

# welcome to Jordan



## Ancient Allure

Jordan has welcomed high volumes of visitors since camel caravans plied the legendary King's Highway transporting frankincense in exchange for spices. Nabataean tradesmen, Roman legionnaires, Muslim armies and zealous Crusaders have all passed through the land we now call Jordan, leaving spectacular monuments behind. In turn, these monuments have provoked a modern wave of visitors who, since the early 19th century, have been fascinated to discover this potent past or who have gone in search of the origins of their faith.

Jordan, then, is no stranger to the tourist and there are many ways to enjoy a

visit – on a short package holiday, on a specialist archaeological tour, by hiring a Bedouin guide on arrival, or simply by hopping in a hire car and travelling where the fancy takes you. Minimal planning and only a modest budget is required to reach the main sites of interest, although booking a room in major destinations is recommended during the peak season in April.

## One of the World's Wonders

Thanks to its small size and large diversity, Jordan repays even the shortest visit with sights and activities that are truly world-class. Petra, the ancient Nabataean city locked in the heart of Jordan's sandstone



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*At the crossroads of history for more than 2000 years, the kingdom of Jordan is a treasure trove of world-class heritage sites and spectacular desert scenery.*

(left) Sunset at Petra (p160)  
(below) Bedouin man with oud



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escarpments, is the jewel in the crown of the country's many antiquities. The walk through the Siq to the Treasury (Petra's defining monument) is sublime in every sense and leaves an indelible impression on even the most jaded of visitors. It takes at least two days to make the most of a visit, particularly as the sites are far flung and require a fair amount of walking.

## **A Taste of the Middle East**

Petra is a highly persuasive reason to visit Jordan but it is far from the only reason. Apart from the many other spectacular historical and biblical sites, the country offers striking desert landscapes, a salty

sea at the lowest point on earth, magnificent springtime flowers scattered across the interior, and rural towns that keep continuity with the traditions of the past.

It takes tolerance to host endless volumes of incomers and Jordan has displayed that virtue in spades, absorbing in recent times hundreds of thousands of refugees from Palestine and Iraq, as well as accommodating ever-growing numbers of tourists who are often insensitive to conservative Jordanian values. While the country has challenges, particularly in terms of modernisation and growing urbanisation, it remains one of the best countries in which to gain an impression of the Middle East without the often attendant difficulties.