

A GUIDE TO  
ECO AND  
NATURE  
IN JORDAN



# Ahlan Wa Sahlan

أهلاً وسهلاً في الأردن



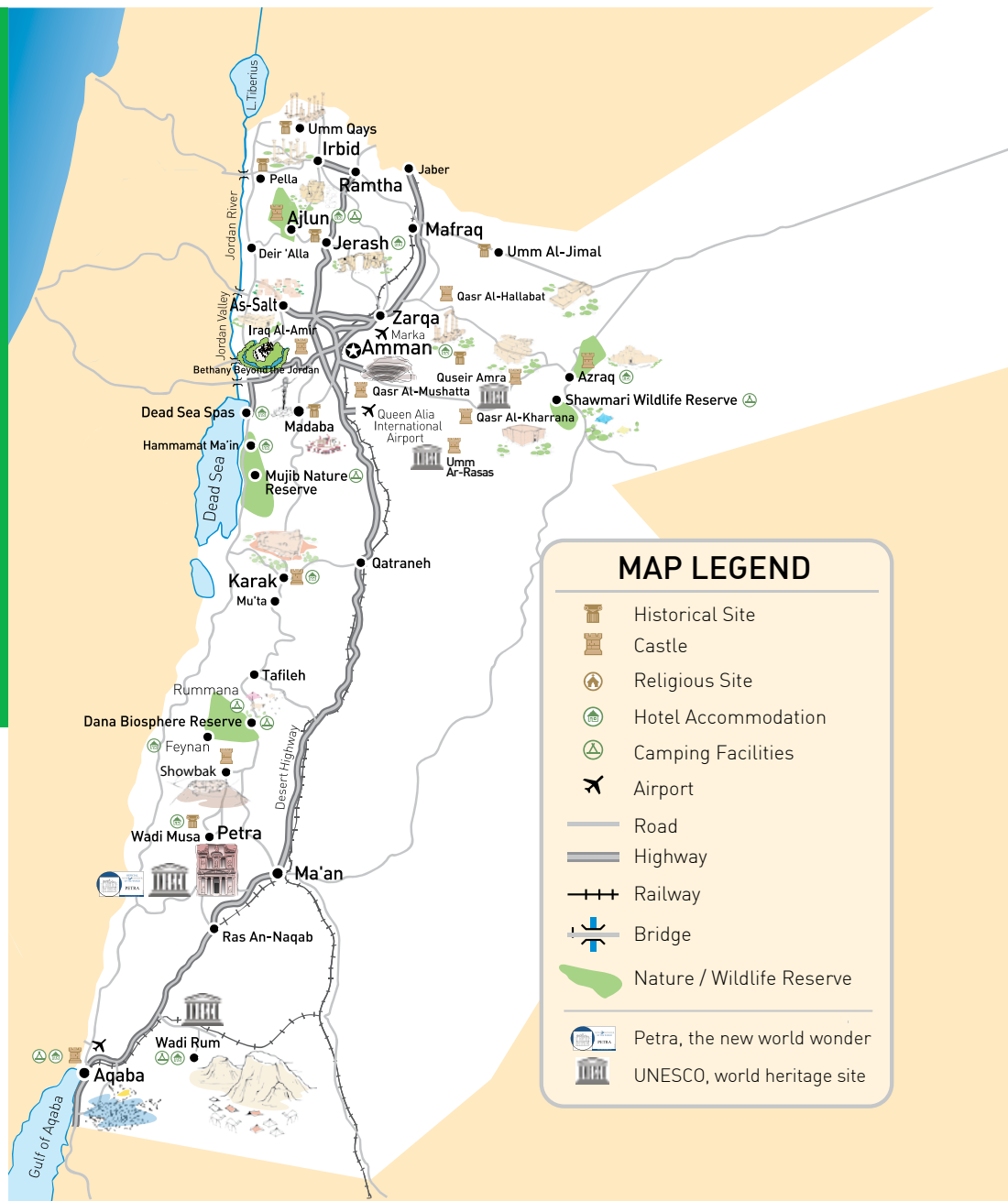
Welcome to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, founded by King Abdullah I, and currently ruled by King Abdullah II son of the late King Hussein. Over the years, Jordan has grown into a stable, peaceful and modern country.

While Jordan is known for the ancient Nabataean city of Petra,

carved from rock over 2000 years ago, it also offers much more for the modern traveller, from the Jordan Valley, fertile and ever changing, to the remote desert canyons, immense and still. Whether you are a thrill seeker, a historian, or you just want to relax, Jordan is the place for you.

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*Jordan Tourism Board:*

Is open Sunday to Thursday (08:00-17:00).

# Jordan - Nature's best-kept secret



Jordan is a country of outstanding biodiversity. It is a land that encompasses all, from pine-clad mountains, lush green valleys, wetlands and oases, to the breathtaking desert landscapes of Wadi Rum and the kaleidoscopic underwater world of the Red Sea.

Undoubtedly, Jordan's most important and impressive ecological treasure is the unique area along the eastern coastline of the Dead Sea. Here, 416m below sea level, many small streams flow down from the surrounding hills, their mineral-rich waters creating gushing waterfalls and an amazing diversity of flora and fauna. Here too, are hot thermal springs, their health-giving waters having attracted visitors for thousands of years. On the Dead Sea coast, nature has taken simple salt, fashioned it into impossible sculptures, and imbued them with colors of unbelievable vividness.

The people of Jordan are aware of their rich natural heritage and go to great lengths to protect it and ensure its continued well-being. For this reason, several large nature reserves have been set up and are professionally-run, in order to minimize negative impacts on the natural habitats and rare species of Jordan's flora and fauna.

# DANA BIOSPHERE RESERVE



Dana is an unparalleled haven of peace and tranquility, and an extraordinary world of natural treasures. It is an experience that defines the meaning of the phrase “going back to nature.” The Dana Biosphere Reserve has been identified by Birdlife International as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

Here you can meditate amid the quiet stillness of the mountains, sleep under the stars, enjoy fresh air and cooling breezes, or track the footprints of the marvelous wildlife endemic to this terrain.

Dana offers a vast diversity of landscapes: There are wooded highlands, rocky slopes, sand dunes, and stony deserts. There is a whole wilderness to explore and a variety of flora and fauna to be discovered. Moreover, visitors have the opportunity to meet and get to know the native people of Dana; the kind and hospitable Ata'ta tribe, who have made this their home for the past 400 years, continuing the tradition of settlement in the area that began more than 6,000 years ago.

Whether it is for individual travelers, families, school groups, meetings, incentives, or conferences, Dana has much to offer.

# DANA BIOSPHERE RESERVE



The Nature Reserve, set over 292 sq km, extends from the top of the Jordan Rift valley in the North, down to the desert lowlands of Wadi Araba. It covers the beautiful sites of the Rummana Mountain, the ancient archaeological ruins of Feynan, the Dana village, and the sandstone cliffs of Wadi Dana. It is home to 703 species of plants, 215 species of birds, and 38 species of mammals. Archaeological discoveries show evidence of Paleolithic, Egyptian, Nabataean, and Roman presence in the area.

## Services for Visitors

Highly qualified local rangers are available to take you on a variety of guided hikes. These excursions not only provide a great opportunity to interact with the local people of Dana but also provide a unique insight into the ecology and geology of the area.

Visitors can also take an unguided hike using a map of the hiking trails provided at the Tower Entrance to the Reserve. Other facilities available to visitors include a Nature Shop selling organically grown produce from the Dana village gardens, as well as pottery and silver jewelry created by the village women. Be sure to visit the Visitors' Center to get information about Dana and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature.

## Accommodations

Guests have a choice of three types of accommodation: the Feynan Eco-lodge, a 'desert monastery' that provides a western gateway to the spectacular Dana Biosphere Reserve and a base for exploring the deserts and mountains of Wadi Araba, or the Rummana Campsite with superb tents and all amenities. Alternatively, the Dana Guest House is a comfortably-furnished facility also suitable for meetings and conferences. Wherever you choose to stay, the Dana experience includes campfire evenings, and delicious dining featuring the region's local products.



Feynan Eco-lodge



Room at Feynan Eco-lodge

### Feynan Eco-Lodge

Awarded as one of the top 25 eco-lodges in the world by National Geographic, Feynan Eco-lodge is set among arid mountains at the edge of the Jordan Rift Valley. It is a perfect retreat from the frantic pace of modern urban life. Isolated from paved roads and electricity supplies, the 26-roomed lodge is a totally new concept in environmentally-friendly accommodation. All the rooms are unique in design and lit by candles at night, creating an Arabesque atmosphere reminiscent of the ancient caravanserai that gave rest and shelter to the camel trains that traversed the nearby trading routes.

From the lodge, you can explore the amazing archaeology of Feynan on foot or by 4x4 vehicles. Activities in this area include, mountain biking, hiking, canyoning and star gazing. Alternatively, you can hike to desert oases in Wadi Araba, or continue on a longer distance trek to Dana Village or to Shawbak and Petra while enjoying stunning mountain scenery.



الجمعية الملكية  
لحماية الطبيعة  
RSCN

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) is deeply involved in the protection of wildlife and habitats throughout Jordan and has received international acclaim for its pioneering work in developing nature based businesses for local people. For more information please visit their website [www.rscn.org.jo](http://www.rscn.org.jo)

### Rummana Campsite

This campsite is a sanctuary set amid awe-inspiring scenery. Its graceful white tents bring out the beautiful harmony of the colors in the background - the stony façades of the majestic Rummana Mountain, the green bushes, and the earth colored horizon. Secluded from the noise of highways, urban settings, and modernity, the Rummana campsite is a place that allows you to appreciate the sound of silence, interrupted only by the soft hush of the wind, or the singing of birds. Enjoy the stillness of this place - many swear they could hear the sound of their thoughts, and the gentle throb of their own relaxed heartbeats.

Rummana, open from March 1 to October 31, can accommodate up to 60 persons per night in 20 large tents. In addition to the tents, the campsite provides mattresses, pillows, covers, barbecue grills, drinking water, toilets, and showers for visitors' use. Catering services for groups of six or more are also available. Camping is permitted in designated areas only.

# DANA BIOSPHERE RESERVE



## Dana Guest House

This accommodation facility offers a stunning view of the Reserve, as it is perched on the very edge of Wadi Dana. Its nine rooms have private terraces, with “Reserve-views.” They are comfortably furnished, offering an excellent alternative for those who wish to experience nature in luxury. Moreover, the Guest House has facilities for meetings and conferences. Booking in advance is required.

## Directions

From Amman, take the Desert Highway southbound for about 165km just after the village of Husayniah, and before the bridge, turn right off the Desert Highway and onto the Kings’ Highway. Drive for about 22km just after passing the Rashadiyah cement factory, which will be on your left, you will reach a junction. Turning right from the junction will take you to the Rummana campsite Tower Entrance. Turning left will take you to Dana Village.

You can also take the scenic Kings’ Highway earlier, just after the city of Madaba, instead of taking it after the village of Husayniah. However, this trip is longer.



### *To the Tower entrance / Rummana Campsite:*

At the junction, turn right and follow the signs to the tower entrance.

### *To Dana Center:*

At the junction, make a left turn. Continue driving on the Kings’ Highway entering the village of Qadissiya. From there turn right, following the signs to the village of Dana.

### *To Feynan:*

Upon reaching the village of Dana, take a four to five hour hike on foot to Feynan. Alternatively, take the Dead Sea- Aqaba highway from Amman. After about a three hour drive from Amman, turn left on the sign towards the village of Greigra (Qureiqura). From Greigra, Feynan can be reached by a 4x4 vehicle.



# MUJIB NATURE RESERVE



*Wadi Mujib*

Both adventure and comfort can be found at the Mujib Nature Reserve. You can explore the Reserve on foot, using several gorgeous hiking trails.

An unusual Visitors' Center has been constructed alongside the Mujib Road Bridge, which is linked by a high-level metal catwalk to the Mujib River. The center provides information about the Reserve as well as restrooms. A small shop selling local handicrafts can be found at the Mujib Chalets.

The Mujib Nature Reserve, located within the deep Wadi Mujib gorge that enters the Dead Sea at 410m below sea level, is the lowest altitude nature reserve in the world. Furthermore, the Mujib Reserve enjoys a 1,300m variation in elevation between its different parts, as it extends to the Karak and Madaba mountains to the south and north, which reach 900m above sea level in some places.

There are five major hiking trails; three river trails and two dry land trails. They offer some of the most dramatic hiking in the Kingdom.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Dana Biosphere Reserve covers an area of 292 sq km and drops an astounding 1,500m from its highest point to 200m below sea level where it joins the Dead Sea coast.

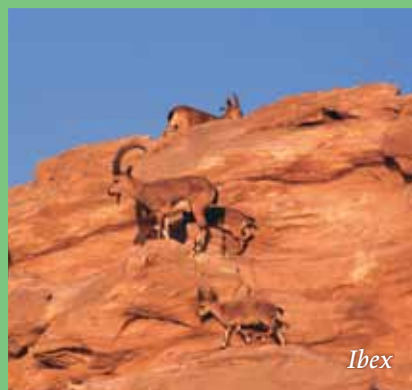
# MUJIB NATURE RESERVE



*Hiking Through Mujib*



*Blandford Fox*



*Ibex*

## Wondrous Wildlife

The year round water presence in the valley due to the inflow of seven tributaries, combined with the elevation difference and the remoteness of many of the Reserve's mountain and valley areas, have created and enabled a safe environment that supports a magnificent bio-diversity of wildlife. Over 420 species of plants, 102 species of migratory birds, and nine species of carnivores (Red fox, Blandford fox, Hyena, Jackal, Wild cat, Caracal, Badger, Mongoose, and Wolf) have been recorded to date.

Two very distinctive living beings that make Mujib their home are the Ibex and the Caracal. The Nubian Ibex, whose numbers had dramatically declined in easily accessible areas due to over-hunting, are now part of a captive-breeding programme established by the RSCN in the Mujib Reserve. The area's sandstone cliffs make an ideal habitat for this beautiful mountain goat. The Caracal, a medium-sized cat distinguished by its black and white ear tufts, can be spotted in action in the rocky valley of Mujib. This agile and powerful hunter uses its amazing jumping power to catch airborne pray.

## Hiking Trails

There are four major hiking trails; three river trails and one dry land trails. They offer some of the most dramatic hiking in the Kingdom. The river trails are for adventure seekers, who should be fit and able to swim. For safety and environmental reasons, hikers must be accompanied by a trained guide. This can be prearranged through RSCN - Wild Jordan offices. The number and frequency of the river hikes is also controlled, so availability must be checked in advance. All hikes leave from the Visitors' Center. Bookings for the hikes can be made through the Wild Jordan office, or directly at the Reserve.

## Directions

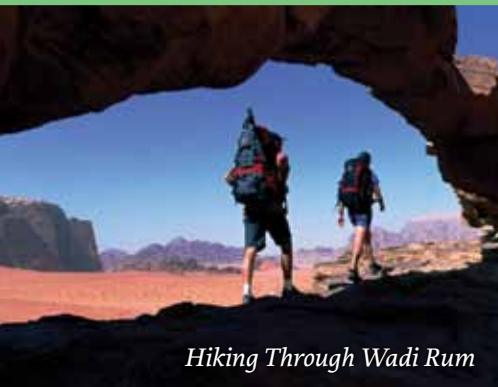
From Amman, take the Dead Sea-Aqaba Highway all the way to the Mujib Bridge, where the Reserve's office is located. The trip takes about one and a half hours by car. Remember to book in advance.

The reserve opens every year starting in April and ending at the conclusion of October.

# WADI RUM UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE



*Wadi Rum*



*Hiking Through Wadi Rum*



*Campsite*

## Accommodation and Activities

Several campsites have been set up for visitors. These are equipped with tents, beds, mattresses, pillows, and covers. They also have good toilet and shower facilities, and excellent catering services. Most of the campsites, except for the Rest House, are privately owned.

In addition to camping, there are many activities to try in Wadi Rum. The most popular of which is the 4x4 off-road trips. Visitors can sign up for bumpy yet very enjoyable drives to such attractions as Lawrence's spring, the mountain known as the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, site of the prehistoric graffiti, amazing sand dunes, and the sunset watching site. The 4-wheel drive pickups are driven by local Bedouins who act as guides, and usually add a complimentary cup of sweet Arabic tea and a folkloric story to their package.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The water level of the Dead Sea is dropping by about 30cm (1 ft) per year. It is being diverted by Israel and Jordan for industry, agriculture and household use. Scientists predict that the sea may be dried up by the year 2050.

Another way to explore the beautiful desert is by camel. Several travel agents organize camel safaris. Some are as short as one or two hours. Adventure lovers, however, can go on longer trips spanning over a number of days to Aqaba or Petra. All the camel caravans are led by experienced local guides.

One activity which keeps attracting thrill-seekers to Wadi Rum is mountain climbing. Ascents can range from simple hikes to serious mountain climbing more than 900 meters up sheer granite and sandstone cliffs.

Looking at Wadi Rum from a bird's eye view is another way to experience the splendors of the desert. A hot air balloon trip can be arranged to watch Rum's magical sunrise and enchanting landscape from a new perspective.

## Directions

From Amman, take the southbound Desert Highway. An exit to Wadi Rum is clearly signposted after about 300km. For a more scenic, but longer route, take the Kings' Highway passing through Petra. Rum is only an hour away from Aqaba.

# THE DEAD SEA



*Salt Formations*



*Mud Treatment*

The Dead Sea basin is famous for three of the ecosystem types found throughout the Middle East: Mediterranean (in the mountains), Irano-Turasian (along the slopes of the mountains and cliffs), and desert (at plain level).

The region hosts a great diversity of species, including some endemics. Its importance for migrating birds is well-known. It is home to Arabian and African species such as the Sand Partridge, Bar-tailed Lark, Dunn's Hoopoe Lark, Little Green Bee-Eater, Blackstart and the Arabian Babbler.

The Dead Sea coast in Jordan, located at the lowest spot on earth, at more than 400 meters below sea level, is a spectacular tourist attraction. Its warm weather, filtered sun rays, oxygen-rich air, famous mineral rich black mud and curative waters, make it the largest natural spa in the world. Its water, nine times saltier than that of the Mediterranean, is known for being rich in healing properties; stress-combating Magnesium, body energizing and moisture-balancing Potassium, and water retention preventing Calcium. It also contains Bromide, which eases muscle stiffness, and Sodium, which is essential for lymphatic fluid balance.

## Dead Sea Panoramic Complex

An environmental education program can be found in the Dead Sea Panoramic complex, covering all aspects of the Dead Sea, from geological to ecological, archaeological and historical origins. This program is run by the RSCN, and introduces visitors to the chemical and physical characteristics of the Dead Sea.



*Hotel at Dead Sea*

### Accommodation and Activities

Visitors to the Dead Sea can stay at one of several excellent four and five star beach hotel resorts. Since the Dead Sea Basin is less than an hour away from Amman, these hotels are also open for day-use.

Once there, make sure to take advantage of the excellent spa services available. These include massages, aromatherapy, mud wraps, and much more. The hotels also offer excellent food outlets and evening entertainment. In addition to providing beach access for those who wish to relax in the exceptionally buoyant waters of the Dead Sea, each hotel has several fresh water pools for the enjoyment of its guests. Most hotels have special amenities and activities for children.



### DID YOU KNOW?

The Mujib reserve extends to the Karak and Madaba mountains to the North and South, reaching 800m above sea level in some places. This 1,300m variation in elevation, combined with the valley's year-round water flow from seven tributaries, means that the Wadi Mujib enjoys a magnificent biodiversity that is still being explored and documented today.

### Directions

Take the Desert Highway. Turn at the exit to the right where the sign says Dead Sea. Follow the signs to the hotels area. The hotels are about 45 minutes away from the capital by car.

# AQABA



*Aqaba Marine Life*

## AQABA MARINE PARK

The Gulf of Aqaba is famous for its marine wildlife. It is the north-eastern arm of the Red Sea, measuring a length of 180km and expanding to a width of 25km, with a shoreline shared by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Jordan.

The Gulf of Aqaba has the world's northernmost coral reef ecosystem. An average water temperature of 23° Celsius, the absence of stormy weather, and mild water currents have created a hospitable environment for the growth of corals. Favorable salinity levels are perfect for the myriads of other marine life-forms. As a result, it is home to 110 species of soft corals and 120 species of hard corals. The reefs that fringe the Gulf host over 1,000 species of fish, corals, crustaceans, and mammals living in its waters. Nocturnal animals such as the crab, shrimp, and lobster appear in search of food in the dark hours of the night. Seasonal visitors to the Gulf of Aqaba include sea turtles, dolphins, sea cows, and harmless whale sharks.

Aqaba is the only coastal city in Jordan. This beautiful town, surrounded by fascinating colorful mountains and the blue waters of the Red Sea, expands over 27km of shoreline on the Gulf of Aqaba. Aqaba has been designated as a Special Economic Zone, with special legislation to protect and improve its business, community, tourism and environment status.

## Activities

Tourists are drawn to Aqaba's continuous bright sunshine, high temperatures, sandy beaches, and wonderful water sports opportunities. Experienced divers, as well as novices, are serviced by many dive PADI certified centers and instructors. Snorkeling, jet skis, pedal boats, speedboats, sailing, and water skiing are just some of the activities that can be enjoyed by visitors. Those who wish to explore the splendors of the sea without getting wet can try the famous glass-bottomed boats.

Aqaba is also a great place to just relax. Its clean sandy shores and clear waters are complemented by excellent services at beach hotels. Sunset, day, and even week-long catered cruises can be organized through specialized providers or hotels.

There are a number of public beaches available in the South Beach area. However, better-serviced beaches can be accessed through hotels and tourist establishments, by either being a resident at these hotels or paying a day-use fee.



*Aqaba Underwater*

## Protect the Treasures of Aqaba

The ecosystem of the Gulf of Aqaba is rich yet fragile. Over-fishing, industrial activities, and irresponsible tourism increase the environmental impact on the coral reefs. Perhaps the greatest single threat from tourism is sheer ignorance. Divers frequently kick up sand, step on coral, or even break off pieces of living coral as souvenirs, causing damage to reefs that took centuries to grow to the size we see today. Environmental damage is also often caused by feeding fish and littering.

In order to preserve the beauty and ecological wealth of Aqaba, visitors are asked to keep the sea and beaches clean, to refrain from touching or harming corals, and to abide by the general marine protection guidelines laid out by the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA).

## Accommodation

There is accommodation in Aqaba to suit every taste and budget, from 1-5 star hotels and furnished apartments. A camping site with basic facilities is situated at the South Beach.

## Directions

From Amman take the southbound Desert Highway. Aqaba is Jordan's southernmost city, about 360km away from the capital. The trip is about 3.5 hours by car.

The Dead Sea Highway also leads to Aqaba, but this is only a two-lane road, and does not have as many rest houses. It is about 20 minutes shorter than the Desert Highway route.

Several companies offer daily bus trips between Amman and Aqaba, while regular daily flights are also available. For more information, please visit [www.VisitJordan.com](http://www.VisitJordan.com)

# SHAWMARI WILDLIFE RESERVE



Welcome to the Shawmari Experience! A sanctuary for a number of endangered species, the Shawmari Wildlife Reserve is designed to be an attractive location for school trips and family outings.

The 22 sq km Shawmari Reserve was created in 1975 by the RSCN as a breeding center for locally extinct or endangered species. It has developed into a home to some of the rarest species of animals in the Middle East. These animals are now reasserting their presence, protected from habitat destruction and hunting. The oryx and onagers (Asian wildass) roam freely in their large desert grassland enclosures, and ostriches and gazelles can be observed in their fenced-off areas.

The Reserve, which follows breeding programmes with a number of the world's leading wildlife zoos and parks, offers visitors a chance to encounter wildlife at close quarters and become involved in protecting and enhancing their well-being. This has proved to be a popular and fulfilling experience that makes children and adults alike return to the Reserve time and time again.

## Accommodation

A very simple campsite located near the entrance to the Reserve offers ten tents and basic facilities for those who wish to spend more than one day in the Reserve. Bookings can be made through the Wild Jordan office or directly at the Shawmari Reserve.

## Directions

Shawmari is about 2 hours away from Amman by car. First make your way to South Azraq (Azraq Aj-Janubi in Arabic) then turn right onto the highway that leads to Saudi

Arabia. Make another right turn after about 15km at the entrance road to the Shawmari Reserve.

The Oryx have been thriving in the Reserve's protected environment, to the extent that their numbers have reached over one hundred.

Please make sure to call the reserve ahead of time.



*Sand Gazelle**Arabian Oryx*

### The Story of the Arabian Oryx

The last known 'wild' Arabian Oryx in the world was killed by hunters in Oman in 1972. These beautiful creatures belong to one of the few species indigenous to the Arabian Peninsula. They became extinct because of the increased range and power of rifles compounded by the use of motorized vehicles. In Jordan, this elegant white antelope became extinct in the 1920s, as a result of increased hunting for its meat, fur, and horns.

It was possible to reintroduce the Oryx to its native habitat because a survival herd had been established in the USA in 1962. "Operation Oryx" was an international rescue effort launched by the Flora and Fauna Preservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund, and involved bringing together nine Oryx; three animals from Oman, one from Kuwait, four from Saudi Arabia, and one from the London Zoo. The nine-animal herd increased steadily in numbers.



### DID YOU KNOW?

The hills and deserts of Wadi Rum come alive during springtime with over 2,000 species of wild plants and flowers, including poppies, red anemones and the beautiful black iris, which is Jordan's national flower.

Consequently, the RSCN proposed to reintroduce the Oryx to the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. In 1978, eleven of these beautiful animals were brought into Shawmari. The Oryx have been thriving in the Reserve's protected environment, to the extent that their numbers have reached over one hundred. Now Jordan supplies Oryx to countries conducting similar reintroduction programmes.

# AJLUN FOREST RESERVE



*Hiking Trail*

## Activities

The Reserve's Visitors' Center has displays and information about the Reserve, and a shop selling locally-made handicrafts. It also encloses a rooftop restaurant offering good food and stunning views. A barbecue area is available for those who wish to self-cater.

Visitors usually love to take hikes along the trails set up by the Reserve management. At the moment there are two hiking trails in the Reserve. A long

Ajlun Forest Reserve was established in 1988 under the supervision of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN). It is situated in the north of Jordan, very close to the Ajlun village of Umm Al-Yanabee'. It is an area of hills covered by dense woodlands of evergreen oak, interspersed with pistachio, carob, and strawberry trees.

The Ajlun woodlands are typical of the original forest cover of Jordan. For centuries they have been important for local people for their wood, scenic beauty and, quite often, for medicine and food. The forest still supports many woodland mammals, including herds of wild boar, foxes, and the occasional wolf and hyena. Typical woodland birds are also numerous, especially the raucous, strikingly colored jays, which feed on the acorns of the Mediterranean oaks. In spring, the woodland floor is carpeted with drifts of multi-colored anemones, rockroses, and a host of other wild flowers.

The Reserve is home to a herd of breeding roe deer. It is hoped this herd will be released into the forest in the near future to replace the original population that became extinct due to excessive hunting.

trail linking the Reserve to the Ajlun Castle is under development. The Wild Jordan office can provide more details about this new development. Visitors are also encouraged to do some community based tourism where they can interact with locals over a shared meal, a home stay experience or by aiding the community during the olive and grape harvest.



Eco-lodge

## Accommodation

An “African style” campsite is located just near the Visitors’ Center. On clear days it offers stunning views of the West Bank and the Jabal Sheikh Mountain in Syria. It is set in a large grassy area on which to pitch tents, and is enclosed by beautiful oak, pistachio, and strawberry trees. It also offers 15 pre-set four-person tents, showers and toilets. Open from April 1st to October 31st, bookings can be made through the Wild Jordan office, or directly at the Reserve.

## Directions

Ajlun is 1.5 hours away from Amman by car. From Amman, take the Jerash Highway northbound. From the highway take the old Jerash road marked by “Ajlun and Jerash” sign. From there, take the Ajlun road, also marked by a sign. Follow this road to Ajlun. From Ajlun, the route to the Reserve is sign-posted.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The Oryx, an elegant white antelope, became extinct in Jordan around the 1920s.

The last known wild Oryx in the world was killed by hunters in Oman in 1972.

In 1978, eleven Oryx were re-located to Shawmari.

The number of Oryx has now increased to a phenomenal two hundred!

In spring, the woodland floor is carpeted with drifts of multi-colored anemones, rockroses, and a host of other wild flowers.

# AZRAQ WETLAND RESERVE



*Azraq Wetland Reserve*

Azraq means 'blue' in Arabic. In the past, the pools, marshes, and streams of Azraq formed a sparkling blue jewel in the desert, a haven for up to a million migrating, breeding and wintering birds. Despite the loss of most of the permanent wetland habitat during the past decade, Azraq continues to provide a seasonal habitat for a large number of bird species.

The species one can meet at the Azraq oasis include The Sinai Rosefinch (Jordan's national bird), Temmink's Horned Lark, Desert Lark, Hoopoe Lark, Desert Wheatear and the Trumpet Finch. In winter, Cranes and Imperial Eagles soar across the area.

Azraq is a unique wetland oasis in the heart of the semi-arid Jordanian desert. The Reserve, managed by the RSCN, is a perfect location to bird watch, especially during the migration seasons when a wide variety of birds stop for a rest during their arduous trip between Europe and Africa. Some birds stay for winter or breed within the protected area of the wetland.

The attractions of the Reserve include several natural and ancient built pools, a seasonally flooded marshland, and a large mudflat known as Qa'a Al-Azraq.

From the Azraq Eco-lodge, a wide range of activities are possible. In addition to bird watching in the nearby wetland reserve, it is possible to go on a day or night safari in Shawmari, or you can take one of several tours to explore the wide expanses of the Eastern Desert. Much of this desert consists of black basalt, which creates stark and unusual landscapes. The desert contains remnants of extinct volcanoes and many archaeological sites. Excursions on 4x4 can be arranged, with overnight camping with Bedouins. Remember to visit the Reserve's Visitors' Center and its interesting Nature Shop. Visitors can also share a home cooked meal with locals, visit one of the five different projects for women, cycle at the Azraq Druze village and enjoy some bird watching.

## Visitors' Center and Nature Shop

The Visitors' Center holds a small but impressive museum with an aquarium and biotope showcases, vividly telling the story of the ancient oasis and today's ecological threats. The Center also offers guided tours. The Nature Shop sells typical local products, such as handmade reed toys and many others.

*Bird Watching in Azraq**Azraq Lodge*

## Accommodation

A short distance from the Wetland Reserve, at the edge of the Azraq villages, the RSCN has opened a new eco-lodge in a former British field hospital. The old buildings have been renovated and extended to provide a uniquely designed complex, with 16 air-conditioned rooms, interpretation areas, a plaza, and a restaurant, all reminiscent of the 1940s military period when they were first built. Bookings can be made through the Wild Jordan office or directly at the Reserve.

## Directions

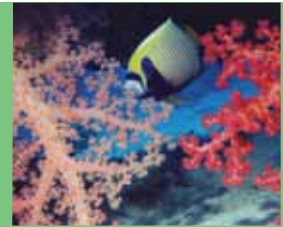
Azraq is 1.5 hours from Amman by car. You can take either one of two routes to the Reserve:

### *Desert Highway*

Take the Desert Highway southward from Amman. On reaching the Madaba sign, take the turn, then head east in the opposite direction from Madaba. Follow the road signs to Azraq.

### *Zarqa Highway*

In Amman, go east on King Abdullah Street, driving past the Roman Theatre to join the Amman-Zarqa highway. The road to Azraq branches off the highway before you reach Zarqa.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Corals are not plants but living organisms. They are part of an ancient and simple group of animals known as cnidaria. A coral structure is actually composed of hundreds or thousands of these tiny animals growing together as a colony. Because of their slow rate of growth, about 1cm a year, the corals that you see in the Gulf of Aqaba are centuries old.

# DIBEEN FOREST



Dibeen Forest is the newest nature reserve in Jordan. The forest is situated just south of the famous Roman city of Jerash, where it covers the steep hillsides over an area of some 8 sq km. Most of the trees are Aleppo pines mixed with evergreen oak (*Quercus calliprinos*) and a scattering of red-barked arbutus. It also has a few wild olive, pistachio, and pear trees. The Aleppo pines are some of the oldest and largest in the Kingdom. Dibeen is the driest part of the world in which they are known to grow naturally.

Surveys have revealed that Dibeen is one of the best remaining examples of pine-oak forest left in the Middle East. It supports at least 17 endangered wildlife species. These include several orchids, the Persian red squirrel and four types of bat. The grey wolf and striped hyena are also present in the area, as well as a range of uncommon woodland birds.

The forest has been open to the public for many years and it has a large rest house that provides accommodation and food. The rest house and surrounding area can become very busy on Fridays. There is no trail system as yet but there are a number of minor roads through the forest that lead to secluded glades with impressive views. Dibeen is particularly attractive in March and April when it is full of spring flowers.

## Directions

The forest is about a one hour drive north of Amman. Take the main Irbid road out of Amman and follow the signs to Jerash, using the first sign-posted exit after crossing the road bridge over the Zarqa River. At the traffic circle just before entering the city of Jerash, take a left turn onto the road to Ajlun. At the next traffic lights turn left and follow the road for about 30 minutes, passing through the small town of Ghaza and the village of Jamiah. As the surrounding area becomes more forested, look for the entrance signs to Dibeen near a road junction. There is a small reception office near the roadside, which marks the official access point.

# BIRD WATCHING



*Bird Watching in Azraq*

Jordan is a great destination for bird-lovers and dedicated birdwatchers. Its remarkable variety of habitats, from rugged mountains and evergreen woodlands to scrubby steppe and hot dry deserts, provide the perfect environments for many species of indigenous birds. Furthermore, its location at the crossroad of Europe, Asia and Africa means that migrating birds from these three continents can sometimes be seen together in the same general area.

A total of 17 sites have been declared as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Jordan's national parks. RSCN's nature reserves are also IBAs.

In the western highlands, including the wooded areas of the north in Zobia, Ajlun and Dibeen, and Dana in the south, the Mediterranean habitats surrounded by open steppe country are home to the Palestine Sunbird, the Upcher's Orphan and Sardinian Warblers. The more open steppe habitats typically host the Spectacled Warbler, Long-Billed Pipit, Black-Eared Wheatear, Woodchat Shrike and Linnet.

The Dead Sea area and Wadi Araba are home to Arabian and African species such as the Sand Partridge, Bar-Tailed Lark, Dunn's Hoopoe Lark, Little Green Bee-Eater, Blackstart and Arabian Babbler.

The RSCN is the BirdLife International partner in Jordan. BirdLife International is a global Partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity. BirdLife Partners operate in over one hundred countries and territories worldwide.

The green areas of Aqaba, particularly the relatively dense vegetation and open ponds at the waste water treatment plant, attract hundreds of thousands (possibly millions) of migratory birds every spring and autumn comprised of more than 350 different species. The Jordanian Society for Sustainable Development (JSSD) began the establishment of protected areas in Aqaba, in cooperation with the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority and the Aqaba Water Company.

## What sort of birds can you see?

The Eastern Desert habitat, including the Azraq Wetland Oasis, is home to local desert and aquatic species, and is periodically visited by migrants. Species that can be seen in that area include the Temmink's Horned Lark, Hoopoe Lark, Desert Wheatear and Trumpeter Finch. In winter, Cranes and Imperial Eagles can also be spotted. Visitors to the Desert Castles, east of Amman, are often greeted by the Thick-Billed Lark and Red-Rumped Wheatears.

Wadi Shu'ayb and Wadi Mujib with their perennial watercourse are dwelling places for the beautiful White-Breasted Kingfisher. The magnificent rocky gorges of Wadi Rum, Dana, Mujib, and Petra are home to the Griffon Vulture, Bonelli's Eagle, Hume's Tawny Owl, Blackstart, different Wheatears, Scrub Warblers, Sinai Rosefinch, House Bunting, Tristram's Grackle, and the Fan-Tailed Raven.

# Helping Nature ... Helping People



## THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE (RSCN) AND WILD JORDAN

RSCN is a non-governmental organization devoted to the conservation of Jordan's natural environment. Created in 1966 under the patronage of His Majesty the late King Hussein, the Society has been given responsibility by the Jordanian government for protecting the country's wildlife and wild places. 'Wild Jordan' is a division of RSCN and the trading name for the Society's eco-tourism and handicraft enterprises.

## THE WILD JORDAN CENTER

Perched high above the old city of Amman, the Wild Jordan Center is a revolutionary complex devoted to promoting protection and sustainable use of Jordan's rich natural heritage. It has the largest nature shop in the region, an amazing wholefood café with stunning views over the city, and a tourist information point to show you how to visit Jordan's natural treasures. It also has fully-equipped training and conference rooms.

Come and find that unusual gift you have been looking for, enjoy a delicious meal or fruit drink, use the Internet, or simply sit and enjoy the view... and do not forget that any money you spend in the Center will be used to support Wild Jordan's "jobs from nature" programme.

## Helping Nature ... Helping People

RSCN has established six protected areas, covering more than 1,000 sq km of Jordan's most beautiful and endangered places. The Society is recognised as foremost among regional and international conservation groups for integrating nature conservation with socio-economic development for local communities. Projects to date include a wide variety of eco-tourism programmes and the production of unique handicrafts and organic food items. All of RSCN products and eco-tourism ventures are marketed under the trade name 'Wild Jordan'.



# Helping Nature ... Helping People



Wadi Rum

RSCN's nature-based businesses provide jobs tied to the protection of natural areas and create improved livelihoods for poor rural communities.

By purchasing any RSCN product or by visiting any of Jordan's nature Reserves, you are directly contributing to the protection of nature in Jordan.

For general information, maps, and booking arrangements for any of RSCN's eco-tourism facilities, please contact Wild Jordan's tourism office.

Phone: +962 6 4616523 - Fax: +962 6 4633657/ 4616523  
 General enquiries and bookings: [tourism@rscn.org.jo](mailto:tourism@rscn.org.jo)  
 Wild Jordan phone: +962 6 4633589 - Fax: +962 6 4633657  
 General enquiries: [wildjordan.center@rscn.org.jo](mailto:wildjordan.center@rscn.org.jo)  
 RSCN website: [www.rscn.org.jo](http://www.rscn.org.jo)



## DID YOU KNOW?

Nearby the reserve is Ajlun Castle, a magnificent castle that dominated the three main routes leading to the Jordan Valley and protected the trade and commercial routes between Jordan and Syria. It became an important link in the defensive chain against the Crusaders.

## NATURE RESERVE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Dana: +962 3 2270497

Mujib: +962 777 422125

Ajlun: +962 2 6475673

Azraq and Shawmari: +962 5 3835225

## WADI RUM PROTECTED AREA VISITORS' CENTER

Tel.: +962 3 2090600 - Fax: +962 3 2032586

[www.wadirum.jo](http://www.wadirum.jo)

## AQABA SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY (ASEZA)

Tel.: +962 3 2091000 - Fax: +962 3 2091052

[www.aqaba.jo](http://www.aqaba.jo)

# GUIDELINES FOR VISITORS



- Experience the day to day life of the people around you. Interact with the local community while showing respect for its laws and customs.
- Practice a few phrases in Arabic. People will appreciate your efforts. Please say “min fadlak” in Arabic and thank you is “shukran.”
- Ask permission before photographing or videotaping people.
- Support the local economy whenever possible by buying local produce.
- In hotels, turn off lights and adjust thermostats to conserve energy before leaving your room.

## Help preserve Jordan’s natural landscapes

Helping to preserve Jordan’s beautiful natural landscapes can be achieved by following some simple steps. Here are a few tips:

- Keep noise levels down as noise can disturb birds and other animals.
- Keep to proper footpaths, do not feed wildlife, and do not pick flowers or other plants.
- Do not damage trees and do not spray historic monuments with graffiti.
- Water is scarce in Jordan, so please conserve and keep water sources clean.
- Stick to designated roads when driving. Off-road motoring is both risky and damaging to the environment.
- Be aware that fire-making is strictly prohibited in all reserves, except in designated barbecue pits. Do not approach, threaten or feed wild animals.

## When on a nature trip:

- Avoid hiking alone or in the dark.
- Watch your footing on rocky or steep slopes, and always stay on the trail.
- During heavy rainfall, avoid low-lying areas such as canyon floors that are susceptible to sudden flash floods.
- Bring your own water for drinking and cooking, as natural water sources may not always be clean or accessible.
- If you do use water from a spring or stream, treat it by boiling or with purification tablets.

## Remember to bring...

Water, a hat, comfortable hiking shoes, a camera, binoculars, and identification guides for wildlife. For overnight camping trips, take a sleeping bag or blankets, food, and plastic bags for garbage. It is always a good idea to carry a flashlight, a compass, matches, waterproof clothing, and a first aid kit.

By minimizing your impact on the wildlife, you will help protect and preserve Jordan’s beautiful nature for future generations to enjoy.

# SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

Below is a list of suggested itineraries that would show the best of eco-Jordan depending on the time available.

## 1 Day Itinerary:

Summer: Mujib Nature Reserve

Winter: Dana Biosphere Reserve

## 3 Day Itinerarays:

*Day 1.* Mujib Nature Reserve - Overnight in Amman

*Day 2.* Dana Biosphere Reserve - Overnight in Dana

*Day 3.* Wadi Rum - Overnight in Wadi Rum

## 5 Day Itinerary:

*Day 1.* Azraq Wetland Reserve - Overnight in Amman

*Day 2.* Ajlun Nature Reserve - Overnight in Ajlun

*Day 3.* Mujib Nature Reserve - Overnight in Feynan

*Day 4.* Dana Biosphere Reserve - Overnight in Dana

*Day 5.* Wadi Rum - Overnight in Wadi Rum



*Azraq*

For more itineraries, please check our website  
[www.VisitJordan.com](http://www.VisitJordan.com)



Jordan Tourism Board

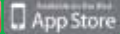
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