



JORDAN & BEYOND
TOURS

About Jordan

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Jordan in a Glance

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan lies in the heart of the Arab world. Founded on the concept of pan-Arabism, Jordan emerged as a regional model of development and prosperity. The Kingdom is, according to its constitution, a parliamentary system with a hereditary monarchy.

- **Geographic co-ordinates:** 29–33 N, 35-39 E
- **Total area:** 89,210 sq. km (34, 445 sq. miles)
- **Total population:** approx. 6 million inhabitants
- **Capital:** Amman (1.7 million inhabitants)
- **Lowest point:** Dead Sea (the lowest point on Earth), -408 meters (- 1338.6 feet)
- **Highest point:** Jebel Rum (Mount Rum), 1,734 meters (5689 feet)
- **Time:** October – March: GMT + 2; April – September: GMT + 3
- **Language:** The official language is Arabic. Almost 80% of the country speaks English. French, German, Italian and Spanish are also spoken, but to a lesser extent.

Public Holidays:

Friday and Saturday are the official weekend holiday in Jordan

Banks, businesses, Government offices and many shops close all day for weekend and public holidays.

Fixed public holidays:

- 1st January: New Year
- 1st May: Labour Day
- 25th May: Independence Day
- 25th December: Christmas Day

A number of public holidays are not fixed. These include Easter and the following Islamic holidays, which are based on the lunar calendar.

- Prophet Mohammad's birthday*
- Eid Al Fitr*
- Eid Al Adha*
- Hijra New Year*

* Dates differ according to the lunar calendar.

Weather

The climate is mainly Mediterranean with hot dry summers and cool wet winters.

Average temperatures

Month	Amman	Petra	Aqaba
January	7(45)	7(45)	16(61)
April	16(61)	16(61)	24(75)
July	25(76)	25(76)	31(88)

Centigrade (Fahrenheit)

The Peoples of Jordan:

The majority of Jordan's 6 million people are Arabs descended from the various tribes that have migrated to the area over the years from all directions. In addition, there are Circassians, descendants of Muslim refugees from the Tsarist Russian invasion of the Caucasus in the 19th century, and a much smaller group of Chechens. Jordan also has a small Armenian population.

More than 92% of Jordanians are Sunni Muslims, and about 6% are Christians who live mainly in Amman, Madaba, Karak and Salt. The majority of Christians belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, but there are also Greek Catholics, a small Roman Catholic community, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and a few Protestant denominations found mostly in Amman. Several small Shi'a and Druze populations can also be found in Jordan.

Jordan values its diverse population, and has consequently provided for the cultural rights of all its citizens. All of Jordan's ethnic and religious groups have full freedom to form and participate in their own clubs, associations, schools or places of worship. Ethnic groups are also free to teach their own languages. The tradition of tolerance and appreciation for diversity has long been a hallmark of Hashemite Jordan and it has helped to provide a stable social foundation on which to build the country.

Government:

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy with representative government. The reigning monarch is the head of state, the chief executive and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The king exercises his executive authority through the prime minister and the Council of Ministers, or cabinet. The cabinet, meanwhile, is responsible before the elected House of Deputies which, along with the House of Notables (Senate), constitutes the legislative branch of the government. The judicial branch is an independent branch of the government.

Since 1989, all elements of the Jordanian political spectrum have embarked together on a road to greater democracy, liberalization and consensus building. These reforms, which were guided by the late King Hussein, have placed Jordan on an irreversible road to democratization. The result has been greater empowerment and involvement of everyday citizens in Jordan's civic life, contributing to increased stability and institutionalization which will benefit the country far into the future.

History:

Jordan is a land steeped in history. It has been home to some of mankind's earliest settlements and villages, and relics of many of the world's great civilizations can still be seen today. As the crossroads of the Middle East, the lands of Jordan and Palestine have served as a strategic nexus connecting Asia, Africa and Europe. Thus, since the dawn of civilization, Jordan's geography has given it an important role to play as a conduit for trade and communications, connecting east and west, north and south. Jordan continues to play this role today.

Because of its centralized location, the land of Jordan is a geographic prize which changed hands many times throughout antiquity. Parts of Jordan were included in the dominions of ancient Iraq, including the Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Mesopotamian Empires. From the west, Pharaonic Egypt extended its power and culture into Jordan, while the nomadic Nabateans built their empire in Jordan after migrating from the south of the Arabian peninsula. Finally, Jordan was incorporated into the classical civilizations of Greece, Rome and Persia, the relics of which are scattered across the Jordanian landscape. Since the mid-seventh century CE, the land of Jordan has remained almost continuously in the hands of various Arab and Islamic dynasties.

The second geographical factor which has helped shape the history of Jordan concerns climate. Only the northern highlands and the Jordan Valley have received enough rainfall to support large populations. Therefore, this area has always been more settled by farmers, villagers and townspeople. Most of the urban civilizations of Jordan have been based in these fertile lands. To the south and east, meanwhile, there is very little rainfall and no rivers for irrigation. These desert areas, which comprise the majority of Jordan, have rarely supported large settled populations. In some periods, there appears to have been no settled population at all. The lifestyle of the Bedouin inhabitants of these desert lands has remained similar in some respects to that of their Edomite or Nabatean predecessors. The contrast between the pastoral "desert" and agriculturally fertile lands is particularly pronounced in Jordan, and much of the area's history can be linked to population shifts between large urban centers and more dispersed, nomadic tribal groups.

Human resources:

Because of its modest natural resources, Jordan has focused on developing its human potential. Turning necessity into virtue, the Kingdom has bolstered its economic and social viability by advancing the well-being of its citizens. Jordan has long concentrated on improving its educational and health standards, thereby strengthening a rising tide which lifts not only the Jordanian economy—due to a skilled and healthy labor force—but also the general quality of life for all citizens of the Kingdom. In spite of the daunting political and socio-economic challenges it has faced as a result of turmoil in the region, Jordan has made rapid strides in developing its greatest asset—its people. This focus on human development stems not only from geographical and economic necessity, but also from the late King Hussein's firm conviction that people need to be given the chance to pursue a better tomorrow for themselves and future generations. This emphasis on qualitative change in peoples' lives has been the main driving force behind the Kingdom's social and economic development.

The Bedouins

One of the best known groups from Jordan's population is the Bedouin. As they are known in Arabic, the Bedu, or "desert dwellers," endure the desert and have learned to survive its unforgiving climate. It is difficult to count Bedouins, but it is generally known that the majority of Jordan's population is of Bedouin origin.

Most of Jordan's Bedouin live in the vast wasteland that extends east from the Desert Highway. All throughout the south and east of the country, their communities are marked by characteristic black goat-hair tents. These are known as *beit al-sha'ar*, or "house of hair."



Traditional Jordanian dress.

Bedouins are often stereotyped as constantly wandering the desert in search of water and food for their flocks. This is only partly true. Only a small portion of Bedouin can still be regarded as true nomads, while many have settled down to cultivate crops rather than drive their animals across the desert. Most Bedouin have combined the two lifestyles to some degree. Those Bedouins who still practice pastoralism will camp in one spot for a few months at a time, grazing their herds of goats, sheep or camels until the fodder found in the area is exhausted. It is then time to move on. Often the only concession they make to the modern world is the acquisition of a pick-up truck (to move their animals long distances), plastic water containers and perhaps a kerosene stove.

It can be said that many of the characteristics of the Jordanian and Arab society are found in their strongest form in Bedouin culture. For instance, Bedouins are most famous for their hospitality, and it is part of their creed—rooted in the harshness of desert life—that no traveller is turned away. The tribal structure of Arab society is also most visible among the Bedouins, where the clan is at the center of social life. Each Bedouin family has its own tent, a collection (hayy) of which constitutes a clan (*qawm*). A number of these clans make up a tribe, or *qabila*.

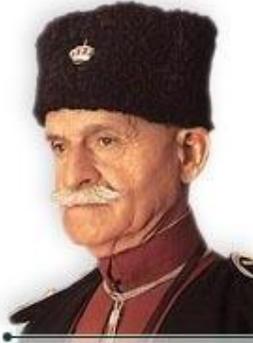
As the Bedouins have long been, and still remain to a limited degree, outside the governing authority of the state, they have used a number of social mechanisms—including exile from the tribe, and the exaction of "blood money" or vengeance to right a crime—to maintain order in the society. The values of Bedouin society are vested in an ancient code of honor, calling for total loyalty to the clan and tribe in order to uphold the survival of the group.

The Jordanian government, which in the past promoted the settling of the Bedouin, recognizes the unique value of their contribution to Jordan's culture and heritage. Indeed, it has been said that they are the backbone of the Kingdom. The government continues to provide services such as education, housing and health clinics. However, some Bedouins pass these up in favor of the lifestyle which has served them so well over the centuries.

The Palestinians

Some Jordanians are of Palestinian origin, having been forced from their homeland during the 1948 and 1967 wars with Israel. Jordan was the only Arab state to grant all Palestinians the right to Jordanian citizenship and many have exercised that option, playing an important part in the political and economic life of Jordan. Some Palestinians continue to live in a number of refugee camps scattered throughout the West Bank and the northern part of Jordan, where the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) is responsible for the welfare of the refugees, including their health and education. There are currently close to 1.4 million Palestinian refugees registered in Jordan. Although massive influxes of refugees have strained Jordan's economy, Palestinian Jordanians have contributed greatly to the health and prosperity of the country.

The Circassians



Circassian Royal Guard.

The Circassians are a non-Arab Islamic people originally from the Caucasus region of western Asia. Southward Russian expansion during the 19th century forced between 1.25 and two million Circassians to emigrate south. Many of these perished along the way, but around one million reached the Ottoman Empire, where they settled first in the Balkans and later in the Levant region of the Middle East.

Circassians first arrived en masse in Jordan in 1878, where they settled in Amman, Wadi Seer and Na'ur. Today, Circassian populations can be found also in Jerash, Sweileh, Zarqa, Azraq and other parts of northern Jordan. Estimates of the Circassian population vary from 20,000 to 80,000.

The Ottomans managed the resettlement of the Circassians to some extent, recruiting them into the police and governmental structures. Until the 1940s, they continued to overwhelmingly prefer service in the army or government, but now they are represented in a diverse assortment of sectors and professions. Today, Circassian Jordanians are a well-educated people who continue to play a role in Jordan's political, economic and social life, larger than their numbers would indicate.

Circassian culture places strong emphasis on respect for the elderly and closely-knit extended families. Marriage with anyone sharing the same surname of either parent is strictly forbidden. Circassians are also well known for their honesty. In fact, Jordanian Circassians constitute King Hussein's ceremonial guard.

Other Ethnic and Religious Groups

In addition to the Christian denominations described previously, there are other small communities of religious minorities scattered throughout Jordan. A small community of Druze live in Jordan, mainly near the Syrian border. There is also a community of Druze in Azraq, in the east of the country. Several other minorities complete Jordan's social mosaic. Several thousand Armenians live in Amman and in other parts of the country. The north Jordan Valley hosts a small community of Turkomans and Baha'is, who moved from Iran to Jordan to escape persecution in 1910.



Circassian dancing. © Caucasian Club Archives - Zarqa

In the late nineteenth century, Chechens, another Caucasian people, migrated to Jordan from Grozny in waves. Over the years, they have assimilated into Jordanian society, while maintaining their special culture and charm. For example, it is a marriage tradition among the Chechens, for the groom to capture his future bride with her consent and against the will of her family. This was seen as a measure of manhood, horsemanship and bravery. Today, this practice continues, but has taken on more of a ceremonial nature.

Jordanian Cuisine

Arabic cuisine delights the gourmet, and feasting is a preoccupation not only of Jordan, but of the Middle East as a whole. In culinary terms, the Middle East enjoys one of the world's most sophisticated and elaborate cuisines, and are rated among the finest foods in the world. Dishes will even satisfy the health conscious because many of them are made with grain, cheese, yogurt, fresh and dried fruits and vegetables. With the use of these grains and vegetables, meat goes a long way and even the simplest ingredients can produce a surprisingly attractive creation. Jordan's cuisine, although unique, is part of this distinctive culinary heritage, which have been savored for well over a thousand years. Below are two Jordanian delicacies:

Mansaf

The national dish of Jordan is Mansaf: lamb seasoned with aromatic herbs, sometimes lightly spiced, cooked in yoghurt, and served with huge quantities of rice. Feasting on Mansaf is taken seriously, and hours are spent in its preparations.

Mansaf is cooked in jameed (the Arabic word for dried yoghurt), which is then mixed with water in a tray to produce a creamy sauce. This is poured into a large stewing pot with chunks of lamb meat. The pot is put over an open fire. As the stew begins to warm, it is stirred to prevent the yoghurt from separating.

Large trays are covered with the doughy flat Arabic bread and dampened with yoghurt. On top of this, a layer of rice is heaped. The meat is then piled on top. Almonds, pine-kernels and other nuts may be sprinkled over the dish, which is then ready for serving.

Stuffed Baby Lamb

Stuffed Baby Lamb is a popular dish in Jordan, which people enjoy as a big and heavy meal. It consists of roasted lamb, stuffed with rice, chopped onions, nuts and raisins.

The first and most important thing to do before buying the lamb is to have the butcher clean it and remove the entrails. The lamb should be rinsed very well inside and out and wiped until dry with clean cloth. Also brush the lamb inside and out with the seasonings (ground coriander and ground ginger) and the onion juice, then just set it aside while preparing the stuffing.

The rice should be boiled until it is tender, then it should be drained. Chop some onions and then sauté them in olive oil. Add chopped pistachio nuts, chopped almonds and seedless raisins to the rice. To add a final touch, season the rice with salt and pepper.

The oven should be preheated at 450 degrees Celsius. Stuff the lamb and then saw it up with a strong thread. Place the stuffed lam on large baking tray and put it into the oven, then reduce the heat to about 325 degrees Celsius. The lamb should be roasted for about 2 hours and turned over once or twice for well-done meat.

“Sahtain wa 'Afiya”

Wildlife and Vegetation

Throughout history, the land of Jordan has been renowned for its luxurious vegetation and wildlife. Ancient mosaics and stone engravings in Jawa and Wadi Qatif show pictures of oryx, Capra ibex and oxen. Known in the Bible as the “land of milk and honey,” the area was described by more recent historians and travelers as green and rich in wildlife. During the 20th century, however, the health of Jordan’s natural habitat has declined significantly. Problems such as desertification, drought and overhunting have damaged the natural landscape and will take many years to rectify.

Fortunately, Jordanians have taken great strides in recent years toward stopping and reversing the decline of their beautiful natural heritage. Even now, the Kingdom retains a rich diversity of animal and plant life that varies between the Jordan Valley, the Mountain Heights Plateau and the Badia Desert region.



Arabian Oryx at the Shomari Reserve.

Flora

Spring is the high season for Jordanian flora, and from February to May many regions are carpeted with a dazzling array of flowering plants. More than 2000 species of plants grow in Jordan, and the variety of the country's topography and climate is reflected in the diversity of its flora. Most of these species, however, depend heavily on the winter rains. When there is a warm, dry winter—as in 1984—many flowers either fail to appear or are considerably reduced.



Anemonis in a thorny bush springtime in Jordan. © Ammar Khammash



Jordan's national flower, the Black Iris.

Jordan boasts a wide variety of flowering wild flowers, but the most famous is the national flower -the black iris. Fields of this flower, which is not found in Europe, can be seen in masses near the town of Madaba.

The highlands of Jordan host forests of oak and pine, as well as pistachio and cinnabar trees. Olive, eucalyptus and cedar trees thrive throughout the highlands and the Jordan Valley. Jordan's dry climate is especially conducive to shrub trees, which require less water. Species of shrubs can be found throughout all the geographical regions of Jordan.



Ancient olive trees at the village of Tibneh near Irbid, some of which could be from Roman times. © Ammar Khammash



Flowers. © Zohrab

Contrary to popular conceptions, deserts are often teeming with life. Many small shrub plants thrive in the Badia, where they are often grazed by the goats of local Bedouin tribes. Several species of acacia trees can be found in the deserts, as well as a variety of sturdy wild flowers and grasses which grow among the rocks in this demanding habitat.

Fauna

One can find about 70 species and subspecies of mammals, along with 73 reptile species, in Jordan. The dry climate has limited amphibian species to only four families. About 20 species of freshwater fish are found in Jordan's rivers and streams, while around 1000 species of fish are known to exist in the rich waters of the Gulf of Aqaba.



Arabian Horse



Swallow- tail butterfly

The harsh conditions of the desert wilderness, which covers most of the country, allow only an assortment of nature's hardiest and most adaptable creatures to survive. As with most desert habitats, the majority of faunal life consists of insects, lizards, and small mammals. However, a number of larger mammals can be found in the desert region, including the Asiatic jackal, desert fox, striped hyena, wolf, camel, rabbit and sand rat. The white oryx, which was hunted almost to extinction, lives on the open plains, while the mountain ibex is at home among rocky, mountainous crags. Both of these two species are relatively rare.

Birdlife

Jordan also possesses a large and varied assortment of birdlife. This can be traced, once again, to the variety of habitats found within the country—from mountains forests to desert oases, from high cliffs to sweeping deserts, and from deep gorges to broad wadis. Two distinct types of avifauna can be found in Jordan: those species which stay year-round, and migratory visitors.



Spur-winged Plovers in Safi. ©Jad Al Younis, Discovery Eco-Tourism

At the junction of the Mediterranean and Arabian faunal regions, Jordan lies on one of the world's major bird migration routes, between Africa and Eurasia. Before the water levels of the Azraq Reserve were depleted over the past ten years, up to 200,000 birds—including spoonbills, white pelicans, egrets, terns and gulls, to name a few—would congregate there at one time during the migratory season. The numbers of migrants have decreased as Azraq has grown drier, yet even today up to 220 migratory species continue to transit through Jordan on their journey north or south. The approximately 150 species which are indigenous to Jordan seem not to have been affected greatly by the great drought of the 1980s.

Marine Life

The Gulf of Aqaba is home to some of the finest marine life in the Middle East, while its coral reefs are unmatched in the world. The gulf is very narrow—at its northern end it is only five kilometers wide—and quite deep, ranging in depth from between 1000 to 1800 meters. The depth of the gulf, combined with its isolation from sea currents, minimizes turbulence and improves visibility. On the sandy shores, one can find creatures such as the ghost crab, sandhoppers and the mole crab.



Gulf of Aqaba

The sea waters, meanwhile, host a plethora of marine life including starfish, sea cucumbers, crabs, shrimps, sea urchins, many species of fish and several worms which burrow into the sandy sea bottom. A variety of sea grasses can be found in the shallow waters, providing both food and shelter to the fishes which inhabit the area. Several species of eel make their home in the gulf's grass beds, where one can also find sea horses and pipe fishes.

Perhaps the greatest attraction for divers in the Gulf of Aqaba is the colorful coral reefs, found especially near the southern part of Jordan's coastline. There are around 100 varieties of stony coral, and they are found mainly in shallow waters, as the algae that live within them require light for photosynthesis. Many hundreds of fish species make their homes among the reefs, and some live by eating the algae that grows on the coral.



Marine meadow beneath the surface of the Gulf of Aqaba. © Camerapix 1994

Costumes:

Obviously textiles have the basic function of covering and protecting the body, but their transformation into garments with distinctive shapes and decorative embellishments is a cultural phenomenon.

Jordanian costume is characterized by its elegance, originality, and practicality. The Jordanian costume is also remarkable for its vast diversity, despite Jordan's relatively small geographical area. This variation reflects different styles of living, for example, the agricultural societies of the north and the Bedouin nomadic and settled communities of the south.

If these costumes are to be taken as a representation of Jordanian culture, then they reflect a uniqueness that has been largely ignored, since the Jordanian people have generally been looked upon as yet another part of Bilad Esham (the Arabic term for greater Syria, i.e. Palestine, Transjordan, Syria and Lebanon).

Men's clothing, though plainer and less varied than the richly decorated costumes of women, was still a rich medium for visual statements about identity, age and status, it was also subject to changes in fashion as individuals and groups sought to emulate their superiors and display their wealth.

SHOPPING

Jordanian handicrafts represent a tradition of skilled workmanship and folk art that dated back many thousands of years. The most common Jordanian craft items include Madaba rugs, carved olivewood, mosaic, cross-stitch, embroidery, Palestine pottery, Hebron glass, silver jewelry and art crafts, old swords and turn of the century rifles, sheepskin and leather goods and Aqaba's colored sand bottles. A walk through a downtown souq will bring you in touch with hundreds of small everyday items that you may wish to take home as an apt souvenir of your visit to Jordan.

Taxes

Jordanians earning money must, by law, report to the tax department. According to the Jordanian Law, foreign companies are taxable only if they generate income or if they sell products or services in Jordan.

Therefore, foreign cast and crew will not be liable to pay taxes on their income in Jordan.

Education

Education in Jordan is free and compulsory starting at the age of five. Jordan invests in higher education and has a wide range of public and private universities, community colleges, vocational training centers, as well as many IT initiatives throughout the Kingdom.

Media

- News Agencies
- Petra is the official news agency of Jordan
- Press
 - There are several daily Arabic newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines. In addition one daily, a weekly and several monthly magazines are published in English.
 - Many regional and international newspapers and magazines are widely available at bookshops and newsstands.
- Television & Radio
 - The television standard is PAL.
 - Jordan Television broadcasts in Arabic, English and French. www.jrtv.jo
 - Foreign language satellite channels are widely available in the country as in most hotels.
 - Radio Jordan broadcasts in Arabic and English.
 - A number of privately owned channels are available on FM in both Arabic and English.

Telecommunications

- Telephone services within Jordan are efficient and reliable.
- Directories in Arabic and English are widely available and international calls can be made from public and private phones.
- Fax services are available at most hotels while telegrams can be sent from post offices.
- Broadband internet access is widespread via cafes and hotels. Major ISPs: Wanadoo, Batelco, Cyberia.
- Jordan's country code: 962 (followed by 6 for Amman).
- Mobile network: GSM 900. Various operators are available (Orange, Zain, Umniah, Xpress).

Post

Post office opening hours are:

- Sat-Thurs 07:00-17:00
- There are also a number of international courier services, including DHL, FedEx, TNT International, UPS, Aramex, etc.

Transportation

Amman and other cities are relatively small, and most places of interest, hotels and restaurants are well known. Moving inside the Kingdom is very easy too.

By Road

- Signposts are in both Arabic and English.
- A standard issue road map can be found at most news stands.
- Driving in Jordan is on the right-hand side of the road.
- The legal driving age is 18 and one must have a valid international driving license.

Jordan has border crossings with Syria in the north, Iraq in the east, Saudi Arabia in the south and with Palestine & Israel in the west and south.

Jordan has a fine roads system that is constantly being upgraded.

By Rail

The Hijaz Railway train runs between Amman and the Syrian capital, Damascus, once a week. This is the only passenger train that runs through Jordan.

By Air

- Queen Alia International Airport is located 35 km south of the capital, Amman.
- King Hussein International Airport, Located in the city of Aqaba
- Amman Marka Airport, used for domestic and charter flights.

By Sea

- Car and passenger ferries from Aqaba to Sharm El Sheik, Egypt and Aqaba to Nuweiba, Egypt operate daily along with a high-speed hydrofoil service.
- A weekly passenger service also operates to Suez, Egypt and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Jordan's only port is Aqaba situated on the Red Sea.

Entry and Visa Requirements

Any non-Arab visitor to Jordan, whether entering for business or as a tourist, needs an entry visa. The fee required for a visa is JOD 40 = US\$ 57 at present and may change at any time, the length of stay which is granted, depends on the purpose of the visit.

Although entrance visas are obtainable at the airport for visitors arriving by airplane and through land border except King Hussein Border. Visas are also obtainable from any Jordanian diplomatic mission abroad, where they generally take a day to receive.

Visas are given on free basis for tourist groups under certain conditions (5 pax minimum size of group, arriving and departing all together and staying at least 2 nights in Jordan, a full passports details must be passed to the tour operator in advance).

King Hussein bridge is not an official border and it is a crossing point and it does not issue visas as victors must be holding visas in advance to be able to cross into Jordan through this border with some exceptions for the tourist groups from Europe and North America as visas can be issued on spot upon arrival as collective visas under certain conditions (5 pax minimum size of group, arriving and departing all together and staying at least 2 nights in Jordan, a full passports details must be passed to the tour operator in advance).

Visas obtained in Jordanian consulates are valid for 3-4 months from the date of issue, and can be issued for multiple entries. Tourist visas allow a stay of up to one month initially. However, this period can easily be extended for up to another two months. After that date you must exit and re-enter the country, or undergo immigration procedures. If your visa has not been renewed properly by the time you leave Jordan

you will have to pay a fine at the border. If you plan to stay for more than two weeks in Jordan, you will need to register at the nearest police station.

Departure Tax

Departure tax is JOD 10 = US\$ 15 at present and may change at any time, tax is payable in JOD up departing land borders and included in the air ticket via Jordan airport at present except for the charters flight as it should be paid on spot at JOD 20 = US\$ 29 at present and may change at any time. Some tourist groups are exempted of departure tax at certain conditions (5 pax minimum size of group, arriving and departing all together and staying less than 2 nights in Jordan and a full passports details must be passed to the tour operator in advance).

Human Rights:

Jordan has consistently been cited by Amnesty International as the country with the best human rights record in the region. This not only reflects the philosophy of the Hashemites, but also speaks for the abilities and personal qualities of Jordan's monarch. To have maintained the Kingdom's stability over the past forty years, in an area of the world not commonly known for its tranquility, is one of His Majesty the late King Hussein's greatest achievements. To have done so principally through persuasion, not coercion, has made this feat even more remarkable.

Within Jordan, the people have responded favorably to the liberal human rights agenda promoted by King Hussein and Prince El Hassan. Article 16 of the National Charter specifies a commitment on the part of Jordan's body politic to protect human rights and to adhere to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1989, the Jordanian government signed the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel and Inhuman or Degrading Treatments or Punishments.

To ensure transparency and accountability, local and international human rights groups are allowed to investigate allegations of human rights abuses and can publish and disseminate findings critical of government policy. The International Committee of the Red Cross is granted permission to visit prisoners and assess the condition of security detainees. Moreover, local groups such as the Arab Organization for Human Rights and the Peace Center for Humanitarian Studies are registered with the government and have raised human rights cases with government officials.

Women's Rights

Jordan's constitution protects women by explicitly stating that all Jordanians are equal before the law, have the right to assume public office and the right to work. In 1974, women were given the right to vote and the right to run in general elections.

In September 1996, a National Committee for Women was formed in order to formulate general policies related to women in all fields. The committee also defines the priorities, charts plans and programs for women in both the governmental and non-governmental sectors.

In June 1996, working mothers were provided with additional legal protection. The new labor law that went into effect includes an article that prohibits employers from terminating their jobs or giving them notice about termination if they are past their sixth month of pregnancy or on maternity leave. It also gives mothers ten weeks of paid maternity leave, compared with the previous allowance of eight weeks, as well as an hour a day for breast-feeding during the first year after delivery and a year's unpaid leave to care for their newborns.

Workers' Rights

Workers in the private sector and in some state-owned companies have the right to establish and join unions, although unions must be registered to be considered legal. Over 30 percent of the work force is organized into seventeen unions, which comprise the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions. The Constitution prohibits anti-union discrimination, and unions exercise their right to bargain collectively. Labor disputes are usually resolved through mediation or arbitration, and during this time strikes are prohibited. If a settlement cannot be reached through mediation, the Ministry of Labor may refer the dispute to an industrial tribunal by the agreement of both parties. If only one party agrees, the Ministry of Labor refers the dispute to the cabinet and then to Parliament. Labor law prohibits employers from dismissing a worker during a labor dispute.

Jordanian law prohibits most workers from working more than the customary 48 hours a week, and 54 hours for hotel, restaurant and cinema employees. Employees are entitled to one day off each week, and workers may not work more than 16 hours in any continuous period or more than 60 hours' overtime per month.

Children's Rights

The government is committed to ensuring the rights of children. Education is free for all primary and secondary school students and compulsory until age 15, and corporal punishment in schools is prohibited. Jordanian labor laws prohibit children under the age of 16 from working except as apprentices, who at age 13 may begin part-time training for up to six hours per day. Poverty has contributed to the problem of child street peddlers, and the Ministry of Social Development has formed a committee to address the problem. In most cases, the children are removed from the streets, returned to their families or to juvenile centers, and their families are sometimes provided with a monthly stipend.

Orphans

The effort to improve living conditions for Jordan's orphans was led personally by His Majesty the late King Hussein. In March 1997, after a surprise visit to a home for orphans, King Hussein was moved by the children's living conditions. He immediately announced his donation of Hashmiya Palace to be a new home for the orphans he had just visited. King Hussein assigned his daughter, Princess Zein, the responsibility of running the new orphanage at Hashmiya. The palace was renamed "Dar al-Bir" (Home of Piety). Jordanians from all walks of life are donating their time and money to help this and other homes for the orphans.

Customs

Customs regulations exempt from duty most items carried by tourists, including cameras, radios, hair-dryers, video equipment, etc. So far as duty allowances are concerned, you may carry up to 200 cigarettes or 200 grams of tobacco, and either one liter of spirits or two liters of wine. Modest gifts and other effects are exempt from customs duty.

Cars and electrical appliances, from household goods to personal computers and video cameras, are subject to duty which may be very high. If you intend to take taxable goods with you when you leave you should ask the customs officials to enter details of these goods in your passport to avoid paying tax. Upon exit you will be asked to show that your goods were tax exempted.

Health Requirements and Recommendations

Inoculations are not required unless you are traveling from an infected location. If you come from a country where diseases such as cholera and yellow fever are prevalent, you will have to show a certificate of inoculation at your point of entry into Jordan. Although not required, it is not a bad idea to have preventative shots for polio, tetanus and typhoid.

Jordan is one of the cleanest and safest countries, but it is nonetheless advisable to take some precautions until your digestive system adjusts. The majority of Hotels have their own filtering systems, and their tap water is safe to drink. In other places, bottled water is recommended. All fruit and vegetables should be washed thoroughly, and salads and cold meats which have been sitting out for a long time should be avoided, especially during summer months. All Jordanian dairy products are pasteurized and safe.

Medical services are well developed throughout Jordan, with a medical center or clinic in every town and village. There are hospitals in Amman, Aqaba, Ma'an, Karak, Madaba, Zarqa, Irbid and Ramtha. In the larger towns and cities many of the doctors have been trained overseas and speak English. Antibiotics and other drugs normally sold on prescription in the West are often available over-the-counter in Jordan. You should carry prescriptions of any medicaments you may need, making sure you have the generic name as your specific brand may not be available. If you wear glasses, bring a spare pair and a copy of the prescription as well.

Animal Quarantine

There are no regulations about bringing pets into Jordan, and the most you may be asked for is a certificate of health for the animal, some hotels prohibits pets and animals and you better check about this before travelling to Jordan.

Time

Jordan is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. Daylight Savings Time occurs between April and October.

Working Hours

Friday & Saturday are the weekly holiday when government offices, banks and most offices are closed. Most businesses and banks have a half-day on Thursday, and some businesses and banks take Sunday as a half-day or a complete holiday.

Government departments are open from 08:00 to 14:00-16:00 daily except Friday & Saturday. Banks are open from 08:30 to 15:00, daily except Friday & Saturday. Small shops are open long hours, from around 09:00 until 20:00 or even after. Most Muslim shop owners close early or do not open on Friday, and Christians follow similar rules on Sunday. However, the markets and street stalls downtown remain open all week long, and Friday is their busiest day of the week. During Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting, business hours are shorter. Museums are generally open every from 08:00 till 17:00: and those opening hours may vary according to seasons.

Electrical Current

Jordan's electricity supply is 220 volts/50 cycles AC. Sockets are generally of the two-pronged European variety, while a variety of other sockets and plugs—especially the 13 amp square three-pinned plug—are in use. To be safe, bring a multi-purpose adapter. American equipment requires both an adaptor and a transformer. Most varieties of adaptors and transformers are readily available in electrical shops throughout Jordan. Electrical current in Jordan is reliable and uninterrupted.

Tipping

Many of the better hotels and restaurants will add a gratuity of about 10% to your bill. However, smaller establishments usually expect you to leave a tip in line with the service you received. Tourist guides, driver, horse boys in Petra, Jeeps drivers in Wadi Rum and similar services providers are generally tipped.

Weights and Measures

Jordan operates on the metric system. Length is counted in meters, distances in kilometers, weight in kilograms and volume in liters. You may come across the measurement for land: the dunum. One dunum is equivalent to approximately 1000 square meters (10,760 square feet).

Currency and Credit Cards

The Jordanian currency is the Dinar, or JD. It is subdivided into 1000 fils, or 100 qirsh or piasters. It appears in paper notes of 20, 10, 5, 1, and 0.5 JD denominations. Coins come in denominations of 500 fils, 250 fils, 100 fils, 50 fils, 25 fils, 10 and 5 fils. The daily exchange rate is published in local newspapers.

You can change foreign cash or travelers' checks at any bank in Jordan. Only travelers' checks will be charged a commission. There are also authorized moneychangers in many parts of Jordan and almost at all tourist destinations and you will usually get a slightly better rate of exchange at money changers than at banks. Hotels of three stars or above will also change money but at a less favorable rate.

Foreigners are permitted to open accounts at Jordanian banks in either Jordanian Dinars or in foreign currencies. Currency exchange operates under the guidelines and regulations of the Central Bank of Jordan. The Central Bank also sets the minimum and maximum interest rates for financial institutions to follow.

Credit cards are accepted at most hotels, restaurants, car rental companies and tourist shops. The most widely accepted cards are American Express, Visa, Diners Club and Mastercard. You can also use your cards

to draw cash (up to 500 JDs) at any bank linked with your credit card network. The automatic cash machines are available at almost all tourist destinations and some hotels.

International Measurements

To Convert	Multiply by
miles to kilometers	1.61
kilometers to mile	0.62
acres to hectares	0.40
hectares to acres	2.47
pounds to kilograms	0.45
kilograms to pounds	2.21
Celsius to Fahrenheit	1.8; then add 32
Fahrenheit to Celsius	subtract 32; then multiply by 5/9