

Obama gets to grips with the World Heritage Site of Petra, Jordan

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It's not often in your life you get to spend two hours with the most important person in the world!

Dr Suleiman Farajat, of Jordan University was fortunate enough to be the personal tour guide for Barack Obama when the President of the USA visited the World Heritage Site of Petra, Jordan at the end of his recent visit to the Middle East. The ancient Nabataean City of Petra is extensive and Suleiman provided his expert guiding services in order that President Obama could truly understand the history, complexity and contemporary importance of this impressive World Heritage Site.

"Of course, this is an experience I will never forget", Suleiman commented. "Petra is a very special place and to be able to share this with such a special tourist was a great honour."

Suleiman gained his PhD under the supervision of [Professor Mike Robinson](/staff/profiles/ironbridge/robinson-mike.aspx), Director of the Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage (University of Birmingham). His PhD addressed the inter-relationships between heritage, tourism and nationalism and focused on Petra as site pivotal in the expression of Jordanian identity. Professor Robinson said "Suleiman's work was outstanding and highlighted some important issues regarding how heritage becomes an important vehicle for exploring questions of identity, though there is still much more research to be conducted on this theme. There is no better guide to Petra than Suleiman and I am very proud to see that he is keeping the company of Presidents!"

The World Heritage Site of Petra is one of cases discussed in the Ironbridge International Institute's new Master's Programme in [World Heritage Studies](/postgraduate/courses/taught/ironbridge/world-heritage-studies.aspx) and we hope Suleiman will be able to share his knowledge with the students and his experience of being the personal guide of President Obama.