PETRA AND BEYOND (ARCHAEOLOGY TOUR)

9 days
PETRA AND BEYOND (ARCHAEOLOGY TOUR)

Countries visited
Jordan

Tour Highlights
• The ancient ruins of Jerash
• Visit unique site of Ajloun Castle
• Visit ancient sites along the King’s Highway
• Marvel at Madaba's mosaics
• Stunning carvings and landscape of Petra, UNESCO heritage site
• Discover Petra at night, lit by candlelight
• A night under the stars in Wadi Rum
• Relax in the Red Sea town of Aqaba

Places visited
Amman • Jerash • Ajloun • Umm Qais • Desert Castles • Petra • Mount Nebo • Shobak Castle • Madaba • Crusader’s Castle of Kerak • Aqaba • Wadi Rum • Little Petra • Bethany
PETRA AND BEYOND (ARCHAEOLOGY TOUR)

What's included
• Airport pick-up & drop-off
• Ground transport
• Expert guides
• Accommodation in 5* hotels (except Wadi Rum)
• Entrance fees to sites
• Breakfasts
• Drivers

All accommodation subject to availability. Final accommodation choices will be confirmed after booking.
PETRA AND BEYOND (ARCHAEOLOGY TOUR)

Your Itinerary Explained

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The first part of the text in each day is the itinerary schedule and will explain what you will normally see/do during this day of your itinerary.

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*The part of the day’s text in italics (and comes after the three dashes “---”) is background information on the places or sites on that day of your itinerary. It is not part of your itinerary and may mention places that will not be visited on your itinerary. If you have any questions please ask us. Travel times where noted are only meant as a guideline.*

Tour Itinerary

Day 1  
**Arrival**

Arrive into Amman airport where you will be met by a Travel The Unknown representative and transferred to your hotel. Overnight in a comfortable hotel in Amman.

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*Overnight in Harir Palace Hotel, Amman*

Day 2  
**Umm Qais - Jerash - Ajloun**

After breakfast, leave Amman to explore Umm Qais. Later drive to the ancient Roman city of Jerash, and in the afternoon visit Ajloun. Evening at your leisure. Overnight in Amman.

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*Jerash is one of the biggest preserved Roman cities outside of Italy. The history of Jerash is a blend of the Greco-Roman world of the Mediterranean basin and the ancient traditions of the Arab Orient. A close contender to Petra for Jordan’s favourite destination, this ancient city has survived for a staggering 6,500 years, boasting an unbroken chain of human occupation. First established by Alexander the Great, Jerash had its golden age under Roman rule and most of its ruins date to this time. Hidden for centuries in sand, Jerash has been excavated and restored over the past 70 years, and now stands almost as it would have appeared in its former glory. A fascinating example of the grand style of provincial Roman urbanism found throughout the Middle East, beguiling Jerash is composed of elaborately paved and colonnaded streets, handsome theatres, public squares and plazas, baths and fountains, and overlooked by striking hilltop temples. Surrounding the city are the old city walls, pierced by the remains of ancient towers and gates.*
Hilltop town Ajloun is best known for its impressive 12th century crusader castle, Qalat Al Rabat. Dominating a stretch of the Jordan Valley, the fortress was the site from which Saladin launched his successful campaigns against the crusaders. Originally boasting four towers, parts of the castle, including the battlements, were destroyed by the Mongol’s attack in the 13th century, and two earthquakes in the 19th and 20th centuries did further damage, but today Jordan is committed to a restoration program. Aljoun is also allegedly the birthplace of the Prophet Elijah and, the site of Tell Mar Elias is located just outside the city, boasting some exquisite Byzantine Church mosaics. Also nearby is the serene Lady of the Mountain Church.

Umm Qais (or Gadara) is one of the most spectacular ancient Greco-Roman cities of the Decapolis, situated next to the famous site of Gadron. Known as the ‘Jewel of the North’ and perched dramatically on a hilltop overlooking the Golan Heights, the Yarmuk Gorge and the mythical Sea of Galilee, Umm Qais is thought to have been the place of Jesus’s exorcism of the demonic Gerasens – a biblical story in which Jesus exorcised the demon spirits, turning them into swine which he sent down Umm Qais’s slopes into the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8: 28-34). This important city was renowned for its cosmopolitan atmosphere, attracting an array of writers, artists, philosophers and poets. Like Pella, its’ sister Decapolis city, Umm Qais was blessed with fertile soil, abundant water and a location astride a number of key trading routes connecting Asia and Europe. Today Umm Qais boasts impressive remains. The serene theatre is made from black basalt, while the basilica and adjacent courtyard are strewn with exquisitely carved black sarcophagi. The old city has a colonnaded main street with a side-street lined with shops, an underground mausoleum, two baths, a nymphaeum, city gate and the outlines of what was once a spectacular hippodrome.

Overnight in Harir Palace Hotel, Amman

Day 3

Amman

Spend half the day exploring the spectacular Amman Desert Castles of Kharrangh, Amra and Al Azraq with their spectacular early Islamic art complexes. In the afternoon return to Amman to see the citadel, the Roman theatre and old souks. Overnight in Amman.

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Now Jordan’s rapidly-developing capital, and the wealthiest in the Middle East outside the gulf, Amman can be dated back to Pre-Neolithic Times, and is referred to in the Bible as ‘Rabbat Ammon’. In the past, conquered by the Assyrians, the Persians and the Macedonians, Amman’s most impressive ancient sites date to Roman times. The old citadel area, situated on a hill overlooking the city, boasts the Temple of Hercules, originally constructed by Marcus Aurelius in the late 1st century and modelled on the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, Turkey. However, some of the temple remains are thought to date to the Bronze Age.
Jordan’s **Desert Castles** are some of the most spectacular examples of early Islamic architecture and their remains bring to life this fascinating period of Jordan’s rich historical past. Boasting striking examples of early Islamic art, the castles are littered with ancient mosaics, frescos, stone and stucco carvings and illustrations, which depict life as it was in the 8th century and are inspired by Greco-Roman traditions. Interestingly these desert complexes were only called castles thanks to their imposing structure, and actually served multiple purposes as caravan stations, trade and agricultural centres, or even resort pavilions and outposts that enabled rulers from neighbouring cities to forge ties with local Bedouins.

**The Old Souk Area**, referred to by locals as ‘Al-Balad’, is still one of the most popular sites in Amman, composed of bustling, old-style markets, many museums and archaeological gems, including the King Abdullah Mosque.

**Amman’s Roman Theatre** is the oldest in all of Jordan, built some years before the Temple of Hercules by the Emperor Antonius Pious and carved into the side of the mountain. The theatre is still used for cultural and theatrical performances to this day.

**Overnight in Harir Palace Hotel, Amman**

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2000 years ago the town of **Shobak** was the greatest city of the Arab nation. Today, the remains of the once spectacular Shobak Castle are set in barren surroundings, dominating the landscape on a hill some 1,300 metres above sea level and towering over the valley of fruit-trees below. Isolated from the town of Shobak, Shobak Castle’s appearance certainly captures the imagination. The remains of the castle today are mostly additions and reconstructions made during the Mamluk period, but numerous Crusader features still survive. In the North-East corner, the keep is decorated with Quaranic inscriptions in Kufic script which are thought to date to the time of Saladin. The castle also boasts two churches, the first one with a baptistery and the second with a crusader cross carved into the wall. Beneath the second church are catacombs, containing Christian carvings, Islamic tablets and what are considered to be the remains of Saladin’s throne.
**Madaba**, located 30 kilometres southwest of Amman, is most famous for its exquisite 6th-century mosaics. Its history dates back at least 3500 years, however. **Madaba**, which was known in the Bible as the Moabite town of Madaba, is mentioned in the Old Testament account of Moses in Exodus (Numbers 21: 30). Its most well-known mosaic lies on the floor of St George’s Church, depicting a map. However, the city is home to a number of tiled art displays, which many believe are even more complete and vibrantly colourful than the latter. Join a walking tour of the market town to discover these rarely visited works of art and listen to the bells summoning Christians to pray before dawn and bid Orthodox Christians to rise at first light, in this surprisingly religiously tolerant town.

**Kerak** lies on the ancient caravan routes that used to connect Egypt to Syria and its’ commanding position almost 1000 meters above the Dead Sea Valley made it a strategic asset of great importance. The city was the ancient capital of Moab and was also used by the Greeks and Romans. Kerak reached its full splendor in the 12th century with the arrival of the Crusaders. The major attraction at Kerak is the magnificent Crusader fortress of Kerak, which made Kerak the new capital of the province; superbly situated on the King’s Highway where it could control all traffic from the north and the south and grow rich by the imposition of road-tolls. This castle soars above its’ valleys and hills like a great ship riding waves of rock; an excellent example of the Crusaders’ architectural military genius.

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**Day 5**

**Petra**

Spend the day exploring the ancient city of Petra. Also visit Petra at night when it is lit up by candles. Overnight in Petra.

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**Petra** is one of the world’s greatest heritage sites and one of the world’s seven New Wonders - an ancient rock city that was the capital of the Nabatean Kingdom. Built around 2,300 years ago, the imposing rose-stone palaces are an impressive testament to the power and influence of the Nabateans who controlled trade around the area in the 3rd century BC. Petra is surrounded by hills in which tombs have been carved into the pink sandstone. The site includes some 800 structures.

**Overnight in Petra Moon Hotel, Petra**

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**Day 6**

**Little Petra - Wadi Rum**

Spend the morning exploring Little Petra, an important suburb of the main city. Continue to Wadi Rum and enjoy a scenic jeep ride. Overnight in a Bedouin camp.

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**Wadi Rum** is a valley cut into the sandstone and granite rock in south-west Jordan. It has been inhabited by many human cultures since prehistoric times and is dotted with massive rock formations. It is virtually untouched by humanity and its destructive forces. Here, it is the weather and winds that have carved the imposing, towering skyscrapers, so elegantly described by T.E. Lawrence as “vast, echoing and god-like”. Much of David Lean’s Lawrence of Arabia was filmed in Wadi Rum.
Better known as Little Petra, Al-Beidha is a historical suburb of the city of Petra. To reach it, you enter a 350 metre long gorge known as ‘Siq-al-Barid’, and popularly referred to as ‘cold siq’ because its high walls block out the sunlight. Little Petra is thought to have functioned as the entry point for Petra’s North and West trade-routes in ancient times, and housed the Caravans from Negev, Gaza, Jerusalem, Egypt and the Mediterranean Coast. Like in Petra, the buildings are carved into the sandstone, and are compromised of residences, storage areas and tombs. A spectacular tomb houses a painted fresco of grapes, birds and flowers, dating to the 1st century AD. Take in its picturesque surroundings and countryside and bask in its stillness and atmosphere, which has largely disappeared from the park’s more frequented central areas.

Overnight in Hillawi Camp, Wadi Rum
Day 7 | Aqaba | Meals
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After breakfast, journey from Wadi Rum to Aqaba, set on the Red Sea coast. Afternoon and evening at your leisure. Overnight in Aqaba.

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Jordan’s only coastal city, Aqaba occupies the southern-most point of the country, overlooking the Red Sea. In ancient times, its location served as the junction for trade routes between Asia, Africa and Europe, and it was once one of the Roman’s most crucial ports. References to Aqaba’s coastal position are also found in the Bible and Arabian Nights, with the city thought to have first been occupied by the Edomites in the 1st century BC.

Overnight in Lacosta Hotel Aqaba, Aqaba

Day 8 | Aqaba - Amman | Meals
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After breakfast, enjoy a city tour of Aqaba and see the Castle of Aqaba. Later on, drive through the desert along the shores of the Dead Sea before arriving in Bethany, where you will visit the baptism site. Continue to Amman for an overnight stay.

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The baptism site of Bethany is the place where, as described in the New Testament, Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead, before entering Jerusalem for the final time. Even by the time of the Crusades, the area remained an important pilgrimage site for Christians. Nearby is the biblical site the Mount of Olives.

Overnight in Harir Palace Hotel, Amman

Day 9 | Amman | Meals
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After breakfast, transfer to the airport in Amman for your return flight.

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Flight