



treasures of the lost city: itinerary

day 1 - amman

Saturday. Welcome to Amman. Airport arrival and included transfer to your hotel. Overnight - Amman.

day 2 - jerash & umm qais

Amman - Jerash - Umm Qais - Amman - breakfast. This morning we visit Jerash, 45 km north of Amman. Second only to Petra in tourist appeal, the 2,000 year-old Graeco-Roman ruins of Jerash which are set in the bowl of a well-watered valley, are recognised as the world's bestpreserved Roman provincial city. Exemplifying the finesse of Roman urban life, Jerash possesses a large number of striking monuments including Hadrian's Arch, an impressive Hippodrome which as a sports field once held up to 15,000 spectators, two immense temples dedicated to Zeus and Artemis, a unique oval Forum which gracefully links the main north-south axis of Jerash, a colonnaded street paved with original stones and the rut marks of chariots, a nymphaeum replete with ancient fountains trimmed with dolphins, two theatres, one of which offers amazing acoustic abilities even today and an almost complete circuit of city walls.

After touring the site we head to the Jerash Hippodrome to attend the RACE (Roman Army and Chariot Experience) re-enactment show, with Roman Army demonstrations, gladiatorial contests and an exciting 7-lap chariot race. This afternoon we drive on to Umm Qais, in Jordan's far north west corner. Umm Qais is the modern name for the site of the ancient Graeco-Roman town of Gadara, one of the cities of the Decapolis, which provides wonderful panoramic views over the Sea of Galilee and the Golan Heights.

Today, a considerable portion of the original Roman amphitheatre has survived and next to the theatre is a colonnaded street that was once the town's commercial heart. Also near the black basalt theatre are the columns of the great Basilica of Gadara. We tour the site of Biblical Gadara before returning to Amman. Overnight - Amman

day 3 - mt nebo & petra by night

Amman - Mt Nebo - Madaba - Shobak - Petra - breakfast. Today we visit Amman's National Archaeological Museum, The Forum and Citadel Hill, which represent the few remaining Roman ruins in Amman. The hill affords a sweeping view of the city. We drive on to Mt. Nebo, the site from which it is believed that Moses saw the Promised Land, to enjoy the panoramic view and the restored Byzantine mosaics.

In nearby Madaba, we enjoy a traditional Jordanian feast at Haret Jdoudna, one of Jordan's best restaurants, and then walk through the bustling market town to visit the Archaeological Park, St. George Church and Museum. Mentioned in the Old Testament, the prime attractions of the venerable town of Madaba are its many 6th-century Byzantine mosaics. Perhaps the most impressive of these is an enormous 6th-century map of Palestine and Egypt that we will see in St. George's Greek Orthodox Church.

We make a brief stop at the atmospheric Shobak Crusader Castle before continuing to Petra. Shobak was built in the early 12th century and stands on the edge of a rocky mountain, looking out over the fruit trees below. There are two churches inside to visit, as well as a keep with Quaranic inscriptions. There are also some exciting catacombs which contain Islamic tablets and Christian carvings, as well as rocks that were used in catapults and what many say is Saladin's tomb.

After hotel check-in, we gather at the Petra Visitors' Center to attend the incredible Petra by Night candlelight walk. We take an atmospheric walk through the narrow Siq to reach the famous facade of the Treasury, lit up by over 1500 candles. Here we sit and listen to haunting Bedouin music, soak up the wonderful surroundings and starlit sky above us. Lunch and overnight - Petra.

day 4 - petra

Breakfast. Chief among Jordan's archaeological riches is the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Rose City of Petra. The city was first settled around the 6th century BC by the Nabataean tribe from Western Arabia. The Nabataeans carved their capital in the surrounding canyons and hills of sandstone. The entrance to the city is through a narrow and deep winding trail-like fissure in the rocks known as the Siq. The rocks give way to reveal the most awesome sight, that of the famous facade of the Kazneh - the Treasury of Petra.

As the Treasury is passed, the hidden valley widens to reveal the remains of the city proper including dozens of ancient Nabataean tombs and a Roman rock-carved street lined with temples, royal tombs, public buildings and a vast amphitheatre. Today we enjoy a full day's touring in Petra, including entry through the Siq and visits to the Khazneh, Theater, Byzantine Church and Museum. The energetic can ascend the 900+ steps to the Monastery, Petra's largest carved façade, in the afternoon.

In all, there are some 800 registered sites in Petra, including some 500 tombs. Just as fascinating as the rock-carved monuments are the rocks themselves. Petra is an erosion-hewn masterpiece. Sandstone shot with minerals burst into colour giving off blue, red, orange and green hues. Amongst the rocky and sometimes jagged scenery, it's sometimes hard to know what is man-made and what is the result of pure nature. Our exploration takes us past many tombs, temples, an impressive amphitheatre and a Roman colonnaded street. Concluding the guided aspect of the tour, you're free to head off and further explore. The intrepid can ascend the hundreds of rock-cut steps to Ad-Deir. Better known as the Monastery, Ad-Deir has a similar facade to that of the Treasury, but is far bigger and the views from the nearby cliff-tops are awesome. Overnight Petra.

day 5 - petra

Breakfast. Explore more of Petra's wonders today. Taking an alternate route to Petra, through the breathtaking "secret road" of al-Madras, and visiting the High Place of Sacrifice, Wadi Farasa, Great Temple and Royal Tombs. In the evening we enjoy a cooking session and tasty meal at the Petra Kitchen. Dinner and overnight - Petra

day 6 - the dead sea

Petra - Dead Sea - breakfast. This morning we drive to the Dead Sea, the lowest point on the earth's surface. The Dead Sea is a natural phenomena, straddling the border between Israel and Jordan, the mineral content of this 75-km-long and 10-km-wide saltwater lake tops out at 33%, or about six times as salty as a normal ocean, creating unusual buoyancy. Spend the day at leisure, enjoying the beach, pool and wellness spa facilities at the resort. Overnight Dead Sea.

Here are a few top tips to make your dip a great experience;

- Don't shave shortly before swimming (the high mineral content will leave you with a stinging face, neck, legs or armpits).
- Take some eye drops along (getting even a tiny drop of the thick water in your eye is painful).
- After swimming be sure to use the freshwater shower facilities where you can rinse off. Otherwise, the sea's minerals will leave an uncomfortable crust on your skin.

Day 7: Dead Sea

Friday. Dead Sea - Amman airport. Departure transfer from the Dead Sea to Amman's Queen Alia airport for your flight back home. (B)

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