

# Pilgrimage Itinerary in Jordan



1st Day



Qaia

Amman



2nd Day



Dead Sea

Baptism site

6th Day

Jerash

Petra



Mt. Nebo

Madaba

5th Day

Ajloun



3rd Day

Anjarah



Petra



Um AR-rasas

7th Day

Kerak



4th Day

Mukawer





# Tour Program

Day 1 : QAIA - Amman.

Day 2 : Amman - Baptism Site - Madaba - Mt. Nebo - Amman.

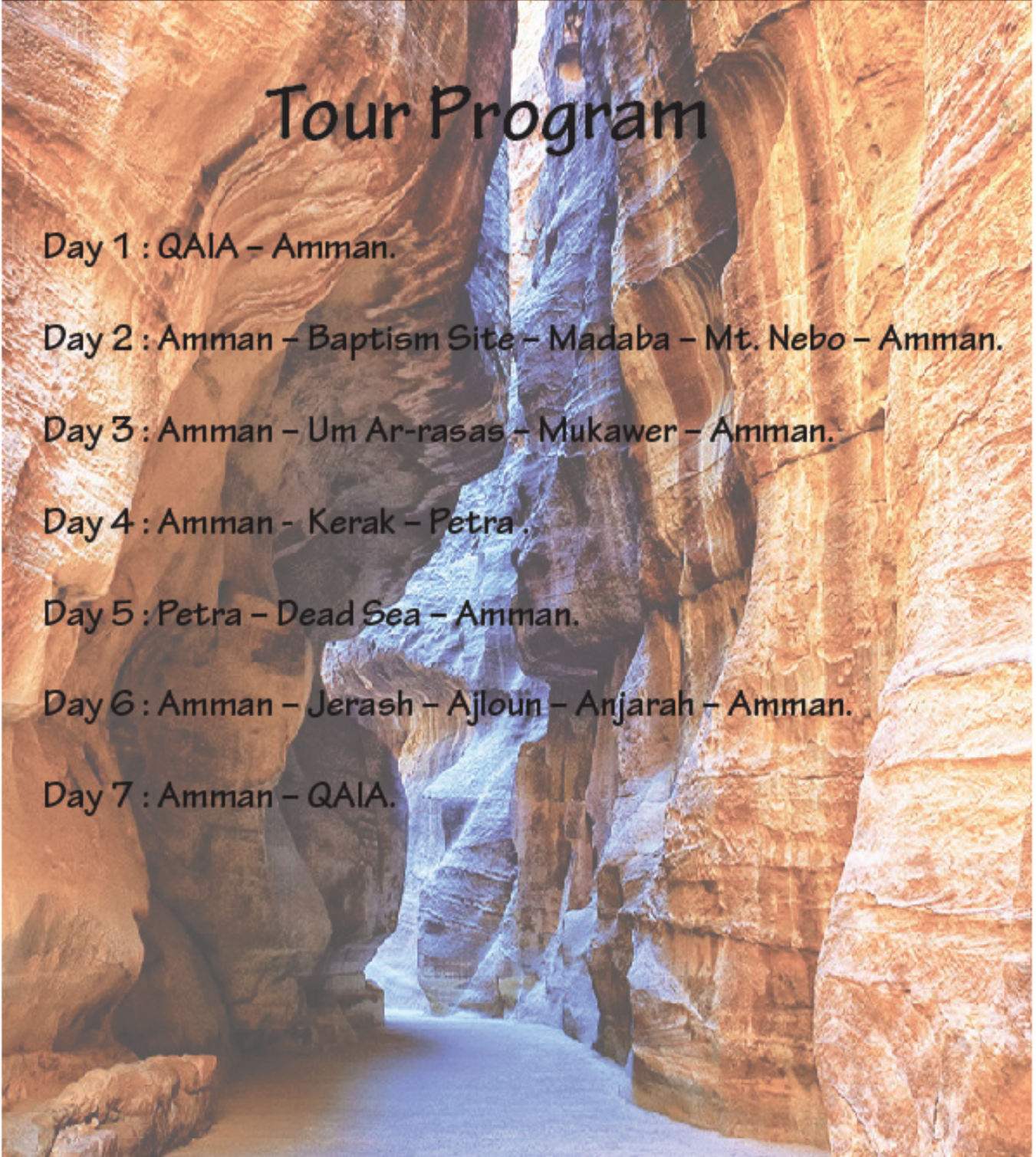
Day 3 : Amman - Um Ar-rasas - Mukawer - Amman.

Day 4 : Amman - Kerak - Petra.

Day 5 : Petra - Dead Sea - Amman.

Day 6 : Amman - Jerash - Ajloun - Anjarah - Amman.

Day 7 : Amman - QAIA.



# 1. Amman

Amman, the capital of Jordan, is a fascinating city of contrasts – a unique blend of old and new, ideally situated on a hilly area between the desert and the fertile Jordan Valley.

In the commercial heart of the city, ultra-modern buildings, hotels, smart restaurants, art galleries and boutiques rub shoulders comfortably with traditional coffee shops and tiny artisans' workshops. Everywhere there is evidence of the city's much older past.



Due to the city's modern-day prosperity and temperate climate, almost half of Jordan's population is concentrated in the Amman area. The residential suburbs consist of mainly tree-lined streets and avenues flanked by elegant, almost uniformly white houses in accordance with a municipal law, which states that all buildings must be faced with local stone.



The downtown area is much older and more traditional with smaller businesses producing and selling everything from fabulous jewellery to everyday household items.

The people of Amman are multi-cultural, multi-denominational, well-educated and extremely hospitable. They welcome visitors and take pride in showing them around their fascinating and vibrant city.

## 2. Baptism site (Al-Maghtas)

Situated on the eastern bank of the River Jordan, nine kilometres north of the Dead Sea, the archaeological site consists of two distinct areas: Tell Al-Kharrar, also known as Jabal Mar-Elias (Elijah's Hill) and the area of the churches of Saint John the Baptist near the river. Situated in a pristine natural environment the site is believed to be the location where Jesus of Nazareth was baptized by John the Baptist. It features Roman and Byzantine remains including churches and chapels, a monastery, caves that have been used by hermits and pools in which baptisms were celebrated, testifying to the religious character of the place. The site is a Christian place of pilgrimage.



## 3. Mount Nebo

is a 1,000m (3,300ft) high mountain located 10km/6 mi NW of Madaba in Jordan, opposite the northern end of the Dead Sea. According to ancient tradition, this is the mountain from which Moses saw the Promised Land before he died.

Because of its connection to Moses, Mt. Nebo has long been an important place of Christian pilgrimage. Excavations led by the Franciscans, who own the site, have uncovered significant remains of the early church and its magnificent Byzantine mosaics. A simple modern shelter dedicated to Moses has been built over them.



## 4. Madaba

Just 30km from Amman, along the 5,000-year-old Kings' Highway, is one of the most memorable places in the Holy Land. After passing through a string of ancient sites, the first city you reach is Madaba, known as the "City of Mosaics."



Best known for its spectacular Byzantine and Umayyad mosaics, Madaba is home to the famous 6th century Mosaic Map of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. With two million pieces of vividly coloured local stone, it depicts hills and valleys, villages and towns as far as the Nile Delta.



The Madaba Mosaic Map covers the floor of the Greek Orthodox Church of St. George, which is located northwest of the city centre. The church was built in 1896 AD, over the remains of a much earlier 6th century Byzantine church. The mosaic panel enclosing the Map was originally around 15.6 X 6m, 94 sq.m., only about a quarter of which is preserved.

Other mosaic masterpieces found in the Church of the Virgin and the Apostles and in the Archaeological Museum depict a rampant profusion of flowers and plants, birds and fish, animals and exotic beasts, as well as scenes from mythology and the everyday pursuits of hunting, fishing and farming. Literally, hundreds of other mosaics from the 5th through the 7th centuries are scattered throughout Madaba's churches and homes.

## 5.Umm Er-rasas

is an important archaeological site that was declared a World Heritage Site in 2004. Its structures date from the 3rd to 9th centuries and most have not yet been excavated. The site is especially known for its magnificent Byzantine mosaics, which have been uncovered in two churches dating from the 6th and 8th centuries.

This site has been inhabited since at least the Iron Age (7th century BC), as attested by artifacts such as a basalt pillar base and a stone scarab. In ancient times, it was a Moabite town .

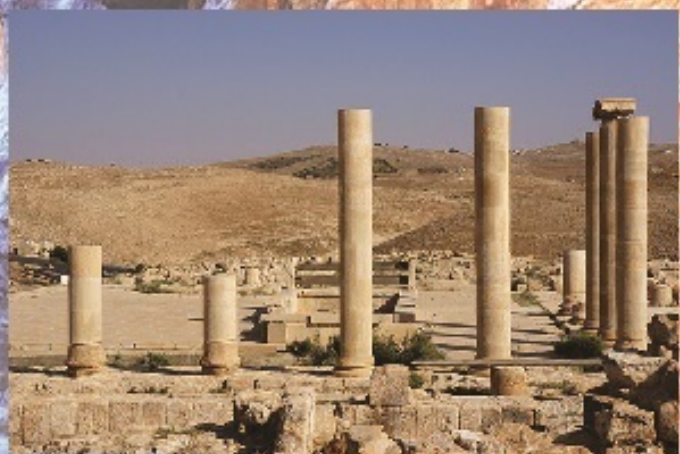


called *Kastron Mefaa*. The prophet *Jeremiah* mentioned the city (as "*Mephaath*") in his condemnation of *Moab* (*Jeremiah 48:21*). The 4th-century church historian *Eusebius* recorded that a Roman army unit was stationed here.

Excavations began in 1986 at the north end of the site and have continued ever since. Most of the site still remains buried under rubble

## 6. Mukawer

*Machaerus* is the infamous setting of the beheading of *John the Baptist*. The historian *Josephus* corroborates a story from the *Gospels* in which *John the Baptist* condemned *Herod Antipas's* marriage to his brother's wife, *Herodias*. *Herodias's* daughter *Salome* danced for her step-father, and when he offered to grant anything she asked, she demanded the beheading of *John the Baptist*. In "*Machaerus: Where Salome Danced and John the Baptist Was Beheaded*" in the September/October 2012 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, excavation director *Győző Vörös* writes that "we can identify the very location of the party where *Salome* danced."



While the beheading of John the Baptist lends the Herodian palace a special notoriety, Gyöző Vörös examines the archaeology and extended site history to show how the location of the Dead Sea fortress at Machaerus led to its special place in Herodian Judea. Looking across a longer expanse of history, the Hasmonean, Herodian and Zealot occupations at Machaerus tell the different stories of their respective periods, from regal luxury to the brutality of a Roman siege.

## 7. Kerak

Whether you approach Karak from the ancient Kings Highway to the east or from the Dead Sea to the west, the striking silhouette of this fortified town and castle will instantly make you understand why the fates of kings and nations were decided here for millennia.

An ancient Crusader stronghold, Karak sits 900m above sea level and lies inside the walls of the old city. The city today is home to around 170,000 people and continues to boast a number of restored 19th century Ottoman buildings, restaurants, places to stay, and the like. But it is undoubtedly Karak Castle that dominates.





The town is built on a triangular plateau, with the castle at its narrow southern tip. The castle is some 220m long, 125m wide at the north end, and 40m wide at the southern end where a narrow valley deepened by a ditch separates it from the adjoining and much higher hill – once Saladin's favourite artillery position. Throughout the castle, dark and roughly-shaped Crusader masonry is easy to discern from the finely-crafted blocks of lighter and softer limestone used in later Arab work.



While the castle we see today essentially dates back to the 12th century, Karak has been a fortress since biblical times. The Bible relates how the King of Israel and his allies from Judah and Edom ravaged Moab and besieged its king Mesha in the fortress of Kir Heres, as Karak was then known.

Centuries later, it took the Crusaders some twenty years to erect their vast castle. Once finished in 1161, it became the residence of the lord of Transjordan, by then the most important fief of the Crusader kingdom, rich in produce and tax revenues. After withstanding several sieges in the early 1170s, Karak came under the rule of Reynald of Chatillon, a lord who became known for his recklessness and barbarism. Breaking all treaties, he began looting merchant caravans and Mecca-bound pilgrims, attacked the very homeland of Islam – the Hijaz – and raided Arabian ports on the Red Sea, even threatening Mecca itself. Saladin, the ruler of Syria and Egypt, reacted swiftly. He took the town of Karak by force, burned it down and almost managed to storm the castle as well.

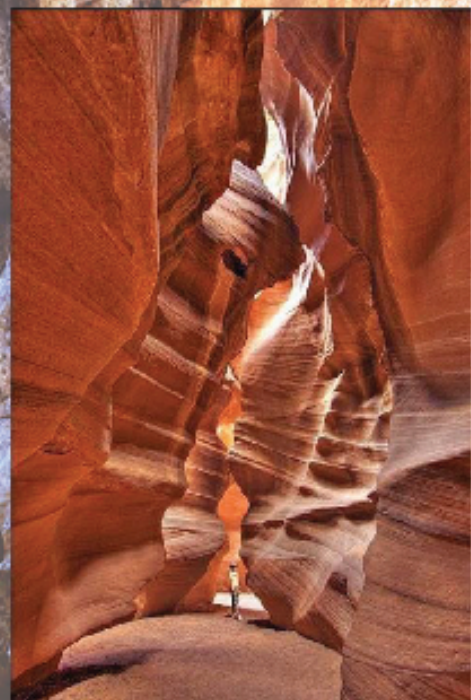
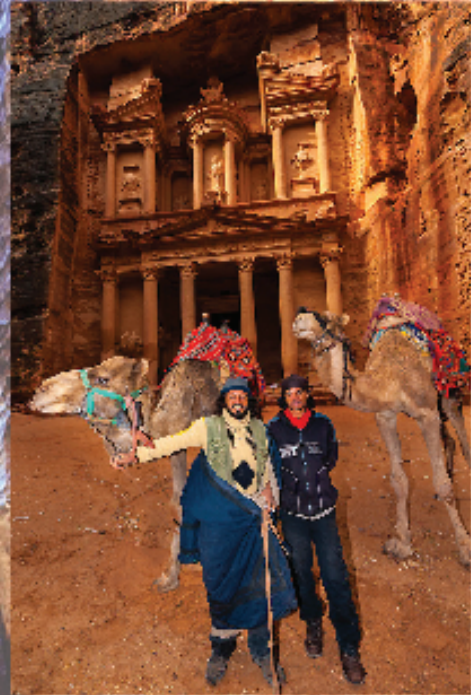
## 8. Petra

The giant red mountains and vast mausoleums of a departed race have nothing in common with modern civilization, and ask nothing of it except to be appreciated at their true value - as one of the greatest wonders ever wrought by Nature and Man.

Although much has been written about Petra, nothing really prepares you for this amazing place. It has to be seen to be believed.

Petra, the world wonder, is without a doubt Jordan's most valuable treasure and greatest tourist attraction. It is a vast, unique city, carved into the sheer rock face by the Nabataeans, an industrious Arab people who settled here more than 2000 years ago, turning it into an important junction for the silk, spice and other trade routes that linked China, India and southern Arabia with Egypt, Syria, Greece and Rome.

Entrance to the city is through the Siq, a narrow gorge, over 1 km in length, which is flanked on either side by soaring, 80m high cliffs. Just walking through the Siq is an experience in itself. The colours and formations of the rocks are dazzling.



As you reach the end of the Siq you will catch your first glimpse of Al-Khazneh (Treasury).

This is an awe-inspiring experience. A massive façade, 30m wide and 43m high, carved out of the sheer, dusky pink rock-face and dwarfing everything around it. It was carved in the early 1st century as the tomb of an important Nabataean king and represents the engineering genius of these ancient people.



## 9. Dead Sea

Without a doubt the world's most amazing place, the Jordan Rift Valley is a dramatic, beautiful landscape, which at the Dead Sea, is over 400m (1,312 ft.) below sea level. The lowest point on the face of the earth, this vast stretch of water receives a number of incoming rivers, including the River Jordan. Once the waters reach the Dead Sea they are landlocked and have nowhere to go, so they evaporate, leaving behind a dense, rich, cocktail of salts and minerals that supply industry, agriculture and medicine with some of its finest products.



The Dead Sea is flanked by mountains to the east and the rolling hills of Jerusalem to the west, giving it an almost other-worldly beauty. Although sparsely populated and serenely quiet now, the area is believed to have been home to five Biblical cities: Sodom, Gomorrah, Adman, Zebouin and Zoar (Bela).



One of the most spectacular natural and spiritual landscapes in the world, the Jordanian east coast of the Dead Sea has evolved into a major hub of both religious and health & wellness tourism in the region. A series of good roads, excellent hotels with spa and fitness facilities, as well as archaeological and spiritual discoveries make this region as enticing to today's international visitors as it was to kings, emperors, traders, prophets and pilgrims in antiquity.



The leading attraction at the Dead Sea is the warm, soothing, super salty water itself – some ten times saltier than sea water, and rich in chloride salts of magnesium, sodium, potassium, bromine and several others. The unusually warm, incredibly buoyant and mineral-rich waters have attracted visitors since ancient times, including King Herod the Great and the beautiful Egyptian Queen, Cleopatra. All of whom have luxuriated in the Dead Sea's rich, black, stimulating mud and floated effortlessly on their backs while soaking up the water's healthy minerals along with the gently diffused rays of the Jordanian sun.

## 10. Jerash

A close second to Petra on the list of favourite destinations in Jordan is the ancient city of Jerash, which boasts an unbroken chain of human occupation dating back more than 6,500 years.



Jerash lies on a plain surrounded by hilly wooded areas and fertile basins. Conquered by General Pompey in 63 BC, it came under Roman rule and was one of the ten great Roman cities of the Decapolis League.

The city's golden age came under Roman rule, during which time it was known as Gerasa, and the site is now generally acknowledged to be one of the best-preserved Roman provincial towns in the world. Hidden for centuries in sand before being excavated and restored over the past 70 years, Jerash reveals a fine example of the grand, formal provincial Roman urbanism that is found throughout the Middle East, comprising paved and colonnaded streets, soaring hilltop temples, handsome theatres, spacious public squares and plazas, baths, fountains and city walls pierced by towers and gates.



Beneath its external Graeco - Roman veneer, Jerash also preserves a subtle blend of east and west. Its architecture, religion and languages reflect a process by which two powerful cultures meshed and coexisted - The Graeco-Roman world of the Mediterranean basin and the traditions of the Arab Orient.

The modern city of Jerash can be found to the east of the ruins. While the old and new share a city wall, careful preservation and planning has seen the city itself develop well away from the ruins so there is no encroachment on the sites of old.

## 11. Ajloun

The marvels of nature and the genius of medieval Arab military architecture have given northern Jordan two of the most important ecological and historical attractions in the Middle East: the sprawling pine forests of the Ajlun-Dibbine area, and the towering Ayyubid castle at Ajlun, which helped to defeat the Crusaders eight centuries ago. Ajlun Castle (Qal'at Ar-Rabad) was built by one of Saladin's generals in 1184 AD to control the iron mines of Ajlun, and to deter the Franks from invading Ajlun. Ajlun Castle dominated the three main routes leading to the Jordan Valley and protected the trade and commercial routes between Jordan and Syria; it became an important link in the defensive chain against the Crusaders, who, unsuccessfully spent decades trying to capture the castle and the nearby village.



The original castle had four towers, arrow slits incorporated into the thick walls, and was surrounded by a moat averaging 16m in width and up to 15m deep.

In 1215 AD, the Mameluk officer Aibak ibn Abdullah expanded the castle following Usama's death, by adding a new tower in the south-east corner and a bridge that can still be seen decorated with pigeon reliefs.



The castle was conceded in the 13th century to Salah ed-Din Yousef Ibn Ayoub, ruler of Aleppo and Damascus, who restored the northeastern tower. These expansion efforts were interrupted in 1260 AD, when Mongol invaders destroyed the castle, but almost immediately, the Mameluk Sultan Baybars re-conquered and rebuilt the fortress.

## 12. Anjarah

Only a few kilometres south of Ajloun in the north of Jordan. It is believed, as it is situated in the hills of Gilead east of the Jordan valley, that Jesus and his mother Mary passed through the town and rested here in a cave.

This was one of the four pilgrimage sites, designated in the year 2000, by the Catholic Churches in the Middle East. The main pilgrimage takes place each year on the 10th June when over 5000 pilgrims descend on the town.

