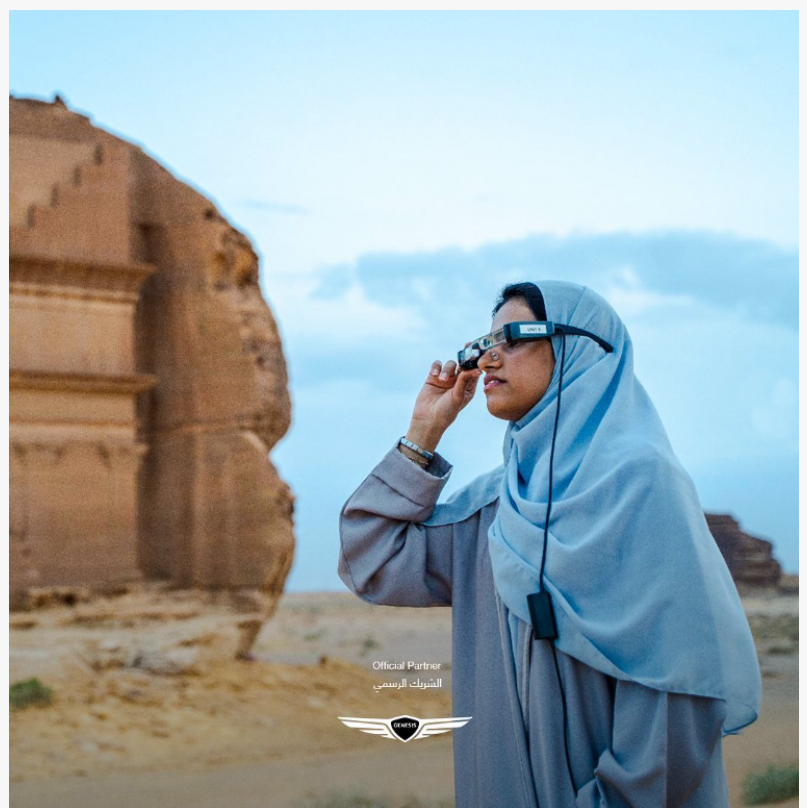


ARtGlass and NOUS Digital Launch First XR Tour on Smartglasses in the Middle East

Visitors Journey Back 2,000 Years at Hegra UNESCO World Heritage Site in Saudi Arabia

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- [ARtGlass](#) Extended Reality (XR) tour-building software and strategies power the 2-hr experience.
- [NOUS Digital's](#) engaging storytelling draws guests into Hegra's ancient mysteries.
- Augmented and Virtual realities comprise the XR experience layered over real-world views.
- 3D and 360-degree recreations, animations, actors, and artifacts bring the ancient landscape to life.
- Hegra's 40 enthusiastic tour guides have embraced the technology to enhance their impact.
- The first such tour in the Middle East is also the world's first in a challenging desert setting.
- Saudi Arabia sees XR as a tool to sustainably host up to 100 million tourist visits annually by 2030.



Visitors enjoying ARtGlass' XR tour at the Hegra UNESCO World Heritage Site. Photo courtesy: AlUla Monuments

In a groundbreaking move to revolutionize Saudi Arabia's tourism sector, this week the [Royal Commission for AlUla](#) (RCU) and partners ARtGlass and NOUS Digital launched the Middle East's first wearable XR tour, thrilling travelers from around the world to the ancient archaeological site of Hegra. The 2-hour experience combining Augmented and Virtual reality elements on transparent smartglasses emerges from the country's ambitious Vision 2030 plan to sustainably host 100 million annual tourist visits by decade's end.

Highlighting the kickoff of the Ancient Kingdoms Festival, the Hegra Alive experience transports tourists back in time to the heart of a thriving Nabataean civilization. Practically undisturbed for 2,000 years, Hegra boasts 111 monumental tombs and massive ceremonial spaces carved into solid rock. The immersive touring experience combines 3D and 360-degree visuals with compelling audio, enabling guests to explore the stunning landscape overlaid with interactive digital “magic.” With transparent lenses seamlessly blending the real and virtual worlds, visitors can simultaneously enjoy the natural beauty of Hegra while being immersed in new layers of its storied history. Visitors gain virtual access to otherwise restricted areas, brought to life through holograms of historic figures, digitally repositioned artifacts, and interactive stories. The tour reveals mysteries of this once-mighty cosmopolitan civilization, a contemporary of the ancient Roman, Greek, and Egyptian empires, and master of international trade routes.

RCU tapped ARtGlass for its track record as the world’s first company to bring wearable AR touring to scale, its technologies enabling long-form experiences at iconic sites with millions of visitors. ARtGlass Cofounder and CEO Greg Werkheiser said: “This region’s landscape is home to at least 125,000 years of human history. ARtGlass is thrilled to reveal its stories as rediscovered treasures to be shared with the world. Only by learning from our past do we build a better future.”

While the trailblazing offering is expected to draw more guests, ARtGlass technologies advance sustainable tourism principles by engaging visitors in profound ways while avoiding physical harm to a site’s sensitive features.

ARtGlass paired its powerful code-free TourBuilder software suite and patented XR storytelling strategies with partners NOUS Digital and BES Studios for content development and production support, and Epson for hardware. The team collaborated with Saudi and international cultural experts to ensure authentic narratives.

“We are on the cusp of a transformative era in heritage tourism and this challenging and rewarding project places the Middle East on its cutting edge,” said NOUS Digital CEO Raphael Schneeberger.

Forty Rawis (tour guides) lead guests on the vintage automobile and walking tour experience, weaving together the XR elements and their own insights to deliver a tour that is both technologically dazzling and personal. Lexi Cleveland, ARtGlass Executive Vice President, remarked, “It is fascinating to watch as the Rawis weave together the threads of heritage and innovation. At their command, the glasses reveal the unseen, immersing guests in visions and stories of the past. And, because each Rawi has a unique perspective, no two journeys are alike.”

Tickets are available online or on site as part of the Hegra vintage car tour. Advanced booking is recommended.

About ARtGlass

ARtGlass, an Augmented Reality technology company based in Richmond, Virginia, USA, and Milan, Italy, offers code-free software and strategies that enable storytellers of all kinds to easily arrange dynamic digital content over views of real-world objects and places through smartglasses, tablets, or smartphones. ARtGlass is the world's first company to scale wearable AR in cultural tourism. Now its TourBuilder platform is also sought by storytellers in other contexts, including for trade shows, product launches, classroom training, real estate tours, and more. Visit www.artglassgroup.com.

About NOUS Digital

For 20 years NOUS Digital has helped cultural institutions around the globe to tell stories through digital media. The company is among the world's leading providers of mobile experiences through content creation, app development, digital transformation, and immersive installations. NOUS Digital acts as a project management intermediary between western and eastern cultures. Visit www.nousdigital.net/en/.

About the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU)

RCU was established to protect and safeguard AlUla, a region of outstanding natural and cultural significance in North-West Saudi Arabia. RCU's development work in AlUla encompasses a broad range of initiatives across archaeology, tourism, culture, education, and the arts, reflecting the ambitious commitment to cultivate tourism and leisure in Saudi Arabia. Visit <https://ucl.rcu.gov.sa/en>.

About BES Studios

For 30 years, BES Studios has been harnessing the powers of cinema, media, art, and technology to craft rich visual stories. A premiere visual content production company, their award-winning production and post-production team works closely with partners, brands, and agencies to ensure every project, regardless of scope, is an overwhelming success. Visit www.besstudios.com.

About Epson

Epson is a global technology leader whose philosophy of efficient, compact, and precise innovation enriches lives and helps create a better world. The company is focused on solving societal issues through innovations in home and office printing, commercial and industrial printing, manufacturing, visual and lifestyle. Epson's goal is to become carbon negative and eliminate the use of exhaustible underground resources by 2050. Visit global.epson.com.

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