



WORLD DISCOVERY
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

Biblical Jordan



The Roman ruins of Umm Qais (the Biblical Gadara) above the Sea of Galilee

DAY 1 – Arrival in Amman.

On arrival at Amman's Queen Alia International Airport you will be met outside customs by a representative of World Discovery and taken by private car direct to your hotel.

DAY 2 – Jerash.

After a leisurely breakfast, your private guide will meet you and take you to the breathtaking ruins of **Jerash**, one of the best-preserved Roman cities in the Middle East boasting some magnificent monuments. The **South Theatre**, the largest and most magnificent of 3 in the city, was built in the 1st century AD and held 3,000 spectators. The **Cardo** (the main boulevard) is some 800 metres long, flanked by majestic columns and its stone paving is marked by deep grooves worn by centuries of metal-wheeled traffic. The unique **Oval Plaza** contains some beautiful stone paving following the curves of the Ionic colonnades. Dominating the site with its towering limestone columns is the imposing **Temple of Artemis**, built in the 2nd century AD and considered the most important building in the ancient city. Return to Amman for an afternoon at leisure.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 3 - Ajloun, Umm Qais.

After breakfast drive north to the 12th century Arab castle of **Ajloun** which dominates the surrounding countryside, and then on to **Umm Qais**, the Roman Gadara referred to in the Gospels; this evocative site overlooks the **Sea of Galilee** to the west. Return to Amman in the late afternoon.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.

DAY 4 - Bethany, Mt. Nebo, Madaba.

After breakfast drive down to **Bethany** on the banks of the River Jordan. Recent archaeological research has identified a site on the east bank of the River Jordan, close to the Dead Sea, as **Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan**, mentioned in the Gospel of St John, the place where John the Baptist lived and where he almost certainly baptised Jesus Christ. This low-lying area, closed off for many years as a military zone, was reopened in 1994 and a wealth of ancient sites have since been uncovered, including Byzantine churches, baptismal pools from Roman and Byzantine times and lodges for pilgrims. This is the Biblical **Plains of Moab**. The place where Jesus was baptised is no longer in the river itself, which used to have a much higher water level. Visit the remains of the 6th century Church of John the Baptist. Nearby is the new Greek Orthodox Church of the same name, built in 2005. before continuing to **Mount Nebo**, Jordan's most important Biblical site. It was from here that Moses is believed to have viewed the Promised Land "flowing with milk and honey" in the valley below. The view to the west is indeed impressive, a vista that includes the Dead Sea, the West Bank, the Jordan River, and, on a clear day, Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The modern Serpentine Cross represents the bronze serpent taken up by Moses in the desert, as well as the cross upon which Jesus was crucified. The Moses Memorial Church at Mount Nebo contains some beautiful mosaic floors of hunting and pastoral scenes (the church, however, is currently closed for renovation work). A short journey to the town of **Madaba** next takes you to the Greek Orthodox Church of St. George with its superb mosaic map of Palestine. Clearly visible on the map are Jerusalem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dead Sea, the Jordan River, Nablus, Hebron, Jericho, Egypt and the Nile River, Turkey and Lebanon. The mosaic was made around 560 AD, originally composed of over 2.3 million pieces, and measured a staggering 25 by 5 metres. Dinner and overnight in Madaba.

Meals included: Full breakfast, dinner.

DAY 5 - Umm er Rasas, Kerak. Drive to Petra.

Today's journey takes you along the scenic **King's Highway**, the main north-south trade route through Transjordan since prehistoric times. Stop at **Umm er Rasas** to see one of the best preserved Roman mosaic floors in the Middle East, excavated as recently as 1987, in the ruins of the Church of St Stephen. Continue to the majestic **Crusader castle of Kerak**. Built by the Crusaders in the mid 12th century, it was only briefly occupied by them, being captured by Salah-ad-Din (Saladin) after the Battle of Hattin in 1187. It was subsequently enlarged and strengthened over the centuries under Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman occupiers. The castle today continues to dominate the surrounding countryside from its rugged spur, and is justifiably one of Jordan's top attractions. Visit the barracks, kitchens, a ruined chapel, the Mamluk keep, the remains of a Mamluk palace and the atmospheric dungeons. As well as exploring this masterpiece of 12th century military architecture, you will have lunch in the town of Kerak before continuing south. In the late afternoon today's historic journey ends with arrival in **Petra**, the highlight of any visit to Jordan.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.

DAY 6 - Petra.

No photograph can prepare you for the impact of first seeing the Treasury of Petra as you approach the ancient city along the famous 'Siq', a narrow winding defile through the amazing rose-coloured mountains. Petra is undoubtedly one of the world's great destinations, an entire city carved out of the living rock in Biblical times. Built by the Nabateans, Petra dominated the great caravan routes of the Middle East until it was mysteriously abandoned and forgotten for centuries. It was only in 1812 that Petra was rediscovered - by the Swiss explorer John Burckhart. Your guide will be with you all morning to show you the lower city. You may return to the hotel for lunch or stay on in Petra to explore further. The two most popular visits are to the wonderful Monastery (El Deir) or to the High Place of Sacrifice, both involving some steep ascents but well worth the effort.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 7 – Wadi Rum. Return to Amman.

After breakfast drive to **Wadi Rum**, one of Jordan's most spectacular destinations. Enjoy a 90 minute jeep ride through the surreal landscape of this amazing valley, before returning along the Desert Highway to Amman.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 8 - Depart for home.

Private transfer to Queen Alia International Airport for your flight home.

Meals included: Full breakfast.