

# Jordan Seeks Tourists to Visit Jesus' Baptism Site

Jordanian officials are cashing in once again on tourist attractions related to Christian historical sites. By December 2000, visitors should be able to access the site believed to be where John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ on the Jordan River.

The Jordan Valley Authority has awarded a series of contracts to build infrastructure and service facilities, such as a road that will link the main highway from the Jordanian capital city of Amman to the Dead Sea, where a newly discovered baptism site known as "Bethany beyond the Jordan" has been found. The site is mentioned in John 1:28.

"This road will allow travelers to reach Jesus' baptism site at Bethany beyond the Jordan in about half an hour from Amman, or in 10 minutes from the Amman-Jerusalem Road," said Tourism and Antiquities Minister Akel Biltaji.

Recent excavations and surveys have uncovered more than 20 different ancient sites in Jordan that were used in the time of Jesus and John the Baptist, or that commemorated John's baptism of Jesus in the later Byzantine period.

The new infrastructure will include a visitors' center and entrance area, a traditional market place, a chapel for multifaith worship, a memorial to John the Baptist, pathways and roads for visitors' access to the large site, and a complex water system that will allow visitors to touch the same natural spring water that John the Baptist used during his ministry for a baptism of repentance.

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