

JERASH

A close second to Petra on the list of favorite destinations in Jordan, the ancient city of Jerash boasts an unbroken chain of human occupation dating back more than 6,500 years.

The city's golden age came under **Roman** rule and the site is now generally acknowledged to be one of the best preserved Roman provincial towns in the world. Hidden for centuries in sand before being excavated and restored over the past 70 years, Jerash reveals a fine example of the grand, formal provincial Roman urbanism that is found throughout the Middle East, comprising paved and **colonnaded streets**, soaring hilltop **temples**, handsome **theatres**, spacious public squares and plazas, baths, fountains and city walls pierced by towers and gates. Beneath its external Graeco - Roman veneer, Jerash also preserves a subtle blend of east and west. Its architecture, religion and languages reflect a process by which two powerful cultures meshed and coexisted, The Graeco - Roman world of the Mediterranean basin and the ancient traditions of the Arab Orient.



KERAK CASTLE

Kerak lies 120 km. South of Amman, the last stop on the Kings' Way to Petra, located 140 km. Southeast. Already capital of the Moab reign, Kerak was chosen by the **Crusaders** to build their stronghold, due to the unique position: built over a promontory overlooking 360° the valley, it was mid-way between Jerusalem and Shobak, another Crusader castle

Built by Payen le Bouteiller starting from 1142, it could compete with Syria's Crac des Chevalier.

After Salah-Eddin conquered it, it was amply rebuilt and enlarged. A steep drop of the terrain naturally protects the South and North sides; a ditch surrounded the castle.

Today's access is in the North wall. **Living** rooms, **storage** rooms, **courts**, **stairs** and turrets are still largely visible, to give an idea of how mighty this fortification was in its heydays. Never inhabited by a court, but mainly a defensive stronghold, the different utilities are still clearly identifiable.



DEAD SEA

At **400 meters below sea level**, the Dead Sea is infinite in what it has to offer. Ever since the days of Herod the Great, people have flocked to the Dead Sea in search of its curative secrets. Due to high annual temperatures, low humidity and high atmospheric pressure, the air is extremely oxygenated, and the high content of oxygen and magnesium in the air make breathing a lot easier. With the highest content of minerals and salts in the world, the Dead Sea water possesses anti-inflammatory properties, and the dark **mud** found on The shores have been used for over 2000 years for **therapeutic purposes**.



AMMAN

A sprawling city spread over 19 hills, or jebels. Amman is the modern, as well as the ancient capital of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan. Known as Rabbath-Ammon during prehistoric periods and later as **Philadelphia**, the ancient city that was once part of the Decapolis league, now boasts a population of around 1.5 million.

Towering above Amman, the site of the earliest fortifications is now subject to numerous excavations which have revealed remains from the Neolithic period as well as from the Hellenistic and late Roman to Arab Islamic Ages. The site which is known as the Citadel includes many structures such as the Temple of Hercules, the Omayyad Palace and the Byzantine church.

At the foot of the **Citadel** lies the 6000 seat Roman **Theatre** which is deep-sided bowl carved into the hill and still used for cultural events.

Amman is an excellent base to explore the environs and many interesting half-day or full-day trips can be arranged.

