enter the park from four gates, each with their own ecological theme; River, Wetland, Arid Landscape and Arid Agriculture.



Visitors entering the Jordan River Peace Park from Naharayim cross over the Yarmouk River onto the Peace Island.



A British Mandate period pillbox with the symbol of the Royal Jordanian Crown.



The dam system installed along the Yarmouk and Jordan Rivers was instrumental to hydropower advancements in the region. Pictured above, a pulley from the dam system.



Despite the diversion of 98% of the Lower Jordan River's natural flow, the River's natural environment, located at the intersection of three ecological systems, creates a remarkable mixture of flora and fauna.



The architecture of the power station is striking in its bold, streamlined, modernist forms.



The rehabilitation of the power station's former reservoir bed into a wetland will attract millions of birds while naturally treating wastewater from nearby cities.



The Jordan River's deep cultural ties to Jews, Christians and Muslims make it the perfect setting to bring people together to celebrate the area's shared natural and cultural heritage.



The Park aims to contribute to the rehabilitation of the Lower Jordan River while creating a model for presenting the history of the region in a spirit of understanding and cooperation.



Industrial remnants from the hydroelectric power station's system of dams, canals and buildings stand as testament to the area's unique contemporary history.



View of the hydroelectric power station from the Peace Island.



With sweeping views in all directions, the former homes of the hydroelectric power station's workers will be transformed into ecolodges for overnight visitors.



The interior space of the turbine hall was vaulted, clean and uncluttered, with the turbines set against a black and white checkerboard floor.



The former turbine building will be adapted for use as a visitor's center to tell the story of the shared cultural and natural heritage of the Jordan River Valley.



The Jordan River Peace Park aims to conserve the area's rich natural heritage while creating a tranquil space for the region's visitors to meet and learn from one another.



Once a formidable river, nearly all of the Jordan's fresh water have been diverted for domestic and agriculture uses. The Peace Park aims to support the Jordan's rehabilitation through conservation, awareness building and sustainable development.



The Jordan River Valley is an important wetland habitat sustaining diverse vegetation and fauna.



Natural landscapes exist in harmony with traditional agricultural fields.



The endless sweep of golden grasses provides visitors opportunities to explore the area's abandoned spaces.



The Jordan River Peace Parks offers visitors dramatic panoramic views of the Jordan Valley.



The special status of the peace island in the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty enabled area kibbutzim to cultivate fields on a small area of Jordanian sovereign territory.



The Naharayim Train Station, inaugurated in 1932, enabled local residents and workers at the power plant to access Haifa or Damascus with ease.



The Jordan River Peace Park offers local communities and national leaders an opportunity to renew commitments to rehabilitate our shared environment and forge a peaceful tomorrow.

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