

## JORDAN

### the 'Hashemite Kingdom'

**8 days**

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#### Day 1 Arrive in Amman

Welcome to Amman, Jordan's vibrant capital. As we begin our journey, take in the sights and sounds of this ancient city, where traditional and modern culture blend together. Over the coming days, we'll explore Jordan's iconic sites, meet its warm people, and experience the famous hospitality.

Overnight in Amman.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

#### Day 2 Amman: Jerash & Amman City Tour

Today we begin by exploring the heart of modern central Amman. We'll start with a visit to the Archaeological Museum, where we can delve into the history of the region. Following that, we'll step back in time at the Roman Amphitheatre, a rather grand structure that's seen a few centuries pass. We'll also wander through the ruins of the Temple of Hercules, imagining the city as it once was.

After our Amman exploration, we'll board our bus and head north to Jerash. This is where things get really interesting. Jerash, in its Roman heyday, was a prosperous city, and thankfully, much of it remains remarkably well-preserved. We'll stroll through the elliptical forum, a unique shape for a Roman gathering place, and take in the impressive amphitheatre. If we're lucky, we might even test the acoustics—no singing required, though it's tempting. We'll also explore the Temple of Artemis, a substantial site that gives a real sense of the scale of Roman Jerash.

To make the most of our day, we'll have our evening meal on the route back to Amman. This allows us to use our bus efficiently and, hopefully, get us back to the hotel at a reasonable hour, after a full day of Roman ruins and archaeological discoveries.

Overnight in Amman.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

#### Day 3 Amman - Madaba - Mt Nebo - Shobak - Petra

This morning, we're off to Madaba, a town that's quite rightly proud of its mosaic floors. Our first stop is St. George's church, where we'll find a rather impressive mosaic map of the Holy Land, as it was back in the 6th century. It's like stepping into a historical atlas, laid out right beneath our feet.

Next, we'll journey to Mount Nebo, perched on the edge of the Jordan Valley. This is where Moses and the Children of Israel supposedly got their first glimpse of the Promised Land. On a clear day, the views are pretty expansive—you can see the Dead Sea, the Jordan River, and even Jerusalem across the valley. We'll also take a look at another large mosaic, this one depicting hunting scenes, found in the remains of a Byzantine church.

From Mount Nebo, we'll head south, following a route where, in days gone by, castles and towns were conveniently spaced a day's travel apart. Later in the day, we'll explore Shobak Castle, a Crusader fortress built in 1115 and later taken by Saladin's forces. It's a reminder of a time when this region saw a lot of comings and goings.

Finally, after a full day of mosaics, views, and castles, we'll arrive at Petra, ready to rest up for our exploration of that remarkable site.

Overnight in Petra.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 4 Petra: Site Tour

Petra was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom from the fourth century BC to the 2nd century AD. From the 12th century until its rediscovery in 1812, Petra was lost to the world -- a closely guarded secret of the local tribes. Today the 'rose red city half as old as time' is probably the most impressive archaeological site in the Middle East, rivaling the temples and pyramids of Egypt in grandeur.

This morning, on our way into the hidden valley of Petra, we will see the Obelisk Tomb and the irrigation system that carried water from a dam throughout the desert city. Access to the monuments of Petra is through a narrow gorge in the towering rocks called the 'Siq'. As we emerge from the 'Siq' you stand in awe in front of the 'Treasury' (El Kazneh), a graceful structure carved from the living rock. After pausing to admire the elegant columns and carvings we carry on into the valley where elaborate tombs are carved into the multi-coloured walls. Everywhere the sandstone swirls and twists in shades of red, orange, yellow, pink and white. Next we will see the Roman amphitheatre, carved directly out of the mountain, with space for over 3,000 spectators.

Further on in the main valley of Petra, are the Royal Tombs including the Palace Tomb and the Silk Tomb. We visit the temple of the Nabataeans' main god, Dushara, and we also see the 'Temple of the Winged Lion'. Our formal guided tour of the site terminates with a visit to the Petra Nabataean Museum.

At this point, you may explore further on your own, or return to our hotel to relax and/or shop. You may also take a strenuous walk up a narrow pass to see the magnificent 'Monastery' building, El Deir. The views of Petra and the surrounding area are expansive. The walk is steep and involves approximately 750 steps carved into the rock and will take APPROXIMATELY one hour up (30 minutes down).

NOTE: Access to Petra is by means of footpath only. The main sites occur near ground that is level and well-worn, though the overall site is huge. Our pace is leisurely with frequent breaks; however, to fully experience Petra you must be prepared for a considerable amount of walking and little shade. Please note that we include lunch today on the site of Petra instead of dinner this evening, which allows us to maximize our time here and still enjoy a relaxing sit-down meal without having to rely on carry-in packed lunches. Your Tour leader can assist with your evening meal plans back in the village, which we do not include today.

Overnight at Petra.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

## Day 5 Petra: El Beidha & Leisure Time

This morning, we're taking a short bus trip to 'el Beidha', also known as 'Little Petra'. It's a Nabatean site, and a rather charming one at that. But what's really fascinating is that we'll also see evidence of a Neolithic settlement, dating back a staggering 8,500 years. That's right, we're talking about one of the oldest sites in the Middle East. It shows us how a "Pre-Pottery" population, herders experimenting with agriculture, managed to make a life here. After our glimpse into the ancient past, we'll hop back on the bus and return to the hotel.

This afternoon, you've got a choice. You can take it easy and relax at the hotel, or you can head back into the main site of Petra to explore further at your own pace. There are plenty of scenic walks and hikes within the site, so if you're feeling energetic, there's no shortage of things to see. Just ask your Tour Leader for some suggestions and directions.

Overnight at Petra.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 6 Petra - Wadi Rum

This morning, we'll leaving Petra behind and heading for Wadi Rum, a landscape that's famously linked to Lawrence of Arabia's wartime campaigns.

After a lunch break, we'll switch gears and climb into smaller trucks, ready to explore the desert. Wadi Rum is a place where the sand takes on a striking red hue, and the towering rock formations look like giant, layered cakes slowly melting under the sun. It's quite a sight. We might even have the opportunity to visit a goat-hair tent and share a glass of tea with some Bedouin tribesmen, the nomadic herdsmen who once formed Lawrence's army. Speaking of Lawrence, we'll also see the Hejaz Railway line that he famously sabotaged, running along the valley floor. Our desert excursion will take us on a three-hour route known as "Siq Al Barra and Om Eshreen," a journey that showcases the unique

beauty of Wadi Rum.

Tonight, we'll be staying in a luxury tented camp, where we can experience a blend of traditional Bedouin culture and modern comforts. It's a chance to enjoy the desert under the stars, with a few extra comforts thrown in.

Overnight in Wadi Rum.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

### Day 7 Wadi Rum - Dead Sea

Today we're travelling north along the Dead Sea Highway, heading straight for the Dead Sea itself. This area has a rich history, with connections to King David, King Herod, Jesus, and John the Baptist. It's safe to say there's a lot of historical footsteps we're following.

Even Cleopatra recognized the unique properties of the Dead Sea, reportedly securing exclusive rights to build cosmetic and pharmaceutical factories here during the Egyptian conquest. Later, the Nabataeans discovered the value of the bitumen extracted from its waters, which the Egyptians found quite useful.

We're aiming to arrive at our Dead Sea hotel in time for lunch, which you can enjoy at your leisure. The hotel is situated right on the shores of the sea, giving you the perfect opportunity to take a dip and experience the remarkable buoyancy of the ultra-salty water. It's a rather peculiar sensation, floating effortlessly, and a chance to say you've floated in one of the saltiest bodies of water on Earth.

Overnight at the Dead Sea.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

### Day 8 Dead Sea - Departure

Today we transfer back to Amman's Queen Alia International Airport to connect with homeward flights. Departure from Amman.

LAND ONLY customers make their own way directly to the airport by taxi directly from the Dead Sea (your Tour Leader will assist).

NOTE that many international flights from Amman depart late at night. Most passengers enjoy the extra "downtime" (ie all day today) at the Dead Sea; however, some prefer to depart earlier (ie last night). You might consider this situation and your preferences before finalizing your air.

RHLAH S'IDAH

Included Meal(s): Breakfast