



CICERONI
T R A V E L

ARABIA FELIX PETRA, JERASH & THE TREASURES OF JORDAN

TUESDAY 14 – THURSDAY 23 APRIL 2020 (10 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£3895

- **Encounter Jordan's remarkable history and its stunning historic sites**
- **Two full days spent exploring Petra**
- **Amman, Jerash and Biblical and Early Christian sites on the Dead Sea included**
- **See Wadi Rum in all its romantic glory**
- **5* hotels will be used throughout, with time to unwind in an excellent spa resort on the Dead Sea**



El Deir at Petra, engraved from a drawing by David Roberts of 1839

OVERVIEW

When Jean-Louis Burckhardt stumbled upon Petra in 1812, he did not realise how his discovery would grip the European imagination. This lost city of the Nabateans, the so-called “rose red city” of poetic imagination, is central to any visit to Jordan. Petra’s position on one of the main trade routes of the ancient world ensured that it would be wealthy, sophisticated and endowed with fine buildings. Who today realises that the wealth which led to Petra’s splendour came from trade in precious materials and spices, above all frankincense?

Yet, Petra is only one amongst many spectacular sites and monuments we shall see. The Nabateans’ great wealth attracted the envy of many and in time Roman expansion in this part of the Hellenistic world led to the conquest of their kingdom by the Emperor Trajan (AD 98 – 117). The great city of Jerash is a testament to the manner in which the grandeur of Roman architecture could easily be translated into local idioms throughout their empire.

Jordan, with its immediate neighbours, together forms the geographical and cultural cradle of the three great ‘religions of the book’: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Thus, the unfolding narratives within the Old and New Testaments and Islam’s Koran will form an integral part of the background to this visit. Indeed, who could not be moved by the view across the Jordan valley from Mount Nebo towards Jerusalem, the place from where Moses is thought to have seen ‘The Promised Land’? Equally pregnant with religious significance is the generally accepted site of Christ’s baptism down below in the Jordan valley, close to the Dead Sea.

Jordan as a state in its own right is a relatively recent creation, emerging from the residual ‘Great Power’ tensions of the early twentieth century. The country takes its name from the great river Jordan, as important today as it was in Biblical times. Our introduction to this remarkable part of the world will highlight the many complex issues, ancient and contemporary, which have moulded this fascinating destination which continues to be a stable outpost amidst the surrounding countries.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Tuesday 14 April – We fly from Heathrow, arriving in Amman where we shall be met by our local guide and tour manager, Odeh Shobaki, and transfer by coach to the **5* Millennium Hotel** (or similar) for a stay of three nights.

Day 2: Wednesday 15 April – Our first morning will be given over to an introductory bus tour of Amman, culminating in a visit to the ancient **Citadel** atop which sits an archaeologically complex site and a small Museum. After an early lunch in Amman we travel out to visit two ‘desert palace’ complexes at **Qasr Al Kharana (Qasr Hraneh)** and **Qusayr Amra**. The former is an Arab structure of the Umayyad dynasty, dated to about AD 700. Though at first it resembles a castle, its exact purpose is difficult to establish. The latter complex is a small bath-house now famed for its unusual frescoes of dancing and semi-naked ladies – subjects which are not what one would expect to find in an Islamic bath! We return to Amman and have a late dinner in the hotel.

Day 3: Thursday 16 April – In the morning we travel north to **Um Queis**, or Gadara, the ancient ‘Decapolis’ city with a fine range of mostly Roman buildings from the second century AD. We continue to **Jerash** where we shall have lunch. After Petra, Jerash is the most important archaeological site in Jordan, with truly spectacular buildings from Rome’s imperial zenith. Returning to Amman, we have dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 4: Friday 17 April – The day will be spent on a journey through time, travelling along the central part of the old **King’s Highway** from Amman to Petra, offering amazing views of nature at its most spectacular. Our major visit of the day will be to the great Crusader castle at **Karak**. After lunch we continue to Petra for our first of three nights in the **5 * Movenpick Resort Petra**. Dinner will be in the hotel.

Days 5 & 6: Saturday 18 & Sunday 19 April – We spend two full days in **Petra**, surely one of the wonders of the ancient world? Our first day will begin with a walk down the spectacular gorge known as the **Siq**, culminating in a first glimpse of the famous **Treasury**, which is a revelation. We continue along the valley, taking in the remains of the **Theatre** and the many tomb façades, up to some of which we shall walk to inspect at close quarters. Lunch will be in a restaurant in the centre of the ancient city. In the afternoon, our first optional ‘climbing’ walk will be to **El Deir** or ‘**The Monastery**’ hidden at the top of a very spectacular valley ascent. Dinner will be in the hotel.

Our second day in Petra will see us return to the city where in the morning we climb, again optional, up to the **High Place of Sacrifice**, which has a wonderful view of the many valleys beneath. We shall lunch in the same restaurant as the day before, and in the afternoon examine the site of the **Great Temple** and the recently excavated **Byzantine Church**. You will then be free to spend the rest of the afternoon at leisure in the ancient city before walking back to the hotel for a rest, followed by dinner.

Day 7: Monday 20 April – En route out of the Petra valleys we visit **Little Petra**, neglected by most visitors. We then drive south through remarkable scenery into the great desert wilderness known as **Wadi Rum**, where we have lunch, after which we travel into the desert by Jeep. At the end of this spectacular adventure, we continue on to the **5 * Movenpick Resort & Spa Dead Sea**, where we have a late dinner.

Day 8: Tuesday 21 April – Mid morning, we drive to the nearby **River Jordan** to visit the generally accepted site of Christ’s Baptism. We return to the hotel for some free time to enjoy the hotel’s Spa and to experience a ‘swim’ in the Dead Sea. Lunch is not included today but there will be dinner for the group in the hotel.

Day 9: Wednesday 22 April – We begin with an excursion to **Mount Nebo**. This is the site from where Moses is thought to have seen the Promised Land before his death. There is an early church, with exceptional early Christian mosaics, all cared for by Italian priests of the Franciscan Order. We continue to **Madaba**, originally an early Christian settlement and once again a centre of active Orthodox Christianity, preserved amidst an Arab world and famous for its many ancient mosaics. We lunch at a local restaurant and return to the hotel in time for an opportunity to sample once again the delights of sea, spa and pool. Our final dinner will be in the hotel.

Day 10: Thursday 23 April – We check out from the hotel, drive to the airport and fly back to the UK.

A tourist visa for Jordan is required, obtainable on arrival and currently approximately US\$55

PRACTICALITIES

Price £3895 **Without flights** £3445 **Deposit** £500 **Single Supplement** £895 (Double for Sole Use)

Hotel 9 nights including breakfast, 3 nights each at the 5* Hotel Amman or similar; 5* Movenpick Resort Petra & 5* Movenpick Resort & Spa Dead Sea

Flights Royal Jordanian

Outward: **RJ112** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 3) **1705**, arrive Amman **0010**

Return: **RJ111** Depart Amman **1200** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 3) **1525**

Price includes All dinners and 7 lunches with water, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, the services of Tom Duncan and our local tour manager Odeh Shobaki

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 1 lunch, soft drinks and alcohol with meals, Tourist Visa



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