

Madaba & the King's Highway

مادبا & الطريق الملوكي

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Why Go?

Occupying the central highlands and interrupted by the mighty Wadi Mujib, Madaba and the points of interest that punctuate the King's Highway lie at the heart of ancient Jordan. From prehistoric dolmens in rolling pastureland, panoramic sites of biblical importance and exquisite Roman mosaics lying along old trade routes, to well-preserved Crusader castles, there is something fascinating to see along the entire length of this central region.

That doesn't mean to say that the region is only of interest to history buffs or religious pilgrims. As home to some of the most diverse communities, including Jordan's Christian minority, and encompassing dramatic and highly varied landscapes, this is quintessential Jordan. With good accommodation, typical Jordanian dining and opportunities for outdoor adventure, it's easy to engage with both town and country in a region that is still surprisingly off the beaten track for most visitors.

Best Places to Stay

- » Black Iris Hotel (p133)
- » Mariam Hotel (p133)
- » Karak Rest House (p147)
- » Dana Guest House (p153)

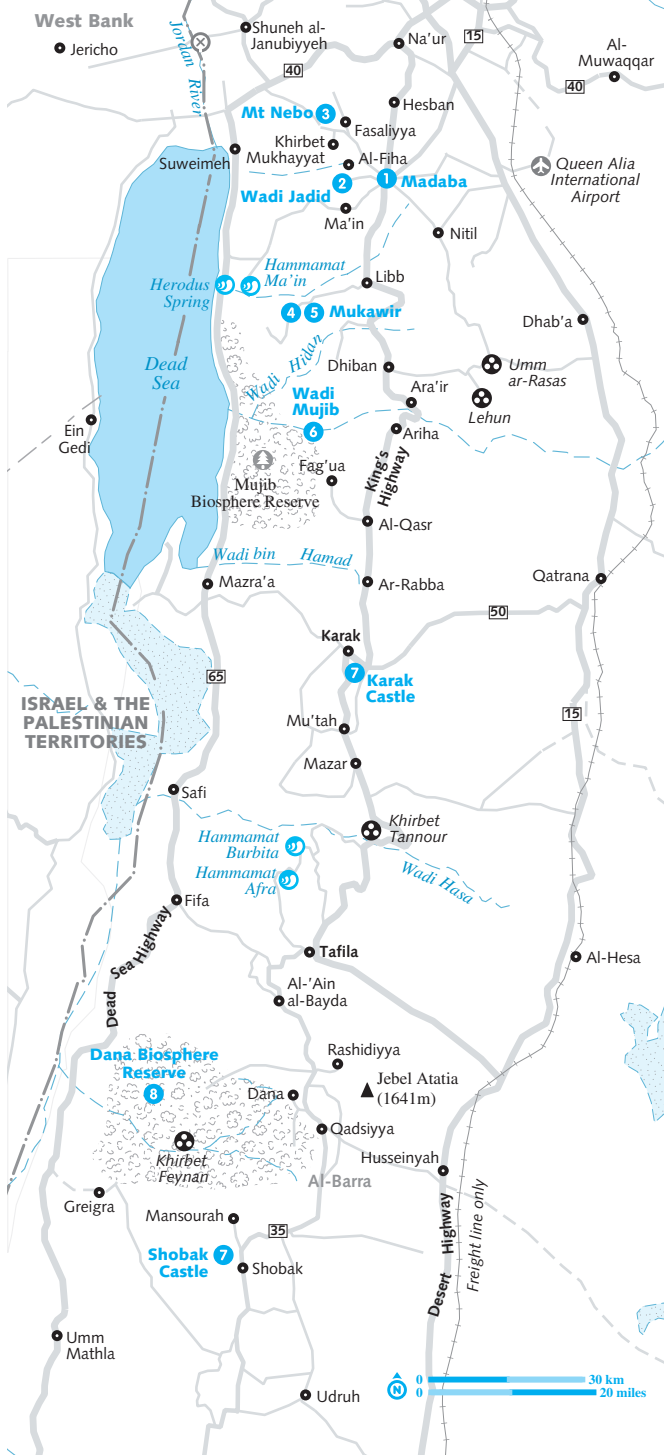
Best Places to Eat

- » Haret Jdoudna Complex & Cafe (p136)
- » Adonis Restaurant (p136)
- » Ayola Coffeeshop & Bar (p136)
- » Asa Moses Restaurant (p139)

When to Go

Enjoyable year-round, the higher altitude towns along the King's Highway often experience snow in winter providing a spectacular backdrop to crusader castles. The cold air brings cut-glass clarity to the region's sweeping panoramas by day, and chilly nights inspire huddles around wood fires in true Arab tradition.

For hiking, the season extends from March (when trail-side flowers are at their best) until 30th October. At this time, while Jordan's lowlands shrivel in the heat, this region's uplands offer relative cool, grapes and figs in abundance, raptor migration and grand sunsets.



Central Highlights

- 1 Piece together early Christian history in the mosaics of **Madaba** (p129) and visit a modern workshop to see how they were made
- 2 Take shade under an ancient stone dolmen in **Wadi Jadid** (p140)
- 3 Survey the Promised Land – that took almost 2000 years to deliver and cost the region dearly – from Moses' memorial at **Mt Nebo** (p138)
- 4 Dance with Salome's ghost at **Mukawir** (p141), before unveiling the spot where a reluctant Herod supposedly beheaded John the Baptist
- 5 Watch the ladies at **Bani Hamida** (p142) weave their past into the shape of a new future
- 6 Savour an eagle-eye view of **Wadi Mujib** (p143) from the viewpoint
- 7 Listen to the thunder of ghostly hoves at **Karak Castle** (p145) and **Shobak Castle** (p155), Jordan's most impressive Crusader castles
- 8 Find peace (and ibex if you're lucky) at **Dana Biosphere Reserve** (p151), on a hike from the temperate high ground to the desert landscape of Wadi Araba