

# Jerash:

## The Roman Conquest Re-visited

> By Ian Stalker

Stellan Lind is enabling legions of tourists to learn about Roman Legions in a setting that truly highlights the dramatic impact the Roman Empire had on lands far from the land that Roman generals, centurions and other officers set forth from.

Lind, a retired Swedish pharmaceuticals executive who became fascinated by the Romans, was visiting his sister in Jordan in 1998 when he decided that the Jordanian ruins of Jerash – considered the best-preserved city of Rome’s Decapolis League – would be the ideal place to create a show telling of a civilization that left enduring reminders of its greatness in the Middle East.

The Roman Army and Chariot Experience, also called RACE, began in 2004 and now employs 60 people, including 44 Jordanian army veterans turned actors who now take on the roles of Roman legionnaires, gladiators and chariot race competitors.

Before launching RACE, Lind consulted with British historians, who enabled him to carefully outfit his employees in the same style of uniforms and armor Romans wore and provide them with weaponry identical to that used thousands of years ago.

One RACE actor takes on a centurion role, barking instructions to those under his command, who demonstrate combat tactics used by an army that revolutionized warfare. Audiences also see modern-day gladiators swing swords and other weapons at each other. Onlookers are then invited to either raise their thumbs or turn them sideways – recreating the gestures used long ago – to



indicate if they wish to spare the lives of fallen fighters or have them put to death, with the latter option, of course, ignored. Narration in English and Arabic tells of the

lives of legionnaires and others who created Jerash. ■

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