

*adventure & eco*

# JORDAN



# Ahlan Wa Sahlan

أهلاً وسهلاً في الأردن



The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is host to a wide variety of flora and fauna due to its diverse geological areas and landscapes. This diversity allows for a rich eco and adventure tourism experience. Whether you're interested in living with a nomadic Bedouin family, farming with villagers, or discovering unique cultural handicrafts; Jordan has what you're looking for. The nature of the land has for centuries shaped the nature of its inhabitants; and the nature of the land here has inspired hospitable people, varied local cuisine and remarkable experiences. The variety in landscape also inspires locals and

guests to go on safaris, watch migratory birds on their seasonal movements, observe endangered species in their natural habitats, search for rare flowers in the valleys and hills, enjoy some horseback riding, or trek around the Kingdom. In Jordan you will be able to hike through canyons, and descend stunning waterfalls in the middle of untouched nature, climb cliffs and mountains to reach breathtaking views, bike through the roads of history's kings and emperors and so much more. This little booklet is made to showcase only a handful of experiences based on 5 separate areas in the country.

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# Mediterranean Jordan (North)



Iraq Al-Dub



Kufranjah



Birgish Cave

This region consists mainly of farms, oak tree bushes, olive fields and limestone rocks. From Jordan's North border to the south of Amman, the region boasts Mediterranean landscapes, while the area to the west of the Jordan Valley has a semi tropical environment. This variation creates a contrast of biospheres within a 20 minute drive. With that in mind here are a few of the things that you can enjoy in its nature:

## **Canyoning & Caving:**

Due to its limestone nature, the majority of the caves here are made up of pressure ridges and water carved natural wells that have formed stalactites and stalagmites of different shapes and sizes. Don't miss out on the opportunity to try caving in Birgish and the numerous limestone caves in Tibneh fields.

As for canyoning; Wadi Al Rayan and its Rashrash waterfall are one of the few canyons in the area with cold water in a forest setting. This distinctive variation allows for a vastly different experience from the main canyoning areas of the South and Center of the Kingdom.



## Rock Climbing & Mountaineering:

As limestone is rampant in this area, its cliffs offer a solid and wide range of clean climbing experiences with levels catering to beginners and professionals alike; we recommend climbing in Sami's Cliff and Ras Sakeb among many others.

## Hiking & Trekking:

Enjoy an exhilarating hike in the woods and between the blossoming groves. There are multiple hiking trails connecting ancient ruins, villages, and the Jordan Trail. Take a moment to try the Salt Circular Hike East of Amman or the Rasun Olive Press Trail north of Ajloun.



## Cycling:

Just like the hiking trails, you can cycle on farm roads or between the trees in single track trails. Try the Scandinavian forest cycling trails or along the Jordan trail for mountain biking.

## Soft Adventures:

As the topography of the land varies, the local cuisine reflects the diversity of Jordanian culture. The farmers in the North transform their lush green surroundings into delicate and specialized dishes. You can take this opportunity to learn how to make a few dishes or handicrafts at the Iraq Al-Amir Women's Cooperative Society near the Ammonite ruins. You can also try the longest zip-line in Jordan; a 500m descent by Ziglab lake and its migratory bird resting station in the Sharhabeel Ibin Hasna Ecopark.

# Volcanic Jordan (East)



Shaumari Wildlife Reerve - Arabian Oryx



Qasr Burqu'



Badia Lava Tube Cave

In ancient times, a now inactive volcano in the southern borders of Syria erupted and painted our east with blankets of volcanic rocks. This area holds multiple lakes and even an oasis in its center that once was the size of Manhattan. This unique landscape and its oases are home to many exotic animals.

## Canyoning & Caving:

Caving in the East is a truly unique experience as the caves here are mostly volcanic lava tube tunnels with residual salts forming star shaped images underground. One of the most breathtaking caves in the area is the Badia Lava Tube Cave where your only way in is by rappelling down to discover multiple layers and underground galleries. Another cave worth visiting is the Al-Kursi Cave, where the remains of a lion; extinct in the area for over 200 years, were found.

## Did You Know?

Dana Biosphere Reserve covers an area of 292 sq km and drops an astounding 1,500m from its highest point to 200m below sea level where it joins the Dead Sea coast.



Wadi Butum - Azraq



Shaumari Wildlife Reserve



## Cycling:

As you cycle through this area the landscape will continue to stun you as it changes from dry desert, to bodies of water, historical castles and medieval hunting chateaus sprinkled over a blanket of black volcanic rock. We recommend cycling through the Petrol Road to Safawi or to and around Azraq Village on mountain or desert bikes.

## Soft Adventures:

The Eastern triangle offers a rich combination of different experiences ranging from safaris, bird watching, ostrich egg drawing, and star gazing. Try visiting the breath-taking sites of the Azraq Oasis, the Showmari Reserve, and Wadi Ed Dahek.

# Dead Sea Basin (Upper Central)



Wadi Hidan



Dead Sea



Wadi Manshala

As the geological plates move apart forming the Great Rift Valley, its shores cracked, causing a formation of valleys and mountains which now host a variety of flora and fauna on the shores of the Dead Sea.

## Canyoning & Caving:

The Dead Sea Basin is a paradise for canyoneers. The basin is surrounded by bodies of water that flow directly into the Dead Sea creating truly unique formations to explore. Wadi Mujib, has a variety of canyoning trails ranging from Balou, Heba, Upper Hidan, Malagi, the Siq trail, and many others. The versatility of the location offers a wide spectrum of activities, from simple walks in water, to a technical experience with multiple rappels from 10m to 100m.

## Wondrous Wildlife

The year round water presence in the valley due to the inflow of seven tributaries, combined with the elevation difference and the remoteness of many of the Reserve's mountain and valley areas, have created and enabled a safe environment that supports a magnificent bio-diversity of wildlife. Over 420 species of plants, 102 species of migratory birds, and nine species of carnivores (Red fox, Blandford fox, Hyena, Jackal, Wild cat, Caracal, Badger, Mongoose, and Wolf) have been recorded to date.

Two very distinctive living beings that make Mujib their home are the Ibex and the Caracal. The Nubian Ibex, whose numbers had dramatically declined in easily accessible areas due to over-hunting, are now part of a captive-breeding programme established by the RSCN in the Mujib Reserve. The area's sandstone cliffs make an ideal habitat for this beautiful mountain goat. The Caracal, a medium-sized cat distinguished by its black and white ear tufts, can be spotted in action in the rocky valley of Mujib. This agile and





Dead Sea



Dead Sea



Dead Sea

The Dead Sea basin is famous for three of the ecosystem types found throughout the Middle East: Mediterranean (in the mountains), Irano-Turasian (along the slopes of the mountains and cliffs), and desert (at plain level).

The region hosts a great diversity of species, including some endemics. Its importance for migrating birds is well-known. It is home to Arabian and African species such as the Sand Partridge, Bar-tailed Lark, Dunn's Hoopoe Lark, Little Green Bee-Eater, Blackstart and the Arabian Babbler.

## Rock Climbing & Mountaineering

Due to the altitude difference, some of these canyons offer great climbing opportunities such as bouldering inside Wadi Mukheires or climbing the great slabs of Weidaa.

## Aero-Sports:

The Royal Aero Sports Club of Jordan is based on the shores of the Dead Sea, offering a unique skydiving experience to the lowest point on Earth in addition to other activities as well. The upper valleys of Wadi Mujib and Wadi Hidan offer a great take off point for paragliding with convenient car accessible landing points.

## Cycling

The Dead Sea basin is a place fit for several different types of cycling. Whether you want to cycle along the shores of the Dead Sea through many of the landmarks that surround it, or down the Eastern hills on farm roads covering multiple villages and archeological sites, you won't be disappointed.

## Soft Adventures:

The area has a variety of different ethnicities, cultures and traditions in its villages. These vary from the Dead Sea villagers of African descent, to the Bedouins on the upper hills or the farmers in the agricultural lands, and the Christian communities in and around Madaba.

# Dry But Green (Lower Central)



Dana Biosphere Reserve



Karak Castle



Wadi Hassa

From the south of Kerak to the borders of the ancient Nabatean Kingdom, this land contains the longest canyon in Jordan with multiple hot springs and other streams pouring into it. The dome shaped mountains and ancient acacia trees in its southern valleys form a great habitat for Ibexes, Caracac, and other species that can reveal themselves to you if you submerge yourself in their nature.

## **Canyoning & Caving:**

The creation of the Great Rift Valley caused several cracks on either side that have, over centuries, turned into awe-inspiring canyons. The great Wadi Hassa falls into this area and has been described as a slice of heaven with its springs, pools and colorful landscapes. Wadi Ghweir on the other hand has steep sandstone walls reaching up to 200m at times that block out the sun in the middle of the day.

## **Did You Know?**

The water level of the Dead Sea is dropping by about 30cm (1 ft) per year. It is being diverted by Israel and Jordan for industry, agriculture and household use. Scientists predict that the sea may be dried up by the year 2050.



Feynan



Baida



Wadi Araba

## Hiking & Trekking:

The Dana Nature Reserve and the Feynan area contain multiple hiking routes. These combine a mix of dome shaped rock formations and covered in acres of greenery often visited by local herders and their mountain goats.

## Aero-Sports:

Al-Hisheh, overlooking the mountains, is a great site for paragliding due its favorable winds, great views, and accessible landing points.

## Cycling:

Cycling along the tracks of the King's Highway and its surroundings is exceptional due to the ever changing scenery and hilly nature of the roads.

## Soft Adventures:

Aside from the locals' hospitality and great cuisine, a few farms have opened their doors for agricultural experiences where you can harvest your dinner while living with the host. This experience is a great way of learning about the daily life of a Southern Jordanian farmer first-hand.

# Wadi Rum, The Red Sea and The Nabatean Kingdom (The Great South)



Descending Jabal Rum



The Monastery - Petra



Petra Back Trail

Petra, Wadi Rum, and Aqaba are also known as the Jordan's golden triangle. Here you can hike the footsteps of ancient civilizations, dive in the warm waters of the Red Sea, or experience the Mars-like desert of Wadi Rum.

## Rock Climbing & Mountaineering

Wadi Rum provides climbers with the epitome of mountain climbing experiences in the southern region. This is due to its truly unique rock formations that vary in shape, height, and difficulty.

## Hiking & Trekking

Petra is surrounded by a multitude of hiking locations that trail through ancient archeological sites and natural monuments. Whether in Petra itself, to its south, or even in Wadi Rum, every area will be as breathtaking as the next.

## Did You Know?

The hills and deserts of Wadi Rum come alive during springtime with over 2,000 species of wild plants and flowers, including poppies, red anemones and the beautiful black iris, which is Jordan's national flower.



Jabal Nassrani - Wadi Rum



Coral Reef - Aqaba



Sinai Rose Finch

## **Aero-Sports:**

Wadi Rum provides incredible options including hot air balloon rides, micro-lights and many more through the Royal Aero Sports Club.

## **Diving:**

The Red Sea is one of the world's diving paradises due to its water temperature and shallow shores. Aqaba has multiple dive sites that provide surreal experiences ranging from submerged wrecks that include boats, a tank and even a Hercules C103 airplane at less than 20m deep.

## **Soft Adventures:**

Bedouin life in the South offers multiple different experiences whether it is camel riding, horseback riding, or even living with the Bedouins and experiencing their lifestyle for a few days. Whatever you choose to do, let Jordan free the Nomad within you.

# Azraq Wetland Reserve



Azraq is a unique wetland oasis in the heart of the semi-arid Jordanian desert. The Reserve, managed by the RSCN, is a perfect location to bird watch, especially during the migration seasons when a wide variety of birds stop for a rest during their arduous trip between Europe and Africa. Some birds stay for winter or breed within the protected area of the wetland.

The attractions of the Reserve include several natural and ancient built pools, a seasonally flooded marshland, and a large mudflat known as Qa'a Al-Azraq.

From the Azraq Eco-lodge, a wide range of activities are possible. In addition to bird watching in the nearby wetland reserve, it is possible to go on a day or night safari in Shawmari, or you can take one of several tours to explore the wide expanses of the Eastern Desert. Much of this desert consists of black basalt, which creates stark and unusual landscapes. The desert contains remnants of extinct volcanoes and many archaeological sites. Excursions on 4x4 can be arranged, with overnight camping with Bedouins. Remember to visit the Reserve's Visitors' Center and its interesting Nature Shop. Visitors can also share a home cooked meal with locals, visit one of the five different projects for women, cycle at the Azraq Druze village and enjoy some bird watching..

## Did You Know?

The Oryx, an elegant white antelope, became extinct in Jordan around the 1920s.

The last known wild Oryx in the world was killed by hunters in Oman in 1972.

In 1978, eleven Oryx were re-located to Shawmari.

The number of Oryx has now increased to a phenomenal two hundred!

# Aqaba



## Aqaba Marine Park

The Gulf of Aqaba is famous for its marine wildlife. It is the north-eastern arm of the Red Sea, measuring a length of 180km and expanding to a width of 25km, with a shoreline shared by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Jordan.

The Gulf of Aqaba has the world's northernmost coral reef ecosystem. An average water temperature of °23 Celsius, the absence of stormy weather, and mild water currents have created a hospitable environment for the growth of corals. Favorable salinity levels are perfect for the myriads of other marine life-forms. As a result, it is home to 110 species of soft corals and 120 species of hard corals. The reefs that fringe the Gulf host over 1,000 species of fish, corals, crustaceans, and mammals living in its waters. Nocturnal animals such as the crab, shrimp, and lobster appear in search of food in the dark hours of the night.

Seasonal visitors to the Gulf of Aqaba include sea turtles, dolphins, sea cows, and harmless whale sharks.

## Did You Know?

Corals are not plants but living organisms. They are part of an ancient and simple group of animals known as cnidaria. A coral structure is actually composed of hundreds or thousands of these tiny animals growing together as a colony. Because of their slow rate of growth, about 1cm a year, the corals that you see in the Gulf of Aqaba are centuries old.

# Dana Biosphere Reserve



Dana is an unparalleled haven of peace and tranquility, and an extraordinary world of natural treasures. It is an experience that defines the meaning of the phrase “going back to nature.” The Dana Biosphere Reserve has been identified by Birdlife International as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

Here you can meditate amid the quiet stillness of the mountains, sleep under the stars, enjoy fresh air and cooling breezes, or track the footprints of the marvelous wildlife endemic to this terrain.

Dana offers a vast diversity of landscapes: There are wooded highlands, rocky slopes, sand dunes, and stony deserts. There is a whole wilderness to explore and a variety of flora and fauna to be discovered. Moreover, visitors have the opportunity to meet and get to know the native people of Dana; the kind and hospitable Ata'ta tribe, who have made this their home for the past 400 years, continuing the tradition of settlement in the area that began more than 6,000 years ago.

Whether it is for individual travelers, families, school groups, meetings, incentives, or conferences, Dana has much to offer.



# Bird Watching



Jordan is a great destination for bird-lovers and dedicated birdwatchers. Its remarkable variety of habitats, from rugged mountains and evergreen woodlands to scrubby steppe and hot dry deserts, provide the perfect environments for many species of indigenous birds. Furthermore, its location at the crossroad of Europe, Asia and Africa means that migrating birds from these three continents can sometimes be seen together in the same general area.

A total of 17 sites have been declared as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Jordan's national parks.

The RSCN is the BirdLife International partner in Jordan. BirdLife International is a global Partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity. BirdLife Partners operate in over one hundred countries and territories worldwide.

The green areas of Aqaba, particularly the relatively dense vegetation and open ponds at the waste water treatment plant, attract hundreds of thousands (possibly millions) of migratory birds every spring and autumn comprised of more than 350 different species.

## What Sort of Birds Can You See?

The Eastern Desert habitat, including the Azraq Wetland Oasis, is home to local desert and aquatic species, and is periodically visited by migrants. Species that can be seen in that area include the Temmink's Horned Lark, Hoopoe Lark, Desert Wheatear and Trumpeter Finch. In winter, Cranes and Imperial Eagles can also be spotted. Visitors to the Desert Castles, east of Amman, are often greeted by the Thick-Billed Lark and Red-Rumped Wheatears.

# What is The Jordan Trail?



Petra

The Jordan Trail is a long distance hiking trail in Jordan connecting the length of Jordan from Um Qais in the north to Aqaba in the south. Offering 40 days of hiking over more than 650 kilometers of trail, and travelling through 52 villages and towns on its way. The trail traverses the diverse landscapes and vistas of the country, from the rolling wooded hills of the north, the rugged wadis and cliffs overlooking the Jordan Rift Valley, the rose rock city of Petra, the dramatic sands and towering mountains in Wadi Rum, to the crystal waters of the Red Sea.

As you walk the Jordan Trail, it becomes a journey through the history of Jordan and an encounter with its diverse culture. Travelling the length of the country enables visitors the chance to peel through the different layers of culture, to taste the varied cuisines of Jordan, encounter locals while walking and spending your nights in their homestays. It is also an opportunity to learn the history of Jordan, the different civilisations who have made their marks on the land. The trail moves through major historical sites in the region such as Um Qais, Jerash, and Petra, while also harbouring hidden ruins resting amongst the land.

To learn more about the Jordan Trail and to access tools to help you start planning your hike visit [www.JordanTrail.org](http://www.JordanTrail.org)

# Helping Nature ... Helping People



## **The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) and Wild Jordan**

RSCN is a non-governmental organization devoted to the conservation of Jordan's natural environment. Created in 1966 under the patronage of His Majesty the late King Hussein, the Society has been given responsibility by the Jordanian government for protecting the country's wildlife and wild places.

'Wild Jordan' is a division of RSCN and the trading name for the Society's eco-tourism and handicraft enterprises.

## **Helping Nature ... Helping People**

RSCN has established six protected areas, covering more than 1,000 sq km of Jordan's most beautiful and endangered places. The Society is recognised as foremost among regional and international conservation groups for integrating nature conservation with socio-economic development for local communities. Projects to date include a wide variety of eco-tourism programmes and the production of unique handicrafts and organic food items. All of RSCN products and eco-tourism ventures are marketed under the trade name 'WILD JORDAN'.

RSCN's nature-based businesses provide jobs tied to the protection of natural areas and create improved livelihoods for poor rural communities.

By purchasing any RSCN product or by visiting any of Jordan's nature Reserves, you are directly contributing to the protection of nature in Jordan.

# Guidelines for Visitors



- Experience the day to day life of the people around you. Interact with the local community while showing respect for its laws and customs.
- Practice a few phrases in Arabic. People will appreciate your efforts. Please is “min fadlak” in Arabic and thank you is “shukran.”
- Ask permission before photographing or videotaping people.
- Support the local economy whenever possible by buying local produce.
- In hotels, turn off lights and adjust thermostats to conserve energy before leaving your room.

## Help Preserve Jordan’s Natural Landscapes

Helping to preserve Jordan’s beautiful natural landscapes can be achieved by following some simple steps. Here are a few tips:

- Keep noise levels down as noise can disturb birds and other animals.
- Keep to proper footpaths, do not feed wildlife, and do not pick flowers or other plants.
- Do not damage trees and do not spray historic monuments with graffiti.
- Water is scarce in Jordan, so please conserve and keep water sources clean.
- Stick to designated roads when driving. Off-road motoring is both risky and damaging to the environment.
- Be aware that fire-making is strictly prohibited in all reserves, except in designated barbecue pits. Do not approach, threaten or feed wild animals.



## When on a Nature Trip:

- Avoid hiking alone or in the dark.
- Watch your footing on rocky or steep slopes, and always stay on the trail.
- During heavy rainfall, avoid low-lying areas such as canyon floors that are susceptible to sudden flash floods.
- Bring your own water for drinking and cooking, as natural water sources may not always be clean or accessible.
- If you do use water from a spring or stream, treat it by boiling or with purification tablets.

## Remember to Bring...

Water, a hat, comfortable hiking shoes, a camera, binoculars, and identification guides for wildlife. For overnight camping trips, take a sleeping bag or blankets, food, and plastic bags for garbage. It is always a good idea to carry a flashlight, a compass, matches, waterproof clothing, and a first aid kit.

By minimizing your impact on the wildlife, you will help protect and preserve Jordan's beautiful nature for future generations to enjoy.

# Jordan - Nature's Best-Kept Secret



In the western highlands, including the wooded areas of the north in Zobia, Ajlun and Dibeen, and Dana in the south, the Mediterranean habitats surrounded by open steppe country are home to the Palestine Sunbird, the Upcher's Orphan and Sardinian Warblers. The more open steppe habitats typically host the Spectacled Warbler, Long-Billed Pipit, Black-Eared Wheatear, Woodchat Shrike and Linnet.

The Dead Sea area and Wadi Araba are home to Arabian and African species such as the Sand Partridge, Bar-Tailed Lark, Dunn's Hoopoe Lark, Little Green Bee-Eater, Blackstart and Arabian Babbler.

Wadi Shu'ayb and Wadi Mujib with their perennial watercourse are dwelling places for the beautiful White-Breasted Kingfisher. The magnificent rocky gorges of Wadi Rum, Dana, Mujib, and Petra are home to the Griffon Vulture, Bonelli's Eagle, Hume's Tawny Owl, Blackstart, different Wheatears, Scrub Warblers, Sinai Rosefinch, House Bunting, Tristram's Grackle, and the Fan-Tailed Raven.



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