

# The Jerash Festival for Culture and Art

## Rekindling the past in an ancient city

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The 23rd Jerash Cultural Festival ( July 21st – August 9th 2004) will be held at the Culture Palace Theatre in the Jordanian capital, Amman, starting with a party of songs and a poetry reading by Mahmoud Darwish. Participants include the best Arab singers and several Arab and foreign groups such as the Golanar group from Syria, the Folkloric Oriental group from Egypt, as well as groups from Spain, France, Japan and others. Activities for children are also on the agenda.



The southern theatre.

المسرح الجنوبي.

The world's first violin conference was held at last year's festival and this year a conference is planned for the Zither - a distinguished Arab musical instrument.

The cultural program will include poetry readings delivered by distinguished Arab and international poets, such as the French David Dosotier, the Spanish Klara Khanes, Snied Morris from Ireland, Ghalim Galibay from Kazakhstan, and Mortsokoki from Italy. Arab poets include Mahmoud. Darwish, Ghassan Zagtan, Maisoon Saker Al-Qassimi from UAE, Shauqi Bzaia from Lebanon, Fawzi Al-Dulaimi from Iraq, Mohammad Afifi and Ahmad Al-Shahawi from Egypt. From Jordan the poets are Haider Mahmoud, Amjad Naser and Jeries Samawi, the director of the festival, and others.

There will be a symposium on "The picture of the other in the contemporary Arab poem", with the participation of Jordanian and other Arab critics. The Jerash Festival for Culture and Art was first inaugurated in 1981 by Queen Nour Al-Houssein, the head of the national committee. In its 23 years it has provided a venue for several cultural symposia on poetry, criticism, art, music and theatre.

### The City of Jerash

The festival gains extra significance and importance because of its venue: the historical Jerash which is a tourist attraction. This year festival activities will also be held in Karak, the Dead Sea and other locations.

Jerash with a thousand pillars, is called

"Gracia" - it is about half an hour's drive north of the Jordanian capital Amman. The old name of the city goes back to Greek and Roman times. It has also been called "Pompey of the Orient" because its magnificent, ancient monuments are still standing.

The city will first meet the visitor with its great three arches gate built to welcome the Roman Emperor Hadrian when he visited in 129 A. D.

Jerash is one of the Deca Polis - a union of ten Roman cities built in the first century B. C. But it is the only city where the ruins are still standing. Visitors can wander through its theatres, baths and streets.

Jerash regains its glory every year and rekindles the past and the present through the festival. ■