

Discovering Jordan

Caravan trails

Discovering... where caravans have crossed the deserts and mountain passes of Arabia for thousands of years. The silk and spice routes are legendary, once fanning out from Mediterranean shores via remote oases and watering holes. We cross the most beautiful and inspiring desert landscapes in the Near East.

FITNESS RATING: 35+

TRIP LENGTH: 13 days

DAYS OF WALKING: 8

SHORTEST/LONGEST DAY'S WALK: 2/8 hrs

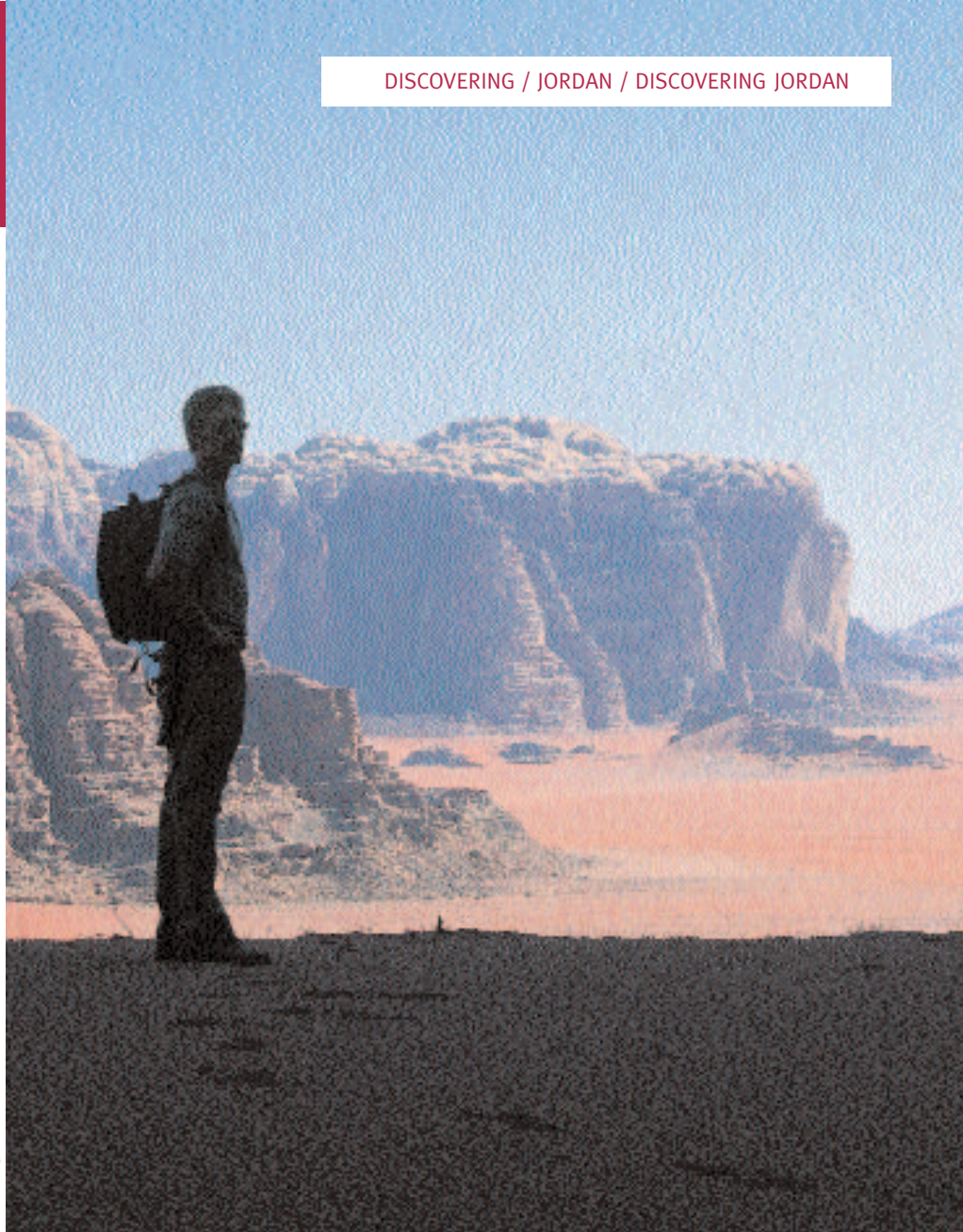
DATES: Cost per operson \$8560 twin share

2009: 2 Mar, 14 Apr, 5 Oct, 2 Nov

2010: 1, 15 & 29 Mar, 12 apr, 4 Oct, 1 Nov



Photo: Paul Treherne



'Wadi Rum: weathered peaks inspired TE Lawrence'

THE TRIP

Rather than an impenetrable barrier, the desert is often likened to water, its surface navigated like the sea. For centuries, caravans have plied the sands and mountain passes of Arabia and inner Asia. The silk and spice routes are legendary, but a vast chain of routes once fanned out from Mediterranean shores, linking oases and watering holes as far away as Persia, India and China. Here and there, local tribes prospered as middlemen, merging nomad and cosmopolitan tradition to produce the great hybrid civilisations of antiquity. The jewel among them carved from the heart of Jordan's Shara mountains a city unique in the ancient world. The Greeks called it Petra, which means simply 'stone', and for centuries it was lost to the outside world.

The trails we walk cross the most beautiful and inspiring desert landscapes in the entire Near East. Often leaving the beaten path, where few travellers venture, we regain the

spirit once shared by merchants, pilgrims and explorers. Along the way, we pass our nights in the highest Arabian comfort and savour the finest local specialities.

SUGGESTED ITINERARY

Day 1 On arrival in Amman we travel to our hotel on the shores of the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth (1hr 30).

Day 2 We drive (1 hr) to the mountain where Moses died. Nearby, Madaba boasts an ancient mosaic map of the Holy Land. After lunch in an Ottoman-era house, we return to the Dead Sea to relax and swim.

Day 3 We drive (2 hrs) to the Crusader stronghold of Karak. After lunch, we travel the 'King's Highway' to Dana village, perched over a dramatic wadi,



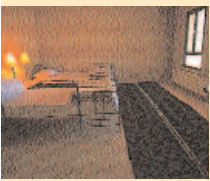
SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATION

The hotels we stay in are characteristic of the area and the towns we visit. You will appreciate that the accommodation is inevitably varied.



Dead Sea
Mövenpick ★★★★★

Hotel with private beach on the Dead Sea, with pool and spa (nights 1&2)



Dana
RSCN Guesthouse

Simple, rustic guesthouse on Wadi Dana Gorge. Shared bathrooms (nights 3&4)



Taybet
Taybet Zaman
★★★★★

Traditional village converted into stylish hotel on panoramic ridge (night 5)



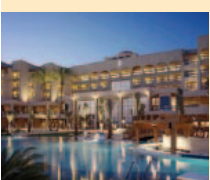
Petra
Mövenpick
★★★★★

Elegant hotel at the entrance to Petra (nights 6-9)



Wadi Rum
Bedouin Camp

Custom camp pitched just for us, deep in the sands of Wadi Rum (night 10)



Aqaba
Intercontinental
★★★★★

Resort with private beach and outdoor pool (nights 11&12)

and light permitting enjoy a gentle walk through terraced gardens (1 hour). The ATG Trust is sponsoring a Bedouin candle-making project in the Dana reserve.

Day 4 Our walk skirts the northern rim of the majestic Wadi Dana, Jordan's finest nature reserve with abundant spring flowers and birds. Return by vehicle (5 miles/5 hrs 30).

Day 5 We walk down through towering sandstone to the desert wastes of the rift valley. Among acacia trees lie the Roman copper mines of Feynan (9.5 miles/6 hrs) and stay overnight at the wilderness lodge.

Day 6 We go by 4-wheel drive to Petra with spectacular views, arriving for a glimpse of the hidden city, before descending to our hotel (10.5 miles/7 hrs).

Day 7 Burckardt's classic entry into the 'Rose Red City' via the Siq, Treasury and Royal Tombs, climbing to the Monastery (7 miles/8 hrs).

Day 8 We re-enter Petra via a rarely used gorge and a recently discovered Byzantine church. A forgotten Nabataean road leads to a caravan station, where merchants once

arrived from Gaza. Return by vehicle (7 miles/7 hrs).

Day 9 After viewing the Treasury in the morning light we climb to the High Place of Sacrifice, descending via the colourful ruins of the Wadi Farasa. Free afternoon (4 miles/4 hrs).

Day 10 Morning drive (2 hrs 30) from Petra to Wadi Rum, whose weathered peaks inspired T. E. Lawrence. Short walk to lunch in the majestic Barrah Canyon, and afternoon camel ride or walk to our camp and an evening under the stars (4 miles/2 hrs 30).

Day 11 Desert sunrise followed by camel trek or walk over seas of red sand between towering sandstone cliffs (6 miles/4 hrs). We drive across open desert to Aqaba, following the trail of Lawrence and his Bedouin army (2 hrs 30).

Day 12 Free day for Aqaba's spice market, Mamluke fort and, weather permitting, some of the finest coral reefs on the Red Sea.

Day 13 Return flight from Aqaba to Amman

WALKING

This is a 13-day trip with 8 days of walking. The length of each walk varies from 2 to a maximum of 8 hours. Hours of walking, which may vary from group to group, include stops for water breaks and sites, but not lunch breaks (generally 1 hour - 1 hour 30). Long days are compensated for by shorter days.

On certain days our walk takes us into the hills where the paths cross a more rugged terrain – please make sure that your footwear provides sufficient ankle support. There is also a limited amount of steep uphill and downhill. Some of the surfaces include loose stone. A walking stick is particularly useful for the mountainous terrain.

The terrain is generally good but is quite demanding in places. We walk across sand (some soft which is hard work), through canyons, and along ridges with well-maintained paths. Most of the rest is on good tracks.

Terrain round Petra very mountainous and elevated and if someone is severely suffering from vertigo, they should think carefully about this trip.

Some of our walks are very weather sensitive. If it is not possible to do a walk due to inclement weather, an alternative will be organised. Any such decision is at the discretion of the Tour Leader.

CLIMATE

Please note that the trip comprises of higher areas and lower areas so temperatures will vary considerably throughout the trip. If anything,

in November and March, you may expect to find the weather somewhat cool, especially in the evenings. Please refer to the temperature chart at the end of this information.

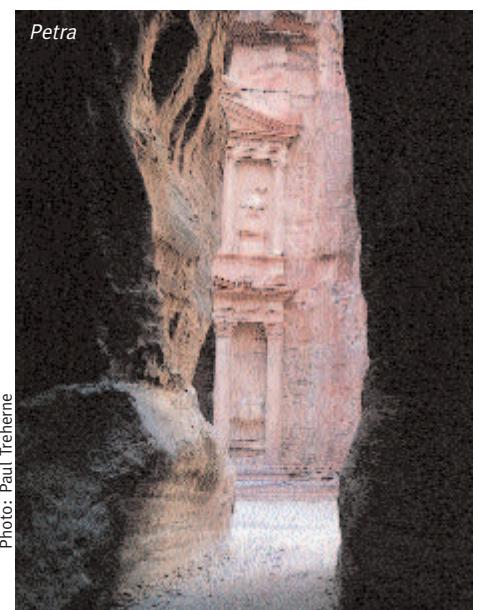
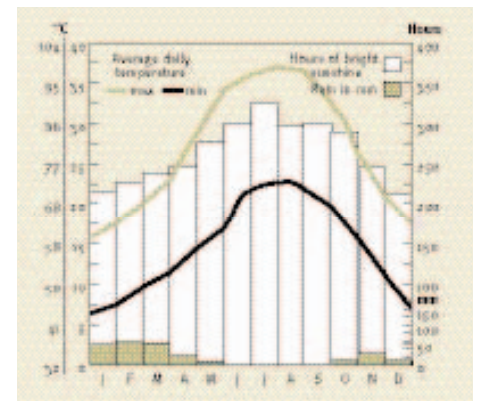


Photo: Paul Treherne

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

PLACES ON ROUTE

Dead Sea: At the northern end of the Great Rift Valley lies the Jordan Valley, the lowest point on the surface of the earth. At the Dead Sea, it is more than 400 meters below sea level. In ancient times, the Jordan Valley was one of the most fertile places in the Middle East, and some of the world's oldest civilisations sprang from this soil. The valley is also important for religious travellers. The Jordan River is known as the place where Jesus was baptised and near where John the Baptist lived. The Dead Sea is believed to be the site of five of the biblical cities: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zebouin and Zoar.

Crusader Forts: The scenic king's Highway is a historic road stretching from Amman to Aqaba, and is littered with the remains of Crusader forts and outposts. The most important among these are Kerak and Shobak. The fort at Kerak is a dark maze of stone-vaulted halls and endless passageways. The castle itself is more imposing than beautiful though it is more impressive as an example of the Crusaders' architectural military genius. Each stronghold was built to be a day's journey from its neighbour. At night, a beacon was lit at each castle to signal to Jerusalem that it was safe.

Petra: A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Petra is the legacy of the Nabataeans who were an industrious Arab people who settled there more than 2000 years ago. From a hidden staging post, they dominated the trade routes of ancient Arabia, levying tolls and sheltering caravans laden with Indian spice and silks, African ivory and animal hides.

The Nabataean Kingdom endured for centuries, and Petra became widely admired for its refined culture, massive architecture and ingenious complex of dams and water channels. By the 16C, Petra was completely lost to the west, and so it remained for 300 almost years. Then in 1812, a Swiss traveller named Johann Ludwig Burckhardt persuaded his guide to take him to the site of the rumoured lost city.

Much of Petra's appeal comes from its spectacular setting deep inside a narrow desert gorge. The sights are best seen in early morning and late afternoon, when the sun warms the multi-colored stone, and you can view the majesty of Petra as Burckhardt saw it in 1812.

Wadi Rum & Desert Vistas: Described by Lawrence as 'vast, echoing and God-like', the Wadi Rum is the largest and most magnificent of Jordan's desert landscapes.

Aqaba: Jordan's window to the sea. Aqaba's reef is healthy and thriving, adorned with untold variety in its coral and fish. There is the Mamluk fort and the castle of Saladin where Lawrence wrested the port from the Ottomans in one of the most dramatic victories of the Arab Revolt.



Suggestions for free days

There are various swimming opportunities on this trip. The Dead Sea Movenpick hotel has a swimming pool as well as a private beach on the Dead Sea. There are also opportunities to swim at Taybet Zaman and in Aqaba. The hotels will provide towels if you require them.

RESTAURANTS

We visit a variety of wonderful eating places and sample some of the best Arabian and Jewish cuisine. Dress is smart/casual. At dinner the local staff will tell you about each evening's menu and if there is anything else that you would prefer, you only have to ask.

CUISINE

Arabic cuisine is one of the most elaborate and sophisticated in the world. Food is also an important part of the culture and like the cardamom-spiced coffee is used to express hospitality and generosity. The local cuisine includes a wide array of savoury appetisers, called *Mezzeh*, aromatic breads, wonderful sweets soaked in honey, pistachios and other delicacies, and Mansaf, Jordan's traditional dish of lamb, yoghurt sauce and rice.

WINES

Alcohol is served in most restaurants and bars in the cities, except during Ramadan (non-Arabs can still get a drink in a hotel). Locally brewed Amstel beer is available, as are excellent wines from surrounding countries. *Araq* is a local liquor similar to Greek *ouzo*, usually mixed with water and ice.

Wine will be served with the evening meals and will be available at lunchtime most days.



Photo: Gail Simmons

SHOPPING

Shopping hours are flexible. Some shops are open from 09.30-13.30 and 15.30-18.00. Others may be open longer hours 08.00-20.00. Many shops close on Fridays, but the Suq does not. Shops close earlier during the month of Ramadan.

Some suggestions of gifts you may like to take back after your visit include:

- handmade glass – once made from sand (now from recycled bottles) which comes in simple shapes and brilliant jewel tones of cobalt blue, bottle green, turquoise, amber and rose;
- sand bottles – as there are more than twenty naturally occurring shades of sand stones, these make colourful and inexpensive presents;
- jewellery – many ornaments are Bedouin in origin;
- ceramics – ‘Jerusalem pottery’ is a highly decorated, colourful and popular form of ceramic ware.

FACILITIES EN ROUTE

Banks: here are ATM machines are available in Madaba, Petra and Aqaba.

Hospitals: There is a hospital in Amman and Aqaba.

Chemists: There are chemists in all the places we visit.

EQUIPMENT/EXTRA ITEMS

We spend a night on this trip camping. We sleep in standing room canvas tents with beds (off the ground), pillows, sheets, blankets, towels, and sleeping bags are available if you get too cold. You may want to bring thermal underwear as the temperatures at night in the desert can drop very low. Also clients have commented that wet-wipes or their equivalent are useful. It is also imperative that you take a torch.

Bring all possible protections against the sun, and clothes for hot days, but also a light waterproof (especially in the Spring), long walking trousers (for days when we visit



Photo: Gail Simmons

mosques), layers for colder temperatures, warm clothes for camping, insect repellent, film (expensive in Jordan), capacious water bottle (possibly the collapsible sort). Swimming things plus mask and snorkel if desired.

HEALTH

For the most accurate up-to-date information we recommend that you visit the National Health Service (Scotland) website: www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk It will give you advice on the requirements for travelling to Jordan concerning immunisation and malaria.

You can of course also consult your doctor.

MOBILE PHONES

Following complaints from clients we would

ask you not to use your mobile phones during the walk or any other group activity.

SECURITY WARNING

Please be especially vigilant in all tourist centres as we have received reports of increased problems with petty theft and pick-pocketing. Take care of your valuables at all times. When out sightseeing, leave spare cash and items of value in your hotel safe along with your passport (but carry a photocopy of it for identification purposes). Beware of bag-snatchers and pickpockets, especially in crowded tourist centres. Don't leave luggage unattended, especially at railway stations. If you are robbed you should report it to the local police.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS

For those travelling on the group flight, there is no need to obtain a visa: a representative at Amman airport will obtain a group visa for you. Independent travellers can visit the following website for visa information: www.travisa.com

TRAVEL TO JORDAN

The recommended destination airport for this trip is Amman. It is a good idea to check the destination on the luggage tag that is stuck onto the ticket at the check-in desk; this helps lessen the possibility of luggage going astray. The recommended check-in time is 2 hours. For those who have requested a vegetarian meal on the plane, it is a good idea to reconfirm this at the check-in.

Please collect your luggage before proceeding

through Customs. In the unlikely event of finding on arrival that your luggage has gone astray en route, please inform the Tour Manager and Tour Leader as soon as possible.

MEETING AT THE AIRPORT

Recommended flights and meeting times for 2009 & 2010 to be confirmed.

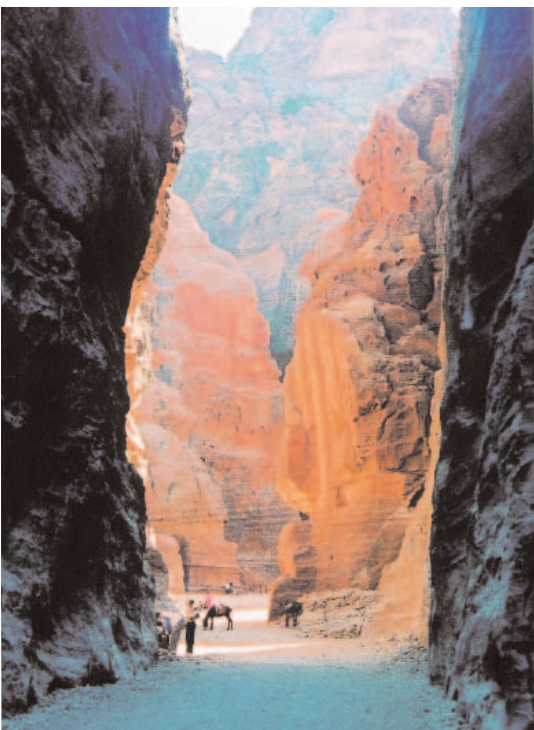


Photo: Katherine Gardener