

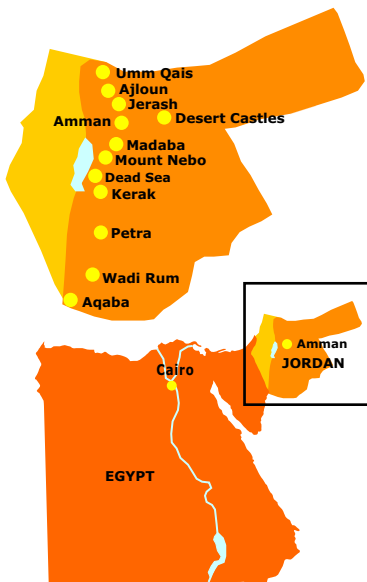
Travel Talk tours will take you on a pilgrimage of culture, history, adventure, fun and relaxation. You will visit sites of antiquity, explore treasures of Jordan, discover the magnificent cities and journey off the beaten track; meet local people and partake numerous activities during your Jordan experience.

Before you leave for your adventure, it is important that you read this pre-departure information to ensure that your trip begins, and proceeds, as smoothly as possible. While we appreciate that you are embarking on an "adventure holiday" that will produce its own share of surprises, it is also true that forewarned is forearmed. This information is not written with the intention of being anything other than general information that we hope will help you come more prepared for your holiday. The philosophy of Travel Talk is simple: to provide excellent value for money for budget conscious and adventurous travellers without compromising their experiences, and providing quality transportation, accommodation, sight seeing and information services. We hope that our philosophy will exceed your expectations and the following information will help you enjoy a memorable journey in Jordan.

INTRODUCTION

FACTFILE

Full Country Name : Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
 Area : 89.206 km2 (34.442sq. miles)
 Population : 5,9 million
 Capital City : Amman
 Language : Arabic
 Religion : 88% Sunni Muslim, 2% She'at Muslim, 10% Christian
 Government Type : Constitutional monarchy



VISAS

Visa requirements change periodically therefore you need to check the requirements and fees for entry with your Jordanian embassy or consulate before travelling.

All foreigners need a visa to enter Jordan. All nationalities except Colombian and Chinese nationals can purchase a visa at the border. The current fee is £11 and has to be paid in cash. South African nationals have free entry.

Columbian and Chinese nationals must obtain their visa from the Jordanian Embassy before departing for their tour.

Visas are valid for two weeks from entry, but can be easily extended for up to three months. The cost of the visa is variable depending on your nationality. Keep your passport on you whenever you're near the Israeli border, as there are lots of military checkpoints. If you plan to leave Jordan and return later, or your tour makes two or more entries into the country, you need a multiple entry visa. If you apply for a multiple visa through the Jordanian embassy in your country, check your passport when it is returned to you to make sure that you have been issued the correct visa.

It is your responsibility to ensure you have the relevant documents/visas and Travel Talk will accept no responsibility for being refused entry through incorrect documentation.

DOCUMENTS

Please make sure that you have all the necessary travel documents ready before you leave your contry.

PASSPORT

In many countries you'll be required to have a passport valid for 6 months staring from the entry date. If you are holding a passport with less then 6 month's validity or a few pages remaining, we suggest you to apply for a new one before you depart.

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It's vital to take a photocopy of the important pages of your passport (pages of personal data, passport number, visas etc) and keep these copies separate from your passport.

BEFORE YOU GO

While it's your own choice and responsibility regarding what type of clothing, belongings, luggage, bags and other items to take with you, we try to share our experiences with you to help you have a comfortable journey in Jordan.

ESSENTIALS

Before you leave your country, we recommend you to make sure you have the followings with you :

- ✓ Passport
- ✓ Airline or transportation ticket
- ✓ Tour voucher
- ✓ Insurance policy
- ✓ Visas (if necessary)
- ✓ Label on your travel bag
- ✓ Pre-departure information
- ✓ Money
- ✓ Credit card

PACKING

Please remember that the airline baggage allowance is 20 kilos and you should not pack more than you can comfortably carry.

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When packing, the golden rule is : decide how many clothes you want to take, halve the amount and that's how much you'll need.

We also recommend you to bring a frame backpack or a suitcase. In addition to your main bag, you'll need to have a smaller day pack and a money belt.

What about the souvenirs ? Make sure that you leave some space for souvenirs in your luggage. There are a wide range of fantastic things to buy in the Middle East and in Mediterranean countries, not only for your mates, also for yourself !

We have also compiled a list of things that you might need on the tour:

Clothing : In general, clothing should be lightweight, loose fitting, hard-wearing and easily washed. In Jordan's hot summer months, cotton clothing is much more comfortable than man-made materials like nylon.

The winter can be cooler. Make sure you allow for climate changes and remember that even in very hot countries, night-time and early morning temperatures can be cold. You will generally find it is better to have several thin layers rather than one thick layer as it gives you more flexibility and warmth. A fleece can be invaluable and double as a pillow. Please remember that Jordan has conservative attitudes towards dress. Women, and also to a certain extent men, will find that the way they dress will often determine the degree of respect they receive from both men and women. Shorts and strappy tops will attract unwanted attention so it is much better to wear loose fitting T-shirts or long sleeves and cropped or full length trousers.

Useful equipment : Water bottle with strap, torch and batteries, international adapter, playing cards, walkman or mp3 player, discs.

Toiletries : Towels, soap, toothbrushes, talcum powder, razors, deodorant, tampons, sunscreens, contact lenses and bring enough extra pairs, solution glasses (and a copy of your prescription in case you need emergency replacements), a roll of toilet paper, antibacterial wet wipes.

First-aid kit : Bandages, pain reliever, antibiotic cream, a thermometer, moleskin, decongestant, insect repellent, burn ointment, stomach, anti diarrheha and personal medicine.

Others : Converters and adapters, camera, films, flash, batteries, money belt and additional belongings that you think will be useful during your journey.

VISA

Check your visa when it's issued to ensure that it contains the correct figures, especially when it's a multiple entry visa. Please bear in mind that a visa does not guarantee you enter a country as the final decision will be given by the authorities at the immigration.

TOUR VOUCHER

When you book a trip, you'll be provided with a tour voucher showing the details of your tour. You'll need to hand over this voucher to your tour leader to join the tour. The tour leader reserves the right to refuse serving any passenger failing to provide the tour voucher. If you have booked extra services like pre- and post tour accommodation and transfer, please make sure that these services are also shown on your tour voucher. If you've booked your tour direct with Travel Talk your tour voucher will have been emailed to you within 24hrs of booking your tour. If you have booked through one of our Agents they will issue your voucher from the branch office you booked the tour from.

FLIGHT TICKET / CONFIRMATION

Do not forget to check your name, surname, flight details and other necessary information placed on your flight ticket/confirmation voucher at least 3 days before you leave your country. It's also required to reconfirm your flight in some countries. Please contact your tour leader if you need to contact your airline to reconfirm your flight on return.

ARRIVAL

The meet and greet service is included in the price of the tour.

You'll be met by our local representative at the ferry port.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Please also note that you can call the following numbers in case of **emergency** : 0090 542 779 04 34 or 0090 544 522 54 74

LEFT OR LOST LUGGAGE

If you discover upon arrival that your luggage is missing, or has arrived damaged, you should report this immediately to the information desk in the baggage hall. The staff will be able to tell you what the procedures are for reclaiming your luggage and advise you on any forms that may need to be filled in and stamped. The airport staff should also be able to explain what will happen next and when you should expect your luggage.

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If you're taking a taxi to your hotel or around the city, close your ears to the common claims of taxi drivers telling newly arrived travellers that their hotel has closed down, full or poor and that they know a better hotel etc... Just insist on being taken to your hotel and once you arrive, go to the reception desk if you need further assistance.

You should not leave the baggage collection area without receiving a completed Property Irregularity Report (PIR) from the baggage handling agents. Remember you are entitled to money or a "necessities kit" from the airline.

If you experience any problems in dealing with airport officials, your tour leader will be happy to assist you. Please remember that lost luggage is a matter between you and the airline /airport authority and the recovery of your luggage is your own responsibility and at your own expense.

ABOUT THE TOUR

Please remember that the tour price covers specific services offered during your trip, not your entire travel cost. Your expenses will vary depending on your interest and budget and your tour leader will be always ready to inform you of the local prices and possible travel costs.

SERVICES INCLUDED

As a general rule, the following services are included in your tour price :

- ✓Transfer from the hotel to the airport
- ✓Accommodation in 3 and 4 Star hotels
- ✓Desert camp accommodation in Wadi Rum, traditional chalets in Wadi Mujib
- ✓All breakfasts in the hotels
- ✓Transportation in air-conditioned non-smoking coaches or mini-buses
- ✓Jeep safari in Wadi Rum
- ✓Services of experienced tour leader

SERVICES NOT INCLUDED

The tour price does not cover the followings :

Any flights, insurance, meals not stated in the itinerary of your tour (please view our web site or brochure), drinks, items of a personal nature, tips, visa fees, entrance fees to the sights and museums, the departure and arrival taxes in Jordan, the entry fee+horse ride in Petra (approx. USD 50), other services not stated in the "services included" section of our brochure, optional activities and excursions.

FERRY BETWEEN EGYPT AND JORDAN

We aim to use private ferries from Egypt to Jordan (or reverse) when the number of the tour participants is big enough. If not, we'll be using the ferry of the local transportation company. Please remember that these ferries are subject to delay for hours without any prior notice from the local transportation company which may affect the schedule of the tour program. Such delays are out of Travel Talk's control and also valid for other tour operators running combined tours in Egypt and Jordan.

When you arrive in the port (from Nuweiba-Egypt to Aqaba-Jordan) please look for our staff holding a Travel Talk sign.

BORDER TAXES

If you've purchased a combined tour of Egypt and Jordan, there will be a departure tax of US\$ 10.00 when leaving Egypt. If you've not obtained visa for Jordan before your trip, this can be obtained in Aqaba, Jordan. Please contact us for the latest information as these fees may change periodically.

ENTRANCE FEES

The entry fees to museums and sights are not included in the tour price. Please bear in mind that the entry fees change periodically and we recommend you to contact us for the latest prices:

Entrance to **Petra** costs US\$ 50 which includes compulsory guiding fees and a horse ride to the beginning of the siq (gorge). You must pay this fee whether you intend on taking a horse or not.

Entrance fees to other museums and historical sights :

Wadi Rum – Dissah US\$ 3

Kerak US\$ 1,50

Dead Sea US\$ 12

Jerash US\$ 12

King Abdula Mosque US\$ 3

Citadel US\$ 3

Amphitheater US\$ 1,50

Madaba & Mt. Nemo US\$ 4

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Please approach to your tour leader for the optional activities available during your tour.

OTHER

Please refer to "Money & Exchange", "Eating & Drinking", "Shopping" and "Tipping" sections for other possible expenses during your journey.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is essential to all passengers travelling on Travel Talk tours to have personal insurance to cover all medical and repatriation costs. Please do not forget to take your insurance policy with you.

While there are no mandatory vaccinations for travellers to Jordan it is advisable to ensure typhoid, polio and tetanus inoculations are up to date.

Some travellers feel more confident with hepatitis and meningitis inoculations as well.

Rabies exists in Jordan in rural areas although it is very unlikely that you will come in contact with a rabid animal. Immunisation is available in either a series of three injections over a period of one month (lasts 3-5 years) or a single visit booster dose that lasts only 6-12 months. Please consult a medical practitioner for advice.

Bottled water is readily available throughout your tour and we recommend that you purchase this rather than drink the local tap water. While the local water is usually heavily chlorinated and safe many people find they get upset stomachs after drinking these supplies.

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It is advisable to carry some Imodium with you in case you get an upset stomach from the difference in cuisine. The different spices and foods may be a little upsetting to your stomach and it is best to be prepared... just in case.

It is often difficult to find the precise medication that is available in one's home country and for this reason we recommend that you carry all current medication with you.

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Toilet paper is rarely provided so it is a good idea to carry a spare roll in your bag. It should be placed in the basket beside the toilet, not flushed away, as you might block the pipes.

Most people find that Jordan is a friendly and hospitable country and feel quite comfortable wandering around alone during the day. However, as with any country you are not familiar with, it is recommended that you exercise more caution at night and generally take taxis rather than walk.

It is wise not to accept gifts of food or drink from any strangers for the risk of possibly being a victim of theft by drugging. Take care with your passport, credit cards and money - a money belt to fit beneath your clothes is highly recommended. It is also recommended that at least one set of modest clothing is taken with you. It is a sign of respect to cover your shoulders and legs when visiting mosques and also attracts less unwanted attention. A headscarf for women is necessary when visiting mosques in Jordan.

MONEY

Jordan Dinar (JD) is divided into 1.00 fils. Notes range from 1 dinar to 20 dinars. Coins : 1 dinar, ½ dinar, ¼ dinar, 100 fils, 50 fils, 10 fils. Approximate Exchange rates are as follows :

1 GB£ = 1.20 JD
1 US\$ = 0.70 JD
1 Euro = 1.06 JD

There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency that a visitor may bring into Jordan, but large amounts should be declared on arrival.

Banks can be found almost everywhere in Jordan. We recommend that you take either US\$, Euro or GB£ currency as these are the easiest to change. Travellers cheques are best avoided as they can be very time consuming to change and often cannot be changed outside major cities. ATMs can be found almost everywhere in Jordan. Credit cards are accepted in most shops, restaurants and hotels (with the exception of American Express cards).

It is difficult to specify the amount of money that you can spend per day, however as a general rule US \$20 to \$30 or GB £15 to £25 per day can provide you with additional meals and entrance fees.

Should you wish to purchase souvenirs, of which there is a diverse range, or participate in optional activities, you will have to budget for these.

Please do not bring Scottish banknotes as they are not changable abroad.

EATING & DRINKING

Food in Jordan tends to be a mixture of Arab and Lebanese cuisine. A Standard Jordanian meal will consist of a main dish supplemented by a number of appetisers such as *tahina* (sesame seed puree) and *baba ghanoug* (tahina, garlic and charred aubergines) dips, salads and side-dishes. *Mensef* is the national dish of Jordan. This traditional Bedouin meal consists of lamb (or goat) cooked with herbs in a yoghurt sauce with rice and bread.

Other favourite dishes include meat stews, meatloaf and kebabs. Wining and dining in Amman is a blend of elegance, ease and fun. Wide variety of national and international cuisine, pubs, discotheques and live entertainment are available mainly in the capital Amman.

Major fine restaurants require prior bookings. Throughout the Middle East, the taking of tea is almost a national pastime. Jordan is no exception, especially if you are shopping or meeting people for the first time. In Jordan mint, thyme, or saga are often used to flavour the tea. Coffee is served Turkish style - very strong and sweet. If you don't normally take sugar, make sure you mention this to your host. Freshly squeezed fruit juice is readily available from street stalls and kiosks, and makes a refreshing change from the carbonated drinks.

Although Jordan is a Muslim country, most of the hotels we use do serve alcoholic drinks (although during Ramadan, some hotels will close their bars). Local wine is fairly palatable, as is the local beer, Amstel, a mild lager. You might also want to try Araq – an aniseed flavoured liqueur.

Approximate costs for meals and snacks are as follows :

Simple snack US\$5

Light meal US\$10-18

Fancy restaurant US\$25-40

Approximate costs for drinks bought in a shop in the street are as follows (prices in restaurants, hotels and luxury bars can be as much as double those specified) :

1l of water US\$1.5

30cl bottle of soft drink US\$1.5

50cl bottle of beer US\$5

SHOPPING

Souvenir choices are endless and handicraft shops are widely scattered throughout Jordan. The wide range of crafts combine traditional art with modern flair. The most common Jordanian craft items include Madaba Rugs, carved olivewood, Hebron glass, ceramics, mother of pearl, cross stitch embroidery, Bedouin silver jewelry and much more.

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You need to bear in mind that haggling is a way of life in the Middle East. Haggling should always be relaxed and can be a lot of fun – you will find most shop owners are very friendly and will probably invite you in for a cup of tea to break the ice before the haggling starts.

OPENING HOURS

Most Jordanians work five days a week with Friday and Saturday off, but business and shopping hours are flexible. Some establishments are open from 9:30 - 13:30 and again from 15:30 to 18:00. Others may be open straight through the day, from 08:00 to 20:00. Government offices are open from 08:30 - 14:00. All businesses and most shops, other than those in the souqs, are closed on Fridays. During the Holy Month of Ramadan, working hours are more flexible and generally shorter.

TIPPING

Tips are a common reward for the service staff in Jordan like everywhere in the world. Most restaurants include service charge. If service charge is not included, waiters expect to be tipped around ten percent of the bill.

Your bus driver and guide can especially be honoured with such a traditional appreciation at the end of the trip.

Approximately 2 USD for the guide per person per day (8 USD for Jordan portion of Egypt & Jordan combined tours and 16 USD on Essential Jordan tours) and 1 USD for the driver per person per day (4 USD for the Jordan portion of Egypt & Jordan combined tours and 8 USD on Essential Jordan tours) will be highly appreciated by your guide and driver who will do their best to show you the impressive sights of their home countries.

WEATHER

The weather in Jordan is pleasurable for travel throughout the year. Amman is sunny and cloudless from May to October, with temperatures averaging approximately 25C (75 F). During the spring, the most beautiful season in Jordan, fields and mountains are coated with rich greenery and exquisite wildflowers. In autumn, the weather is mild and pleasant. July and August are hot and dry, but not restrictive of tourist activities. The valleys and Aqaba are ideal winter resorts, with temperatures averaging 16-22 C (66-72 F) between November and April. Rainfall is a rare occurrence in Aqaba as well as in the desert areas of Jordan.

TEMPERATURES

Month	Amman	Aqaba
Dec.	50 ° F / 10 ° C	62 ° F / 17 ° C
Jan.	46 ° F / 8 ° C	60 ° F / 16 ° C
Feb.	48 ° F / 9 ° C	62 ° F / 17 ° C
March	53 ° F / 12 ° C	68 ° F / 20 ° C
April	60 ° F / 16 ° C	75 ° F / 24 ° C
May	69 ° F / 21 ° C	82 ° F / 28 ° C
June	74 ° F / 23 ° C	89 ° F / 32 ° C
July	77 ° F / 25 ° C	89 ° F / 32 ° C
August	78 ° F / 26 ° C	91 ° F / 33 ° C
Sept.	73 ° F / 23 ° C	86 ° F / 30 ° C
Oct.	69 ° F / 21 ° C	80 ° F / 27 ° C
Nov.	59 ° F / 15 ° C	71 ° F / 22 ° C

ELECTRICITY

All appliances require a double round pin type plug for 220 volts AC, 50-hertz.

DISTANCES

The following information will give you an idea of the times travelled to help you plan your day:

Boat / Aqaba	16 Km	15 min.
Aqaba / Wadi Rum	70 Km	1 h.
Wadi Rum / Petra	115 Km	1 h. 45 min.
Petra / Dead Sea	200 Km	3 h. 30 min
Dead Sea / Amman	60 Km	1 h.
Amman / Madaba	35 Km	45 min.
Madaba/Mont.Nebo	12 Km	15 min.
Mont.Nebo/Kerak	110 Km	2 h.
Kerak/Aqaba	280 Km	3 h.

ACCOMMODATION

Please bear in mind that star ratings utilized in the Middle East are not directly comparable with the European standards. The hotel selection in Jordan is 4 star locally rated and the main criteria in the hotel selection process is cleanliness, private bath-room facilities, usually but not always air-conditioning and central location.

If you are travelling on your own, you'll be allocated a twin or triple room with other group members of the same gender.

Travellers who have paid a single supplement will stay in single rooms, however we can not guarantee the availability of double beds for couple travellers.

Your Tour Leader will organise the rooming arrangements when checking into the hotels according to the rooming lists sent by the operation department. Therefore we also can not guarantee any last minute changes to suit personal requirements of our passengers.

LANGUAGE

Jordanian language is Arabic. Below you'll find some important phrases that will make your travel easier :

Hello	Selaam
Goodbye	Ma Salama
Yes	Aiwa
No	La
Please	Minfudluk
Thank you	Shokran
Excuse me	Lao Samaht
How are you ?	E-zayak
I'm well, thank you	El Humdoolelaa
How much is it ?	Bekam ?
Too much !	Ketir !
I don't understand	Ana mish fahem
Water	Maya
Coffee	Ahwa
Tea	Shy
The bill	El Hesab

RAMADAN

Ramadan is the most important religious event for Muslims lasting for one month. Around one billion Muslims do not eat and drink from sunrise to sunset which may also effect the usual travel habits of travellers from all over the world. During Ramadan many cafes, restaurants, shops, bazaars and other services may be closed during the day or have limited opening hours. Your tour leader (who will be probably fasting too) will advise you of any changes and will assist you in making plans for your free time.

In 2010 Ramadan is set to begin on 11 August until 9 September.

BRIEF INFO ABOUT THE SIGHTS

Before you explore the fantastic sights of this unique country, we hope that the below information will give you basic idea about the sites you'll visit.

Amman

Amman the capital of Jordan is a city which geographically straddles seven hills and historically sits astride many centuries. The city's modern buildings blend with the remnants of ancient civilizations. The profusion of gleaming white houses, kebab stalls with roasting meat, and tiny cafes where rich Arabian coffee is sipped in the afternoon sunshine, conjure a mood straight from a thousand and one nights. It is a city with a timeless ambiance, where a slight detour off the beaten track reveals the wonders of a Bronze Age settlement or a Byzantine monastery. In its souqs (markets), you can bargain for fruit, perfume, gold or other exquisite luxuries of the Middle East. For Businessmen, Amman offers the most up-to-date convention and communication facilities. Its strategic position and convivial atmosphere, make it one of the foremost centers of finance & trade in the Middle East today. Anyone visiting Amman for the first time will be surprised above all by the hills. The mental image of a Middle Eastern capital set on a dusty plain must be discarded, for Amman lies on a high plateau of 850m. Built originally on seven hills, the main areas of Amman gain their names from the hills on whose slopes they lie. The city is dotted with a number of historic sites from the stone age to the Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic eras. Each is considered interesting in its own way. The first impression you get as you arrive, is that of a modern city

with limestone and concrete buildings, and well maintained cars cruising wide streets. The bustle, noise and squalor which accompany this western veneer is not to be seen except in Downtown Amman, which was also hub of life in ancient times. Amman's population is close to one and half million, swelled by refugees from the 1948 Palestinian conflict, the Six Day war in 1967, and the Gulf War in 1991. Nearly half the population of Jordan lives in Amman. Underneath its modern appearance, Amman's origins go back a long way. Neolithic sites and villages were discovered in the 1980's in more than one area in Amman. One of the revealed sites is a village ten times the size of Jericho. During the Iron age, Amman was the Capital of the Ammonites, and it is referred to as Rabbath-Ammon in the Old Testament, an area thought to have been located, where the Citadel now stands. The city which was rebuilt during the Hellenistic and Roman periods was renamed Philadelphia by the Hellenistic ruler Ptolemy II. Later, during the Byzantine Period, Amman was home to bishop and several splendid churches. One important church was discovered in 1970, in a site known as Sweifieh. It has one of the greatest mosaic floors in Jordan and is one of the only few Byzantine mosaic floors found in the capital. Following the Sasanian onslaught in the early 7th Century, Philadelphia reverted to being known by its Semitic name.

Thus Ammon evolved to become Amman. Again, during the Early Islamic Era Amman held some of its importance through its location on trade routes and for its strategic military position. But Amman's entry into modern times did not happen until the 19th century. In 1878 a group of Circassian emigrants, many of whose descendants still reside in the capital, were transported to Amman by the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid.

It was in 1921 that the Emir Abdullah bin Hussein moved his capital to Amman. Touring Amman should begin at the Citadel, which is now located - as in ancient times- at the heart of the city, facing the Roman theatre in the valley below. On all sides but the north it is buffered by valleys, and on the north an escarpment was quarried to give security from the underlying areas. Many of the summit's most valuable remains and important relics from across Jordan, can be found in the Archaeological Museum located at the Citadel. Below the Citadel's southern rim is a stream known as Seil Amman. It is on its south bank that most of the Roman City of Philadelphia was situated. This included the main Forum, Theatre, Odeon, and various shops. Just north of the Sail was a large road that ran from east to the west. This street or Cumanus Maximums, gave access to the citadel by a connecting path. A smaller main street also lined with Corinthian columns, ran off the Decuraunce Maximus called the Cardo. Behind the junction of the two main streets was the site of the Nymphaeum. This sacred fountain, similar to the Nypmhaeum at Jerash, was fed by water from Seil Amman which ran to its southern wall. The forum is concealed by the streets of modern Amman. Amman's Amphi Theatre is the largest in Jordan, with room for 6,000 spectators.

In the east wing of the stage is the Folklore Museums of Amman. In the western wing is the Museum of Popular Traditions. Steps lead to a gallery of exquisite Byzantine mosaic scenes from Madaba. The Theatre area is an ideal place to wander.

There is a bustle of traffic and everyday life, stalls selling shish kebabs or ice creams as well as a bevy of souvenir shops.

Amman is home to some of the grandest mosques in the Middle East. The newest of these is the enormous King Abdullah Mosque, built between 1982 and 1989. Located to the north-west of the Citadel, it is capped by a magnificent blue mosaic dome, beneath which 3,000 Muslims may offer prayers. The most unusual mosque in Amman is the Abu Darwish Mosque, situated atop the Jabal Ashrafieh. It is covered with an extraordinary black-and-white chequered patterns and is unique to Jordan. Western Amman is considered the most fashionable, with modern shops and office buildings. The impressive Hussein Sports City is the main site housing sports, cultural events and national festivities. Overlooking the Hussein Sports City is the Palace of Culture building which was built to resemble a Bedouin tent, and the Royal Cultural Centre. The Sports City complex houses the Martyrs' Memorial and in it the military museum of Amman. As for art lovers, the Jordan National Art Gallery and the Dar Al Funoun, both situated in Jabal Al-Weibdeh, are important stops. Other sites found around Amman are the following: The Cave of the Seven Sleepers: Myriad tombs with ornately sculpted covers are found at the site. On the northern outskirts of Amman the remains of a prehistoric Neolithic settlement have been unearthed. The site located near Ain Ghazal, dates back to 7200 BC.

■ Petra

Hidden behind an almost impenetrable barrier of rugged mountains, the rock-carved city of Petra is full of mysterious charm. The approach through the cool gloom of the Siq, a long narrow gorge whose steeply rising sides all but obliterate the sun, provides a dramatic contrast with the magic to come.

Suddenly the gorge opens into a natural square dominated by Petra's most famous monument, the Khasneh, whose intricately carved facade glows in the dazzling sun. More facades beckon the visitor on until the ancient city gradually unfolds, one monument leading to the next for kilometer after kilometer. The sheer size of the city and the quality of beautifully carved facades is staggering and leads one to reflect on the creativity and industry of the Nabateans who made Petra their capital more than 2,000 years ago.

Petra is an enchanting place that captivates and excites the senses. Its overwhelming size, rich textures and stunning surroundings create an ambiance almost impossible to describe. Descending through Wadi Mousa, as you begin to drop into the valley you will notice the change in the geology of the landscape. Gradually the rocks and hillsides all around, and especially to the west, take on strange and distinctive formations, often showing hints of reds, mauves, yellows, blues and black. The rock city of Petra sits in the middle of this geological freak of nature, over 200 sq Km in area. Earthquakes, watercourses, wind, rain and time have created out of the soft natural sandstone, a landscape of fantasy where dramatic Puffy rock formations suddenly give way to abrupt gorges, narrow defiles and deep fissures.

In some ways even more remarkable than the natural phenomenon is the man-made contribution. From their capital at Petra the Nabateans had established an elaborate network of caravan routes which brought spices, incense, myrrh, gold, silver and precious stones from India and Arabia, to be traded onto the west. From the wealth they acquired, they adorned their city with palaces, temples, and arches. Many that were free-standing have largely disappeared but many were carved into the rock i.e. the treasury, the monumental tombs, the high place of sacrifice.

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As you set off from the City's entrance gate, at this stage the valley is quite wide and open. This section is the approach to the narrow gorge and is known as Bab Es-Siq, gateway of the siq. The first monuments you pass are the curious Djinn Blocks, a cluster of three free standing rock cubes just to the right of the track.

Continuing along the path you come to the Obelisk Tomb, carved out of the cliff. At one point the passageway goes from a wide breach to a dark chasm not more than a few feet across. Suddenly in the space of a few footsteps, you get your first glimpse of Petra's most fabled achievement, El-Khazneh (the Treasury), which looms up in the brilliant sunshine, carved from the rock, defiled by man. Triclinium.

At the outer siq's widest point a gully runs abruptly off to the south. The path takes you to the high place: an ancient Nabatean sacrificial site with an Altar cut from the rock. For those who can stand the strenuous climb, the sweeping view of Petra is well worthwhile.

Past the altar the track continues leading to the garden Tridinium (the garden temple complex). There are two free-standing colonnades, in front of which are remnants of a shrine. Continuing on, one passes dozens of wall niches, before arriving at the Roman Soldier's Tomb, and a further

Petra has dozens of sacred sites. On a windswept ridge high above the city, the Nabatean people extolled their gods at the High Place known as El-Madbah in Arabic.

In an area known as the street of facades, many classical Nabatean ruins can be seen.

The Outer siq makes a sudden turn northwards and leads to the Roman Theatre which was built in typical Roman style.

The substantial building Qasr El Bint Faroun (Palace of the Pharaoh's daughter'), demonstrates that the Nabateans were capable of creating free-standing buildings.

Petra's second most spectacular construction after the treasury is El-Deir (The Monastery). For a feeling of Petra's immensity and the sheer power of the rock, the trip is essential. Across from the Qasr Bint a jumbo of steps lead up to Petra's Museum. The room housing the small collection is the most monumental exhibit of all.

Wadi Rum

Some 70 kilometers northeast of Aqaba lies Wadi Rum, a vast silent place that is both romantic and extremely beautiful. Massive mountains rise vertically out of the pink desert sand, which separate one dark mass from another.

The faces of these sheer rock cliffs have been eroded by the wind into faces of men, animals and monsters. Everywhere in this strange and empty place are indications of man's presence since the earliest known times. Scattered around are flint hand axes, while on the rocks at the feet of the mountains the names of ancient travellers are scratched.

In the center of the valley an elaborately carved temple bears witness that Wadi Rum was once a holy place for Nabateans. Today the major distraction in route to Aqaba is the fabled Wadi Rum. As you near Wadi Rum, look to the left or to the north, and you will see the Seven Pillars of Wisdom. These natural columns are huge and vary in height.

The true size of the mountains at Wadi Rum is only realized when a human or animal form gives the vastness of perspective. Life does not seem to have changed in Rum for a long time. The pace is slow and tourist activities tend to centre on the rest house. No more than a cluster of Bedouin tents and basic houses make up Rum. There is no feeling to compare with being in the wilderness, with pinkish sand beneath your feet and no sound but the wind cutting across the surface of the rocks.

Daybreak at Wadi Rum must surely be one of life's greatest experiences. A landscape whose likeness seems more lunar than earthly. With its rosy, yet pallid, complexion, the sky is vast and seems as forbidding as the wilderness beneath it. As you enter Rum you will pass the small fort which looks best for Beau Geste. It is home to the elite Desert Patrol, whose corps watch over Jordan's eastern deserts.

Visitors are always welcomed and, in the ritualistic fashion of the desert, offered a cup of cardamom flavored coffee or hot sweet tea. Wadi Rum's immensity is hard to leave. The longer time you spend there the more you become attached to it and the more you long for it when you have gone. The valley of the Moon makes man tremble at the power and majesty of Nature.

■ Aqaba

The small Red Sea port of Aqaba is unique and beautiful in a very special way. Encircled by rugged purple mountains that subtly change in mood and color as the day unfolds. On the beaches visitors soak up the sun before cooling off in the refreshingly cool waters.

It is the secrets these waters hold that makes Aqaba unique, for further down the coast are some of the most spectacular coral reefs to be found anywhere in the world.

Often over many hundreds of meters wide, the reef is made up of many delicately hued corals among which live a myriad of brilliantly coloured fish. The Fortress, now a museum, was originally a Crusader Castle.

It was extensively rebuilt by the Mamelukes in the 14th Century. A stroll around the modern town will reveal the presence of some excellent fish restaurants and craftsmen are to be found at work filling small bottles with coloured sand in intricate geometric designs. A few days spent at Aqaba, Jordan's winter resort, is an ideal way to relax on the beach at the end of a tour round the country.

■ The Dead Sea

The most spectacular site, is the Dead Sea, which at 400 meters below sea level is the lowest body of water on earth. Surrounded by arid hills, as devoid of life as the sea itself, the Dead Sea glistens under a burning sun with barely a ripple disturbing its surface.

The rocks that meet its lapping edges become covered with a snow-like thick gleaming deposit of white salt.

It is this extremely high concentration of salt that gives the Dead Sea waters their renowned therapeutic qualities and their buoyancy. Because the salt content is eight times that of most world's oceans, you can float in the Dead Sea without even trying. Swimming in the Dead Sea is a truly unique experience not to be missed.

The Dead Sea, is known in Arabic as "Bahr Lott" (the Sea of Lot). As the name suggests, the Dead Sea is entirely devoid of plant and animal life. and located at Sweimeh.

There is a resthouse, showers and a few facilities for visitors. This is due to an extremely high content of salt and other minerals, 350 gm of salt per kilogram of water, as compared to about 40 gm in the world's oceans.

These natural elements give the waters of the Dead Sea certain curative properties, recognized since the days of Herob the Great over two thousand years ago.

The Dead Sea is also famous geographically as "the lowest point on earth", lying some 400 meters below sea level. In addition the historical significance of the "Salt Sea", as it was referred to in the Bible, the Dead Sea in an important and rich source of minerals essential for agricultural and industrial development, as well as for the treatment of various medical conditions such as psoriasis.

Visitors to the Dead Sea come always with an unforgettable swimming experience, as the high density of the water makes sinking virtually impossible. While marine enthusiasts will find a paradise in Aqaba, the Dead Sea is a great place to catch up on your reading.

The only resort on the eastern banks of the Dead Sea is government-owned,

Newly built is Salt Land Village, nicknamed The Basement of the World. Its various buildings include the Dead Sea Spa Hotel, assorted bungalows and the German Medical Centre which is aimed at helping patients with skin diseases, using the healing powers of the Dead Sea. As well as the highly saline water, are other therapies including black mud, highly oxygenous air treatment and filtered sunrays. The centre has its own access to the Dead Sea and also provides medical assistance on request.

ENJOY YOUR ADVENTURE !

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