Running a successful hotel and offering guided tours in such an arid and remote location requires equally special skills. The Feynan Ecolodge, however, is a very special place. The first ecolodge in Jordan, from the day it opened in 2005 the aim was to support the local communities and wildlife of the Dana Biosphere Reserve - and to do this by introducing international guests to the lifestyles and legacy of the Bedouin.

Everything about the guest experience connects them to the people and the land around. All the onsite employees are hired from local tribes and villages. Many grew up in tents; most didn’t complete school. Only 5% have ever worked in tourism before.

The lodge is run on 100% sustainable power, and lighting the lodge by candles each night adds to the allure. The space heaters keep guests warm on chilly desert nights run by burning jift, a natural by-product of Jordan’s olive harvest, and as a result saves burning 4 tonnes trees annually. Water in rooms is served from claywater jars made by a local women’s co-operative, which along with the reusable bottles used on hikes saves 15,000 bottles a year. In all, 80% of the products used at the lodge are purchased from within a 60km radius, while 55% of the money paid by guests at Feynan stayed in the immediate local area, benefiting 450 local people in 2014.

All of this has been achieved against not only the challenges of the desert, but also the current unrest affecting its neighbours in the Middle East (Jordan has borders with Iraq, Syria, Israel and Saudi Arabia), which has affected tourist numbers to Jordan as well. As a result of its efforts, Feynan’s business has grown by 28% since 2012, while the tourism sector in the country has fallen. The secret of their success may be steeped in hundreds of years of culture, but it is one they share with their guests every day.

To learn more about Feynan Ecolodge and the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards please visit: http://www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards/