

A GUIDE TO
HISTORY AND
CULTURE
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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MAP LEGEND

- Historical Site
- Castle
- Religious Site
- Hotel Accommodation
- Camping Facilities
- Airport
- Road
- Highway
- Railway
- Bridge
- Nature / Wildlife Reserve
- Petra, the new world wonder
- UNESCO, world heritage site

Jordan Tourism Board:

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



Citadel Interior

JORDAN'S HISTORY & CULTURE

Step back into time as you walk the paths of the Romans, Nabataeans, early Islamic and biblical figures as you travel around Jordan. The country's historical and cultural wealth is overwhelming as it envelopes you upon arrival with ruins of ancient civilizations, religious sites and cultural hotspots. Although most of these civilizations have long since been relegated to the history books, they have not been forgotten as their fusion and evolution brought upon the great country of Jordan as we know it today. From the ancient Nabataean city of Petra, the miracle of the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley, the wonders of the Red Sea and Wadi Rum, to the fine hotels, shopping centers, museums and art galleries of modern Amman; Jordan truly is a blend of old and new, east and west, and an oasis of culture.

*The People of Jordan*

Jordan's People

The majority of Jordan's population is comprised of Arabs descended from the various tribes that have migrated to the area over the years from all directions. In addition, there are Circassians, descendants of Muslim refugees from the Tsarist Russian invasion of the Caucasus in the 19th century, and a much smaller group of Chechens. Jordan also has a small Armenian population.

Most Jordanians are Sunni Muslims, and about 6% are Christians who live mainly in Amman, Madaba, Karak and Salt. The majority of Christians belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, but there are also Greek Catholics, a small Roman Catholic community, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and a few Protestant denominations found mostly in Amman. Several small Shi'a and Druze populations can also be found in Jordan.

*Handicrafts*

Handicrafts

Take time to visit the souq in downtown Amman. This is a treasure trove for those seeking something a little bit out of the ordinary and authentically Jordanian. Find great bargains at our excellent gold and silver outlets! Do not miss the busy little spice shops to get your own herbs and seasonings; we know that once you try Jordanian flavors you are going to want to take some home!

Find hand-woven rugs and cushions, beautifully embroidered fabrics and clothing, traditional pottery and glassware, not to mention silver jewelry embedded with

semi-precious stones, mosaics, as well as handmade bedouin daggers at all popular tourist sites, hotel boutiques and visitors' centers. These gorgeous handicrafts are handmade locally by Jordanian women carrying on the traditions of their ancestors. There is nothing like finding the perfect Thawb (traditional dress), embroidered in a unique oriental design to complete your shopping experience and take home for yourself or bring back as a gift for a loved one. If you're looking for beauty and skin care supplies you'll find healing and rejuvenating Dead Sea and olive oil products available across the country. Although nothing can compare to your visit to Jordan, bring back a breathtaking landscape created with colored sand in a bottle therefore forever preserving your experience.



A Family Enjoying the Jordanian National Dish: Mansaf



Mjadarra



Sweets

Cuisine

Wherever you are in Jordan, you're never too far away from a conversation about food. Whether the discussion is a heated argument on the busy streets of Amman over the city's best kunafe or one in the coastal towns of Aqaba as the catch of the day comes in, or in the most remote part of the Wadi Rum desert you'll doubtlessly end up talking about food, and if you're talking about it you're more than likely to be eating it with your Jordanian hosts later!

Sit down with the bedouin in their desert tents, drink camel milk and eat mansaf the national dish, and you'll learn how people have survived for centuries in this harsh landscape. Try baklava pastries in any of their forms, and you'll experience the flavors and recipes of the Ottoman Empire. And if you pick up a menu in cosmopolitan Amman, you'll see dishes made famous by different ethnicities within the Jordanian community, not to mention cuisine from all around the world.

It matters little where people are from, or what language they speak. In Jordan, food is the word on everybody's lips, and all are welcome to join the discussion.

AMMAN



Citadel

AMMAN

The ever-expanding city, originally built on seven hills, dates back to the Stone Age when our Neolithic ancestors roamed the earth. Amman exemplifies the evolution, development and survival of a small city through its expansions during the Early Bronze Age, its development as a city state through the Iron Age and into its role in Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian empires. The city, known by several different names such as Amman, Ammon, Rabath-Ammon and Philadelphia, played key-roles in multiple civilizations.

As Philadelphia, it flourished as a member of Rome's Decapolis League and was rebuilt with colonnaded streets, baths, theaters and impressive public buildings. During the Byzantine period it was the seat of a Christian bishop who oversaw the construction of two spectacular churches before being embraced as a part of Islam's domain. While the rise of the Mameluks of Egypt caused a downturn for the city's status, its welcoming of persecuted Muslims from the Caucasus and the weakening of the Ottoman authority caused it to return to its former glory. On March 2, 1921, the Emirate of Transjordan came into existence, with Emir Abdullah, a Hashemite and direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), as its undisputed leader. On May 25, 1946, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan secured its independence, the Emir's title was changed to King, and Amman became the capital of the Kingdom.

Historical Sites

If a journey through history is what you're looking for then the best place to start would be the Citadel. Located on a hill it gives visitors a glimpse into the evolution of Amman and provides stunning views of downtown Amman. Among the sites you can't afford to miss at the Citadel are the Umayyad Palace complex, the Temple of Hercules and the Byzantine Church. If you're looking for a literal walk through history do not hesitate to venture to nearby sites like the Roman Forum, and Nymphaeum as well as the Grand Hussein Mosque built by Emir Abdullah in 1924.

AMMAN



The Royal Automobile Museum



Art Gallery



The Jordan Archaeological Museum

Museums

- The Jordan Archaeological Museum
- The Jordanian Museum of Popular Traditions
- The Jordan Folklore Museum
- The Archaeological Museum / University of Jordan
- The Anthropological Museum / University of Jordan
- The Numismatics Museum / Central Bank of Jordan

- The Royal Automobile Museum
- The Children's Museum
- The Jordan Museum

Archaeological Centers

To accommodate Amman's massive heritage spanning several centuries and civilizations, a number of specialized local and international archaeological centers have been established.



Theatrical Performance in Amman

Cultural Centers

An increasing number of venues are hosting cultural activities. English-language newspapers, The Jordan Times and The Star, carry details of individual events.

- The Royal Cultural Center
- Al-Balad Theater
- City Hall - Ra's Al-Ain
- Ras al Ain Art Gallery
- The Haya Cultural Center for kids
- The Zaha Cultural Center for kids
- Emirates Cultural Center
- Turkish Cultural Center
- Goethe Institute
- The French Cultural Center
- The British Council
- Spanish Cultural Center



DID YOU KNOW?

The Royal Film Commission of Jordan is a committee that aims to develop the local production industry by encouraging Jordanians to use film and audio-visual media to express their original ideas. The commission also provides opportunities for audiences and filmmakers to get together, watch independent films, and exchange ideas.

For more information:
www.film.jo

Art Galleries

Jordan has a rapidly developing fine arts scene and, Amman in particular, is home to several excellent galleries and exhibition centers. These have transformed the city into a focal point for local and international artists who regularly exhibit here.

Theaters & Film Industry

Jordan boasts many theaters that are being nurtured by various cultural centers. Along with the organic theater scene, Jordan is very supportive of the film industry and holds many workshops as well as foreign and local film screenings in coordination with the Royal Film Commission.

MADABA



MADABA

Madaba, the city of mosaics, situated along the 5,000-year-old King's Highway, is one of the most memorable places in the Holy Land. The city has a long history dating back to the book of Exodus when it was named as one of Moab's Cities of the Plain. The town, later conquered by the Romans, was remodeled in the typical provincial style with colonnaded streets, temples, large cisterns and a town wall.

Historical Sites

Madaba's chief attraction can be found in the contemporary Greek Orthodox church of St. George. It is a wonderfully vivid 6th century Byzantine map showing Jerusalem and other holy sites. Painstakingly handcrafted using two million pieces of colored stone, the map originally measures a full 25m by 5m. While this masterpiece is unrivalled, there are literally dozens of other mosaics dating from the 5th through the 7th century found throughout Madaba's churches and buildings.



Museums

- Madaba Archaeological Museum
- Madaba Archaeological Park
- Madaba Institute for Mosaic Art and Restoration

UMM AR-RASAS



Mosaics from Umm Ar-Rasas



Umm Ar-Rasas



DID YOU KNOW?

Some of the world's earliest known churches have been recently discovered in Jordan.

The remains of a mud-brick building in Aqaba may be the world's oldest known purpose-built church. This Aqaba early church dates from the late 3rd or early 4th century AD.

UMM AR-RASAS (Ancient Mayfa'a)

Umm Ar-Rasas is a town unique in its combination of different civilizations. This is exemplified in its Roman, Byzantine and Islamic heritage. Due to its unification of Roman style architecture and its embellishment by early local Christians, well over a hundred years after the beginning of Muslim rule, the town has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Historical Sites

A must see in the ruins of Ancient Mayfa'a is the large, perfectly preserved mosaic floor in the Church of St. Stephen. The mosaic floor, laid down in 718 AD portrays fifteen major Holy Land cities both east and west of the River Jordan and is the perfect destination for the biblical history fan!

MUKAWIR, MOUNT NEBO



Mukawir

MUKAWIR

One of the things in abundance in Jordan, besides hospitality and great food, is the amount of significant biblical sites. Mukawir is a great example of that as it was the location of events that greatly affected religious history. Situated about an hour away from Madaba on the picturesque King's Highway, Mukawir once served as the hilltop stronghold of Herod the Great and later was the location where Herod Antipas ordered the beheading of John the Baptist after Salome's fateful dance of the seven veils.



Franciscan Archaeological Institute



Serpentine Cross/Mount Nebo

MOUNT NEBO

Mount Nebo, the most revered holy site in Jordan, was a place of pilgrimage for early Christians for a myriad of reasons. This is the site where Moses viewed the Holy Land and where he was believed to have been buried. Walk in his footsteps and witness religious history at this moving landmark.

The Serpentine Cross, standing just outside the sanctuary, is symbolic of the brass serpent taken by Moses into the desert and the cross upon which Jesus was crucified.

Historical Sites

The Moses Memorial Church is a destination on every history or religious tourist's list of must-see spots. The church, built on top of six tombs from different periods, boasts several mosaic remnants, the earliest of which is a panel with a braided cross.

Archaeological Centers

To preserve the archaeological heritage of the area the Franciscan Archeological Institute protects and maintains all sites at Mount Nebo and the nearby city of Madaba.

THE DEAD SEA



Salt Formations at the Dead Sea

THE DEAD SEA

The therapeutic waters of the Dead Sea, combined with the Jordan Valley's fertile land and warm climate, have attracted people to live, hunt, and farm in the area as early as the Stone Age. One of the world's most amazing places, the Valley, is a dramatic, beautiful landscape, which at the Dead Sea, is over 410m (1,312 ft.) below sea level making it the lowest point on the face of the earth. While over 200 archaeological sites have been discovered, many more are still waiting to be found. The area is full of biblically important sites as it is where God first spoke to man, where He gave His Ten Commandments to Moses, where Job suffered and was rewarded for his faith, and where Jacob wrestled with the angel of God. This is also the site of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah, the site of the story of Lot, and where Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt.



DID YOU KNOW?

In the Book of Genesis, God refers to the Jordan River Valley around the Dead Sea, as the "Garden of the Lord," and it is believed to be the location of the Garden of Eden.

While this area has a lot of significance for Christians, there are also several key locations equal in importance for Muslim visitors as it hosts the tombs of several of the Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) venerable companions and military leaders.

PETRA



Petra By Night

PETRA

The ancient city of Petra is one of Jordan's national treasures and by far its best known tourist attraction. Located about three hours south of Amman, Petra is the legacy of the Nabataeans, an industrious Arab people who settled in southern Jordan more than 2,000 years ago. Admired then for its refined culture, massive architecture and ingenious complex of dams and water channels, Petra is now a UNESCO World Heritages Site and one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. Inhabited by the Nabateans, Edomites and Romans, Petra brought together the knowledge and skill of these civilizations to create this world wonder. Caravans laden with incense, silks, spices and other exotic goods would rest at Petra. But their main wealth came from the fact that Petra was an important hub for the lucrative trade routes that linked China in the east with Rome in the west.



Magnificent Siq Leading Up to The Treasury



The Colonnaded Street

Trade caravans laden would break at Petra, which offered a plentiful supply of water and protection from marauders. In return for their hospitality, the Nabataeans imposed a tax on all goods that passed through the city and grew wealthy from the proceeds. Petra later flourished under Roman rule, and many Roman-style amendments were made to the city, including the enlargement of the theatre, paving of the colonnaded street, and a triumphal arch was built over the entrance to the Siq. When the Roman Emperor, Hadrian, visited the site in 131 AD, he named it after himself, Hadrian Petra.

Historical Sites

Petra's most famous monument, the towering facade of the Treasury is only one of a myriad of architectural wonders to be explored. Visitors can grasp the history of this specific area by walking to sites like "Little Petra" and the little monastery to witness the beginnings of the Rose City. Various walks and climbs reveal literally hundreds of tombs and temple façades, funerary halls and reliefs carved into rock. Other must-see structures include a 3000-seat theater from the early 1st century AD, a Roman-style Palace Tomb, a gigantic 1st century monastery as well as the 13th century shrine of Moses's brother Aaron.

Museums

- Petra Archaeological Museum
- Petra Nabataean Museum



DID YOU KNOW?

While visiting Petra during the day is awe-inspiring, experiencing it at night by the light of 1,800 candles is truly out of this world! Walk through the Siq to Al-Khazneh while following a candlelit path to enjoy the haunting music of the Bedouins at the Treasury. Tours run three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, starting at 8.30pm and ending at 10 p.m.

Although abandoned after a series of devastating earthquakes and its loss of status, Petra was rediscovered by Swiss traveler, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, disguised as an Arab on August 22nd 1812.

AS-SALT



As-Salt



Old Men Playing Mangala in Downtown As-Salt



As-Salt Archaeological Museum

AS-SALT

Once an important settlement strategically located on the trading route between the West and the Eastern Desert, As-Salt enjoyed the rule of several civilizations including the Romans, Byzantines and Mameluks. The town flourished during the Ottoman period during which it was established as a regional administrative base and encouraged settlement from across the empire. As a commercial town, it housed a lot wealthy merchants who built their homes in a mix of local and European styles. These impressive yellow limestone buildings typically have domed roofs, interior courtyards and characteristically tall arched windows. Although Al-Salt lost its status when Amman became the capital of the Emirate of Transjordan, these homes remain as a reminder of what once was!

Historical Sites

Besides As-Salt's past as a successful and booming merchant town, the area is also significant in terms of religion. Among the shrines the town hosts is the shrine of Job, one the earliest patriarchal figures in the Bible who overcame his suffering through his faith. The town also hosts the shrine of the prophet Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, as well as the tombs of Jacob's two sons: Jad and Asher. Another must-see in the area is the Abu Jaber mansion, which is reputed to be the finest example of a 19th century merchant house in the region.

Museums

- As-Salt Archaeological Museum
- As-Salt Folklore Museum
- As-Salt Historical Museum (Abu Jaber House)

Bethany Beyond the Jordan



Bethany Beyond the Jordan

Bethany Beyond the Jordan

Home to several biblical cities including Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar, the archeological discoveries between the Jordan River and Tal al-Kharrar have identified this area as Biblical "Bethany Beyond the Jordan." The area is where John was living when he baptized Jesus. Tal Al-Kharrar also known as Tar Mar Elias was named after the Prophet Elijah who ascended to heaven from this very location.

If that's not enough biblical history for one area, the cave where Lot and his daughters took refuge after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is located just outside an area called Safi (Biblical Zoar).



DID YOU KNOW?

During his visit to the Holy Land in 2000, His Holiness, the late Pope John Paul II, held a sermon for the public at the Moses Memorial Church at Mount Nebo overlooking the Jordan Valley and the Holy Land. Following his visit to Jordan, the Pope declared Mount Nebo as an official Millennium 2000 pilgrimage site along with 4 others in Jordan: Bethany Beyond the Jordan, Anjara, Tall Mar Elias and Mukawir.

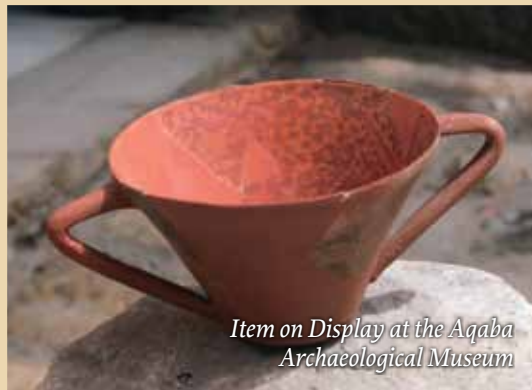
Aqaba



Aqaba Underwater



Mameluk Fort



*Item on Display at the Aqaba
Archaeological Museum*

AQABA

Famed for its preserved coral reefs and unique sea life, this Red Sea port city was, in ancient times, the main port for shipments from the Red Sea to the Far East. From as far back as 5,500 years ago, Aqaba has played an important role in the region's economy as the prime junction for land and sea routes from Asia, Africa, and Europe. Because of this vital function, there are many historic sites to be explored within the area, including what is believed to be the oldest purpose-built church in the world.

Historical Sites

The Mameluk Fort, one of the main historical landmarks of Aqaba, was built in the 16th century. Square in shape and flanked by semicircular towers, the fort features various inscriptions marking the latter period of the Islamic dynasty. Other places of interest for history buffs include a mud-brick building believed to be the earliest purpose-built church in the world as well as the house of Sharif Hussein Bin Ali - the great grandfather of King Abdullah II.

Museums

- Aqaba Archaeological Museum
- Aqaba Marine Science Station

JERASH



Jerash Ruins During Springtime

Highlights

Hadrian's Arch

Built to commemorate the visit of the Emperor Hadrian to Jerash in 129 AD, this splendid triumphal arch was intended to become the main southern gate to the city; however, the expansion plans were never completed.

Hippodrome

This massive arena was 245m long, 52m wide and could seat 15,000 spectators at a time for chariot races and other sports.

JERASH

The ancient city of Jerash prides itself for having an unbroken chain of human occupation dating back more than 6,500 years. Known as Gerasa, the city was conquered by General Pompey in 63 BC, came under Roman rule and flourished as one of the ten great Roman cities in the Decapolis League. The site is currently generally acknowledged to be one of the best-preserved Roman provincial towns in the world.

Historical Sites

Hidden for centuries in sand, Jerash has been excavated and restored over the past 70 years. The city reveals a fine example of the grand provincial Roman urbanism found throughout the Middle East. Beneath its external Greco-Roman veneer, Jerash also preserves a subtle blend of east and west. Its architecture, religion, and languages reflect a process by which two powerful cultures meshed and coexisted - the Greco-Roman world of the Mediterranean basin and the ancient traditions of the Arab Orient. The full glory of this cultural hub is revived every summer in the form of the two-week long Jerash Festival of Arts and Culture.

Oval Plaza

The spacious plaza is surrounded by a broad sidewalk and colonnade of 1st century AD Ionic columns. A fountain was added to the existing two altars in the middle of the plaza in the 7th century AD. This square structure now supports a central column, which was recently erected to carry the Jerash Festival Flame.

JERASH



Colonnaded Street

Still paved with the original stones – the ruts worn by chariots still visible – the 800m Cardo was the architectural spine and focal point of Jerash. An underground sewage system ran the full length of the Cardo with regular holes at the sides of the street to drain rainwater into the sewers.

Cathedral

Further up the Cardo Maximus, is the monumental and richly carved gateway of a 2nd century Roman Temple of Dionysus. In the 4th century, the temple was rebuilt as

Nymphaeum

This ornamental fountain was constructed in 191 AD and dedicated to the Nymphs. Such fountains were common in Roman cities, and provided a refreshing urban focal center. Water cascaded through seven carved lion's heads into small basins on the sidewalk and overflowed from there through drains and into the underground sewage system.

North Theater

The North Theater was built in 165 AD in front of a colonnaded plaza where a staircase led up to the entrance. The theater originally only had 14 rows of seats and was used for performances, and city council meetings. In 235AD, the theater was doubled in size to its current capacity of 1,600.

South Theater

Constructed over the course of two years (90-92 AD) during the reign of Emperor Domitian, the South Theater can seat more than 3,000 spectators. The first level of the ornate stage, originally a two-storey structure, has been reconstructed and is still used today. The theater's remarkable acoustics allow a speaker at the center of the orchestra floor to be heard throughout the entire auditorium without raising his voice.

a Byzantine church and is now referred to as the 'Cathedral'. At the top of the stairs, against an outer East wall of the Cathedral is the Shrine of St. Mary, with a painted inscription to Mary and the archangels Michael and Gabriel.

Museums

The Jerash Archaeological Museum is not to be missed as it houses a fascinating collection of artifacts including gold jewelry, coins, glass and - perhaps the most unusual - pottery theater tickets!

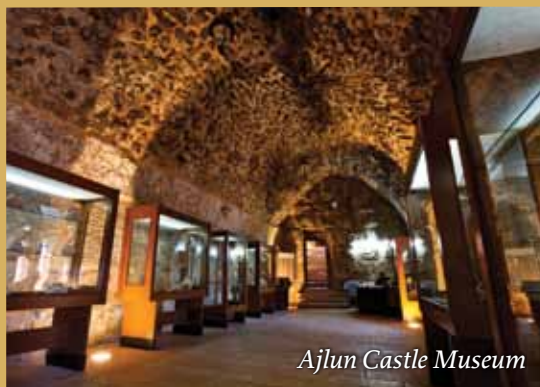
AJLUN, UMM AL-JIMAL



Ajlun Castle



Umm Al-Jimal



Ajlun Castle Museum

AJLUN

The marvels of nature and the genius of medieval Arab military architecture have given northern Jordan two of the most important ecological and historical attractions in the Middle East: The sprawling pine forests of the Ajlun-Dibeen area, and the towering Ayyubid castle at Ajlun, which helped defeat the Crusaders eight centuries ago. The Ajlun area has a long history of human settlement, due to its Mediterranean climate, dense forest and fertile soil. This rich history is reflected in the many archaeological ruins scattered in the woodlands and surrounding villages.

Historical Sites

Ajlun Castle is the most prominent ancient monument within the Ajlun region. It towers above green hills and can be seen from many miles away, betraying its strategic purpose as a military watch post protecting the trade routes in the 12th to 15th centuries. The castle is one of the best-preserved examples of Medieval Arab-Islamic military architecture. Among its main features are a contiguous dry moat, a drawbridge into the main entrance, a fortified entrance gate, and a massive south tower.

UMM AL-JIMAL

Umm Al-Jimal is located at the edge of the eastern basalt desert plain, along a secondary road close to the former junction of several ancient trade routes linking central Jordan with Syria and Iraq. The paucity of timber in the region led to an almost exclusive use of the hard basalt stones as building materials: door and window frames, sills, lintels, and sometimes even the doors themselves! The use of these stones also introduced a unique roofing system: corbel courses which consisted of long basalt slabs that lay across the rooms.

Historical Sites

Among the most interesting structures to visit are the tall barracks with their little chapel, several large churches, the outlines of a Roman fort, and the remains of several town gates.

PELLA, UMM QAYS



Pella



Umm Qays

UMM QAYS (Gadara)

Perched on a marvelous hilltop overlooking the Jordan Valley and the Sea of Galilee, Umm Qays is the site of Jesus' Gadarene swine miracle. It is here that He encountered a demented man who lived in the tombs near the entrance to the city; Jesus cast the evil spirits out of the man and into a herd of pigs, which then ran down the hill into the waters of the Sea of Galilee and drowned.

Historical Sites

Alongside the old Roman city gate on the road to the Sea of Galilee, a rare 4th century five-aisled basilica, built directly over a Roman-Byzantine tomb, was discovered and excavated. Everything about this distinctive arrangement of a church above a tomb at this particular location strongly indicates that it was designed and built to commemorate the very spot where the Byzantine faithful believed that Jesus performed his miracle.

PELLA (Tabaqat Fahl)

In the foothills of the Jordan Valley, at exactly sea-level, Pella contains antiquities dating back to both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Historical Sites

Together with excavated ruins from the Greco-Roman period, Pella offers visitors the opportunity to see the remains of a Chalcolithic settlement from the 4th millennium BC, as well as evidence of Bronze and Iron Age walled cities, Byzantine churches, early Islamic residential quarters, and a small medieval mosque.

KARAK, SHOWBAK



Karak Castle



Karak Archaeological Museum



Showbak Castle Arches

SHOWBAK

A lonely reminder of former Crusader glory, Showbak Castle is located less than an hour's drive north of Petra. Once called "Le Krak de Montreal," or "Castle of Montreal," it is located on the side of a mountain and has a grand sweep of fruit orchards below.

KARAK

As Islam expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula, civilizations clashed and marked Karak as a strategic area for battle. First contact between Islam and non-Arab Byzantines in the 7th century led to several decisive battles including Mu'ta, Yarmouk and Fahl.

Historical Sites

An ancient crusader stronghold, Karak sits 900m above sea level and lies inside the walls of the old city. The city today continues to boast a number of restored 19th century Ottoman buildings and restaurants, but it is undoubtedly Karak Castle that dominates the area.

Museums

- Karak Archaeological Museum
- Mazar Islamic Museum



DID YOU KNOW?

The Jordanian flag symbolizes the Kingdom's roots in the Great Arab Revolt of 1916. The black, white, and green bands represent the Arab Abbasid, Umayyad and Fatimid eras respectively, while the crimson triangle joining the bands represents the Hashemite dynasty. The seven-pointed Islamic star set in the center of the crimson triangle represents the seven verses of Surat Al-Fatiha, the first Sura in the Holy Qur'an.

Historical Sites

Showbak castle's exterior is impressive with a foreboding gate and an encircling triple wall. Despite the precautions of its builder, the fortress fell to Saladin only 75 years after its construction. Built during Crusader times, over 800 years ago, Showbak castle appears as a natural extension of a dramatic hill.

DESERT UMAYYAD CASTLES, Quseir Amra



Quseir Amra



Quseir Amra Interior

DESERT UMAYYAD CASTLES

Jordan's desert castles, beautiful examples of early Islamic art and architecture, testify to a fascinating era in the country's voluminous history. Inspired by the best in Persian and Greco-Roman traditions, the fine mosaics, frescoes, stone, and stucco carvings tell countless stories of life as it was during the 8th century.

Quseir Amra

Quseir Amra (the little palace of Amra) is a bathhouse constructed in the Jordanian steppe during the first half of the 8th century far from any visible ancient settlement. The most striking features of Quseir Amra are its extensive fresco paintings that virtually cover all interior surfaces. Its iconographic repertoire includes hunting and bathing scenes, wrestlers, archers, musicians and dancers, as well as panels depicting various crafts and activities connected with construction work. The frescoes, unrivaled in any other contemporary monument, are the reason Quseir Amra is included in the World Heritage List.

Qasr Al-Azraq, Qasr Al-Kharrana



Qasr Al-Azraq



Qasr Al-Kharrana

Qasr Al-Azraq

Crafted from local black basalt rocks, the Qasr Al-Azraq castle exploited Azraq's important strategic position and water sources. While the present form of the castle dates back to the beginning of the 13th century CE, the first fortress constructed here is thought to have been built by the Romans around 300 CE, during the reign of Diocletian.

Qasr Al-Kharrana

The purpose of Qasr Al-Kharrana remains an enigma to archaeologists and historians to this day. Some experts believe that it was a defensive fort; others a caravansary for passing camel trains while others maintain that it served as a retreat for Umayyad leaders to discuss state affairs.



DID YOU KNOW?

The fresco paintings inside Quseir Amra are particularly important in that they offer a wealth of iconographic themes that are unrivalled in any other contemporary monument. Because the frescoes represent a key historic moment of when Islamic art was still in its formative stages Quseir Amra is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Qasr Al-Hallabat, Qasr Al-Mushatta



Qasr Al-Hallabat

Qasr Al-Hallabat

The site includes a castle, mosque, huge reservoir, eight cisterns as well as an irregularly shaped agricultural enclosure with an elaborate system of channels. Excavations inside the castle uncovered a total of 146 Greek, and two Nabatean inscriptions as well as one Safaitic inscription on basalt stones. The castle was elaborately decorated with carved stucco, frescoes, and colored mosaics during the Umayyad reconstruction of the castle thusly transforming it from a fortified building into a palatial residence.



Qasr Al-Mushatta

Qasr Al-Mushatta

This castle presents the most complete fusion of Iraqi, Sasanian, Coptic and Classical influences characteristic of Umayyad architecture. The most remarkable feature of Qasr Al-Mushatta is the delicately carved stone façade that used to stand between the semicircular buttresses that flank either side of the entrance towers.

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

1 Day Tour Options:

1. Jerash, Ajlun
2. Amman City Tour
3. Madaba, Mount Nebo, and Bethany Beyond the Jordan

3 Day Itinerary:

- Day 1.* Amman, Madaba - Overnight in Amman
Day 2. Petra - Overnight in Petra
Day 3. Jerash, Ajlun - Overnight in Amman

5 Day Itinerary:

- Day 1.* Amman, Karak - Overnight in Amman
Day 2. Madaba, Mount Nebo, and Karak - Overnight at Petra
Day 3. Petra - Overnight at Wadi Rum
Day 4. Wadi Rum - Overnight Dead Sea
Day 5. Bethany Beyond the Jordan

For more itineraries, please check our website
www.VisitJordan.com



Ancient city of Petra



Jordan Tourism Board

Tel : +(962-6) 5678444

Fax: +(962-6) 5678295

P.O.Box 830688

Amman 11183, Jordan

email: info@visitjordan.com



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