



ACADEMY  
TRAVEL

TAILORED  
SMALL GROUP  
JOURNEYS

# ISRAEL & JORDAN

A CRADLE OF CIVILISATION

## OVERVIEW

Set in the heart of the Near East, Jordan and Israel are bursting with archaeological and historical gems that epitomise the vast sweep of history in this part of the world.

The world's first villages, mighty Bronze Age cities, incomparable Classical period towns, sites reaching back to the origins of Judaism and Christianity, Crusader castles and splendid Islamic monuments - this region has the lot, as well as stunning landscapes and a diverse range of modern cultures.

Our 20-day tour takes us in a leisurely and thorough fashion through the very birthplace of Western civilisation. From ancient archaeological tells to bustling markets, we will explore this fascinating region safely and enjoyably.

Round out your experience with contributions by expert archaeologist and historian Ben Churcher. While archaeology will be the focus, so too will be the food, culture and landscapes of this storied part of the world.



## TOUR LEADER

**Ben Churcher** is an archaeologist who works in Near East as well as Australian Aboriginal archaeology. He holds a BA (Hons) from the University of Queensland and a Dip. Ed from the University of Sydney. Ben is currently Field Director at the University of Sydney's archaeological excavations at Pella, Jordan.

## TOUR DATES

**March 6-25, 2023**

## TOUR PRICE

**\$13,890** per person, twin share  
**\$4,240** single supplement

## TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

## GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

## ITINERARY

Amman (2 nights), Jerusalem (4 nights), Haifa (2 nights), Tiberius (2 nights), Amman (3 nights), Petra (3 nights), Wadi Rum (1 night), Amman (2 nights)

## INCLUSIONS

**19** nights' accommodation in centrally located 5-star hotels. All breakfasts, 16 lunches and 11 dinners. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.



## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Start & Finish

The tour starts at 6.00pm on Monday 6 March, at the Intercontinental Hotel, Amman. The tour ends after breakfast on Saturday 25 March, at the Intercontinental Hotel, Amman.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

### Monday 6 March

#### Arrive Amman, Jordan

The tour commences at the hotel in Amman at 6pm. Meet your tour leader in the lobby for introductions and drinks and dinner in the hotel. Overnight Amman (D)

### Tuesday 7 March

#### Touring Amman

Despite its incredible growth in the last 50 years, Amman has kept a bustling charm and many reminders of its historic past. Today we visit the National Museum, which exhibits the best archaeological treasures that have been unearthed in Jordan. We also explore the citadel atop one of Amman's seven hills. Though inhabited at least from the Bronze Age, almost everything currently visible is of the Roman, Byzantine or Umayyad periods. The imposing Roman theatre built into the sides of the cliff could seat some 6,000 people. Overnight Amman (B, L, D)

### Wednesday 8 March

#### To Jerusalem

No brief description will do justice to Jerusalem. To reveal its complex overlay of 5,000 years of history, it needs to be seen and walked. A historical treasure house, Jerusalem is also the spiritual home to both Christianity and Judaism and the most important site for the Muslim world after Mecca and Medina. Today we travel across the Allenby Bridge to Jerusalem. When we arrive, we take an orientation tour of the city, beginning at the Mount of Olives and continuing to the Damascus Gate. Overnight Jerusalem (B, L, D)

### Thursday 9 March

#### Touring Jerusalem

This morning we walk the streets and alleys of Old Jerusalem, a city that has seen everything from the entry of Jesus to marauding Crusaders in the 11th century and members of the Australian Light Horse during World War 1. We visit the Temple Mount as well as the exquisite seventh century Umayyad Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aksa Mosque, the third most holy site of Islam. To crown a historically rich day, we also visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of Jesus's burial and a great basilica originally constructed by Constantine the Great. Overnight Jerusalem (B)

## TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

### Petra

Traverse the 2-kilometre-long gorge of the Siq and admire the Nabatean Sculptures before emerging to see the temple-like façade of the Treasury and the rest of this archaeological wonderland.

### Jerusalem

Walk in the footsteps of Jesus, the Crusaders, Saladin and the Australian Light Horse in Jerusalem's Old City, a perpetually controversial crossroads of cultures and faiths.

### Pella

Access all areas of this magnificent 10-hectare working archaeological site, set in beautiful surroundings by a perennial spring in the foothills of the north Jordan Valley.

### History Brought to Life

Uncover the cradle of civilisations from Neanderthal remains found in the Mt Carmel caves, to the Neolithic tells that uncover examples of the world's first urban developments: Jericho, Ashdod, Bethlehem, and more.

### Wadi Rum

Survey the spectacular Martian-like Wadi Rum. Home Lands of wandering Bedouin, Arab trade routes and Lawrence of Arabia, the landscape is one of towering red sandstone cliffs surrounded by plains of sands and grasses.

## **Friday 10 March**

### **Israel Museum**

Today we visit the Israel Museum, with the very best of Israel's archaeological treasures preserved in a well-curated, chronological display that spans the incredible history of the country from the Stone Age to the Classical periods. The afternoon is free for further exploration. Overnight Jerusalem (B, L)

## **Saturday 11 March**

### **Masada, Jericho and Qumran**

This morning we travel to Masada, the site of Herod the Great's tiered palace on the Dead Sea. In 73 CE, under siege from the Roman Legate, the Jewish community Flavius Silva committed collective suicide, marking Masada as an important symbol of the modern Israeli state. We continue to Qumran, an Essene community at the time of Jesus and the original location of the Dead Sea scrolls. Jericho is one of the world's earliest examples of large-scale urban development and our visit will be our first introduction to an ancient archaeological tell (mound). Overnight Jerusalem (B, L, D)

## **Sunday 12 March**

### **To Haifa via Bethlehem**

We depart for Bethlehem and visit the Church of the Nativity, situated directly over the cave in which Jesus was believed to have been born. Crossing to the Mediterranean Sea, we visit the Museum of Philistine Culture at the Philistine city of Ashdod, and the archaeological port site Ashdod-Yam. Next, we visit Ashkelon, another important Philistine city with remains from the Bronze Age, as well as the Byzantine, Crusader and Ottoman periods. Overnight Haifa (B, L, D)

## **Monday 13 March**

### **Caesarea, Megiddo and Mt Carmel**

Founded by Herod the Great, Caesarea features a large artificial port, a sewer system, a grid town plan, and all the accoutrements expected of a Classical town: temples, an amphitheatre and aqueducts. We also visit Megiddo, the site of Armageddon: the battle to end all battles. We end our day at Mt Carmel, where hominid remains have been excavated in several caves; including the most southerly example of a Neanderthal yet discovered. Overnight Haifa (B, L)

## **Tuesday 14 March**

### **To Tiberius**

Today we travel a short distance to Acco. Principally known as a Crusader town, it became the major port for the Kingdom of Jerusalem after its capture in 1104. This afternoon we visit Hazor and Tell Dan, dating to the Bronze and Iron Ages. Of particular interest are the well-preserved fortifications at both sites. Overnight Tiberius (B, L)

## **Wednesday 15 March**

### **Hippo, Capernaum and Nazareth**

Today we visit three ancient sites associated with Jesus. Located on a ridge overlooking Lake Tiberius (Sea of Galilee), Hippos has all the features of a Greek city: temples, a central agora, colonnaded streets and other public structures. Frequently mentioned in the Gospels, the pleasantly situated Capernaum was the closest to a permanent base that Jesus had during the Galilean ministry and it is referred to simply as "his own city". This afternoon we visit Nazareth and the impressive Church of the Annunciation. Overnight Tiberius (B, L)

## **Thursday 16 March**

### **Beth Shan and Umm Qais**

We return to Jordan, stopping at Beth Shan, the younger but more strategically located 'sister city' of Pella. After crossing the Jordan River, we climb high above Lake Tiberius and visit the unique black basalt construction of the Classical period city of Umm Qais (ancient Gadara), where a theatre, tombs, stretches of shops and residences have been excavated. Overnight Amman (B, L, D)

## **Friday 17 March**

### **Pella**

Today we visit the ancient site of Pella in northern Jordan, which has been inhabited for over 10,000 years and subject to excavations by the University of Sydney since 1979. While never a major centre, Pella is a world-ranking site set in a very beautiful region of Jordan. As your tour leader knows the site intimately, you will gain an unparalleled understanding into the many phases of occupation at the site. Overnight Amman (B, L)

## **Saturday 18 March**

### **Ajlun and Jerash**

Most people know two sites in Jordan: Petra and Jerash. Jerash is often referred to as 'the Pompeii of the East' and it is one of the best-preserved Roman cities in the Near East, along with Palmyra. On our return to Amman we stop at Ajlun Castle, one of the few surviving Arab castles dating to the Crusader period and a great example of Crusader-period military architecture. Overnight Amman (B, L)

## **Sunday 19 March**

### **Madaba, Mt Nebo and Umm El Rasas**

As we make our way to Petra, we stop in Madaba, one of the centres for Jordan's sizeable Christian community from the Byzantine period, when it became a centre for the region's mosaic industry. We'll see the famous Madaba Map mosaic in the Church of St George, more of the region's mosaics wonderfully displayed at the Mt Nebo church and the pinnacle of mosaic work found at the Church of St Stephen at Umm El Rasas. Overnight Petra (B, L, D)

## HOTELS

### **Amman, Intercontinental Hotel**

(7 nights)

### **Jerusalem, Olive Tree Hotel**

(4 nights)

### **Haifa, Dan Panorama**

(2 nights)

### **Tiberius, Leonardo Plaza**

(2 nights)

### **Petra, Petra Marriott**

(3 nights)

### **Wadi Rum, Aicha Camp**

(1 night)

## WEATHER

Mid to late March is a pleasant time to visit Jordan and Israel. Evening temperatures are cool, around 8 to 10 degrees. Daytime highs average around 20 degrees. Rainfall is low, about 20 millimetres for the month.

## FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

### **Grade Two**

This tour is physically demanding. To participate on this tour, you should be able to:

- negotiate challenging sites
- overnight in a tented desert camp
- walk confidently on uneven ground
- keep up with the group at all times
- walk for 4-5 kilometres over the day at a moderate pace with only short breaks
- stand for a reasonable length of time in galleries and museums
- tolerate uncomfortable climatic conditions like cold, humidity and heat
- negotiate steps and slopes on archaeological sites
- get on and off a coach unassisted
- move your luggage a short distance

## ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Jamal Fairbrother** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email: [jamal@academytravel.com.au](mailto:jamal@academytravel.com.au)



## **Monday 20 March**

### **Petra**

While the description of Petra as 'the rose-red city, half as old as time' may be clichéd, it is still apt. Petra dates to the Palaeolithic but is best known for the Nabataean period, during which time the prosperous Nabataeans carved mighty tomb edifices into the sandstone cliff faces, creating an evocative visual smorgasbord that is unmatched at any site in the ancient world. Overnight Petra (B, L, D)

## **Tuesday 21 March**

### **Little Petra**

This morning we visit an outlying group of monuments named Siq el Barid (painted gorge) for the traces of internal paint that exist in one of the tombs. We then walk to Beidha, a prehistoric village site that spans the crucial Natufian and Neolithic periods when human society in this part of the world started to turn to agriculture and settle into permanent villages. The afternoon is free to relax, or to re-visit Petra. Overnight Petra (B)

## **Wednesday 22 March**

### **Wadi Rum**

Featured in the movie Lawrence of Arabia, and more recently, The Martian, the spectacular Wadi Rum evokes Outback Australia with its landscape of towering, weathered red-sandstone cliffs, surrounded by plains of sand and grasses. As part of an inland trade route from Saudi Arabia, the inscriptions carved into the rocks remind us that people have been using this thoroughfare throughout history. This is the world of the Bedouin and today we will be guided through Wadi Rum by the locals before camping (comfortably!) for the night among the soaring peaks. Overnight Wadi Rum (B, L, D)

## **Thursday 23 March**

### **Shobak Castle**

Our first stop of the day, Shobak Castle on the King's Highway, is a small but complete example of the Crusader period castle. Next we visit Dana, both a well-preserved mud-brick village and one of Jordan's major nature reserves, a unique example of the ecosystem of the highlands of Jordan in a spectacular location. Overnight Amman (B, L, D)

## **Friday 24 March**

### **Kerak Castle and the King's Highway**

Occupied since the Iron Age, Kerak Castle is imposingly situated and commands a magnificent view in all directions. We'll travel from there to the Dead Sea to the archaeological site of the Church of St Lot, which consists of a small church and associated monastic complex built around a small cave. Travelling north once more we pass along the shores of the Dead Sea before returning to Amman. Overnight Amman (B, L, D)

## **Saturday 25 March**

### **Departure**

The tour concludes after breakfast in Amman. (B)

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