


# Jordan Factsheet

Currency	dinar	Divided into 100 piastres; obtainable in advance
Time	GMT + 3	When it is 9am in London it is midday in Jordan
Language	Arabic	English is widely spoken in tourist areas
Electricity	220v	220v 50 Hz Round pin plugs mostly used 

## PASSPORT & VISA

A valid ten-year passport is essential; it should be valid for at least six months after arrival in the country – check the FCO’s advice on entry requirements for Jordan to be sure: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. A visa is currently required for British passport-holders. It can usually be obtained at the airport, but please check current visa requirements on our website (<https://www.discoveradventure.com/essential-information#/get-your-visa>) and ensure you allow plenty of time if obtaining in advance. Remember to check any regulations for countries you may transit during your flight.

## MONEY

The currency in Jordan is the Jordanian Dinar (JD, known as ‘gee dee’) and made up of 100 piastres and 1000 fulus; you can obtain it before departure (you may need to order well in advance). For everyday use JD5 is probably the biggest note that you want. Changing money in Jordan is very easy and most major currencies are accepted; US Dollars are easier and tend to get a better rate than Euros or Sterling. Do not bring Scottish banknotes. Hotels will change money but banks and money-change bureaux give a better rate of exchange – however access to them is less practical. Travellers’ cheques are the safest way to carry money, but can only be changed in the main towns so really only useful if you are extending your stay; US\$ travellers’ cheques are easiest to change. ATMs (cash machines) are found throughout the main cities; the main credit cards are accepted by most large hotels, restaurants and shops catering to tourists.

## HEALTH:

### Vaccinations

We recommend you ensure your routine UK schedule of vaccinations is up-to-date (especially Tetanus) and check the Fit For Travel (<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk>) website for further details. You should always check with your GP/travel clinic for the latest health advice, as they are made immediately aware of any updates in World Health Travel requirements.

### Malaria & Insect Bites

Malaria is not a risk in Jordan, though there are still biting insects – cover up at dawn and dusk in loose-fitting clothing, use a good insect repellent and avoid wearing strongly perfumed toiletries.

### General

On the trip itself, food is cooked and prepared to very high standards and you can eat with confidence – though adopt good hand-washing procedures to prevent bugs being passed around the group. The majority of restaurants in Jordan have very good standards of hygiene and the chances of being ill from badly-prepared food are rare. An upset stomach is more likely to be due to a change in diet and climate. However, it’s wise to take the following general precautions: Do not drink tap water – or clean your teeth in it – and avoid ice cubes in drinks unless you are sure they are made with bottled water. For the same reason avoid salads, raw vegetables and fruit that you cannot peel yourself, as well as unpasteurised dairy products and ice cream, which is sold in the street – it may have melted and refrozen. Do not eat a meal if you think it has not been freshly cooked; shellfish is best avoided, as well as undercooked meat.

There is always a risk of sunstroke and dehydration on a trip of this nature if you are not careful. Drink lots of water, replenish your salt intake and protect yourself against the strong sun: use high factor sun cream or sun block, wear a hat and sunglasses. The key point for good health is to keep your resistance high – eat and drink well – and to be fully aware of all possible health risks such as poor hygiene, undressed open cuts, untreated water and bites.

## SAFETY & SECURITY

Despite ongoing turmoil in neighbouring countries, Jordan is a surprisingly safe country to visit. As always, you should be alert, but not so paranoid that you can’t enjoy friendly interaction with the locals – and they are incredibly welcoming and friendly! Use your common sense: wear a concealed moneybelt containing your passport, flight ticket and cash, and do not flash any valuables, including your watch and camera. Leave your valuables behind; you don’t need your best jewellery and gadgets on this trip. Be careful at night and avoid walking or getting into taxis alone. Crowded areas such as bus stations and markets attract pick-pockets and bag-slashers, so be vigilant for both yourself and your companions. Avoid any demonstrations or political gatherings.

## WEATHER

For a small country, Jordan has an extraordinary range of climates. The hottest populated region of Jordan is the Jordan Valley with extremely oppressive summer temperatures often in excess of 39°C. In Amman the temperatures are a little more forgiving with an average 32°C in August and 12°C in January. The climate in the desert is extreme; with temperatures often well into the 40s. Average temperatures and rainfall for Amman:

	Min-Max Temp°C	Rainfall (mm)
Mar / Apr	6 - 24	31
Sept / Oct	14 - 31	5

## LANGUAGE

Arabic is the official language of Jordan. However, anyone working in the tourism industry will speak some English. Almost all town and street signs all over the country are in English as well as Arabic. You will often hear 'welcome' said in English. One of the most common greetings in Arabic is *ahlan wa sahan*, loosely translated as 'be as one of the family and at your ease,' which ends up simply as 'welcome' in English. This friendly behaviour is based on the harsh realities of life in the desert, where people's social and caring nature provides strangers with shelter and food as a matter of course.

Having a few basic phrases up your sleeve will go a long way in forming good relationships with the people you meet, and having some fun interaction! Here are a few examples to get you started:

Hello / how are you - <i>As-salam aleykum</i>	Goodbye - <i>Beslama</i>	Yes/No - <i>Naam/La</i>	
Please - <i>Afak</i>	Thankyou - <i>Shukran</i>	Sorry - <i>Smahliya</i>	
Praise be to God - <i>Al hamdu lillah</i>	If God wishes - (used in many contexts) - <i>Inshallah</i>		
How much? - <i>bshal</i>	I don't understand - <i>La afham</i>		
1 - wahid	5 - khumsah	9 - tissaa	100 - miyya
2 - itnain	6 - settah	10 - asharah	1000 - alf
3 - thalatha	7 - sabaa	20 - ishryn	
4 - arba	8 - thamaaneeya	50 - khamseen	

## FOOD AND DRINK

Mealtimes are synonymous with celebration and hospitality in Jordan; the nation enjoys its food! The most well-known dish is the Bedouin *mansaf*, a dish of rice, lamb or chicken served with a yogurt-based sauce and nuts; it is traditionally eaten with your hands. Appetisers (mezze) are generous, with hummous and koubba (deep-fried ball of meat, pine nuts and bulgar wheat) or falafel common. Kebabs, stews, lentil dishes and stuffed vegetables and poultry or lamb are also common dishes, as are side salads. Arabic unleavened bread is usually served with everything. Fresh fruit is a common dessert and tea and coffee are served widely. Coffee is the national drink and roadside coffee stalls are common. Alcohol is not taboo as in some other Islamic countries and some wine is produced here, but it has a fairly low profile.

## CULTURE & PEOPLE:

### Religion

Islam is the predominant religion in Jordan. Muslims pray five times a day and you will regularly hear the call to prayer. The monotheistic faith of Islam originates from the Middle East; it is a younger religion than Christianity or Judaism. In the Koran, Jesus is seen as another in a long line of prophets that ends definitively with Mohammed. Christians are believed to account for 5-6% of Jordan's population.

### Dress

Remember that what you would wear on a hot day in the UK is not necessarily acceptable in other countries, particularly in Muslim regions. At Discover Adventure we expect our groups to be sensitive to other cultures – remember that even in the most remote locations, we have local crew with us and they also deserve your respect. Women travellers in particular should be modest in dress - avoid tight or 'strappy' tops in favour of regular T-shirts. Shorts should not be too short and loose trousers are preferable in rural areas. Men should wear a top at all times. By dressing thoughtfully you not only experience minimum hassle but do not offend the local people. Those extending their stay, especially women, should dress in order to draw as little attention to themselves as possible.

### Women Travellers

In Jordan men and women have very little contact with each other before marriage. When Jordanians see male and female travellers together they will instantly ask if you are married. Western movies and TV give some men the impression that all western women are promiscuous and will jump into bed at the drop of a hat, so many women on their own will receive unwanted banter, proposals of marriage and even declarations of undying love. This problem will unfortunately not go away; however steps can be made to reduce the amount of unwanted attention (see 'Dress' above). Avoid eye contact with any man you don't know and try to ignore any rude remarks. This is by no means a magic formula but will certainly help. Unless you are staying on after your trip you are unlikely to be alone at any point.

## Haggling

It is expected in most situations in Jordan that you will haggle for prices (except in restaurants or on public transport). You are not ripping locals off if you knock their prices down. Haggling is great fun and a good way of interacting with local people. A good rule of thumb is to offer a third of the asking price and meet somewhere in the middle. However, while the intention is to knock the price down, remember that a dollar means a lot more to the seller than it will to you once you get home.

## Customs

Jordan, like most Arabic nations is typically hospitable. The culture has a great deal of etiquette which is strictly adhered to, but Jordanians are very forgiving of visitors who innocently break these rules.

- Stand when someone important or another guest enters the room
- Shake hands with everyone – but only with a Jordanian woman if she offers her hand first
- Do not sit so that the soles of your feet point to anyone
- Never accept any present or service of any kind without first politely refusing twice
- Don't engage in any conversation about sensitive topics e.g. the Jordanian Royal family or Judaism
- An unaccompanied foreign man should not sit next to an unaccompanied Jordanian woman on public transport unless unavoidable
- Remove your shoes when visiting a mosque, or private house
- Never walk in front of, or interrupt in any way, someone praying towards Mecca
- Foreign couples should refrain from holding hands or showing any signs of affection in public

Male and female divides are extremely evident in Jordan, particularly in the home. There are various parts of the house that are reserved for men and others for women. The majority of meals are eaten on the floor and trays of food spread out for all to share. Food should not be taken from a communal plate with your left hand – it is associated with toilet duties and is considered unclean. More traditional families are often quite hierarchical at meal times. The grandparents and male head of the house may eat in one circle; the latter's wife and the older children in another, and the small children in yet another. Usually, outsiders eat with the head of the household.

## Tipping

A tip of 10% is expected in the more expensive bars and restaurants, and most people round up a taxi metre's fare to the nearest round figure. While most services are performed with the aim of getting a small amount, aggressive hustling isn't the norm in Jordan and shouldn't be rewarded.

## RECOMMENDED READING:

### Travel Guides (useful if extending your stay)

- Jordan – Lonely Planet
- The Rough Guide to Jordan
- Middle East Arabic Phrasebook – Lonely Planet

### Fiction / Autobiography

- Setting the Desert on Fire (TE Lawrence) – James Barr
- Married to a Bedouin – Marguerite Van Geldermalsen
- Leap of Faith – Queen Noor