

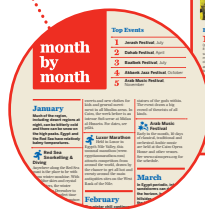
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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

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

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UNDERSTAND THE MIDDLE EAST

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

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

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Anthony Ham

**Stuart Butler, Zora O'Neill, Olivia Pozzan, Daniel Robinson,
Anthony Sattin, Paul Smith, Jenny Walker**

➤ 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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Middle East



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



Anthony Ham

Coordinating Author

Anthony first landed in Damascus in 1998 and couldn't bear to leave. He stayed three months and returns at every available opportunity. His first job for Lonely Planet was the Iraq chapter of this guide back in 1999, and he has since written or contributed to the guides to Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Libya, and five editions of this *Middle East* guide. He has also worked in Australia as a refugee lawyer, with clients from the Middle East, and has a Masters

degree in Middle Eastern politics. Anthony is now based in Madrid and writes for magazines and newspapers around the world.



Stuart Butler

Iraq Hailing from southwest England, Stuart Butler has travelled widely throughout the Middle East. Visiting Iraq for Lonely Planet, though, was one of the most enjoyable travel experiences he has ever had – rarely has he encountered a country with such a genuinely friendly and welcoming population. Stuart's travels for Lonely Planet and various surf magazines have also taken him beyond Iraq – from the desert beaches of Yemen to the coastal jungles of Colombia.

He lives in southwest France with his wife and son. Read about his travels at <http://stuartbutler-journalist.blogspot.fr>.

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Egypt Zora lived in Cairo in the 1990s while working on her Masters degree in Arabic literature and has contributed to more than a dozen guidebooks, including two editions of Lonely Planet's *Egypt*. She writes about food and travel for the *New York Times* and *Conde Nast Traveler*, and is currently working on a book about Arabic language and travel in the Middle East. She lives in Astoria, Queens, and blogs about her travels at www.rovinggastronome.com.

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Olivia Pozzan

Lebanon While working as a veterinarian for an Arabian Prince in the UAE, Olivia travelled extensively throughout the Gulf region and the Middle East, developing an affinity for its magnificent deserts and rugged landscapes. She has contributed to a dozen Lonely Planet guidebooks, from *Australia to Italy* and the *Middle East*. While researching Lebanon for this edition, she experienced an incredible hike through a night-time snowstorm. When not exploring the world's most exotic places, she lives the Aussie beach lifestyle and is a practising veterinarian.

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OVER MORE
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Daniel Robinson

Israel & the Palestinian Territories Brought up in the San Francisco Bay Area and near Chicago, Daniel also spent part of his childhood in Jerusalem, a bit of his youth at Kibbutz Lotan and many years in Tel Aviv, where he worked on a PhD in late Ottoman history and covered suicide bombings for the Associated Press. A Lonely Planet author since 1989, he holds a BA in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton and an MA in Jewish History from Tel Aviv University.

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Anthony Sattin

Syria Anthony Sattin first fell for Syria more than twenty years ago. He has contributed to Lonely Planet's *Egypt*, *Morocco* and *Algeria* guides and to several anthologies, including *A House Somewhere*, which he edited. He contributes to a number of publications, including the *Sunday Times* and *Conde Nast Traveller* and presents documentaries for BBC radio. Anthony's highly acclaimed non-fiction includes *A Winter on the Nile*, *The Pharaoh's Shadow* and *Lifting the Veil*.

Read more about Anthony at anthony.sattin.com.



Paul Smith

Turkey From an early age, and with a vague and naive ambition to be the next David Attenborough, Paul dreamed of exploring the remotest areas of the globe in search of wildlife. While researching this edition Paul took a beating billed as a massage in a hamam, ate more than his own weight in *Iskenders* and came to the realisation that there probably isn't another country on earth with more to offer the visitor than Turkey.



Jenny Walker

Jordan Jenny Walker's first involvement with the Middle East was as a student, contributing to her father's book on entomology in Saudi Arabia. Convinced she and her mum were the first Western women to brew tea in the desolate interior, she returned to university to see if that were true in a dissertation (BA Hons) and thesis on the Arabic Orient (MPhil, University of Oxford). Jenny has travelled in more than 100 countries. She is Associate Dean (PD) at Caledonian University

College of Engineering, Oman.

itineraries

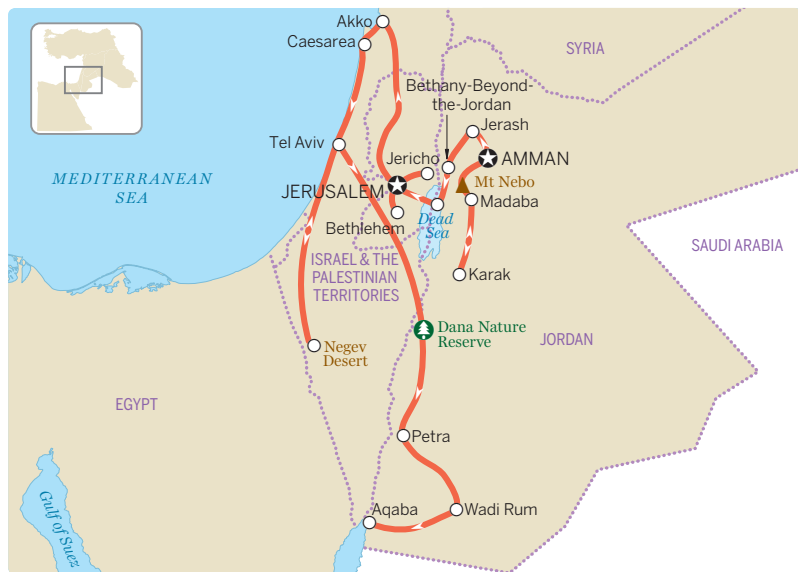
Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Two Weeks

Amman to Cairo

Your journey starts in **Amman**, an agreeably cosmopolitan city with a handful of Roman ruins offset by brilliant restaurants. Jordan may be small, but there's a lot to pack in, including a visit to the **Dead Sea** – it's an easy day trip from the capital. A detour to **Jerusalem** takes you to the Middle East's spiritual heart. Returning to Jordan, spend some time exploring fabulous **Petra**, arguably the Middle East's most beguiling ancient city. Further south, Petra's rival to the title of Jordan's most spectacular site is **Wadi Rum**, a soulful red-hued desert landscape that rewards those who spend a couple of days exploring, either by camel or 4WD. From here, leave Jordan behind and cross the Red Sea at **Aqaba** to **Nuweiba** in Egypt, then continue on to **Dahab**, where just about every traveller pauses for at least a couple of days, including time for snorkelling in the Red Sea and sunrise at **Mt Sinai**. That should just leave enough time to make for **Cairo**, home to the Pyramids of Giza and the extraordinary Egyptian Museum, and the gateway to Egypt's many charms.



Three Weeks

Jordan, Israel & the Palestinian Territories

A beacon of stability and home to a collection of attractions wholly out of proportion to its size, Jordan is worth as much time as you can give it. **Amman** may lack the cachet of other Middle Eastern cities, but most travellers end up staying longer than planned. From here, it's easy to make side trips to many of Jordan's must-see destinations; the echoes of Moses at **Mt Nebo**, the mosaics of **Madaba** and the Crusader castle of **Karak** all deserve your time. When you're ready to move on, head to **Jerash**, a quiet yet rewarding ancient site with a wonderful colonnaded way running through its heart. Travelling south, **Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan**, the place where Christ was baptised, resonates strongly with pilgrims, while floating in the buoyant waters of the **Dead Sea** is a signature Middle Eastern experience.

Across the Jordan River in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, beguiling **Jerusalem** is the site of so much Middle Eastern history that it can be difficult to believe you're actually there. From Jerusalem, your ability to visit the biblical towns of **Bethlehem** and **Jericho** will depend entirely on the prevailing security situation. In the north of the country, timeless **Akko** and the world-class ruins of **Caesarea** are worth as much time as you can give them. On your way back, don't miss **Tel Aviv**, a lively place to let your hair down and a chance to discover the other side of Israeli life that you rarely hear anything about. Its antithesis, the **Negev Desert**, is a wilderness area that you simply don't expect to find in this ever-crowded corner of the earth.

Crossing back into Jordan, the spectacular scenery of **Dana Nature Reserve** shouldn't be missed, while **Petra** is an astonishing place, one of those rare destinations where the reality outstrips even the most lofty of expectations. If time allows, plan to spend at least a couple of days here, so you can savour the main tombs as well as visit the more outlying areas of the site. The same applies to **Wadi Rum** – you could get a taste of this soulful place in a day, but you'll gain a deeper understanding of its gravitas if you sleep out under the stars for at least one night. The laid-back Red Sea port of **Aqaba**, with world-class diving and snorkelling, provides the perfect place to rest at journey's end.



- » (above) Fishing port at Byblos (Jbail; p361), Lebanon
- » (left) Wadi Rum (322), Jordan



Three Weeks Turkish Trails

Istanbul is at once a destination in its own right and the starting point of so many Turkish journeys. You could spend a week here, but three days should give you a taste before you move on to visit the **Gallipoli Peninsula**, with its poignant echoes of WWI, and **Troy**, where altogether more ancient battles took place. Work your way around the coast, pausing at the mighty ruins of **Ephesus**, which rank among the Middle East's most imposing, and lingering in the delightful Mediterranean villages of **Kaş** or **Olympos** where you'll wonder why life can't always be like this. On your way east, cut inland for long enough to marvel at the otherworldly landscapes of **Kapadokya (Cappadocia)** that seem to have sprung from a wonderfully childlike imagination. A detour to the east takes you to the brooding statues of **Mt Nemrut**, surely one of Turkey's most thought-provoking sights. On your way back to Istanbul, break up the journey in **Konya**, the spiritual home of the Sufis, and beautiful **Pamukkale**.

One Month Among the Kurds

Begin in **Ankara**, the heart of Turkey's secularist Atatürk cult of personality, where you'll find a splendid museum and a fine citadel. On your way southeast into the Kurdish heartland, make the obligatory stop in **Cappadocia** and **Mt Nemrut** before exploring the rarely visited but always fascinating cities of **Gaziantep** and **Şanlıurfa**. Nearby **Mardin** combines a beautiful setting with equally beautiful architecture and a fascinating cultural mix. By the time you reach **Diyarbakir**, with its intriguing architecture, you're deep in Kurdish territory. Head for **Doğubayazit**, one of eastern Turkey's most extraordinary sights, with a legendary castle and stunning views of **Mt Ararat**; the mountain can be climbed, although most travellers content themselves with not-so-distant views from the town. Further south, **Van** is home to the lovely Armenian church on Akdamar Island. If you've come this far, it's likely you're en route to Iraq. If it's safe, cross into **Zakho** with its iconic bridge, then spend as long as they'll let you getting to know **Amadiya**, **Dohuk**, **Al-Kosh**, **Lalish** and **Gali Ali Beg**, before finishing up in **Erbil**, one of the oldest cities on earth, but one rushing headlong towards the future.



Two to Three Weeks Lebanon & Syria

How much of this itinerary you're able to complete will depend entirely on whether Syria has returned to peace. If it remains unsafe, the Lebanon part of this itinerary could be completed in around 10 days, or a more leisurely two weeks. Either way, begin in that great survivor among Middle Eastern cities, **Beirut**, a glamorous metropolis that somehow manages to encapsulate the Middle East in complicated microcosm while also clinging to its Mediterranean *joie de vivre* – a stroll along the waterfront Corniche at sunset will show you what we mean. Check the security situation before setting out, and if it's OK, spend some time sweeping through the Phoenician heartland of the south – **Sidon**, the **Temple of Echmoun** and **Tyre** – where you'll see ruins that rank among the oldest traces of civilisation found in the Middle East. Save a couple of days for the wild landscapes, palaces and time-worn villages of the pretty **Chouf Mountains**. Returning north to the Bekaa Valley, **Baalbek** is one of the Middle East's premier Roman sites, an extraordinarily well-preserved proliferation of temples set against the distant backdrop of snow-capped mountains. Nearby **Aanjar** is a lesser-known Islamic archaeological jewel, with a walled Umayyad city that dates back 1300 years and bears traces of Roman town planning in its layout. If Syria is safe, cross to peerless **Damascus**, one of the oldest and most hospitable cities on earth. Spend a week or more taking in the desert ruins of **Palmyra**, the evocative souqs of **Aleppo** and the Crusader castle of **Crac des Chevaliers**. Back in Lebanon, **Tripoli** has some fabulous Mamluk architecture, not to mention a reputation for irresistible sweets. The pretty fishing port of **Byblos** contrasts nicely with the mountain drama around **Bcharré**. To really appreciate the landscape, go hiking through the **Qadisha Valley**, and then put on your skis at the **Cedars**.



One Month Land of the Pharaohs

All Egyptian journeys revolve around **Cairo**, and you'll return here again and again. Apart from being the Middle East's largest and most clamorous metropolis, Cairo is also home to the iconic Pyramids of Giza, the Egyptian Museum and a wonderful coffeehouse culture. If you can tear yourself away, begin by heading east to the Sinai Peninsula. Using utterly chilled **Dahab** as your base, climb **Mt Sinai**, visit **St Katherine's Monastery** and possibly take an excursion out into the desert with the Bedouin. Spend the remaining days, as many as you can spare, lounging in seaside restaurants and stirring only long enough to go for a long and lazy snorkel. But be warned – just about everyone who comes to Dahab ends up staying longer than they planned. Return to Cairo, then head north to **Alexandria**, Egypt's sophisticated and quintessentially Mediterranean city. It feels like nowhere else in the country, and a combination of terrific museums and great food gives you further reason to visit. A *really* long journey west is worth it for your first sight of **Siwa**, one of the Sahara's great oasis outposts and home to an ancient temple in the sands. Dusty desert trails lead to the **Bahariya Oasis**, the starting point for expeditions into the White and Black Deserts. It's back to Cairo to enjoy the pleasures of civilisation for a day or two, then jump on a train south to **Aswan**, one of Africa's loveliest riverside spots. There's a monastery and museum to anchor your explorations of the city, but its real charm is its proximity to the Nile. Take the detour south into Nubia to **Abu Simbel**, one of Egypt's most extraordinary temples, then from Aswan sail slowly up the Nile aboard a felucca all the way to **Luxor**, home to the richest collection of Pharaonic sites in the country. Here you'll find so much of what drew you to Egypt in the first place, including the Temples of Karnak, the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens.

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