



**PREPARED BY  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INTERNATIONAL (EQI)  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Siwa Oasis, located about 70km east of the Libyan border on the edge of the Qattara Depression, possesses an exceptional natural environment, a number of attractive archaeological sites and spectacular geomorphologic features. Living through the centuries in relative isolation has allowed the Siwan community to maintain their own identity and traditions. These qualities, all indicative of the potential that the oasis holds, dictate the importance of preserving its fragile eco-system, maintaining its cultural heritage and developing economic activities in a sustainable way.

In 1997 Environmental Quality International (EQI), a private firm established in 1981, began privately investing in Siwa through a series of community-based initiatives. The Siwa Sustainable Development Initiative is an integrated sustainable development plan that addresses economic, cultural and environmental challenges. EQI's investments in Siwa are in the following areas: (1) Lodging (2) Traditional Artisanship (3) Organic Agriculture and (4) Renewable Energy. Together, these activities have established a sustainable private-sector-led development model which is socially and environmentally responsible.

## 2. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INTERNATIONAL

Environmental Quality International (EQI) operates in the Middle East and Africa providing services in Environmental and Natural Resource Management, Policy and Governance and Enterprise Development. EQI's objective is to contribute to the growth and development of the region by bringing about sustainable improvements in the living conditions of its peoples. EQI's services are directed at promoting economic and social development that respects the region's natural assets and preserves its rich cultural heritage. More information can be found at [www.eqi.com.eg](http://www.eqi.com.eg).

## 3. SIWA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

**3.1. *Adrère Amellal*** is a Nature Lodge overlooking Lake Siwa and nestled at the foot of the White Mountain<sup>1</sup> cliffs. Adrère Amellal has been built with indigenous material using traditional Siwan building techniques and styles which have a minimal impact on the environment. Kershef, a mixture of sun-dried salt rock mixed with clay, is used for wall building. This material maintains indoor temperatures at moderate levels. Ceilings are made of palm beams, while doors, windows and fixtures are made of olive wood from annual tree trimmings. Furnishings are simple, yet of the highest quality, drawing exclusively on local materials and designs.



**Adrère Amellal**

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<sup>1</sup> White Mountain means Adrère Amellal in the native Siwan language.

Contemporary plumbing is used throughout. Wastewater is first settled in self-contained sedimentation tanks, allowing the supernatant to flow through perforated pipes into a sealed wetland where indigenous papyrus plants are grown to complete the biodegradation and waste reduction process.



Siwan Craftsmanship and Salt Walls at Adrère Amellal

Food prepared at the lodge is organically grown and predominantly local. Furnishing is simple, yet of the highest quality, drawing exclusively on local material and design. Accessories reflect the rich and colorful traditional handicrafts of the oasis. Adrère Amellal is not operated with electricity. Lamps and candles are used for lighting and on cold nights, coal-filled braziers are used for heating. Natural ventilation systems that rely on strategic positioning of doors and windows have been adopted, eliminating the need for air conditioning. All agriculture on the land is organic and free of chemicals.

Adrère Amellal has been designed to operate as a low-profile structure with no lighting and producing very limited noise. We have made minimal changes in the natural landscape of the area and furthermore we do not use chemical fertilizers of any kind on our property. We avoid interference with the natural habitats of the area in both the construction and operation of the ecolodge.

- 3.2. **Shali Lodge – Kenooz**, located on the other side of the lake in the town of Siwa, is the Village Lodge. Shali Lodge is situated nearby the hub of activity yet set into the serenity of a grove of palm trees. It is a 5-minute walking distance from the Historic Shali Fortress. The lodge itself has become a local meeting point and is well liked by both visitors and Siwans alike. Moderately priced, the lodge offers 20 rooms and a warm and friendly atmosphere. The lodge also appeals to travelers who, regardless of cost, prefer spending their time in the center of activity. Shali Lodge has played an important role in ensuring that EQI is actively engaged and present in the village, thereby consolidating the partnership between the community and EQI.



Shali Lodge Kenooz

- 3.3. **Albabenshal**, also in Siwa Town, is our Heritage Lodge. It is a 14-room lodge, located on the periphery of the Historic Shali Fortress. The rooms were constructed out of once inhabited *kershef* houses that had been destroyed by several factors including the migration of the original Siwan residents, looting and unusually heavy rains. *Albabenshal* is a restoration project created through a process of restoring and restructuring dilapidated and abandoned homes. The lodge aims to revitalize this important area in Siwa and encourage the continued restoration of the remaining abandoned homes surrounding the



**Albabenshal Heritage Lodge**

- 3.4. **Siwa Creations:** Siwa is considered a highly conservative society. Siwan girls have extremely limited mobility outside their homes, and married women even less so. The primary opportunity for work is in the production of handicrafts. Girls typically learn sewing, embroidery and basketwork from their mothers and grandmothers. Over time, however, many of these local crafts have deteriorated and the pressure to produce saleable items coupled with the lack of access to good quality raw materials has resulted in the production of mediocre items that rely on artificial dyes and synthetic materials. Furthermore, most of the artisans are forced to produce their work and then wait several months until the item is sold, at which time they are then able to receive payment for their work.



**Ermanno Scervino by Siwa**



**Siwa Creations Embroidered Leather Jewelry**

The Women's Artisanship Initiative began as a community development intervention designed to increase the empowerment and economic self-sufficiency of Siwan women through the revitalization of traditional handicraft production and the promotion of a culture of artisanship. The project has focused on opening up viable business opportunities for Siwan women and enhancing their skills to ensure that their workmanship is of the highest standard.

Working with the women of the Siwan community, EQI has developed a brand of artisanal products called *Siwa Creations*; a product line designed to incorporate traditional Siwan embroidery styles and techniques with the fashions of today. Siwa Creations products are sold in the Adrère Amellal boutique and in high-end outlets in countries throughout Europe, including Italy, France and England.

- 3.5. ***Siwa Organic***: Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood in Siwa, engaging between 70 to 80 percent of Siwan families. The oasis boasts an environment largely free of chemical fertilizers and practically untouched by herbicides and pesticides. The most important crops are olives and dates.

Siwan farmers face serious impediments in selling their crops, primarily in regards to the lack of financing made available. Informal credit schemes available to the farmers are insensitive to seasonal fluctuations in productivity and to the farmers' lack of liquidity. This forces farmers to accept below market prices before the harvest season so that they are able to finance the harvesting of their crops. If the season proves unproductive and they are unable to deliver the crops to the trader, they are then forced to sell parts of their land. To safeguard against such risks, many of the farmers have begun using chemical fertilizers to maximize their yields. In doing so, they compromise the very assets that distinguish Siwan agricultural produce in the international marketplace.

The Sustainable Agriculture Initiative aims to stop this transition from natural to chemical. Instead it promotes the use of organic farming methods and provides Siwans with the needed capacity to improve harvesting techniques and farm management practices. EQI certifies the land organic, pre-purchases the crops at a fair market price and then sells the products to the international market.



*Siwa Organic* is the brand name established for Siwa's organic products. It positions itself as a product of excellence offering organic produce originating from a unique and special destination. The product line includes olives, dates and agri-culinary products such as olive tapenade, sycamore jam, and hibiscus syrup.

- 3.6. ***'Siwa' Globally***: EQI believes that the spirit of entrepreneurship at the smallest scale is what has preserved the cities of the region for centuries as thriving centers for world trade, finance and culture; and that this spirit is the region's best hope for prosperity in today's economy. As such, the company will continue to invest in ventures that channel this spirit towards sustainable development. We aim to take the model of the Siwa Initiative and apply it in similar destinations across the country and the region. Through these initiatives, EQI hopes to

transform these marginalized communities into vibrant eco-villages and transform these ecologically sensitive and cultural heritage sites into hubs of conservation and eco-business activities.

- 3.7. **Partnerships:** EQI has partnered with the local community and local government authorities as well as with international development organizations such as UNCHS, UNDP, the Ford Foundation, and the British Embassy to address the special needs of the Siwan community. In 2005 EQI partnered with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to co-finance the expansion of its activities under the Siwa Initiative and to provide funds towards capacity building of women artisans and local farmers.
- 3.8. **Publications:** The Siwa Initiative was designed to set an example of sustainable development that would be a source of inspiration to other communities around the world. The initiative has created widespread publicity among the business community, both locally and internationally. A complete list of publications is provided in Annex 1.
- 3.9. **Awards:** The Siwa Sustainable Development Initiative has received international recognition from a host of prestigious awards that highlight Adrère Amellal and the Siwa Initiative as an innovative and successful example of sustainable development. These awards include: **National Geographic Adventure** for *Top 50 Eco-lodges of 2009*, **Tatler** (2008) for Best Eco-Hotel, **Travel and Leisure Global Vision Award** in the category of Green/Eco Hotel (2006); **International Chamber of Commerce and UNDP World Business Award** for the Siwa Initiative (2006); **Condé Nast Green List Top 5 Lodges** award for Adrère Amellal (2005); **Talents du Luxe Well Being Talent Award** (2005); **Hip Hotels Orient 2005 Top 20 Hotels**; and **British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award**. Adrère Amellal also received a Certificate of Appreciation from the **Ministry of Tourism** for “A remarkable effort in promoting tourism in Egypt” on the occasion of World Tourism Day (2004).

## Annex 1: List of Publications

- Napier, Eloise « *Way to go* » in **Image**, February 2009. pp. 87 - 90
- «*Dans L'air du temps – Desert Evasion* » in **Ideal Coiffure Beaute**, January 2009. p.26
- Bagley, Christopher « *Far and Away* » in **W Magazine**, January 2009. pp. 104 - 111
- Tamura, Ai « *Ecology – Concierge de Luxe* » in **Superluxe**, Winter 2008. p. 49
- Von Meiss, Susanne « *Heaven on Earth – Ein Paradies Aus Lehm, Sand und Salz* » in **Swiss Universe**, December 2008. pp. 14 - 22
- Cheng, Mori « *Adrère Amellal* » in **Traveller Luxe**, November 2008. p. 94
- Maes, Nick « *Nomad's land* » in **The Guardian**, November 2008.
- Muresan, Andreea « *3 Refugii in Octombrie* » **Elle Decoration** Romania, October 2008. pp. 153 - 156
- Kranenburg, Karen « *The Palace of Sands* » in **The Style Observer**, July 27<sup>th</sup> 2008. pp. 10-13
- Strambi, Letizia « *L'alternativa El Alamein Nuova promessa egiziana* » **Primo Piano**, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2008. p.13
- Conijn, Helen « *Egypte – Schatten in Het Zand* » in **Elegance**, June 2008. pp.109 - 120
- Le Tourneur, Claudine « *Palais de Sel* » in **ELLE Décoration**, May 2008. pp.144 - 151
- Damiano, Ildo « *Sospesi nell' infinito* » in **V&S**, May 2008. pp. 30 – 35
- Conde Nast Traveller**, Italy, April 2008. p.200
- Le Gall, Anne-Laure « *Pour des Vacances en Vert* » in **Paris Match**, April 2008. p.116
- Vincent Dudant « *Siwa Initiative*» in **L'Eventail**, February 2008. p.56.
- Dû Cattelain-Le, Anne-Marie « *Lune de mile Ecolo Chics*» in **Gala**, January 2008. p. 63.
- Hermione, Eyre « *Welcome to the Future of Travel* » in **The Independent** on Sunday, The New Review, January 2008. p.18
- De Dives, Alix « *Siwa, La palme du désert* » in **COTÉ SUD Maisons** January 2008. pp. 178-189
- Amagat, Béatrice « *Five Stars Siwa Oasis*» in **Soon**, Winter/Fall 2007-2008. Issue #3. p. 276.
- Sadek, Hanifa & Abdella, Heba « *Something Old, Something New*» in **Al-Ahram Weekly**, Egypt, November 2007.
- Crous, Yolanda « *Our Favorite Green Hotels*» in **Travel + Leisure**, November 2007. p.129.

« *Adrère Amellal Oasis* » in **Oasis Riyadh** Magazine, first issue autumn 2007

Radwan, Amany « *Women's Freedom Comes Slowly to a Sleepy Oasis* » in **Time** Magazine, June 2007.

Benson, Donald « *Luxury by an Other Name* » in **Obelisque**, June 2007.

Venturi, Alfredo « *Ecolodge aux antipodes* » in **Voyage de Luxe**, No.25, p.72

« *Siwa Egipto, Adrère Amellal & Shali Lodge* » in **HS Hotels de SONHO**, June 2007.

Bailey Robinson Travel « *Perfect Getaways* » **Vanity Fair Green Issue**, May 2007. p.102.

Greig, Geordie « *Nomad's land* » in the **Tatler** Magazine, April 2007. p. 228

« *Ägypten* » in **In Style Deutsch**, February 2007

Otterman, Sharon « *Chilled out in the Sahara* » in the **New York Times**, March 2007

Oriordain, Aoife « *Hotel of the Week* » in **The Independent**, December 2006, pp. 9

Blottière, Alain « *Siwa, Chronique d'une Mort Annoncée* » in **Paris Match**, December 2006 pp.78

Clark, Aaron « *Global Vision Awards - Adrère Amellal Oasis and singita grumeti reserves* » in **Travel and Leisure**, December 2006 pp.130-135

Le Tourneur, Claudine & Cyril « *L'Oasis des Mirages* » in **Hôtel & Lodge**, November - December 2006. pp. 65

Campbell, Sarah « *A land time forgot* » in **Royal Wings** November- December 2006. pp.35

Elodie Klein, Celine Lis, et Christophe Migeon « *Des Maisons Troglodytiques dans l'Ouest Egyptien* » in **L'Express Mag**, October 2006. pp. 76

Cator, Sparks « *Where We Go For Tea in the Sahara* » in **Out Traveler**, Fall 2006. pp. 48

Geneviève Dortignac and Beatrice Amagat, « *Egypte Terre d'Oasis* » in **Maison Coté Sud/Est/Ouest**, Spring-Summer 2006. pp.124

Cator Sparks « *Like an Egyptian* » in **New York Times**, Summer 2006. pp. 22

Wade Jude « *Charles and Camilla – The Royal couple are closer than ever during their two-week tour in the Middle East and India* » in **Hello Magazine**, April 4, 2006, pp. 38 - 44

« *Royals spend night in eco-hotel* » in **BBC News**, March 23, 2006

Smith, Sylvia « *The Oasis of Siwa in Egypt* » **CNN World**, March 24, 2006

Mathew Carrington « *Going for the green* » in **Business Monthly Magazine**, February 2006.



- « *L'Adrère Amellal AU COEUR DU DESERT LIBYQUE* » in **Le Figaro Magazine**, December 17, 2005. pp. 108-109.
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- Abdel Nour, Nada. « *An oasis of eco-friendly luxury* » **The Daily Star**, September 17, 2005.
- Wilkinson, Brook. « *The Green List* » **Conde Nast**, September 2005 pp. 92 - 98
- Hauss, Friedmann. « *Solitary State* », **Marie Claire Australia**, September 2005. pp. 254 – 265
- Liotard, Anne Séverine. « *La Fille Du Désert* », **Cosmopolitan**, June 2005. pp. 198 – 205
- Ypma, Herbert. « *Hip Hotels Top 20* », **Sunday Times**, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005. pp. 1-3
- Liotard, Anne Séverine. « *Mille et Une Nuits* », **Cosmopolitan**, May 2005. pp. 176 – 183 & 221
- Ypma, Herbert. **Hip Hotels Orient 2005**, pp. 84 - 91
- Taschen, Angelika. **Egypt Style 2005**, Photos Deidi Von Schaewen **Exteriors**, pp 10 – 29 – **Interiors**, pp78 – 85 – **Charming Details**, pp. 160 – 167 & 170, 171
- Bnshtock, Avital. « *14 days in North Africa* », **ELITE Traveler**, March /April 2005 **On To Siwa**. pp. 95
- Le Tourneur d'Ison, Claudine et Cyril. « *La Forteresse de Sel* », **Hôtel & Lodge N 15** March / April 2005. pp. 74-79 & p. 92
- Senes, Alexandra. « *Si tu vas a Siwa* », **Jalouse N°77**, February 2005. pp. 98 – 100
- Le Tourneur d'Ison, Claudine et Cyril. « *Parmi les oasis oubliées du désert libyque* », **Le Figaro N 12675**, February 2005. pp. 76 - 82
- Le Tourneur d'Ison, Claudine et Cyril. *Oasis*, « *Ces Mystérieuses Inconnues* », **Chroniques Egyptiennes**.
- Foiry, Emmanuel. « *Adrère Amellal, Des Nuits Publiées D'Étoiles* » **Emotions 2005**. pp. 146 – 147 – 66
- Nicolien Zuijdgest. « *Pootjebaden in hetzand* » **Reizen**, October 2004. pp. 86 - 90
- Yann Arthus Bertrand. « *Ecolodge Adrère Amellal, oasi di Siwa, Egitto* », **366 Giorni Per Riflettere Sulla Terra**, July 2004.
- Von Schaewen, Deidi & Angelica Taschen « *Adrère Amellal Siwa Oasis* » **Inside Africa North & East**, pp.148-159
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