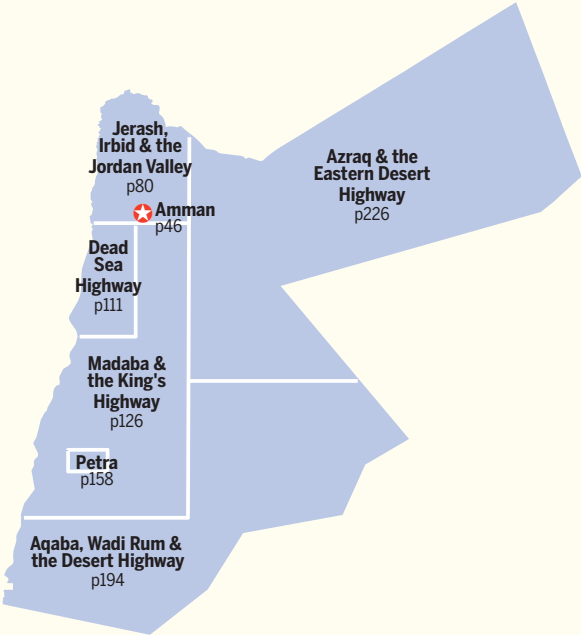


ON THE
ROAD

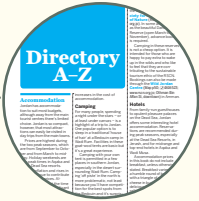
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In-depth reviews, detailed listings
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SURVIVAL
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VITAL PRACTICAL INFORMATION TO
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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Jenny Walker

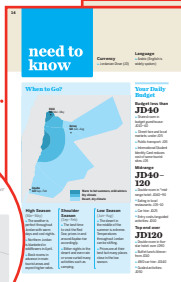
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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions
to help you put together your perfect trip

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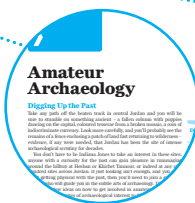
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GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you
can make sense of what you see

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➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first.**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



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Jordan



Umm Qais

Atmospheric ruins laced with wildflowers (p101)

Wadi Jadid

Remote valley of ancient dolmens (p140)

Mt Nebo

View of Moses' Promised Land (p138)

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King's Highway town of mosaics (p128)

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Spectacular site of Salome's dance (p141)

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Desert forts and pleasure domes (p231)

Karak

Crusader castle with a haunting history (p145)

Wadi Rum

Lawrence of Arabia's magical desert (p210)

Top Experiences ›





OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Jenny Walker

Jenny Walker's first involvement with Arabia was as a student, collecting butterflies for her father's book on entomology in Saudi Arabia. Convinced that, with her desert-savvy mum, they were the first Western women to brew tea and eat sardine sandwiches in the desolate interior, she returned to university to see if that was true.

Her studies resulted in a dissertation on Doughty and Lawrence (BA Hons, University of Stirling) and a thesis entitled *Perception of the Arabic Orient in British Literature 1780–1820* (MPhil, University of Oxford). She is currently undertaking a PhD on the role of the desert in modern literature during the period 1950–2000, through the Centre for Travel Writing Studies, University of Nottingham Trent in the UK.

A member of the British Guild of Travel Writers and the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild, she has written extensively on the Middle East for Lonely Planet and other publishers. With her husband, Wing Commander (retired) Sam Owen, she authored *Off-Road in the Sultanate of Oman*, about the country that has been their home for the past 14 years. This work, which is now in its third reprint, covers all parts of Oman and focuses on the geology, botany, zoology and entomology (among other 'ologies') of the country's wild and diverse desert landscapes.

Although deeply attached to Arabia, Jenny has travelled in more than 100 countries from Panama to Mongolia, on various assignments. After eight years of writing study skill courses for the Ministry of Health in Oman, Jenny has served as the Associate Dean for Professional Development at the Caledonian University College of Engineering in Muscat for the past three years.

Contributing Writer

Dr Alon Tal wrote the 'The Dead Sea is Dying' boxed text (p117). He founded the Israel Union for Environmental Defense and the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, and has served as chair of Life and Environment, Israel's umbrella group for green organisations. Professor of the Desert Ecology Department at Ben-Gurion University, he heads the Jewish National Fund's sustainable development committee and still finds time to hike and bike around Israel with his wife and daughters.

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Bestselling guide to Jordan – source: Nielsen BookScan, Australia, UK and USA, March 2011 to February 2012

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itineraries

Whether you have six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



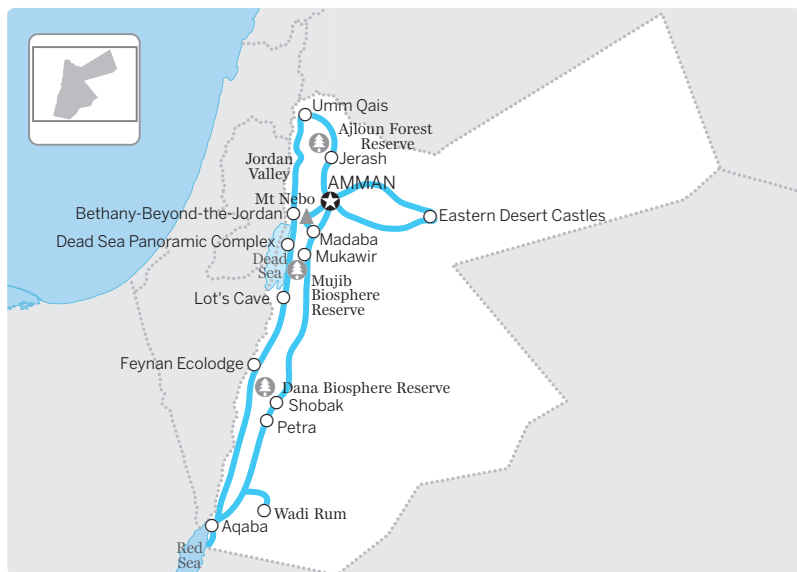
Seven Days

Amman to Aqaba Return

Thanks to its relatively compact size, Jordan rewards even the shortest of getaways, especially if you're prepared to hire a car. On day one take the pulse of the modern Middle East in the souqs and coffeehouses of **Amman**. On day two, piece together a biblical history in the mosaic town of **Madaba** and, like Moses, survey the Promised Land from neighbouring **Mt Nebo**.

Spend day three following the caravans of history along the ancient King's Highway, crossing mighty **Wadi Mujib**. Visit the Crusader castles in **Karak** and **Shobak** en route to **Petra** and listen for hooves clattering through cobbled corridors.

Make an early start on day four to experience the Siq at Petra at its best. Climb to a High Place and picnic under an oleander bush. On day five, slither through Wadi Muthlim and end your visit to the rose-red city at the iconic Monastery. From here, the seaside town of **Aqaba** is only two hours away. On day six, wash off the desert dust in the spectacular coral gardens of the **Red Sea**. On day seven, return to Amman (four hours via Ma'an and the Desert Highway); with an early start, you could have lunch on a **Wadi Rum** sand dune en route.



Two to Three Weeks Around Jordan

In around 18 days you can unravel a path through Jordan's most famous sites, travelling in the footsteps of Roman legionnaires, Crusader craftsmen, Islamic warriors and Bedouin nomads. Begin with two days in **Amman** and a third day at the races – chariot races that is – at the spectacular Roman ruins of **Jerash**.

For a springtime flower show, camp overnight at the oak woodlands of **Ajloun Forest Reserve** or spend day four wading knee-high among daisies at **Umm Qais**. On day five descend to the subtropical **Jordan Valley**, pausing at the point where Jesus was supposedly baptised in **Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan**.

Follow the River Jordan to the **Dead Sea** and treat yourself to a night of luxury in a **Dead Sea resort** and an early morning float on day six at the world's lowest point. Survey the West Bank from a higher vantage at the **Dead Sea Panoramic Complex** en route for **Mujib Biosphere Reserve**. Splash, swim and struggle through 'Petra with water' on the unguided Siq Trail. Dry out along the Dead Sea Highway to **Lot's Cave** and swap stories about the adventure at candlelit **Feynan Ecolodge**.

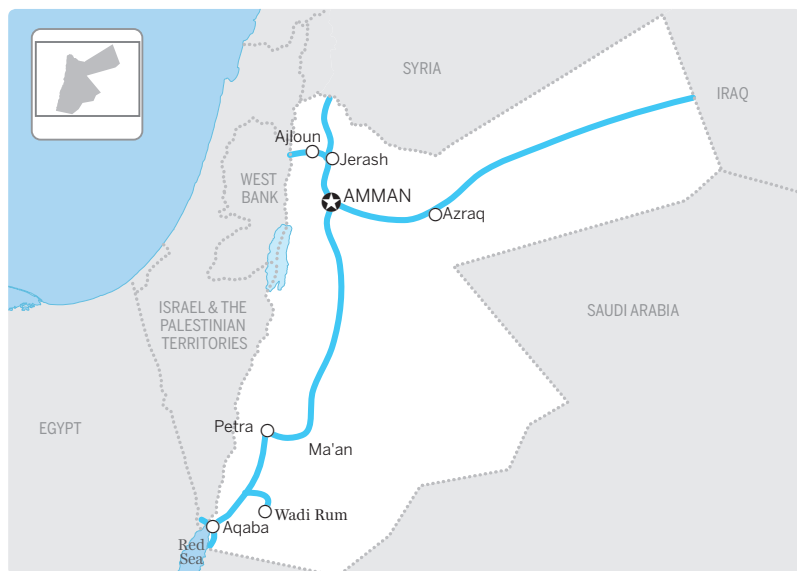
Begin week two chilling in **Aqaba** for two days, sparing time for a dive or snorkel in the fabled **Red Sea**. With batteries recharged, tackle a hike in **Wadi Rum** on day 10 and stay overnight in a Bedouin camp. Spend the next three nights in Wadi Musa, joining Petra by Night for a magical introduction to the world-wonder of **Petra**. End your second week travelling back to Amman along the Desert Highway.

If you have a third week to hand, head north from Petra via the ancient **King's Highway** on day 15, sparing time to pause at the imposing castle of **Shobak**. Break the journey at **Dana Biosphere Reserve** and relax on day 16, taking village walks or a longer hike with a guide.

Spend day 17 making the most of the King's Highway to Madaba, pausing at Karak and Herod's Castle in **Mukawir** en route. Allow two days for some souvenir shopping in **Madaba**, the closest town to the international airport, or at craft shops in nearby **Mt Nebo**. If energy allows, end your visit with a day trip to **Azraq** and the **Eastern desert castles**.



- » (above) Horse-drawn carriage, the Siq, Wadi Musa (p179)
- » (left) Roman theatre (p52), Amman



Ten Days Border to Border

Jordan is plumb in the middle of a richly historic region, making it an essential part of a Middle East adventure. This 10-day route by public transport assumes an entry point by ferry from Egypt or by taxi from Israel and the Palestinian Territories. If coming from the latter, check the visa and security situation for onward travel to Syria or Iraq (not recommended at the time of writing).

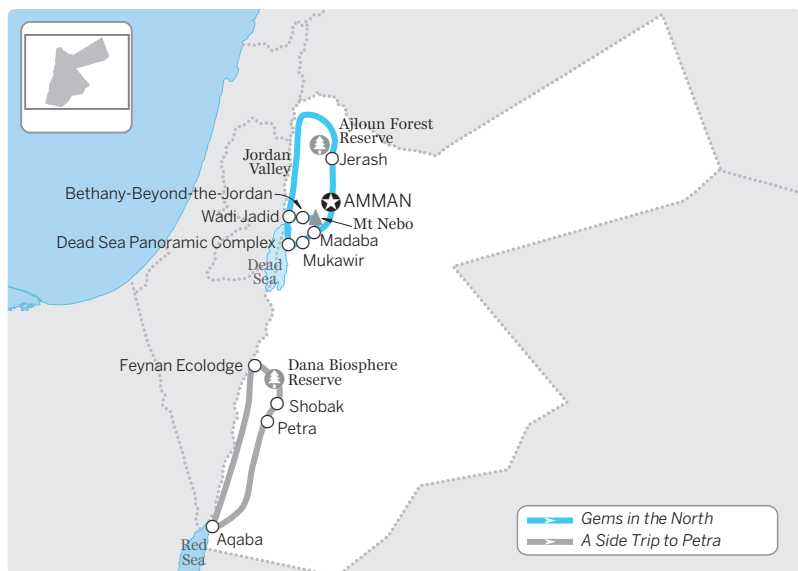
Spend the first two days acclimatising to a new country in **Aqaba**: Jordan has a distinct character, immediately felt in the souqs and open-air restaurants of this seaside town. Spare time for a swim – Jordan's access to the **Red Sea** may be diminutive but the coral gardens are pristine and relatively unvisited. On day three take the morning bus and go in search of 'El Lawrence' in the magnificent desert of **Wadi Rum**. Don a bandana and hop astride a camel and head into the red sand dunes for an overnight camp with the Bedouin.

On day four rise at dawn with the locals, ready to catch the minibus to **Petra**. With two days in the pink city you can hike to the High Places, learn to cook Jordanian food at Petra Kitchen and watch the sunset from the Monastery.

On day six head north to Amman on the frequent Desert Highway buses via Ma'an. Spend a night sampling city nightlife, including an evening's stroll downtown through Amman's Roman ruins. Hike from the Citadel on day seven and reward the effort with the capital's best-loved Arabic street food at Hashem Restaurant.

If you're heading for the Iraqi border on day eight, stop over for two nights at **Azraq**. Azraq Fort was Lawrence's winter hideout and the nearby Azraq Wetland Reserve is a reminder of the fragility of life in the black Badia (stone desert). After crossing such barren lands, the shrunken waters of the oasis seem miraculous. Getting to the border from here requires patience but is possible.

If heading for the Syrian or Israeli border, spend day eight roaming the Roman ruins of **Jerash** and stay overnight in **Ajloun**. With a crumbling castle, Qala'at ar-Rabad, and a nature reserve with easy hiking trails, Ajloun is a peaceful place to spend a last day in Jordan. Although the borders with Syria or Israel and the Palestinian Territories are nearby, allow time for a change of minibus in Jerash or Irbid.



Four Days Gems in the North

With a long weekend, most visitors head straight for Petra on an over-nighter from Amman. For a more rewarding use of time, leave the pink city for a longer visit and focus instead on Jordan's gems in the north. This trip bypasses the capital.

Collect a car from the airport in Amman and head to the Roman ruins of **Jerash**. On day two, amble down to the **Jordan Valley** via **Ajloun** and the Islamic castle of Qala'at ar-Rabad. Pause at the point where John supposedly baptised Jesus at **Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan** and book in for some extreme R&R at the lowest place on earth. If you can tear yourself away from the fluffy towels of the region's best **spas** (which come complete with a bob in the **Dead Sea** and a therapeutic mud pack), then drive via the **Dead Sea Panoramic Complex** on day three to steaming Hammamat Ma'in and take the scenic road to **Mukawir**, where Salome is said to have danced for John's head on a platter. Skirt the plateau ridge to the friendly mosaic town of **Madaba** and on day four visit **Mt Nebo**, or take an escort to the dolmens of **Wadi Jadid**. From Madaba, allow an hour to return the car to the airport.

Six Days A Side Trip to Petra

Travellers frequently ask the question: 'Is it worth making the effort to get to Petra as a side trip from Israel or Egypt?' The answer is a resounding 'yes!' While you can just about do the round trip in three days, the experience will be much more rewarding in four or five days. Add one additional day and be prepared to use taxis to make this trip viable in the time available.

A trip to Petra from neighbouring countries invariably involves an overnight stop in **Aqaba**. With plenty of accommodation, a lively ambience and excellent seafood, this is no hardship. On day two, take the early bus to Wadi Musa, the town closest to the Nabataean treasures of **Petra**. Amble through the Siq at midday, missing the morning tour groups. Watch the sunset turn the Royal Tombs pink, and return to the lively traveller scene in the town's Cave Bar. On day three, hike through Wadi Muthlim and end the day at the Monastery.

Follow the ghosts of centurions and Crusaders along the King's Highway to **Shobak** on day four and stay overnight at the **Dana Biosphere Reserve**. Hike down to eco-friendly **Feynan Ec lodge** on day five, prearranging transport along the Dead Sea Highway back to Aqaba on day six.

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