

Jordan

Getting Started



NAME:

Hashemite
Kingdom of Jordan

CAPITAL:

Amman

LANGUAGE:

Arabic

RELIGION:

Muslim

CURRENCY:

Dinar

When to Visit

[Jordan](#)'s weather varies based upon the seasons and location you are within the country. Due to differing elevation changes, from the lowest spot on earth (the [Dead Sea](#)) to the higher land in the north-central part of the country conditions can be quite different.

The winter months, from December to February are warm to hot along the Red Sea coast and at the [Dead Sea](#), with average temperatures of about 70° F (21° C) however [Amman](#) and parts of the desert, including [Petra](#) can get below freezing and can even encounter snow with a daily average of about 45° F (7° C). The summer, on the other hand is hot throughout the country (with average highs of about 85-100° F (30-38° C) and it can also be humid, especially along the Red Sea coast and at the [Dead Sea](#).

Most tourist sites aren't as busy during the summer or winter months as they are during the late spring and early fall (autumn) months, but [Petra](#) is busy year-round and the number of tourists at the Red Sea coast can grow during the winter months.

The springs and falls are the best time to visit since the Red Sea and [Dead Sea](#) aren't yet overly hot, but the north-central highlands around [Amman](#), the deserts, and [Petra](#) tend to be the most comfortable. Unfortunately, this is also the tourist high season, but the greatest threat you'll encounter is more people at the beach or more bodies ruining your perfect picture of [Petra's Treasury](#).

Travel plans can also be disrupted if you haven't booked ahead during local holidays, especially during Ramadan (ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which rotates every year compared to the Gregorian calendar). This month also tends to close shops, restaurants, and coffee shops.

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Weather

Although weather can be generalized based upon years past, for more up to date weather patterns and predicted future weather patterns, visit weather websites like weather.com; many local news sources also have information for international weather forecasts.

Tours & Cruises

If you're looking for a pre-arranged trip, that involves little effort on your part, then you should consider going on an organized tour or cruise. Organized tours and cruises vary from all expenses included to only daily tours and perhaps hotels included in the price, but all the options below will help you arrange all the details so you don't have to worry about finding the best deal or right hotel.

[Gap Adventures](#): Known best among young adults, Gap Adventures provides local transportation, housing, and food, which cuts costs and introduces the local culture, but can also be challenging for those seeking luxury.

[Intrepid Travel](#): Boasts more "off the beaten track" destinations; do your research though since some tours are very adventurous and involves camping and local hotels.

[Kensington Tours](#): Only offers personal tours for you and your family/friends, which allows greater flexibility, but also means slightly higher prices.

[Road Scholar](#): For older adults, Road Scholar offers tours with an educational emphasis; formerly known as Elder Hostel.

Guidebooks

If you are just traveling on business and have little free time or are already familiar with [Jordan](#), you may not need anything more than

this guide! However, if you need more detailed and up to date information, there are a number of great country-wide, region-wide, and city-wide guidebooks available for travel in Jordan.

[Lonely Planet](#): Great maps and updated often with comprehensive housing information, restaurants, & transportation options. Backpackers and adventurers love these guidebooks.

[Rough Guides](#): Cover various aspects of travel from culture to getting by on the cheap.

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Culture

Personality, Culture, & Identity

[Jordan](#) is the calm in the chaotic storm that surrounds them. They are Muslims who are influential members of the Arab league, yet maintain open relations and an open border with Israel. There's a balance in Jordan that seems impossible, yet they have maintained it for years.

[Jordan](#) is, in many ways defined by their relationships. They work with their neighboring Muslim countries as some, particularly Syria allow terrorists to create chaos in their region, yet Jordan refuses to allow such acts and quickly expels any such people or ideas. Jordan also has an open border and a peace treaty with Israel, yet are the recipient of many of the Palestinian Territories' refugees. They are a kingdom, yet preach independent thought and democratic ideas. Jordan is a land of seemingly obvious contrasts, yet it remains calm.

Jordanians tend to identify as either Jordanian or Palestinian and each person's dress defines this. This identity is at the root of how each person defines him or herself, particularly the Palestinians; cities, regions, and the country are divided by the two groups. They get along fine, but the Palestinians view [Jordan](#) as a temporary home and the Jordanians view the Palestinians as a friend and neighbor who needs a place to stay.

History

[Jordan](#) is as old as time, however the political borders that exist today were only created after WWII. Modern-day Jordan was part of the [Egyptian](#), Persian, Greek, Israeli, Roman, Arab, and [Turkish](#) empires. It is mentioned often in the Bible as "trans-Jordan" meaning across the Jordan River and it was through Jordan that Moses led his people and here that Moses took his final breath.

Before Alexander the Great took the land now known as [Jordan](#), the Persians nominally controlled the region, but in the 300s BC, Alexander the Great took and established order over much of the Middle East including what is today Jordan. This began a long history of foreign rule for the region and was about the same time that [Petra](#) was built in southern Jordan, which was erected as a trading post. After the Greeks came the Romans, whose ruins at [Jerash](#) remain as a symbol of their history. Next, with the division of the empire, the Byzantines and so on.

With the introduction of Islam in the 500 and 600s the area changed dramatically from a cultural perspective and this change later led to a number of wars between the Muslims and Christians, known as the Crusades. The Crusades often times traveled through modern-day [Jordan](#), continuously wrecking havoc on the land.

In the 1500s the Ottoman Turks took power over much of the Middle East, then four centuries later the region's strongest influence shifted to the [European](#) powers as Ottoman [Turkey](#) found itself on the losing side of WWI and were unable to control its Arab colonies. [Jordan](#) didn't escape the control of foreign rulers until they gained independence from [Britain](#) in 1946.

In 1947 Israel was created and [Jordan](#), among other countries, protested this action. Despite a battle, the Arab countries accomplished little and Jordan became a destination for fleeing immigrants from the Palestinian Territories. In 1967's Six Days War, [Egypt](#) pressured Israel, which resulted in their loss of the Sinai Peninsula and Jordan's loss of the West Bank and their share of Jerusalem.

Over the next 20 years or so the Middle East was unstable as power shifted to the oil-rich Gulf Coast Countries, yet somehow through this process, [Jordan](#) remained fairly neutral and relatively unaffected by the drastic changes taking place in neighboring Iran, Iraq, and [Egypt](#). In 1993 there was finally a truce between Israel and the Palestinian Territories and the following year, Jordan signed a formal peace treaty with Israel.

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Food

Since the 1990s, peace with Israel seems far from certain, but [Jordan](#) has maintained an open border with Israel, while balancing their commitment and support to the Arab world. Additionally, there are multiple Palestinians in Jordan, yet the government has maintained peace by expelling radical Palestinians who threaten Israel's existence and Jordan's pact with Israel.

Dress & Behavior

As a Muslim country, there are a number of religious laws which should be obeyed by everyone in [Jordan](#), including tourists.

Women should cover their hair at all times in public and both women and men are expected to cover their legs and shoulders; showing your knees and/or shoulders can be offensive. Although western clothing, even tight western clothing is common in Jordan, showing skin is still not appropriate. Even 3/4 length pants, like Capris and short sleeve shirts should be avoided, although, with the growing tourist industry, there is some leniency to these rules, especially at [Dead Sea](#) beaches. The best course of action is to follow the lead of the locals.

Adult women are best off traveling to [Jordan](#) with their husband or family. Single women travelers are looked at oddly and traveling with a man who is not related or married to you is widely considered inappropriate. Pretending you are married is not right, but most Jordanians would consider it less offensive than a single man and women traveling together. It is also improper to touch a woman, even holding your wife's hand or offering to shake a local woman's hand can be considered inappropriate to a strict Muslim, but in Jordan you'll rarely encounter this issue.

Islamic law forbids pork products and alcohol and these must be avoided. Although some hotels may offer alcohol in their restaurants, pork is nearly impossible to find and consuming either is offensive and is best avoided. To learn more about dining etiquette in [Jordan](#), continue reading below.

Dining Etiquette

As a primarily Muslim country, many dining traditions in [Jordan](#) are dictated, or influenced by the Islam religion. Most noticeable, pork and alcohol will be absent from most menus. In more conservative families men and women even eat separately, however this is rare outside conservative homes. Less noticeable, but still very important is the local tradition of washing your hands immediately before and after eating as well as only using your right hand to eat. In fact, Jordanians don't use their left hands to eat; neither touching their food with their left hand, nor even placing their left hand on the table.

You will also notice that locals never place their feet on a foot rest or cross their legs since it's considered rude to show the bottom of your foot to another person.

Food can be served in a number of ways. Restaurants typically serve food on individual plates, however many families (and some restaurants, particularly local restaurants) serve food in one large bowl or plate, from which everyone eats or serves themselves. While cutlery (silverware) is common, many foods can and are eaten with thin bread; picking up food with the bread and eating both together. Whatever you take, however you must finish so your plate is clean when you're done.

Due to the variety in etiquette, just follow the locals' lead. In formal business settings you may be required to follow [European](#) customs, such as using your knife in the right hand and fork in the left, in less formal settings you may not even have forks or knives.

History & Influences

For the country's historic Bedouin population their culinary roots contain nothing more than camel's milk and dates. For the rest of the

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people, particularly those living along the [Jordan](#) River valley in the country's north and west, their food was and continues to be similar to Levantine food.

The Arabs in the west and north grew wheat and barley while producing dairy products like their very popular yogurts. As food throughout the entire region developed, new flavors were added to the [Jordanian](#) plate. [Mediterranean](#) influence introduced olives, lemons/limes, and garlic while Levantine and Persian influences brought cinnamon, saffron, and increased the popularity of nuts.

Today, [Jordanian](#) food has much in common with Lebanon and Levantine food, but is more diverse in a number of ways. Jordan's location between Arabia, Persia, Lebanon, [Turkey](#), Israel, & the [Mediterranean](#) has brought dishes from all these places to the country today.

Staple Foods

Dairy: yogurts and milk-based drinks are very common in [Jordan](#) and often served as a side

Meats: meat is common in Jordan, although pork is forbidden by Islamic law; lamb and mutton are very common

Regional Varieties & Specialties

Falafel: mashed chickpeas (garbanzo beans) deep fried and served on bread with fresh vegetables like tomatoes and onions

Hummus: chickpeas (garbanzo beans) mashed with lemon juice, garlic, and olive oil among other seasonings

Mansaf: [Jordan](#)'s national dish is seasoned lamb, cooked in yogurt & served over a bed of rice, traditionally served with nuts

Shwarma: seasoned meat (usually lamb or chicken) served in *lavash* (thin bread) and at times topped with vegetables or a sauce

Drinks

As a primarily Muslim country, [Jordan](#) has very little alcohol available, but it can be purchased. Among typical non-alcoholic drinks, coffee is perhaps the most popular.

Practical Information

Visas

Many foreign nationals need a visa to enter [Jordan](#), however the requirements for citizens of different nationalities varies. To learn more about who need visas, what type of visa is needed, what requirements are needed to obtain a visa, and visa costs, please visit [Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official Website](#) (in Arabic only).

Health & Insurance

Every part of the world has different health concerns and diseases, including [Jordan](#). Before traveling, consult with a physician to learn more about your destination and what steps you can take to prevent illness. At the time of writing, Jordan didn't have any health immunizations that are required prior to arrival, although a number of immunizations are strongly recommended.

Many health insurance providers don't cover health care that is provided outside your home country. Before going abroad check with your health insurance to see if they cover international care. If not, consider purchasing an international medical insurance option, preferably from a company that specializes in international medical insurance.

Transportation

Unless you're on an organized tour or working with a travel agent, you will have to arrange some transportation. The below links can greatly help you start your planning, first by finding a flight to [Jordan](#), then with domestic airlines and car rental agencies. If you don't know where to begin, try the "Flight & Rental Car Search Sites" to learn competitor's prices during your trip.

Largest International Airlines: [Air France](#), [American Airlines](#); [British Airways](#); [Cathay Pacific](#); [China Southern Airlines](#); [Delta](#); [Emirates](#); [KLM](#); [LAN](#); [Lufthansa](#); [Qantas](#); [Singapore Airlines](#); [United Airlines](#).

Largest Jordanian Airline: [Royal Jordanian](#)

Largest Rental Car Agencies in Jordan: [Alamo](#); [Avis](#); [Europcar](#); [Hertz](#); [Payless](#); & [Thrifty](#)

Flight & Rental Car Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Farecast.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Housing

Housing options are numerous in most tourist destinations, but every individual seeks out something different when it comes to housing. The below links should help you get started, with low- to high-end hotels, hostels, and camping options.

Popular International Hotel Conglomerates: [Accor Group](#) (various price ranges); [Choice Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range); [Hilton](#) (various price ranges); [Hyatt](#) (high-end to resorts); [InterContinental Group](#) (mid- to high-price range); [Marriott Family](#) (various price ranges); [Starwood Hotels](#) (high-end); [Wyndham Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range).

Hotel Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Hostels: Although there are many hostel websites, some of the most popular and reputable include [hostels.com](#), [hostelworld.com](#), & [hostelbookers.com](#).

Camping: Camp sites in Jordan are sparse at best and dangerous at the worst (particularly along the Israeli border and in the deserts). Camping is best avoided in most parts of the country, although

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some organized tours offer desert camping, particularly in the area around Wadi Musa, but this is desert country and should be avoided without a knowledgeable local guide.

Opening Hours, Expenses, & Tipping

[Jordan](#)'s schedule is about the same as in [Europe](#) or [North America](#), but hours are less consistent. Places tend to open at about 8:00-9:00 am, but close anywhere from about 2:00 pm to as late as 8:00 pm during the week. Weekend (Friday-Saturday) hours are even more inconsistent.

The one time of the year that shops and restaurants are closed more often than not is during Ramadan (ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which rotates every year compared to the Gregorian calendar), when fasting is required from sunrise to sunset. Due to this Islamic requirement, most shops close down and it can be difficult to find an open restaurant anywhere outside major hotels catering to tourists.

[Jordan](#) is one of the most expensive countries in the Middle East, yet for many people it's a must see country due to some of their sights, which include the [Dead Sea](#) and [Petra](#). Admission fees to the most popular destinations alone, including [Petra](#) and entrance to a beach at the [Dead Sea](#) will cost over 50 dinar (\$70), excluding transportation, food, and housing. Despite the outrageous entrance fees to the better known sights, ruins in [Amman](#) cost as little as 1 dinar (\$1.50).

Fortunately, public transportation options are numerous and reasonably priced, although taxis can be expensive. Housing prices vary drastically and budget accommodations can be difficult to find in many places, but [Amman](#) and Wadi Musa have a number of great options from hostels (10-20 dinar (\$15-30) to high end international hotels (starting at about 100 dinar (\$140)) catering to business and governmental affairs. Likewise, food prices vary from 1 dinar (\$1.50) for street food or a stop at a local market to well over 20 dinar (\$30) for a sit down meal.

Tipping in [Jordan](#) is common and expected in nicer restaurants and hotels. Rates are roughly equivalent to [Europe](#): up to 10% for food service, about 1 JD (\$1.50) per bag for a bell hop, and to taxi drivers round up.

Crime & Safety

***NOTE** - [Jordan](#)'s political situation is currently unstable as protesters have taken to the streets. Although there is little violence, all travelers should look into warnings posted by their home government prior to departing for Jordan.

[Jordan](#) is typically a very safe Middle Eastern destination. The biggest threats are usually hawkers and pick pocketers at major tourist sites like [Petra](#) and the [Dead Sea](#). Single women traveling alone may also find single travel restricting and uncomfortable, although they are rarely in danger.

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