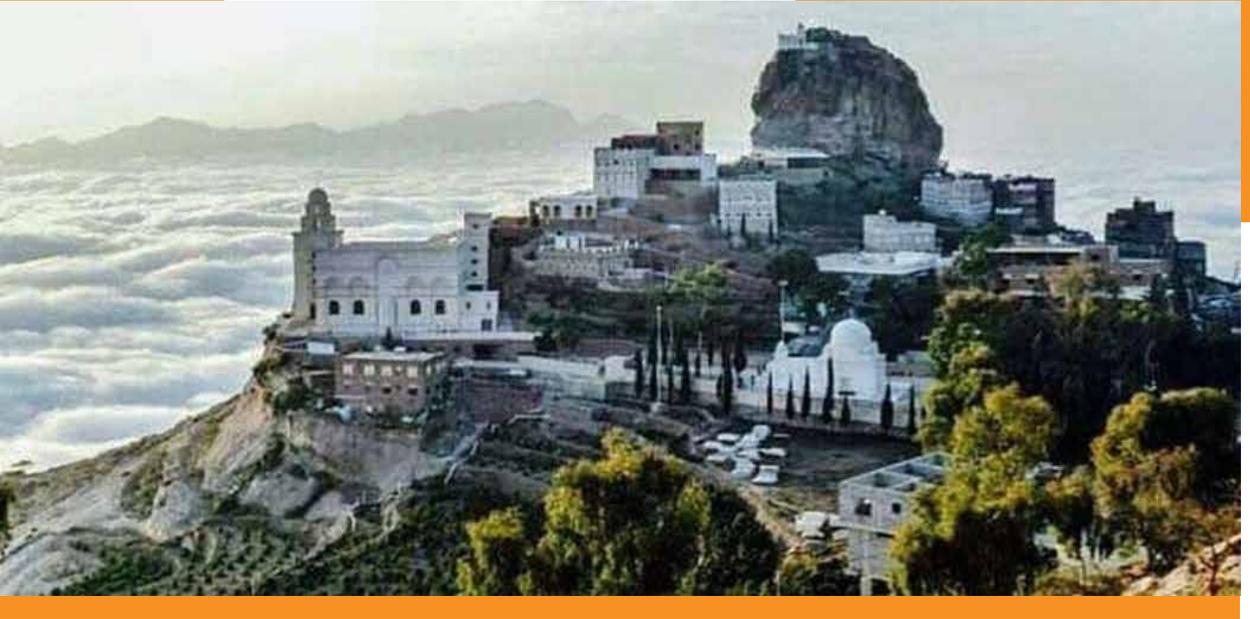


The Forgotten Treasure in Yemen

(Scientific Paper)



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2020



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Yemen's tourist treasures are not limited to its cities only. In fact, there are countless treasures in its countryside like its natural park that is multi-beautiful and low in cost. In our countryside, we can find stunning landscapes, charming agricultural terraces and very green plains and valleys, as well as villages that combine the beauty of nature and urbanization, mountains and plateaus with high peaks, and a pure and moderate climatic atmosphere throughout the year. It includes wonderful archaeological areas witnessing the glory of our ancestors and their great exploits, as well as pouring waterfalls and therapeutic water springs. In addition to that, the countryside of Yemen is inhabited by people who are kind-hearted and welcoming.

However, rural tourism in Yemen suffers from neglect and indifference to developing its infrastructure, and a lack of awareness of its importance and its economic return on the rural people, and on rural development alike, as is the case in Western countries, and some Arab countries such as Egypt and Jordan.

By rural tourism, we mean the multi-format activity that tourists or local visitors practice in rural areas, which are predominantly agricultural, landscapes, and heritage places, where the tourist enjoys fresh air and green scenery in the plains and valleys, climbing mountains and agricultural terraces, and hunting wild animals, and lives according to the customs and traditions of the rural people. This type brings economic benefits to the rural people that improve their income, and stimulate rural development and the rural economy (Esper, Mesa, 2014). Far from the crowded cities and their noisy rhythms, citizens resort to the countryside to enjoy the green landscapes and get fresh air, instead of polluted cities, learning about the life of the rural people and their lifestyles. Hence, rural tourism is not limited to daily going to rural areas, and returning on the same day as it happens in Yemen.

Rather, the tourist spends his trip in farms and villages in rural areas, residing in old country houses, shanties or popular huts, or ancient houses. In the morning, he goes to wild animals hunting areas or rural farms to ensure food as vegetables, fruits and cows' milk and eat fresh eggs. The tourist stays with his family and children for days, enjoying the scenery, the customs of the rural people and their lifestyles. Rural tourism represents many types: agri-tourism, natural tourism, and community tourism, and by the first we mean:

those services provided by the owners of farms in the countryside to attract tourists and local and foreign visitors, where they watch the methods of raising animals inside the farms, and have a stay in the countryside, during which they help the rural people cooking and eating some popular foods, and they participate in the cultivation of some agricultural crops, reap their fruits, as well as make and sell some handicrafts,

As for community tourism, we mean living with a rural family and getting to know its customs and traditions, where visitors spend days with rural residents, allowing them to learn about their lifestyles and their culture, given that this culture and customs are the product of the creativity of peoples and the ways of life of the ancestors in past times when they were pioneers in their environment. Thus, the third type is the tourism in which tourists go to rural areas to enjoy the landscape, where they see wild animals and birds, climb mountains and terraces, enjoy waterfalls, ponds, forts, and nature reserves, and they swim in the hot springs that tourists and visitors visit for the purpose of treatment from some diseases such as joint diseases, some skin diseases and mood improvement.

The Yemeni countryside is full of types of rural tourism, whether it is agricultural, societal or natural tourism, in a way that is difficult to enumerate in this article, so we will only focus on the rural areas near Amanat Al-Asimah, which surround it from all sides.

What qualifies these areas for rural tourism is that they are agricultural areas, where agriculture is the main activity of the population, as they grow many crops, the most important of which are coffee of all kinds, and various fruits and vegetables. The governorate of Sana'a comes at the forefront of the Yemeni governorates in the production of agricultural crops, and what qualifies it for natural tourism is that it has varied terrain areas, including mountain heights, plains, fertile agricultural bottoms, many agricultural tourist attractions and forests, in addition to many archaeological areas and monuments, and a variety of customs and traditions, showing the history and originality of those rural areas, which qualifies them to attract rural community tourism (National Information Center, 2020).

What drives us to pay attention to these rural areas in Amanat Al-Asimah lies in the nature of the problems and crises that Yemen has been going through since 2011 A.D, as the intensity of the conflict and problems in the country increased, and this was reflected in the lives of the residents of the Sana'a capital, who used to go to other governorates during the summer holidays, or the two festivals of "Eid Al-Fitr" (Festival of Breaking the Fast) and "Eid Al-Adha" (Festival of Sacrifice), such as the governorates of Aden, Hudaydah, Hadramaut, and Ibb governorate, but with the instability that Yemen has been witnessing since 2011 AD, and what the residents of Amanat Al-Asimah suffer from in moving between the governorates, and the high costs of travel to other governorates to spend their summer vacation with their families and relatives, the vast majority of Al-Asimah's residents resorted to spending their vacation days in rural areas near the Sana'a capital, where they go to rural places with beautiful tourist attractions such as the Dar Al-Hajar (Rock Palace), Shibam Kawkaban region, Bani Matar waterfall, the village of Al-Hijra in Haraz, Wadi Jaref resort, in addition to the Al-Ahjar waterfalls, Hammam Ali (baths), Shahek dam and the Mukhtan dam, which is what Al-Jaadabi, Jameel pointed out (2020). In fact, all of these areas are tourist attractions, where residents of the capital spend hours full of psychological comfort, and enjoy the picturesque landscapes, fresh air, green landscapes, and archaeological sites that tell the greatness of our Yemeni ancestors and the strength of our cultural and civilizational heritage.

There are many rural areas close to the capital Sana'a, which should be taken care of and rehabilitated as a destination for visitors and internal tourism, and among these areas: Hayftein village, which is one of the villages of uzlat Al-Dhola Al-Aa'la in the Shibam Kawkban district of Al Mahwit governorate, which is about 75 km from the capital Sana'a, and the village is located in an important archaeological and tourist area, and it contains five large fertile valleys, famous for the cultivation of grains, and also contains old fortresses for the Yemeni inhabitants of the Jewish community, which are still standing even now, despite their departure to Palestine in 1950 AD approximately.

There is a famous neighborhood called the neighborhood of Al-Fattan. It is said that it belongs to the Jews or the Himyarite state that was established there, thus, unfortunately the houses of the village are no longer inhabited, and they became deserted after the Jews left Yemen, and there are still inscrip-

tions, symbols and archaeological wells dug among the rocks. Some of them are still used until now. And despite the proximity of this village to the capital Sana'a, and its archaeological buildings and landscapes, it suffers from neglect and lack of attention as a destination for internal rural tourism, which can contribute significantly to the development of the region's countryside.



Al-Fattan neighbourhood/ Hayftein Village

And from the rural areas near the capital Sana'a, Khairan village, which is one of the villages in the districts of Sanhan and Bani Bahloul of the Sana'a governorate, which lies about 26 kilometers from the capital, Sana'a, as the village contains many streams and springs of water, increasing its springs during the rainy season, and it has many manual wells with fresh water. The village is famous for cultivating the finest grapes, and it has a wonderful dam in the form of a lake with a wonderful view, and next to it are fresh water springs, and due to the climatic changes that Yemen has recently witnessed, which led to an increase in rainfall, visitors to this village have increased in recent years.



Springs of water of Khairan Village



Dam of Khairan Village

In addition to the villages of Hayftein and Khairan, the village of Bait Razeq is an important tourist area, located in the Bani Hushaysh district of the Sana'a governorate and is an hour away for those who are traveling by car. Perhaps the most important feature of the touristic village is the presence of a large pool of water between the rocks and next to a mountain, where young people practice the sport of jumping from the top of the mountain to the bottom of the pool to swim, with an atmosphere full of excitement. There are vine fields of many types in the village, and other crops of fruits, vegetables and legumes, where visitors can learn about grape varieties, roam freely in the fields, and eat grape bunches amidst the farmers' applaud. They can also buy their products of fruits and vegetables directly from the farms. At a short distance from the village, there is a village called Bait Al-Sayed, famous for the local pottery industry, where old household utensils are made, and where visitors get to know this handicraft and traditional, and can buy pottery cheaply, compared to what is the case in the city.



Part of the water pool/ Bait-Razeeq village



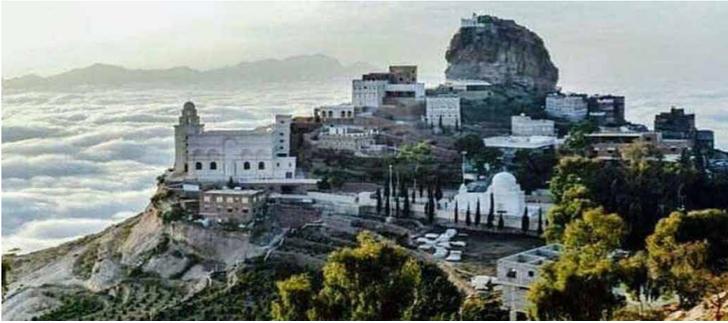
*Roaming in the vineyards with the people
Bait-Razeeq village*

Among the tourist villages surrounding the capital Sana'a is the village of Al-Mahjar, which is located in the Shibam Kawkaban district of Al-Mahwit governorate. It is about 65 kilometers away from the capital Sana'a, and is a wonderful village. It has a group of caves submerged with fresh water, springing from the surface of the earth, in addition to coffee fields and other agricultural crops.



One of the caves of Al-Mahjar village

As for the most surprising and charming villages for visitors is the village of Al-Hutaib, which is located at the top of the Haraz Mountains in the Governorate of Sana'a. This village is located above the clouds, and is inhabited by 400 people. It is the only area in the world where it has never rained because it's hanging above the clouds and whoever sees it thinks it is an imaginary village or a scene in a Hollywood movie. Although, it is located at an altitude of 3200 meters above the ground, it is characterized by a very warm and beautiful atmosphere, as the weather is very cold in the early morning in the winter, but as soon as the sun rises, a warm, beautiful and pleasant climate takes over.



Archive Source: Al-Hutaib Village

In addition to the tourist villages that have been mentioned, there is the village of Wadi Saham, which is located on the banks of the famous Wadi Saham in Foreign Alehimp, which is about three hours away from the capital Sana'a, for those who drive there by car. In fact, the village is famous for the water flow of the valley throughout the year, and the valley water level increases during the rainy season in the summer, and a varieties of grains, legumes and some fruits and vegetables are cultivated there. What distinguishes this village is the presence of natural baths that make it among the therapeutic areas as well.



The fact that the problems of rural tourism in Yemen lie in the lack of sufficient awareness of its importance, the absence of the infrastructure that should be provided for rural tourism, in addition to the lack of support for farmers and rural people to establish tourism projects that attract visitors, and the lack of a complete guide to the rural tourist areas in Yemen, it is necessary to advertise the rural village, indicating its advantages in cultural and agricultural heritage, marketing it in various media and communication means, constructing the necessary infrastructure to establish this type of tourism, attracting visitors, and providing loans to rural people and farmers to encourage them to establish some tourism activities that attract visitors to stay for days in the countryside, because this will positively affect the income of the rural people, and the development of rural areas with tourist attractions.

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