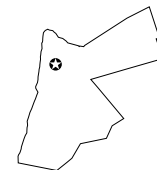


Amman عمان



Amman is a modern Arab city rather than one of the great cultural centres of the Middle East; it has never rivalled Damascus or Cairo as a grand Islamic city of antiquity. For those arriving from Syria or Egypt it can, depending on your perspective, feel either refreshingly or disappointingly modern and Westernised.

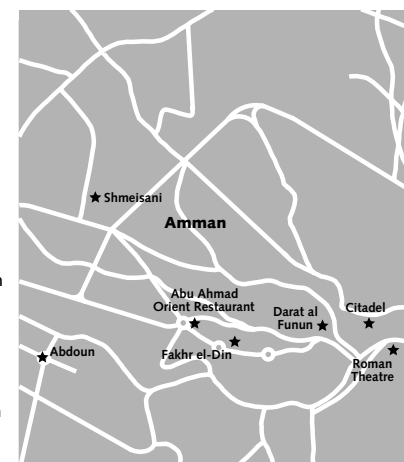
Residents talk openly of two Ammans. Conservative and Islamic in its sympathies, Eastern Amman (which includes downtown) is home to the urbanised poor, with vast suburban Palestinian refugee camps on its fringe. Western Amman is a world apart, with leafy residential districts, trendy cafés and bars, and impressive art galleries. It's impossible to gain a full understanding of Amman, or even Jordan, without visiting both areas.

The city's character has been indelibly altered by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees and, more recently, 100,000 Iraqi refugees, most of whom are highly educated and have pushed the boundaries of a cultural life that had been kept under close rein by Islamic conservatives. Along with a young generation of Jordanians, these immigrants have helped to make Amman a tolerant and outward-looking city.

Don't come to the nation's capital with expectations of medieval souqs and bazaars, or wonderful mosques of Islam's grand architectural heritage. Do come to Amman to catch a glimpse of a modern Arab city, embracing an international and culturally diverse vision of the future. Whether you're in the urbane western suburbs, or the earthy, kinetic chaos of downtown, the welcome you'll receive is sure to be warm.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Take in the ruins of ancient Amman at the **Citadel** (p71), visit the impressive National Archaeological Museum there, and admire the views of the modern city
- Sit and watch Jordanians come and go from high in the **Roman Theatre** (p81), Amman's most spectacular ancient monument
- Take in an art exhibition at the tranquil **Darat al-Funun** (p83) complex, then relax in its simple café, set amidst Byzantine ruins
- Join the beautiful people for a hubbly bubbly in the cool **wine bars** and **cafés** (p95 and p96) of Shmeisani and Abdoun
- Enjoy a fine Lebanese meal at **Fakhr el-Din** (p93) or **Abu Ahmad Orient Restaurant** (p93)



FAST FACTS

- Population: 1.8 million
- Telephone code: ☎ 06
- Former names: Rabbath Ammon, Philadelphia (the 'City of Brotherly Love')
- Elevation: 850m

HISTORY

Excavations in and around Amman have turned up finds from as early as 3500 BC, when the earliest inhabitants settled on Jebel al-Qala'a (the site of the Citadel). There has been a town on this site since at least the Bronze Age; objects dated to this time show that the town was involved in trade with Greece, Syria, Cyprus and Mesopotamia.

Biblical references indicate that by 1200 BC, Rabbath Ammon (the Great City of the Ammonites mentioned in the Old Testament) was the capital of the Ammonites. King David sent the Israelite armies to besiege Rabbath, after being insulted by the Ammonite king Nahash. After taking the town, David burnt many inhabitants alive in a brick kiln. Rabbath continued to flourish and supplied David with weapons for his ongoing wars. His successor Solomon erected a shrine in Jerusalem to the Ammonite god Molech. From here on, the only biblical references to Rabbath are prophecies of its destruction at the hands of the Babylonians.

The history of Amman between then (c 585 BC) and the time of the Ptolemies of Egypt is unclear. Ptolemy Philadelphus (283–246 BC) rebuilt the city during his reign, and it was named Philadelphia after him. The Ptolemy dynasty was succeeded by the Seleucids and, briefly, by the Nabataeans, before Amman was taken by Herod around 30 BC, and fell under the sway of Rome. The city, which even before Herod's arrival had felt Rome's influence as a member of the Decapolis (see p109), was totally replanned in typically grand Roman style, with a theatre, forum and Temple to Hercules. It soon became an important centre along the trade routes between the Red Sea and Syria.

Philadelphia was the seat of Christian bishops in the early Byzantine period, but the city declined and fell to the Sassanians

(from Persia) in about AD 614. At the time of the Muslim invasion in about AD 636, the town – by then named Amman – was again thriving as a staging post on the caravan trade route. From about the 10th century, however, the city declined, and was soon reduced to a place of exile.

Amman was little more than a backwater village of less than 2000 residents when a colony of Circassians resettled there in 1878. It boomed temporarily in the early 20th century when it became a stopover on the new Hejaz Railway between Damascus and Medina (Saudi Arabia). In 1921 it became the centre of Trans-Jordan when Emir Abdullah made it his headquarters. In 1948 many Palestinians settled in and around Amman and, two years later, it was officially declared the capital of the Hashemite kingdom.

ORIENTATION

Like Rome, Amman was born on seven major jebels (hills), but today it spreads across over 20. As such, it's not really a city to explore on foot, apart from the downtown area – known by locals as *il-balad*. A straight, flat road is almost unheard of in Amman.

The only way to make any sense of Amman in a short time is to pick out the major landmarks on the jebels. The main hill is Jebel Amman, home to several embassies, a few hotels and trendy restaurants. The traffic roundabouts in this central area (some now replaced with tunnels and major intersections) are numbered west of downtown from 1st Circle to 8th Circle. If you're travelling in a taxi, street names will mean little so ask for the nearest 'circle' and walk from there, or give the driver a nearby landmark (like an embassy or hotel).

Jebel al-Hussein, northwest of downtown, has the Housing Bank Centre; its mossy, terraced façade sticks out a mile. This also marks the start of the upmarket Shmeisani area, which stretches out to the north as far as the leafy Sports City. It has plenty of restaurants, shops, top-end hotels and a few nightclubs. Another trendy and affluent area is Abdoun, a few hills south of Shmeisani and home to supercool cafés and several embassies.

Closer to downtown is the grittier Abdali area, home to the Abdali bus station and

topped by the distinctive blue dome of the King Abdullah Mosque.

In the far west is swanky Sweifieh, a booming shopping area. Further out, the city's outlying towns, suburbs and refugee camps have now pretty much merged into one sprawling urban area.

Maps

The maps in this guidebook should be sufficient for most visitors. If you plan to stay for some time or intend to visit places out of the centre, the 2003 *Maps of Jordan, Amman and Aqaba* published by Luma Khalaf is worth picking up. It shows just about every street in the city and pinpoints embassies and other landmarks. It doesn't, however, cover

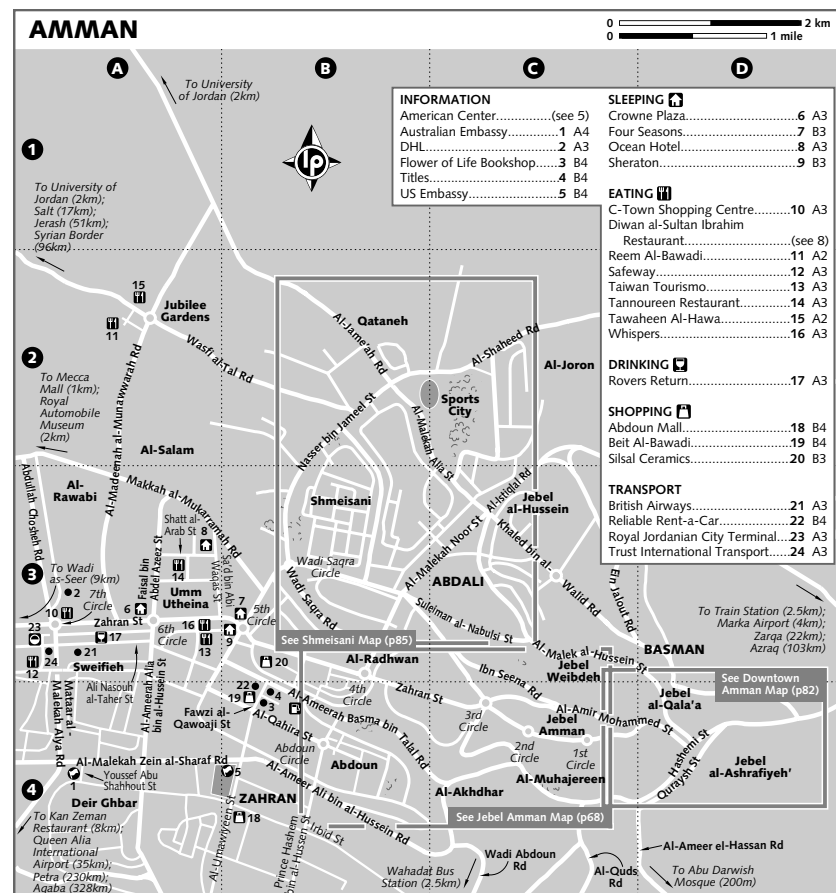
the southern or eastern suburbs. The map is available from most bookshops.

INFORMATION Bookshops

Amman has a good range of bookshops with titles in English but there are few bargains on books in Jordan.

Books@café (p93) has a large, eclectic selection, with a café and Internet access. The bookshop at the Jordan InterContinental Hotel (p91) has a good range of books about Jordan.

Al-Aulama Bookshop (Map p82; ☎ /fax 4636192; 44 Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; ☒ 8am–8pm Sat–Thu) Good for hard-to-find locally produced (and Lonely Planet) guidebooks, maps and postcards.



WHEN CIRCLES ARE SQUARES

With its endless one-way streets, stairways, narrow lanes and jebels (hills), Amman is confusing enough to get around anyway, but the ambiguous names for the streets and circles would challenge the navigational skills of even the most experienced explorer. We have used the more common names on the maps and in the text, but if street signs, directions given by locals and queries from taxi drivers are still confusing you, refer to the list below.

Don't forget that Al-Malek means King, so King Faisal St is sometimes labelled Al-Malek Faisal St. Similarly, Al-Malekah is Queen and Al-Amir (Al-Emir) is Prince. And don't be too surprised that some 'circles' are now called 'squares' (*maidan*)...

Streets

- Al-Kulliyah al-Islamiyah St – sometimes known as Zahran St
- Omar bin al-Khattab St – Mango St
- Quraysh St – Saqf Sayl St
- Abu Bakr as-Siddiq St – Rainbow St
- Suleiman al-Nabulsi St – Police St

Circles

- 1st Circle – Maidan al-Malek Abdullah
- 2nd Circle – Maidan Wasfi al-Tal
- 3rd Circle – Maidan al-Malek Talal
- 4th Circle – Maidan al-Emir Gazi bin Mohammed
- 5th Circle – Maidan al-Emir Faisal bin Hussein
- 6th Circle – Maidan al-Emir Rashid bin al-Hassan
- 7th Circle – Maidan al-Emir Talal bin Mohammed
- Ministry of the Interior Circle – Maidan Jamal Abdul Nasser
- Sports City Circle – Maidan al-Medina al-Riyadiyah

Amman Bookshop (Map p68; ☎ 4644013; Al-Amir Mohammed St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3.30-6.30pm Sat-Thu) Just down from 3rd Circle, it has the best range of books and novels in Amman.

Bustami's Library (Map p82; ☎ 4622649; Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; ☎ 5am-6pm Sat-Thu) Right in the heart of downtown, this tiny bookstand is the place to go for up-to-date Western magazines and newspapers.

Flower of Life Bookshop (Map p65; ☎ 5921838; Abdoun Fawzi al-Qawoaji St, Abdoun; 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Sat-Thu) Strong on archaeology, spirituality and kids' books.

Titles (Map p65; ☎ 5924130; Karadshe Complex, Abdoun Fawzi al-Qawoaji St, Abdoun) Across from the Flower of Life Bookshop, with a good selection of books for sale and DVDs to rent.

Cultural Centres

All of the following foreign cultural centres regularly organise film nights and lectures (generally in their own language), plus exhibitions and concerts (in their own language or Arabic). Tourists are normally welcome at these events, but it's always a good idea to ring the centre first. You will also find details of functions at the various cultural centres listed in the two main local English-

language newspapers, the *Jordan Times* and the *Star*.

American Center (Map p65; ☎ 5859102; US Embassy, 20 Al-Umawiyeen St, Abdoun; ☎ 1-4.30pm Sat-Wed, 9am-4pm Thu) Has a library with American newspapers and magazines.

British Council (Map p68; ☎ 4636147; www.britishcouncil.org.jo; Abu Bakr as-Siddiq St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Sun-Wed, 9am-3.30pm Thu) Southeast of 1st Circle. Has a library with current English newspapers and a pleasant outdoor café. Library hours are noon-6.30pm Sunday to Wednesday, 11am to 3.30pm Thursday.

Centre Culture Français (Map p82; ☎ 4612658; www.cccfjor-jo.org; Kulliyat al-Sharee'ah St, Jebel Weibdeh; ☎ 8.30am-2pm & 4-6pm Sat-Thu) By the roundabout at the top of Jebel Weibdeh. The library is open 4pm to 6pm Saturday, Sunday and Monday, 11am-1pm and 4pm to 6pm Tuesday and Wednesday, 4pm to 8pm Thursday.

Goethe Institut (Map p68; ☎ 4641993; giammvw@go.com.jo; 5 Abdul Mun'im al-Rifa'i St, Al-Radhwan; ☎ 9am-1pm Sun-Thu, 4.30-6.30pm Sun-Wed) Northwest of 3rd Circle.

Instituto Cervantes (Map p68; ☎ 4610858; http://amman.cervantes.es; Mohammed Hafiz Ma'ath St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Sun-Thu) Behind Amman Surgical Hospital near 3rd Circle.

Emergency

The tourist police have an office at the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities and there is a small tourist police booth on Hashemi St near the Roman Theatre. You can contact the tourist police through the **Halla Line** (☎ 0800 22228); free if calling from a non-mobile or public telephone.

Ambulance (☎ 193)

Fire Department (☎ 4617101, 199)

Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities (Map p68; ☎ 4642311, 4603360, ext 254; fax 4646264; Ground fl, Al-Mutanabbi St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 8am-9pm)

Police (☎ 192, 191)

Traffic Police/Accidents (☎ 4896390, ☎ 190)

Internet Access

Amman has plenty of Internet cafés, particularly in downtown and by the University of Jordan.

Books@café (p93; per hr JD2) A highly professional set-up with fast connections.

Internet Yard (Map p82; ☎ 079 5509569; dweib@joynet.com.jo; Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; per hr JD1; ☎ 9.30am-midnight)

Meeranet (Map p85; ☎ 5695956; Ilya Abu Madhi St, Shmeisani; per hr JD2; ☎ 24hr)

Welcome Internet (Map p82; ☎ 4620206; Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; per hr JD1; ☎ 10.30am-1am) Used to dealing with travellers.

Laundry

Several tiny laundries and dry-cleaning services are hidden down side-alleys around

downtown. There's one around the corner from Jabri Restaurant in downtown which charges around 500 fils per piece. Several hotels, including the Palace, offer a laundry service.

Libraries

The Darat al-Funun gallery (p83) has terrific art books. The main library at the University of Jordan is your best option for serious research. There are also small libraries at the British Council and in the American, French, Spanish and German cultural centres.

Amman Central Library (Map p82; ☎ 4627718; Hashemi St, downtown; ☎ 9am-5pm Sat-Thu) Near the Roman Theatre. The top floor holds an eclectic range of English titles.

Media

Jordan Today (www.jordantoday.com.jo) is a free monthly booklet that includes a Yellow Pages listing of embassies, airlines, travel agencies and car-rental companies in both Amman and Aqaba, as well as restaurant listings and news of upcoming events.

The similarly monthly *Where to Go* (www.w2go.com) includes a useful collection of Amman restaurant menus. To track down a copy of either, ask at one of the tourist offices or at top-end hotels and restaurants.

The English-language *Jordan Times* and *Star* newspapers both print entertainment listings and a collection of useful phone numbers.

AMMAN IN...

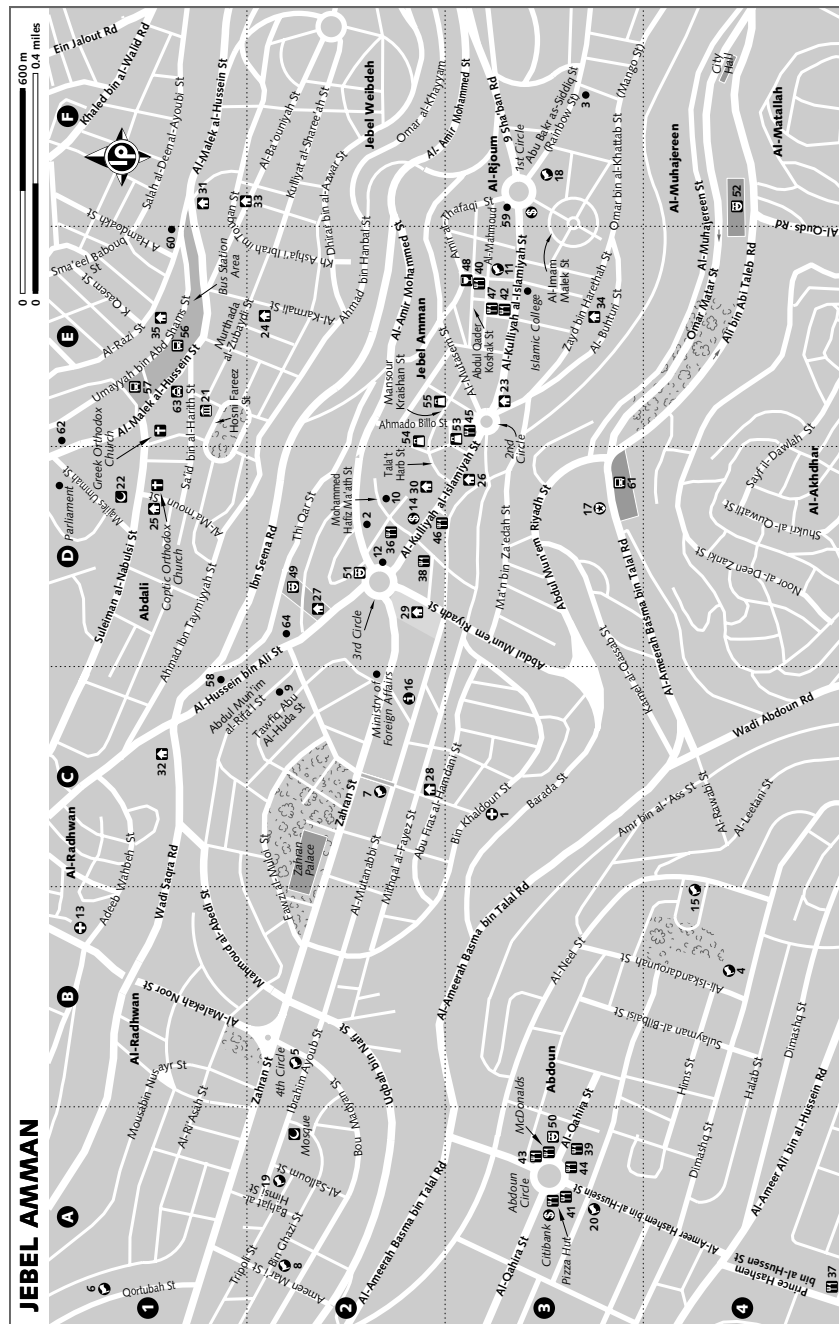
One Day

Take a taxi to the **Citadel** (p71), with its ruined Roman temple and Umayyad palace, and check out the Archaeological Museum and views over downtown. Take a taxi or head east on foot and descend the series of steps to the aptly named downtown to check out the **Roman Theatre** (p81) and its museums. Follow our walking tour (p86) in reverse and shop the **souqs** around the Hussein Mosque. Enjoy a cheap local lunch of hummus and mint tea at **Hashem Restaurant** (p91) or spend a bit more on an organic salad while visiting the **Wild Jordan Centre** (p70).

In the afternoon wander the swanky districts of Shmeisani or check out the **craft shops** (p98) around 2nd Circle, before dining at **Abdoun Circle**.

Two Days

On the second day take a taxi or drive to **Wadi as-Seer** (p102) to check out the ruined Hellenistic palace and handicrafts complex of Iraq al-Amir and then continue on to **Fuheis** (p106) for a lunch or dinner of *fatteh* (fried bread with yoghurt, hummus and chicken). If you are short on time make a great day trip out to the Roman ruins of **Jerash** (p108) instead. After a hard day's sightseeing sweat it all out in the opulent **Al-Pasha Turkish Bath** (p86).



INFORMATION		SLEEPING		ENTERTAINMENT	
Al-Khalidi Medical Centre.....	1 C3	Bellevue Hotel.....	23 E3	Century Cinemas.....	49 D2
Amman Bookshop.....	2 D2	Canary Hotel.....	24 E2	Cine Le Royal.....	(see 29)
British Council.....	3 F3	Caravan Hotel.....	25 D1	Galleria.....	50 A3
British Embassy.....	4 B4	Carlton Hotel.....	26 D3	JJ's.....	(see 27)
Dutch Embassy.....	5 B2	Grand Hyatt Amman.....	27 D2	Kanabayé.....	51 D2
Egyptian Embassy.....	6 A1	Hisham Hotel.....	28 C2	King Hussein Cultural Centre.....	52 F4
French Embassy.....	7 C2	Hotel Le Royal.....	29 D2		
German Embassy.....	8 A2	Jordan InterContinental Hotel... 30	D2	SHOPPING	
Goethe Institut.....	9 C2	Merryland Hotel.....	31 F1	Al-Alaydi Jordan Craft Centre.....	
Instituto Cervantes.....	10 D2	Ridasson SAS Hotel.....	32 C1	
Iraqi Embassy.....	11 E3	Select Hotel.....	33 F2	
Jacob's Pharmacy.....	12 D2	Shepherd Hotel.....	34 E3	
Jordan Hospital & Medical Centre.....	13 B1	Toledo Hotel.....	35 E1	
Jordan National Bank.....	14 D2			TRANSPORT	
Lebanese Embassy.....	15 B4	EATING		Abdali Bus Station.....	
Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities.....	16 C2	Abu Ahmad Orient Restaurant.. 36	D2	Airport Express Bus.....	
Muhajireen Police Station.....	17 D3	Blue Fig Café.....	37 A4	Emirates.....	
Post Office.....	(see 30)	Bonita Inn.....	38 D2	Firas Car Rental.....	
Saudi Arabian Consulate.....	18 F3	Caffe Mokka.....	39 A3	Gulf Air.....	
Syrian Embassy.....	19 A2	Fakhr el-Din.....	40 E3	Hijazi.....	
Tourist Police Centre.....	(see 16)	Gérard's.....	41 A3	Minibuses to Dead Sea & Wadi as-Seer (Muhajireen Bus Station).....	
Yemeni Embassy.....	20 A3	Haaboo Grand Stores.....	42 E3	Royal Jordanian Airlines.....	
		Lebnani Snack.....	43 A3	Royal Jordanian Airlines.....	
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Noodasia.....	44 A3	Service Taxis to Damascus, Beirut & Baghdad.....	
Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts.....	21 E1	Ristorante Casereccio.....	(see 43)	Trust International Transport (booking office only).....	
King Abdullah Mosque.....	22 D1	Romero Restaurant.....	46 D2	Turkish Airlines.....	
Museum of the Political History of HM Late King Abdullah bin al-Hussein.....	(see 11)	Shanghai Restaurant.....	47 E3		
		DRINKING			
		Grappa.....	48 E3		
		Harir Lounge.....	(see 39)		
		Tche Tche Café.....	(see 43)		

Medical Services

Amman has more than 20 hospitals and some of the best medical facilities available in the Middle East. Among the better ones are those listed here. The two English-language newspapers found in Amman list the current telephone numbers of these and other hospitals, and of doctors on night duty throughout the capital. The two newspapers also publish a list of pharmacies open after hours.

Al-Khalidi Medical Centre (Map p68; ☎ 4644281; www.kmc.jo; Bin Khaldoun St, southwest of 3rd Circle)

Islamic Hospital (Map p85; ☎ 5680127; just off Al-Malek al-Hussein St, Jebel al-Hussein)

Italian Hospital (Map p82; ☎ 4777101; Italian St, downtown)

Jacob's Pharmacy (Map p68; ☎ 4644945; 3rd Circle, Jebel Amman; ☎ 9am-3am) One of the more convenient pharmacies.

Jordan Hospital & Medical Centre (Map p68; ☎ 5607550, 5620777; Al-Malekah Noor St, Jebel Amman)

Palestine Hospital (Map p85; ☎ 5607071; Al-Malekah Alia St, Shmeisani)

University Hospital (Map p65; ☎ 5353444; University of Jordan complex, northern Amman)

Money

Changing money is very easy and the downtown area especially is awash with banks and moneychangers. The Arab Bank, Jordan Gulf Bank and the Housing Bank for Trade & Finance are among those with widespread ATMs for Visa and MasterCard, while Jordan National Bank and HSBC ATMs allow you to extract dinars from your MasterCard and are Cirrus compatible. The Housing Bank has an ATM in the arrivals hall at Queen Alia International Airport; you get there after passing through customs so make sure you have some cash to buy your Jordanian visa if necessary.

Many moneychangers are located along Al-Malek Faisal St in downtown.

Sahloul Exchange Co (Map p82; ☎ 9am-7pm Sat-Thur; Ground Fl, Aicco Bldg, Al-Malek Faisal St) Good for travellers cheques.

Post

There are lots of small post offices around town (ask your hotel for the nearest), including at the Jordan InterContinental Hotel between 2nd and 3rd Circles in Jebel Amman, and in the Housing Bank Centre

in Shmeisani (which also houses the Royal Jordanian Airlines head office).

To send a large parcel anywhere, first go to the Parcel Post Office, in an alleyway behind the central post office in downtown (it looks more like a shop, so look out for the weighing machine on the counter), where it's weighed. Then take it unwrapped to the nearby Customs Office, diagonally opposite (look for the sign with the word 'Customs' in English on the crest), where a customs declaration must be completed. Then take the parcel back to the Parcel Post Office for packing and paying.

Central Post Office (Map p82; ☎ 4624120; Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Sat-Thu, 8am-1.30pm Fri)

Customs Office (Map p82; ☎ 8am-2pm Thu-Sat) Diagonally opposite the Parcel Post Office.

Parcel Post Office (Map p82; Omar al-Khayyam St, downtown; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Thu, 8am-2pm Sat, 8am-3pm Sun)

Amman's courier companies will generally pick up your package free of charge if you ring them:

DHL (Map p65; ☎ 5858487, 58005800; info@amm-co.jo.dhl.com; 7th Circle, Sweifeih) Behind C-Town Shopping Centre

FedEx (Map p85; ☎ 5511460; fedex@go.com.jo; Nasser bin Jameel St, Shmeisani)

UPS (Map p85; ☎ 5697030; ups@ups.com.jo; 21 Abdul Hameed Shoman St, Shmeisani)

Telephone

There is no central telephone office found in Amman. To make a local telephone call, use a telephone in your hotel (ask the price and minimum call length before dialling), or one of the numerous payphones (see p249 for more information). Telephone cards are available at shops close to telephone booths and grocery stores around town.

The private telephone agencies around downtown are the cheapest places for international and domestic calls.

Communication International (Map p82; Nimer Bin Adwan St, downtown) Charges 150 fils per minute to the US or UK, through a mobile phone.

Tourist Information

Jordan Tourism Board (Map p85; ☎ 5678294; Tunis St, Al-Radhwan; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Sat-Thu) Probably only worth contacting if you have a specific query or interest. It's next to the Century Park Hotel, between 4th and 5th Circles.

Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities (Map p68;

☎ 4642311, 4603360, ext 254; fax 4646264; Ground fl, Al-Mutanabbi St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 8am-9pm) The most useful place for information is this office, southwest of the 3rd Circle. The staff are friendly and speak good English. This is also the centre for the tourist police. You can also ask questions or lodge a tourism-related complaint at this office through the Halla (Welcome) Line (☎ 0800 22228; free if calling from a nonmobile or public telephone).

Wild Jordan Centre (Map p82; ☎ 4616523; www.rscn.org.jo, tourism@rscn.org.jo; Othman Bin Affan St) The place for information and bookings for activities and accommodation in any of Jordan's nature reserves, including Dana and Wadi Mujib. The centre is run by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN; see p53). There's also a shop (p99) and café (p93) here.

Travel Agencies

There is a plethora of travel agencies dotted around the city: a crowd of them is strung along Al-Malek al-Hussein St, not far north of downtown near the flyover, and along the northwestern end of Abdul Hameed Sharaf St in Shmeisani. Although some claim to organise tours within Jordan, the bulk are sales agents for international airline tickets.

Atlas Travel Agency (Map p82; ☎ 4624262; www.atlastours.net; Al-Malek al-Hussein St) Reliable for airline tickets.

Universities

The **University of Jordan** (Map p65; www.ju.edu.jo) is one of the biggest universities in Jordan, and is located over 10km northwest of downtown. It boasts a Museum of Archaeology (p84) and a massive library. It also offers language courses (see p240), and is a great place to meet young locals. Numerous Internet cafés and Western fast-food outlets are dotted at various points along the main road, just opposite the university. Take any minibus or service taxi to Salt from either Raghadan or Abdali stations; the university is easy to spot from the main road.

Visa Extensions

If you're staying in Jordan for longer than 30 days (this used to be 14 days, until a change in mid-2005, so double check on arrival), you must obtain a visa extension (see p250).

The process is simple but involves a little running around. First you will need to get

your hotel to write a short letter confirming where you are staying. Your hotel will also need to fill out two copies of a small card (or photocopy) that states all their details. On the back of the card is the application form for an extension, which you must fill out. It's in Arabic but your hotel should be able to help you fill it out and answers can be in English. That done, take the form, letter, photocopies of the front pages of your passport and the Jordanian visa page, and your passport to the relevant police station.

Which police station you visit depends on which area of Amman you're staying; ask your hotel for directions to the relevant office. If you're staying downtown, go to the first floor of the **Al-Madeenah Police Station** (Map p82; ☎ 4657788; 1st fl, Al-Malek Faisal St, downtown), opposite the Arab Bank.

After getting the relevant stamp, take your passport off to the **Muhajireen Police Station** (markaz amn muhajireen; Map p68; Al-Ameerah Basma bin Talal Rd), west of the downtown area. A taxi there from downtown should cost around 600 fils or take service taxi 35 along Quraysh St. A further stamp in your passport should see you with permission to remain in Jordan for an additional three months. Police stations are usually open for extensions from 10am to 3pm Saturday to Thursday, although it's best to go in the morning. Extensions are granted on the spot and you're unlikely to spend more than 10 minutes in each office.

CROSSING THE STREET IN AMMAN

When you first arrive in Amman, one of your greatest challenges is likely to be making it safely to the other side of the street. This is especially true of the downtown area, although the faster-moving thoroughfares elsewhere also pose a serious hazard to your health. Contrary to what you may think, Amman's drivers have no desire to run you over; they just want to get to their destination as quickly as possible. The installation of more traffic lights has made the situation a little easier, but you'll still have a better chance of survival if you follow a few simple 'rules'. In slow-moving traffic, the name of the game is brinkmanship – whoever yields last will win. A car missing you by inches may scare the hell out of you but is actually a normal and precisely calculated course of events.

Cross wide roads a lane at a time – if you wait for a big gap you'll be there all day. Some unscrupulous travellers have even been known to hail a taxi so that it will block traffic and give them a lane's head start. Make your decision and then don't hesitate – Amman's drivers will make their decisions based on a reasonable assumption of what you'll do next. Above all, have patience; an extra minute's wait is infinitely preferable to a nasty accident. And if all else fails, put your pride behind you and ask some old lady to lead you by the hand or at least follow in their slipstream.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The only problem you're likely to encounter is the traffic; if driving, avoid the chaotic downtown area. The pollution can also affect those with respiratory problems, especially when dust levels are high. Nightclubs frequented by foreigners are more likely to attract pickpockets and bag snatchers, but crime in Amman is extremely rare.

The suicide bombings of November 2005 targeted tourist hotels in a worrying new development to the turmoil in neighbouring Iraq – the export of terrorism. Expect heightened security in the city's hotels and public places.

Scams

Be wary of taxi drivers who claim that your chosen hotel is closed, dirty or 'burnt down', only to recommend another hotel at which they get commission.

SIGHTS

The lion's share of the sights are downtown. Amman boasts several good museums, the best being the National Archaeological Museum in the Citadel. Amman doesn't boast any truly spectacular mosques; Non-Muslims will feel most comfortable at King Abdullah Mosque.

Citadel (Jebel al-Qala'a)

The area known as the **Citadel** (Map p82; ☎ 4638795; admission JD2; ☎ 8am-4pm Sat-Thu Oct-Mar, 8am-7pm Sat-Thu Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Fri) sits on

WORLD'S TALLEST FLAGPOLE

From most places in the city you can spot the huge Jordanian flag of the Raghadan palace compound, which at 127m high is said to be the world's largest free-standing flagpole. (A smaller but similarly impressive flag flies in Aqaba.) The award for the tallest flag pole in the world actually goes to those crazy North Koreans on the border with South Korea but that one is supported by cables, which as everyone knows is cheating.

the highest hill in Amman, *Jebel al-Qala'a* (about 850m above sea level) and is the site of ancient Rabbath-Ammon. Artefacts dating from the Bronze Age show that the hill was a fortress and/or agora for thousands of years. The complex is surrounded by 1700m-long walls, which were rebuilt many times during the Bronze and Iron Ages, as well as the Roman, Byzantine and Umayyad periods. The Citadel ticket office is on the road leading up to the Citadel's entrance.

The Citadel's most impressive series of historic buildings is the **Umayyad Palace**, which stretches out behind the National Archaeological Museum. Believed to be the work of Umayyad Arabs and dating from about AD 720, the palace was an extensive complex of royal and residential buildings and was once home to the governor of Amman. Its life span was short – it was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 749 and never fully rebuilt.

Coming from the south, the first major building belonging to the palace complex is the domed **audience hall**, designed to impress visitors to the royal palace. It is the most intact of the buildings on the site and is shaped like a cross because it was built over a Byzantine church. After much debate as to whether the central space had originally been covered or left open to the elements, consensus came down on the side of the ceiling dome, which was reconstructed by Spanish archaeologists.

A **courtyard** immediately north of the hall leads to a 10m-wide **colonnaded street**, lined with numerous arches and columns and flanked by residential and administrative buildings. Further to the north is the former **governor's residence**, which includes the **throne room**.

East of the audience hall is the **Umayyad Cistern**, an enormous circular hole with steps leading down to the bottom, which once supplied water to the palace and surrounding areas. The small disk on the floor in the centre once supported a pillar which was used for measuring water levels.

Back towards the museum to the south is the small **Byzantine Basilica**, most of which has been destroyed by earthquakes. It dates from the 6th or 7th century AD, and contains a few dusty mosaics.

About 100m south of the basilica are the remaining pillars of the Roman **Temple of Hercules** (Map p82). Once connected to the Forum (see the boxed text, p81), the temple was built during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (AD 161–80). The only obvious remains are parts of the podium and the columns, which are visible from around town. Nearby is a **lookout** with great views.

There are information boards in English and Spanish at a few places around the Umayyad Palace but, while informative, they can be a little confusing to follow. Guides will probably approach you when you arrive (or you can ask at the museum) and can really enhance your visit (up to JD5 depending on the length of time and number of people).

The **National Archaeological Museum** is just northwest of the Temple of Hercules. It has a good collection of items spanning all eras of Jordanian and regional history, ranging from 6000-year-old skulls from Jericho to Umayyad period artwork. It also boasts some examples of the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran in 1952, a copy of the *Mesha Stele* (see p165) and assorted artefacts from Petra and Jerash. Most exhibits are well labelled in English. Pride of place are three of the *Ain Ghazal* statues, which date back to 6500 BC as some of the world's earliest sculpture. Finds from the Citadel itself include the head from a statue of the Greek goddess *Tyche* and some Egyptian-style carvings.

The only access roads to the Citadel are from Al-Malek Ali bin al-Hussein St. It's better to hire a taxi for the trip up (less than JD1 from downtown). If you decide to walk it's much easier headed downhill. Steps lead down from east of the Citadel complex, past a viewing platform to Hashemi St, opposite the Roman Theatre.

(Continued on page 81)

(Continued from page 72)

Roman Theatre

The restored **Roman Theatre** (Map p82; admission incl Folklore Museum & Museum of Popular Traditions JD1; ☎ 8am–4pm Sat–Thu, 10am–4pm Fri Oct–Mar, 8.30am–7pm Apr–Sep) is the most obvious and impressive remnant of Roman Philadelphia and, for many, the highlight of Amman. It is cut into the northern side of a hill that once served as a necropolis, and has a seating capacity of 6000. It was built on three tiers: the rulers, of course, sat closest to the action, the military had the middle section, and the general public sat perched, squinting, way up the top.

The theatre was probably built in the 2nd century AD during the reign of Antoninus Pius (AD 138–61). Theatres often had religious significance, and the small shrine above the top row of seats once housed a statue of the goddess *Athena* (now in the National Archaeological Museum), who was prominent in the religious life of the city.

Full restoration began in 1957. Unfortunately, nonoriginal materials were used so the reconstruction is partly inaccurate. In recent years, the theatre has again become a place of entertainment; productions are sometimes put on here in July and August; check with the tourist office or ask at your hotel.

The best time for photographs is probably the morning, although the views from the top tiers just before sunset are superb. At night the theatre is floodlit, providing a spectacular backdrop to the very modern bustle of downtown.

TUNNEL UNDER AMMAN

In ancient Roman Philadelphia, royalty considered it beneath them to mingle with the general public unless they had to. To ease their path between the major sites, an underground tunnel was built to connect the Citadel high on the hill with the *Nymphaeum* and Theatre. While modern visitors to Amman might welcome having such access without having to negotiate the streets of downtown, the tunnel's precise location and state of repair is a closely guarded secret. All the locals know about it, but very few know where it is and some even doubt that it exists. Those that do know aren't telling.

The row of columns immediately in front (north) of the Roman Theatre is all that's left of the **Forum**, once one of the largest public squares (about 100m by 50m) in Imperial Rome. Built in AD 190, the square was flanked on three sides by columns, and on the fourth side by the *Seil Amman* stream; almost everything (including the stream, which still runs) lies underneath the modern streets.

On the eastern side of what was the Forum stands the 500-seat **Odeon** (admission free). Built in the 2nd century AD, it served mainly as a venue for musical performances. The small amphitheatre was probably enclosed with a wooden or temporary tent roof to shield the performers and audience from the elements.

FOLKLORE MUSEUM

This **museum** (Map p82; ☎ 4651742; Roman Theatre complex; ☎ 9am–7pm Sat–Thu, 10am–4pm Fri May–Sep, 9am–5pm Sat–Thu, 10am–4pm Fri Oct–Apr) is immediately to the right as you enter the Roman Theatre. It houses a modest collection of items illustrating traditional Jordanian life. They include a Bedouin goat-hair tent complete with tools; musical instruments such as the single-string *rababa* (a one-stringed Bedouin instrument); looms; *mihbash* (coffee grinders); some weapons; and various costumes, including Circassian. Don't miss the B&W photos of old Amman by the entrance. Captions are in English.

MUSEUM OF POPULAR TRADITIONS

This **museum** (Map p82; ☎ 4651670; Roman Theatre complex; ☎ 9am–7pm Sat–Thu, 10am–4pm Fri May–Sep, 9am–5pm Sat–Thu, 10am–4pm Fri Oct–Apr), to the left after you enter the Roman Theatre, has well-presented displays of traditional costumes, jewellery, face masks and mosaics from Jerash.

Nymphaeum

Built in AD 191, the **Nymphaeum** (Map p82; Quraysh St; admission free; ☎ daylight Sat–Thu) was once a large, two-storey complex with fountains, mosaics, stone carvings and possibly a 600-sq-metre swimming pool – all dedicated to the nymphs (mythical young girls who lived in and around the rivers). Up until 1947 the ancient stream and Roman bridge still stood where the road now runs. Excavations started in earnest in 1993, and restoration

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- Arab Bank.....4 B2
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- Central Post Office.....7 A2
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- Happiland Hotel.....38 A1
- Kamak Hotel.....39 B1
- Mansour Hotel.....40 B2
- New Park Hotel.....41 A1
- Palace Hotel.....42 B3
- Sydney Hotel.....43 A2
- Zahrani Hotel.....44 B3
- Batafa.....45 B3
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- Habbah.....51 B2
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- Bani Hamida House.....65 A3
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- Souvenir Stalls.....67 D2
- Wild Jordan.....68 D2
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- Al-Husseini Cinema.....76 B2
- Raghadan.....77 B2
- Al-Husseini Cinema.....78 B2
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GIVING AMMAN A FACELIFT

Amman is definitely a city on the rise, with investment rates and rents skyrocketing. Several huge construction projects in particular look set to change the face of the city over the next few years.

Amman's congested downtown area is midway through a major makeover, which will include a new international-standard National Museum next to City Hall (due for completion in 2007), gardens, panoramic vantage points and pedestrian trails linking the Citadel and Roman Theatre. As part of the Japanese-funded redevelopment, many of the grimy buildings in the area have already been cleaned and the Raghadan bus station has been rebuilt, with corner towers, a tourist police booth, restaurants and shops.

Further west, the Abdali Urban Regeneration Project will house a large shopping and office complex, as well as a library and a new American University of Jordan. The project is part of a drive to relocate the Jordanian military out of some of Amman's prime real estate.

Jordan Gate/Royal Metropolis is another high-profile US\$1 billion business and retail complex planned for 6th Circle. The twin 35-storey high-rise towers will house a five-star hotel and shopping complex and looks set to dominate the Amman skyline.

will continue for many years. Except for a few columns, an elegant archway and a few alcoves there is still little to see.

The site is easy to find, not far from the King Hussein Mosque. It's open for as long as the workers are toiling away.

King Hussein Mosque

Built by King Abdullah I in 1924, and restored in 1987, the **King Hussein Mosque** (Map p82; Hashemi St; admission free) is in the heart of downtown on the site of a mosque built in AD 640 by 'Umar, the second caliph of Islam. The mosque is more interesting as a hive of activity than for any architectural splendour; the precinct is a local meeting place and exudes an altogether Arab flavour. Non-Muslims, while generally welcome any time (except during prayer time), may feel intrusive.

Abu Darwish Mosque

On top of **Jebel al-Ashrafieh**' is the striking **Abu Darwish Mosque** (map p65), built in 1961 with unmistakable alternating layers of black and white stone. Non-Muslims are generally not permitted inside, but the views on the way up are good. Take service taxi 25 or 26 from Italian St in downtown to the mosque, or charter a taxi. It's a very long and steep climb southeast of downtown if you decide to walk.

Darat al-Funun

On the hillside to the north of the downtown area, **Darat al-Funun** (House of Arts; Map p82;

☎ 4643251; www.daratafunun.org; Nimer bin Adwan St; admission free; ☎ 10am-7pm Sat-Wed, to 8pm Thu) is a superb complex dedicated to placing contemporary art at the heart of Jordan's cultural life. The main building features a small **art gallery** with works by Jordanian and other Arab artists, an art library, and workshops for Jordanian and visiting sculptors and painters. A schedule of upcoming exhibitions, lectures, films and public discussion forums is available on the website and the *Jordan Times* newspaper.

Almost as significant as the centre's artistic endeavours are the architectural features of the site. At the base of the complex, near the entrance, are the excavated ruins of a 6th-century **Byzantine church**. Buildings further up the hill are mostly restored residences from the 1920s; it was in one of these that TE Lawrence wrote part of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. There is also a peaceful café (see p97) and gardens with superb views over Amman.

Access is easiest on foot. From near the southern end of Al-Malek al-Husseini St, head up the stairs under the 'Riviera Hotel' sign. At the top of the stairs, turn immediately right onto Nimer bin Adwan St and walk uphill for 50m where you need to take the left fork. The entrance gate (no English sign) is on the right after a few metres.

King Abdullah Mosque

Completed in 1989 as a memorial by the late King Hussein to his grandfather, the unmistakable blue-domed **mosque** (Map p68;

Suleiman al-Nabulsi St; Jebel Weibdeh; admission JD2; ☎ 8-11am & 12.30-2pm Sat-Thu, 8-10am Fri) can house up to 7000 worshippers inside, and another 3000 in the courtyard area. This is the only mosque in Amman that openly welcomes non-Muslim visitors.

The cavernous, octagonal prayer hall is notable for not having any pillars; the dome is 35m in diameter. The inscriptions quote verses from the Quran. The blue colour of the underside of the dome is said to represent the sky, and the golden lines running down to the base of the dome depict rays of light illuminating the 99 names of Allah. The huge three-ringed chandelier contains more Quranic inscriptions. There is also a small women's section for 500 worshippers, and a much smaller royal enclosure.

Inside the mosque is a small **Islamic Museum** (☎ 5672155), which has some pottery pieces, as well as photographs and personal effects of King Abdullah I. There are also a number of pieces of Muslim art, coins and stone engravings. The admission fee to the mosque includes access to the museum.

Women are required to wear something (which can be borrowed at the mosque) to cover the hair; and everyone must remove their shoes before entering the prayer hall.

Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts

This small **gallery** (Map p68; ☎ 4630128; www.nationalgallery.org; Hosni Fareez St, Jebel Weibdeh; admission JD1; ☎ 9am-5pm Sun-Thu) is an excellent place to gain an appreciation of contemporary Jordanian painting, sculpture and pottery and is worth an hour or more. There's an excellent small gift shop and a café. The gallery was renovated in 2005.

The gallery is signposted from Suleiman al-Nabulsi St, opposite the King Abdullah Mosque.

Museum of Archaeology

If you have an interest in archaeology, or happen to be at the University of Jordan, this small **museum** (map p65; ☎ 5355000, ext 3412; ☎ 8am-5pm Sun-Thu) is well worth a visit. Highlights include models of the Temple of Artemis and Nymphaeum at Jerash, a copy of the Mesha Stele (see p165), and finds from Bronze Age Jericho and the 6th-century BC Ammonite fort at Tell al-Mazar. Don't miss the unmarked gems laying around outside the building, including several dolmens

(ancient graves). The next door Museum of National Heritage isn't up to much.

To get here, take any minibus or service taxi heading towards Salt from Abdali or Raghadan stations, then get off at the main (west) entrance to the university and head for the clocktower; the museum is just behind it.

Other Sights

The simple and solemn Martyr's Memorial houses the small but interesting **Military Museum** (Map p85; ☎ 5664240; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Sat-Thu), which chronicles Jordan's recent military history, from the Arab Revolt in 1916 (in which 10,000 Arab fighters were killed) through to the Arab-Israeli Wars. It does, however, airbrush over many of the controversial aspects of these conflicts – the 1948 and 1967 wars are hardly mentioned and the 1973 war only in passing.

The memorial is on the road to Zarqa, 1km east of the Sports City junction, in the grounds of the Sports City. Take any minibus or service taxi towards Zarqa, but check whether it goes past the Sports City (*al-Medina al-Riyadiyah*). A private taxi from downtown should cost around JD1.500.

The **Museum of the Political History of HM Late King Abdullah bin al-Hussein** (Map p68; ☎ 4621151; Al-Kulliyah al-Islamiyah St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 9am-2pm Sun-Thu) is worth checking out for its coverage of Jordan's political life in the early 20th century. It's next to the Iraqi Embassy, west of 1st Circle.

Car enthusiasts will like the display of over 70 classic cars and motorbikes from the personal collection of King Hussein at the **Royal Automobile Museum** (Map p65; ☎ 5411392; www.royalautomuseum.jo; King Hussein Park; adult JD3; ☎ 10am-7pm Wed-Mon). It's in the northwestern suburbs, north of 8th Circle.

ACTIVITIES

Swimming

The top-end hotels allow nonguests to use their swimming pools for a fee; the Inter-Continental charges JD15; Le Royal currently JD10. Among the cheapest is the Manar Hotel (p90), which charges JD5.

Sports City (Map p85; ☎ 5667181) in northern Amman has an Olympic-sized pool. Non-members are charged around JD6, which includes the use of a locker. Women may feel uncomfortable swimming here.

SHMEISANI

1	INFORMATION Directorate of Residency & Borders.....1 C4 FedEx.....2 A4 Islamic Hospital.....3 D6 Israeli Consulate.....4 A3 Jordan Tourism Board.....(see 16) Meeranet.....5 B5 Palestine Hospital.....6 C4 Post Office.....(see 40) UN Relief & Works Agency (UNRWA).....7 B3 UPS.....8 B5	Martyr's Memorial.....(see 12) Military Museum.....12 D3 Power Hut.....13 B5 Strikers.....(see 18)	Houstons.....23 B5 La Terrasse.....24 B5 Lebnani Snack.....25 B5 Safeway.....26 B3 Vinaigrette.....(see 17)
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Hammams

Al-Pasha Turkish Bath (Map p82; ☎ /fax 4633002; www.pashaturkishbath.com; Al-Mahmoud Taha St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 9am-2am, last booking midnight) is the perfect pampering antidote to the hills and bustle of Amman. The full service (JD15) includes steam bath, sauna, Jacuzzi, scrubbing, a 40-minute massage and two soft drinks, all done in a superb building architecturally faithful to the tradition of a Turkish *hammam*. There are male and female attendants. Couples are welcome during the day; evenings are generally for men only. It's a good idea to book ahead and bring a pair of swimming trunks. It's easiest to find if you're coming along Abu Bakr as-Siddiq St (Rainbow St) from the 1st Circle; it's the fifth street on the right. Taxis know it as near Ahliya School for Girls.

Other Activities

The Sports City complex has **tennis courts** (Map p85; ☎ 5682796) for JD1 per hour. This rises to JD2 if you play at night under lights. You will, however, need to provide your own racquet and balls.

The **Bisharat Golf Course** (Map p103; ☎ 079 5520334) comprises of a nine-hole course, putting greens and even a golf pro. Nine holes cost JD12, plus JD12 for club hire. The club is 14km south of downtown, and signposted from the Desert Highway on the way to Queen Alia airport.

To try something completely different here, gliding is sometimes possible at the **Gliding Club** (☎ 4874587) at the Marka Airport east of Amman. The **Royal Racing Club** (Map p103; ☎ 5850630) holds races (for horses and camels) in spring and summer, and offers horse-riding classes. Details are available from the club, located off the Desert Highway and on the way to Queen Alia airport.

For tenpin bowling try **Strikers** (Map p85; Kempinski Amman, Abdul Hamid Shouman St, Shmeisani) or the **Jordan Bowling Centre** (map p65; ☎ 5512987) at Mecca Mall in the northwestern suburbs. A game costs JD3.

Power Hut (Map p85; ☎ 5686349; powerhut@nets.com.jo; 11 August St, Shmeisani; ☎ 5.30am-11pm Sun-Thu & Sat, 10am-6.30pm Fri) is one of the best gyms in town. A day/week pass costs JD6/17.500 and gives access to a wide range of machines, free weights, spin and taekwondo classes, and a sauna and steam room. The gym is women-only from 9.30am to noon.

Club Olympus (Map p68; Grand Hyatt Amman, Al-Hussein bin Ali St, 3rd Circle; ☎ 6am-10pm Sat-Thu, 7am-10pm Fri) charges JD15 for a day's use of its gym, indoor and outdoor pools, Jacuzzi and sauna; 10 visits cost JD75.

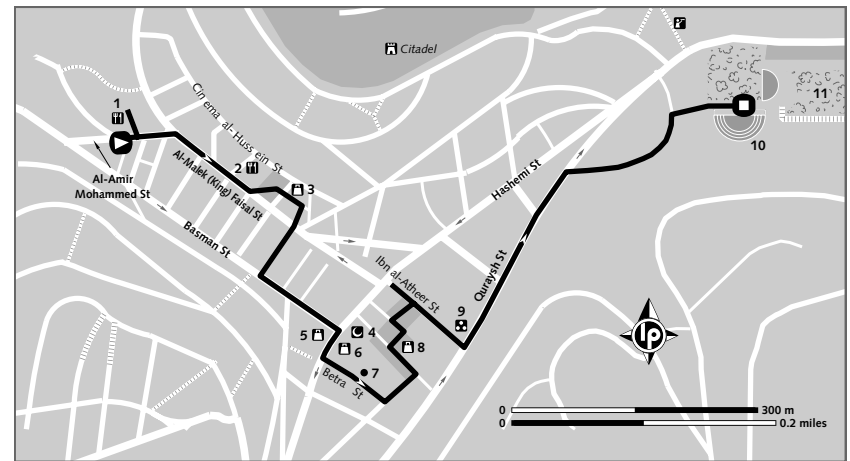
WALKING TOUR

This walk takes you through the busiest part and most interesting sections of downtown's bustling souqs. It can be done in an hour (2km) but it's worth stopping, detouring and making a shopping trip out of it.

Start off the walk by sitting down with a fortifying hummus and mint tea at **Hashem Restaurant** (1; p91), before heading down Al-Malek (King) Faisal St. Just past the ornate Arab Bank, on the left, you'll see an alleyway perennially overflowing with men lining up like impatient addicts waiting for a plate of *kanafa* (shredded wheat and syrup dessert) from the takeaway branch of **Habibah** (2; p95); 300 fils will buy your very own sugar rush. After another 80m, turn left into the dazzling **gold souq** (3). After a quick window shop, cross the road and head up the alley directly opposite, by the Palace Hotel (the alley entrance is marked by a perfume stall). The eye-opening side alley is lined with risqué Islamic lingerie shops – sure to blow away any preconceived myths you have about prudish Arab women! Head up the flight of steps at the end of the alley and turn left onto Basman St, past several dress shops that stock some nice examples of Palestinian-style embroidery to views of **King Hussein mosque** (4; p83). The area is particularly busy on Friday lunchtimes, when hundreds of men stream out of the mosque after the weekly sermon.

Right on the junction is the **Al-Afghani souvenir store** (5), a tiny Aladdin's cave overflowing with tourist kitsch. The souq behind conceals a maze of other souvenir stores. Across the street, four shops from the mosque, is a tiny but excellent **keffiyeh shop** (6) – actually a converted stairwell!

Take your life into your hands, cross the street and head down Betra St. On the left is a traditional **Arabic medicine stall** (7), recognisable by its dried alligators, starfish and drawers of herbs. At the junction take in the lovely aroma of the coffee roasters and spice grinders. Take a left past these and then another left, past a small bakery on the right, whose staff are continually pulling



huge pitta breads out of the ovens. Take a right into the **vegetable market** (8), past piles of Saudi dates, Iranian pistachios and Syrian olives. A left and quick right takes you through the fruit souq. As you hit the main road a left turn takes you to couple of shops selling olives and cheeses; a right leads to the **Nymphaeum** (9; p81).

From the Nymphaeum follow Quraysh St then take a right along the busy road to plaza in front of the **Roman Theatre** (10; p81). Beyond the Theatre is **Hashemite Sq** (11), a place for locals to stroll, sip tea, smoke the nargileh (water pipe) and watch the world go by. There are cafés, shwarma stalls, souvenir shops and even dodgem cars (like any downtown Amman street really!).

If you are feeling fit, as an add on to the walking tour you can climb the steps across the road from the Roman Theatre up to a viewpoint and then up to the **Citadel**.

AMMAN FOR CHILDREN

Dodgem cars (Map p82; Hashemite Sq, downtown; admission 500 fils; ☎ 9am-10pm) Children and the young at heart can enjoy these.

Haya Cultural Centre (Map p85; ☎ 5665195; Ilya Abu Madhi St, Shmeisani; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Sat-Thu) Is designed especially for children and has a library, playground, an interactive ecomuseum and an inflatable castle. It also organises regular activities and performances for kids.

Luna Park (Map p85; Khaled bin al-Walid Rd; admission JD1; ☎ 10am-10pm) Has rides and amusements for the kids. It has a branch at King Abdullah Gardens (Map p85).

The Friday brunch at Wild Jordan Café (p93) offers entertainment and environmental education for kids aged eight to 11, between 9am and 11am.

Amman Waves, 15km south of town on the highway to the airport, is a new water park but wasn't open at the time of research.

TOURS

At least three budget hotels – the Cliff, Farah and Palace – offer day trips from Amman. The most popular tours are to the desert castles (JD10 per person), or to Jerash, Ajlun and Umm Qais (JD13 per person). A day trip to Madaba, Mt Nebo and the Dead Sea is possible if you can find enough people to make up a carload. Don't expect anything more than transport on these tours.

One option, which has been recommended by readers, is the transport offered by some hotels (eg Farah) which leaves Amman at 8.30am and travels to Petra (around 6pm) via Madaba, Mt Nebo, Wadi Mujib Gorge, Karak, Shobak and Dana Nature Reserve with a brief amount of time spent at each of the various sites (JD15 to JD25 per person). A taxi for the same route costs around JD60.

The Palace Hotel plans to run a day trip from Amman to Damascus, via Jerash and Bosra, for JD20 per person.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Concerts, plays and performances are occasionally held at the Odeon and Roman Theatre in July and August. The Ministry

of Tourism office, near 3rd Circle, is the best source of detailed information, but also check out the English-language newspapers. See p113 for information about the Jerash Festival (generally visited as a day trip from Amman), Jordan's best-known cultural event.

SLEEPING

Most cheap hotels are in downtown; there are also a few around Abdali bus station. Many midrange places are around Abdali and between 1st and 5th Circles; most top-end places are further out in Shmeisani.

Budget

The cheapest places are around the King Hussein Mosque, but these are only for deep sleepers and those for whom price is everything. Many have shops on the ground floor, a tea shop on the 2nd and rooms on the 3rd and 4th floors, so getting to your room involves a lot of climbing. All budget places mentioned here come with shared bathroom facilities unless stated otherwise; all promise hot water and some even deliver.

DOWNTOWN

Cliff Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4624273; fax 4638078; Al-Amir Mohammed St; 3-bed dm/s/d JD3/5/6) A long-standing shoestring favourite with friendly staff, in the heart of downtown and one of the few

places in Amman where you can hook up with other backpackers. The rooms are simple but bright, though you should check out a few rooms as some beds are better than others. The doubles are much better than the pokey singles. Showers cost 500 fils. In summer you can sleep on the roof for JD2.

Farah Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4651443; farahhotel@hotmail.com; Cinema al-Husseini St; mattress on roof/dm/s/d 2.500/47/9; ☑) A backpacker-savvy place that gets good reports from travellers. The rooms are a bit dingy and the shared bathrooms consist of a shower head installed directly above a squat toilet, but the staff are friendly and eager to help. Solo travellers get a double room for a single rate.

Mansour Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4621575; Al-Malek Faisal St; s/d JD5.500/8.800, d with private bathroom JD10) An old-school place that's central and quieter than most because it's a little back from the busy main road. The rooms are simple but well looked after and the welcome is understated but friendly. Toilets are Arab-style; showers cost 500 fils.

Al-Riyad Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4624260; fax 4625457; Al-Malek Faisal St; s/d/tr with sink & fan JD5/5/7) The dyslexic al-Riyad/Reyad/Riyadh is a basic place with an almost exclusively male Jordanian clientele. There's little English spoken but plenty of goodwill.

Zahrán Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4625473; Hashemi St; q JD1.500 per bed, s/d JD3/4) Probably the pick of the very basic cheapies around the King Hussein Mosque, but you'll feel as if the muezzin (mosque official) is broadcasting from your closet daily at 4am. Lone women will definitely feel uncomfortable here. A hot shower costs 500 fils.

Bdeiwi Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4643394; fax 4643393; Omar al-Khayyam St; s/d/tr JD5/7/9) Slightly away from the bustle of downtown, the Bdeiwi gets decidedly mixed reviews from travellers but it seems to depend on who's on duty at reception (ask for Feraz). The rooms are simple but generally clean, with a shared Western-style bathroom. Room 6 is the best by far and a good deal if you can get it.

Karnak Hotel (Map p82; ☎/fax 4638125; Al-Malek al-Husseini St; s/d/tr with fan & private bathroom JD8/10/12) This is a good-value, well-run, friendly but slightly unexciting option. The rooms are freshened up a little by the pine furniture and a few have balconies overlooking the noisy street. There's a sitting area with cold drinks for sale.

New Park Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4648145; Al-Malek al-Husseini St; s/d with fan, private bathroom JD10/13 with breakfast) Also has a nice feel about it with helpful staff and clean, fresh rooms that come with satellite TV. Hot water is available 5am to 9am and 5pm to 9pm. The rooms over the street have a balcony but the rooms at the back are quieter. Doubles are much better value than singles.

Happyland Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4639832; fax 4628550; Al-Malek al-Husseini St; s/d with private bathroom summer JD5/8, winter JD4/6) Like most budget places in Amman, Happyland Hotel is better than its exterior suggests and is actually pretty good value because you get a private bathroom. The rooms are simple and hot water is only available between 7am and noon – at least they're honest about it.

Sydney Hostel (Map p82; ☎ 4641122; sydney_hostel@yahoo.com; 9 Sha'ban St; with private bathroom dm/s/d/tr JD4/10/15/20) The short walk from Al-Malek Faisal St means this is a little quieter than other budget places. Rooms are clean, comfortable and fresh with hot-water bathrooms, towels, a small balcony and satellite TV. Singles are good value but there's only one dorm room. A coffee shop is planned, as is free Internet access. This new place has already undergone one change of management so things may change again. They claim they'll pick you up from the airport for free if you book in advance.

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The following places are within a short walk of the Abdali bus station and can, therefore, be especially useful for late-night or early-morning departures or arrivals.

Merryland Hotel (Map p68; ☎/fax 4654238; www.merryland-hotel.com; Al-Malek al-Husseini St; s/d with private bathroom from JD13/16 with breakfast & tax) Not the most stylish option, with an odd castle-like interior, but good value with clean, tiled rooms and hot water in the bathrooms.

Select Hotel (Map p68; ☎ 4637101; www.select-ammán.com; 52 Al-Ba'ouniyah St, Jebel Weibdeh; s/d JD12/18; ☑) Excellent upper-budget value, quiet and well-run with a family feel. Its rooms are clean and spacious and come with TV, air-conditioning and spotless private bathrooms, though the doubles are much more spacious than the singles. Ask for one of the four rooms with a balcony. There's a bar and outside terrace. Prices include breakfast.

Midrange

Most places listed have air-conditioning, satellite TV and a fridge in the rooms and all have private bathrooms with hot water. All prices listed here include tax and breakfast unless stated otherwise. A few midrange places are in downtown, but most are around Abdali and between 1st and 5th Circles.

DOWNTOWN

Al-Saraya Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4656791; www.saraya-hotel.com; Al-Jaza'er St; s/d/tr JD14/18/22; ☑) One of a few midrange options in downtown, the Saraya, near the eastern end of Raghadan bus station, has clean, comfortable and spacious rooms, with superclean bathrooms and towels. Among the highlights are Fayez, the friendly owner. The call to prayer from the neighbouring mosque can be quite a shock early in the morning. The reception changes money.

Amman Palace Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4646172; aplchott@hotmail.com; Quraysh St; s/d JD15/20; ☑) A friendly midrange option if you want the convenience of being close to the interesting downtown souqs. The large rooms are a tad jaded and the hot water can be slow to arrive but it's comfortable nonetheless. Ask for a room with a window. Solo travellers should push for a double room, as they are much bigger.

Firas Palace Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4650404; www.firaspalace.com; Nimer bin Adwan St; s/d JD23/28) Not a bad midrange choice close to downtown's colour. Rooms are spacious and comfortable, set around a large central skylight, though the carpet's seen better days.

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Toledo Hotel (Map p68; ☎ 4657777; www.toledohotel.jo; Umayyah bin Abd Shams St; s/d JD25/35; ☑) If you are concerned about either a late arrival or early departure by bus (though there are taxis available at any time), this Andalusian Moorish-style midrange place is conveniently located right by the Abdali bus station. Rooms here are comfortable and surprisingly quiet, and have satellite TV, 24-hour room service and even pizza delivery to the room (JD2). The lobby is on the 7th floor. The hotel can arrange airport transfers.

Canary Hotel (Map p68; ☎ 4638353; canary_h@hotmail.com; 17 Al-Karmali St; s/d/ste JD18/24/28; ☑) In the leafy Jebel Weibdeh area, the cosy

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Palace Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 4624326; www.palacehotel.com.jo; Al-Malek Faisal St; s/d/tr JD6/8/12, with private bathroom JD11/14/21; ☑) The Palace is definitely the best budget and lower midrange option in downtown and is worth a little splurge if you are on a tight budget. The rooms are clean and large, all renovated in 2005, and some have balconies with good views over the street. There's a wide range of rooms, from midrange triples with satellite TV and fridge to singles with shared bathroom (four bathrooms on every floor). The hot water is reliable and it's surprisingly quiet considering the downtown location. It also runs the best value tours around the country (see p87) and has a laundry service, free local calls, Internet access, a café and free baggage storage. Breakfast is an extra JD1 per person.

B&B-style Canary is pleasantly aloof from the chaos of the nearby Abdali bus station but within walking distance of it. The rooms are more comfortable than luxurious, although the (smallish) bathrooms sparkle. Doubles are generally better value than the singles; the best deal is the four-bed family suite. Visa cards are accepted.

Caravan Hotel (Map p68; ☎ 5661195; caravan@go.com.jo; Al-Ma'moun St; s/d JD16/22) Almost opposite the King Abdullah Mosque, in a similarly quiet neighbourhood, is another good-value and reliable place, with a family feel and pleasant rooms, some bigger than others.

Carlton Hotel (Map p68; ☎ 4654200; jcarlton@joinnet.com.jo; Al-Kulliyah al-Islamiyah St; s/d JD35/45) After a recent renovation the rooms here vary (some are quite luxurious) so check out a few before committing. The staff are friendly and there's a Chinese restaurant, café and basement pub, and it's got a useful location between 2nd and 3rd Circles.

Hisham Hotel (Map p68; ☎ 4644028; www.1stjordan.net/hishamhotel; Mithqal al-Fayez St; s/d high season JD30/40, low season JD25/35; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) You can't go wrong in this excellent choice, in a leafy embassy district a couple of blocks south of the French Embassy. The rooms are comfortable and spacious and there are lots of personal touches; one reason why the place is popular with journalists and diplomats. Prices are often negotiable but you should book in advance. The restaurant (mains from JD5) has nice garden seating in summer.

Shepherd Hotel (Map p68; ☎/fax 4639197; www.1stjordan.net/shepherd; Zayd bin Harethah St; s/d JD30/40; ☎ ☎ ☎) The Shepherd comes warmly recommended by readers and it's not hard to see why. The rooms are good value and very comfortable, with satellite TV and a fridge, and discounts are often possible. The hotel restaurant is especially good and there's also a bar, café and terrace.

BelleVue Hotel (Map p68; ☎ 4616144; www.bellevue.com.jo; 2nd Circle; s/d JD45/55) A cosy, stylish and comfortable vibe and big bathrooms push this to the upper end of the midrange scale. The four-star facilities include a small health club (sauna and steam room), restaurant and Mövenpick ice-cream café, but the Saudi owners don't allow alcohol in the hotel.

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Century Park Hotel (Map p85; ☎ 5680090; Tunis St; m.twal@jtcc.edu.jo; s/d from JD70/85; ☎ ☎) Sleek

lines and cool cream and brown décor lend this comfortable new four-star business hotel a surprisingly stylish twist. There's a pool, tennis court, bar and terrace, all in a quiet embassy district.

Manar Hotel (Map p85; ☎ 5662186; manarhotel-ammam@wanadoo.jo; Abdul Hameed Sharaf St; s/d/tr JD20/26/30; ☎) Decent value, especially in summer when it's one of the cheapest places in Amman with a swimming pool. Rooms are small and a bit old-fashioned but cosy.

Ambassador Hotel (Map p85; ☎ 5605161; ambasthtl@go.com.jo; Abdul Hameed Sharaf St; s/d JD30/40) There's no doubt this is a big tour-group joint, but it's still a good, professionally run and friendly place. The rooms are stuck in bit of a 70s timewarp, with faded pink and brown décor and some kinky mirrors but it's not a bad choice.

Howard Johnson Alqasr Plaza Hotel (Map p85; ☎ 5689671; www.alqasr-hojo.com; 3 Arroub St; s/d JD60/70; ☎ ☎) Not your average Howard Johnson, this is probably the closest thing to a boutique hotel in Amman, with an excellent range of restaurants and bars (including Vinaigrette, p93, and Nai, p97) and free access to the Power Hut gym (see p86), a 10-minute walk away. The good service and facilities warrant its four stars. Ask for a free upgrade to an executive room.

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Ocean Hotel (Map p65; ☎ 5517280; www.oceanhotel.com.jo; Shatt al-Arab St, Umm Utheima; s/d JD37/45) Clean, spacious rooms in a quiet neighbourhood make this a quiet option, with nice terrace seating and a great Lebanese restaurant in-house (see Diwan al-Sultan Ibrahim Restaurant, p94).

Crowne Plaza (Map p65; ☎ 5510001; www.crowneplaza.com; Faisal Bin Abdel Azeed St, 6th Circle; r JD60/70; ☎) Good value and has excellent facilities, as you'd expect. Restaurants include Mediterranean, a top-floor Arab/Moroccan terrace, the Café Vienna for salads and snacks and a brasserie. Facilities include wi-fi high speed Internet, a good fitness centre, a nightclub, indoor and outdoor pools, a Turkish bath and a tennis court.

Top End

Amman has its share of four- and five-star hotels. Many offer frequently changing rates depending on demand and you'll often get the best deal by booking from abroad

or through an online agency. Prices below are walk-in rates at time of research. Prices include breakfast and tax unless otherwise stated.

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Jordan InterContinental Hotel (Map p68; ☎ 464 1361, 0800 22666; www.ammam.intercontinental.com; Al-Kulliyah al-Islamiyah St; d JD77; ☎) Midway between 2nd and 3rd Circles, the InterCon is suitably luxurious and well-equipped, with a shopping arcade, Royal Jordanian office, a good bookshop, a post office and a deli. There's a cool Mexican bar/restaurant at Cinco de Mayo, plus Indian and Lebanese restaurants, a 24-hour gym, indoor and outdoor pools and wi-fi Internet. All the rooms were refurbished in 2004.

Grand Hyatt Amman (Map p68; ☎ 4651234; www.ammam.hyatt.com; Al-Hussein bin Ali St, 3rd Circle; s/d JD106/116; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Quite a complex, with seven restaurants, a deli, bookshop, JJ's nightclub, indoor and outdoor pools and high-speed Internet. There's a cinema and shopping complex next door.

Hotel Le Royal (Map p68; ☎ 4603000; www.leroyalhotel-ammam.com; Zahran St, 3rd Circle; s/d JD95/105 discounted from JD160/170; ☎) Amman doesn't get more ostentatious than this huge zigurat-shaped palace, bustling with Gulf sheikhs and oil ministers. Facilities include three pools, a good gym, the biggest spa in Amman, a cinema, 13 restaurants (Japanese, French, Italian, Lebanese, café, pastry shop), a German beer hall, the funky Buddah Bar and an executive floor. Don't expect a lot of cosy intimacy here.

Radisson SAS Hotel (Map p68; ☎ 5607100; fax 5665160; Al-Hussein bin Ali St; d from JD80; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) With a popular rooftop garden and poolside terrace.

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Kempinski Amman (Map p85; ☎ 5200200; www.kempinski.com; Abdul Hamid Shouman St; rooms from JD120, discounted to JD77) Opened in late 2005, this is the newest place in town, with a good location in the café and restaurant quarter of Shmeisani. Facilities include Cuban and Italian restaurants, high-speed wi-fi Internet, a bowling alley, video games for the kids and cinemas to come.

Amman Marriott (Map p85; ☎ 5607607; www.marriott-middleeast.com; Isam al-Ajlouni St; s/d JD81/95; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Bright, breezy and informal

is the feel here, with Mediterranean and Italian restaurants and a popular sports bar. The two pools and 24-hour gym will please jet-lagged health nuts. There are six buses (JD6) a day which shuttle guests to its sister property on the Dead Sea.

Le Meridien (Map p85; ☎ 5696511; www.lermeridien.com; Al-Malekah Noor St; s/d old wing JD70/80, new wing JD80/90 without breakfast or tax; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Grand and stylish. For those vital business first impressions, Le Meridien is grand and stylish but couples may find it too impersonal for that romantic getaway. Still the facilities are good with a gym, pools and a spa, and a great range of restaurants and bars. New wing rooms are worth the extra JD10.

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Four Seasons (Map p65; ☎ 5505555; www.fourseasons.com/ammam; Al-Kindi St, 5th Circle, Jebel Amman; s/d from JD120/130; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A stylish and designery option with some lovely Art Deco touches. Facilities include large rooms, wi-fi Internet, Italian and Thai restaurants, a spa, squash court (chilled towels!), two pools, free DVD rental and wheelchair accessible rooms.

Sheraton (Map p65; ☎ 5934111; www.sheraton.com; 5th Circle; r JD80 without tax) The Sheraton is another class option, with all the facilities you'd expect.

EATING

Amman has a wide range of eating options, with budget places concentrated in downtown and, to a lesser extent, Jebel Amman, while the more upmarket restaurants serving Arab and international cuisine are concentrated in Shmeisani and Abdoun.

Budget

If money's an issue, your mainstay in Amman will be felafel, shwarma and roast chicken; these are easy to find in downtown, though bear in mind that not much is open after 9pm. The following are in downtown unless specified.

Hashem Restaurant (Map p82; Al-Amir Mohammed St; hummus 400 fils; ☎ 24hr) A legendary place which overflows into the alley. It's popular with locals for felafel, hummus and fuul (fava bean paste). A filling meal with bread and mint tea costs less than JD1. As one reader extolled: 'nothing but bread, hummus, fuul and felafel, but everything is fresh and dirt cheap. I love this place!'

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Blue Fig Café (Map p68; ☎ 5928800; Prince Hashem bin al-Hussein St; starters from JD1.650, mains JD4-8; ☎ 8.30am-1am) Travellers always seem to appreciate the global coffeehouse vibe in this supercool place near Abdoun Circle. It's great for almost any occasion, from breakfast to late-night drinks.

The menu is an extensive and imaginative mix of world fusion dishes, strong on pizza-like dishes, and with a wide range of snacks from sushi rolls to baked potatoes (JD2). Try the Bedouin-influenced *gallai* (sautéed tomato, garlic, onion and peppers topped with cheese and pine nuts on Arabic bread; JD3.500). There's also a kids' menu, sinful smoothies (JD1.800) and a full bar. Throw in some seductive world music and the occasional poetry reading and you've got a winner. And, honestly, where else could you get a 'Kyoto green tea and mint flavoured crème brûlée'?

Jabri Restaurant (Map p82; ☎ 4624108; Al-Malek al-Hussein St; starters from 500 fils, mains from JD1.800; ☎ 8am-8pm Sat-Thu) Jabri is famed as a pastry place, with branches across town, but the restaurant is also pretty good, with attentive service and decent food. Highlights include *mansaf* (Bedouin dish of lamb on a bed of rice topped with a lamb's head; JD2.400), shish kebabs (JD2.250), fried half chicken (JD1.800) and a bite-sized cheese or meat pie for 200 fils. A plate of fuul for breakfast costs 500 fils. Jabri also has an outlet in Shmeisani.

Jerusalem Restaurant (Al-Quds; Map p82; ☎ 463 0168; Al-Malek al-Hussein St; mains from JD2; ☎ 7am-10pm) Another famed place specialising in sweets and pastries, but with a large restaurant at the back. The menu is in Arabic and sadly most waiters can only be bothered to translate a couple of items before getting huffy. The *mansaf* (JD2.500) is recommended. Lunchtime is busier and better.

Cairo Restaurant (Map p82; ☎ 4624527; Al-Malek Talal St; mains from JD1; ☎ 6am-10pm) This is one place we kept coming back to night after night for the best budget food in downtown. Most of the locals opt for the mutton stews and boiled goat's heads but take it from us you're better off with the excellent *shish tawooq* (JD1.750), which is enough

grilled chicken for two. Alternatively combine a tomatoey *kofita* (mincemeat and spices grilled on a skewer) and a yoghurt for another great meal. There's also *mansaf* and the ever popular chicken *maqlubbeh* (rice with vegetables). It's a clean and pleasant place, just off Sahat al-Malek Faysal al-Awal St, with a family section on the top floor.

Bifa Billa (Map p82; Cinema al-Hussein St; mains from 500 fils; ☎ noon-midnight) One of the better places in downtown for hamburgers and shwarmas.

Fast Meal (Map p82; ☎ 4650037; Hashemi St; meals from JD1.250; ☎ 8am-2am) Superclean and close to the Roman Theatre, you can get a burger/shwarma, fries and juice combo here for JD1.300, though the burgers are pretty anaemic. If nothing else, pop in for one of the superb juice smoothies (600 fils).

Batata (Map p82; ☎ 4656768; Abu Bakr as-Siddiq St; small/large/family fries JD0.600/0.750/1.500; ☎ noon-10pm Sat-Thu, 6pm-late Fri) 'Do one thing and do it good' could well be the motto here; the one thing being French fries, which come with a choice of eight sauces (100 fils each). There are also hot drinks, including cappuccino (750 fils) and hot chocolate (500 fils).

R&B Shawerma (Map p82; ☎ 4645347; Abu Bakr as-Siddiq St; shwarmas JD0.700-1.500; ☎ noon-midnight) Not your average sliced-meat stand, the shwarmas here come in three sizes – 6, 10 and 12 inches – and come in Chinese, chicken and cheese varieties. The fries are good too.

Reem Cafeteria (Map p68; ☎ 4645725; 2nd Circle, Jebel Amman; shwarma JD0.500) There are hundreds of shoebox-sized shwarma dives in Amman but few that have the punters queuing down the street at 3am. Even the royal family are rumoured to have dropped in here for a late-night kebab. And if it's good enough for them...

Lebnani Snack (Map p68; ☎ 5930018; Abdoun Circle) A reliable place for good-value Arabic fast food, such as a cheese and olive sandwich (600 fils). There is an English menu and good juices too. There are four branches around town, including at Abdoun Circle and a good branch on Ilya Abu Madhi St in Shmeisani (Map p85).

Midrange

Abdoun Circle and Shmeisani offer the densest concentration of restaurants in Amman. Abdoun Circle (Map p68) is particularly good if you can't make up your

mind; just pick between the dozen or so restaurants and cafés lining the roundabout.

Fakhr el-Din (Map p68; ☎ 4652399; www.fakhr el-din.com; 40 Taha Hussein St, Jebel Amman; mezza JD1-2, main meals JD4-5.500; ☎ 12.30-3.30pm & 7.30-11.30pm) The highly recommended Lebanese food and elegant, classy setting in a 1950s villa make this a great place for a minisplurge. In addition to the extensive à la carte selections of hot and cold mezze and meaty mains, there's also a good set menu for JD10 (minimum four people), which is good value. Alcohol is served. It's about two blocks behind the Iraqi Embassy in Jebel Amman.

Abu Ahmad Orient Restaurant (Map p68; ☎ 464 1879; www.abuahmadorient.com; 3rd Circle, Jebel Amman; mezza JD0.600-1.500, mains JD2-4.500; ☎ noon-midnight) Another excellent midrange Lebanese place, with a particularly nice outdoor terrace in summer. The standard grilled meats are all present here but the real highlights are the hot and cold mezze. Try a *buraik* (meat or cheese pie; JD1) or *yalenjeh* (stuffed vine leaves; JD1.250). Lunch specials are a steal at JD4 and the set menu for three costs JD7 to JD8 per person.

Bookscafé (Map p82; ☎ 4650457; Omar bin al-Khattab, downtown; mains from JD2.500; ☎ 10am-midnight) For a slice of coffeehouse chic and good Western food this mellow restaurant, bar and café is hard to beat. Genuine Italian pizzas (JD3.500 to JD5) and pasta (from JD2.500) are joined by good salads (JD3). The food is excellent, the service discreet and the atmosphere supercool with plenty of hip young Jordanians lounging on sofas in cosy corners. Hot drinks are a steep JD2, although the 'hot strawberry' may just be worth it. The bar area has a decent selection of wines (JD4 a glass) and beers (JD2 to JD4.500). The special Friday brunch (9am to 1pm; JD5), with French toast and pancakes, is great value.

Wild Jordan Café (Map p82; ☎ 4633542; Othman Bin Affan St, downtown; ☎ 11am-midnight; mains JD4.500-7.500; ☎ ☎) After checking out the Wild Nature shop, grab a bite at this stylish and modern café. The emphasis is on light and healthy, with smoothies, wraps and organic salads, plus strong veggie options like the spinach and mushroom salad. The glass walls and open-air terrace offer terrific views over Amman, particularly at night. On Fridays and Saturdays there's a great breakfast (JD5) with apple muesli, pancakes and smoked salmon with cottage

cheese. Many dishes incorporate fresh organic herbs brought in from the RSCN's nature reserve projects.

Noodasia (Map p68; ☎ 5936999; Abdoun Circle; mains JD4-5) The shiny chrome and dark woods of this stylish pan-Asian diner feel like they have been lifted straight from the cooler quarters of Shanghai. The menu stretches to Chinese, Thai and Japanese snacks and main dishes. The green curries, Thai beef salad and sushi combos are all good and the service is excellent.

Ristorante Casereccio (Map p68; ☎ 5934722; Abdoun Circle; pizzas JD2-4, pastas JD4, mains JD5-6; ☎ 1-4pm & 7pm-midnight) An unpretentious and casual pizza and pasta place just off the trendy Abdoun Circle. Save space for the Nutella-stuffed pizza with strawberries.

Vinaigrette (Map p85; ☎ 5695481; Howard Johnson Alqasr Plaza Hotel, 3 Arroub St, Shmeisani; mains JD6-12) Salad and sushi rule at this unique and stylish restaurant on the top floor of the Howard Johnson Hotel. Build your own salads (from JD1.950) or try a sushi combo (JD7 to JD18). The daily specials are also worth a look. Mel-low jazz complements the superb views over the city, making it a great place for a light dinner before hitting the dance floor downstairs at Nai (p97). The food is brought to you by the same people who run Fakhr el-Din and Wild Jordan Café.

Whispers (Map p65; ☎ 5921850; Abdul Rahman Alawi St, Umm Utheina; sandwiches JD3-4, mains JD6-9) A short walk from the Sheraton, Whispers is a good choice for quality Western food. The contemporary décor is fun (baby sharks circle the huge fish tanks eyeing up all the customers' steaks), it has a good bar and there's one of the best salad bars in town (JD6). Vegetarians will like the tofu scramble.

There are several decent Chinese restaurants in town including the good-value **Shanghai Restaurant** (Map p68; ☎ 4619945; Abbas Mahmoud al-Aqad St, Jebel Amman; dishes JD1.500-2) and the authentic **Taiwan Turismo** (Map p65; ☎ 5924670; Abdul Rahman Alawi St, Umm Utheina; dishes from JD2; ☎ noon-3.30pm & 6.30-11.30pm). The latter has great General Tso's chicken and toffee bananas.

Top End

Amman's most classy and expensive places are in Shmeisani or Western Amman, so unless you're staying there, factor in taxi fares to the total bill for the evening. Remember

that most top-end places add a whopping 26% tax to the quoted prices. The places listed below are those we consider to be worth the splurge. All the places listed below are air-conditioned.

Bonita Inn (Map p68; ☎ 4615061; off Al-Kulliyah al-Islamiyah St, Jebel Amman; tapas JD1.500-5.500, mains JD7-8; ☎ noon-midnight) A very good choice with European (primarily Spanish) cuisine and tapas is this inn with a romantic, rustic farmhouse feel. The steaks have a citywide reputation, while the paella Valenciana (JD15 for two; 30 minutes required) and gazpacho soup are as good as you'll get in Amman. Other highlights include the extensive tapas menu, with plenty of calamari, octopus and salads, and wide-ranging wine list. Grab a pre-dinner drink in the pub next door as your paella simmers to perfection. It's near 3rd Circle.

La Terrasse (Map p85; ☎ 5662831; 11 August St, Shmeisani; meze JD1.250, mains JD5-9, bottle of wine JD20-25; ☎ 1pm-1am) Does decent European cuisine, strong on steaks, in a pleasant and low-key setting. The wine list is extensive, with labels representing Jordan and much of the Mediterranean rim (JD20 to JD25 a bottle). Most nights after 10pm the tiny stage is given over to live Arab singers and musicians, making it a popular venue for well-to-do local families.

Houston's (Map p85; ☎ 5620610; off Abdul Hameed Shoman St, Shmeisani; starters JD2.900-4.500, mains JD5-9; ☎ noon-midnight) A popular American-style family restaurant that gets good reviews from homesick expats. It specialises in Mexican dishes and margaritas (JD4.500), but it also does steaks, burgers and a good salad bar (JD5.500; open noon to 5pm Sunday to Thursday) – you know the deal.

Tannoureen Restaurant (Map p65; ☎ 5515987; Shatt al-Arab St, Umm Utheina; starters JD1-3, mains JD4-9; ☎ 12.30-4.30pm & 7.30-11.30pm) Worth the trek for good Lebanese food, especially mezes (try the spinach and pine-nut pie) and salads, but it also does a wide selection of Western dishes, grills and fish (around JD8). Reserve a table in the bright and airy conservatory. The restaurant is easily missed – look for the green wall.

Diwan al-Sultan Ibrahim Restaurant (Map p65; ☎ 5517383; Ocean Hotel, Shatt al-Arab St, Umm Utheina; starters JD1-2, mains JD3.750-8; ☎ noon-midnight) The Diwan comes highly recommended by wealthy locals and expats for its quality

Arab food. Among the entrées are frogs legs with garlic and coriander (JD5.500) and deep-fried brains (JD2.250), the latter an acquired taste. The fresh fish selection is good, the *batrkh* (roe) is popular, and there are good salads and some Western dishes.

Romero Restaurant (Map p68; ☎ 4644227; www.romero-jordan.com; Mohammed Hussein Haikal St, Jebel Amman; pastas JD4, mains JD6-10) Without doubt the best Italian restaurant in town: upmarket, formal and a stone's throw from the InterContinental Hotel. The salads are imaginative (chicken with rocca, mushroom, orange, pine nuts in a honey balsamic dressing), as are the steaks, seafood (red snapper and mussels) and a wide range of pasta and risotto. Desserts are predictably wonderful – crêpes with crème de banana, Grand Marnier and Cointreau, or homemade hazelnut and vanilla ice cream. Reservations are recommended. It's part of the Romero chain with branches in Aqaba, Pella, Umm Qais and Madaba.

Reem al-Bawadi (Map p65; ☎ 5515419; Tlaa al-Ali, Jubilee Gardens; starters JD1, mains JD3-6) and **Tawaheen al-Hawa** (Map p65; ☎ 5349986; Wasfi al-Tal Rd, Jubilee Gardens; mains JD3-6) are two huge restaurant complexes popular with tour groups and Jordanian families. They're a bit far from the centre but are a good option if you want to try some upper-end Jordanian and Lebanese food. Both menus include a wide range of mezze and grills, giving you a chance to explore beyond the normal felaful and hummus dishes. You can eat on brass tables in the cavernous main halls or in Bedouin tents, either way the live music gets things going between 10pm and midnight. The Reem has a traditional bread oven and is perhaps better for couples. If you're headed to Tawaheen al-Hawa, look for the windmill symbol on the wall as there's no English sign.

The top-end hotels all have good restaurants. The Grand Hyatt (p91) has a weekly seafood buffet (JD19; currently Wednesday) and a Friday brunch (JD12.500) in its Grand Café, with Belgian waffles and a kids' clown. The Four Seasons (p91) serves afternoon tea (JD12) from 4pm to 7pm in its classy foyer and terrace. Local expats flock to the wi-fi Internet, deli sandwiches (JD4) and wide selection of wines at the Deli Café in the Jordan InterContinental Hotel (p91).

Pâtisseries & Ice-Cream Parlours

Sweet tooths can find a spiritual home just about anywhere in Amman. **Habibah** (Map p82; Al-Malek al-Hussein St, downtown) is probably the best bet for Middle Eastern sweets and pastries, though the other long-time stalwarts Jerusalem Restaurant (p92) and Jabri Restaurant (p92) next door are also great. Habibah has a phenomenally busy take-away branch a couple of minutes southeast in an alley off Al-Malek Faisal St.

Ata Ali (Map p85; ☎ 5812310; Abdul Hameed Sharaf St, Shmeisani; ☎ 7.30am-midnight) Does excellent sweets and ice creams.

Gérard's (Map p68; Abdoun Circle; desserts JD1-3) As soon as you get a whiff of this sweet, hot and sticky place you'll be hooked. It's all about hot waffles, ice cream, shakes, crêpes, frozen yoghurt and iced coffees. Think Brad Pitt in *The Ides of March* – all bad but, oh, sooo good.

Caffe Mokka (Map p68; ☎ 5926285; Al-Qahira St, Abdoun; ☎ 7.30am-11pm) A good place to start; serves pastries (from 500 fils) and delicious cakes (from JD1.200), as well as sandwiches and great coffee (JD1.500). There's a breakfast buffet on Fridays (8.30am to noon; JD7).

Self-Catering

Although there are small grocery stores throughout the capital, the larger supermarkets are located in the more affluent and remote suburbs.

There is an outlet of **Safeway** (Map p85; ☎ 5685311; Nasser bin Jameel St, Shmeisani; ☎ 24hr) around 500m southwest of the Sports City junction, and another **Safeway** (Map p65; ☎ 5815558; Sweifieh) just southwest of 7th Circle.

C-Town Shopping Centre (Map p65; ☎ 5815558; Zahran St, Sweifieh; ☎ 7am-midnight) also has a branch close to 7th Circle, as well as in Shmeisani (Map p85; Abdul Hameed Sharaf St; ☎ 7am-midnight).

More central is **Haboob Grand Stores** (Map p68; ☎ 4622221; Al-Kulliyah al-Islamiyah St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 7am-midnight), between 1st and 2nd circles; it sometimes closes on Fridays.

DRINKING

There is plenty of nightlife in Amman, although little that's salubrious in the downtown area. The areas of Shmeisani, Abdoun and, to a lesser extent, Jebel Amman have numerous trendy cafés, bars and a few

nightclubs that stay open late, some of which have live music.

Bars

Several bars in downtown, patronised almost exclusively by men, are tucked away in the alleys near the Cliff Hotel. If you're willing to move beyond downtown, there are a range of enjoyable options where women will feel much more comfortable.

MOSTLY MEN

Orient Bar & Restaurant (Map p82; ☎ 4636069; off Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; beer from JD1.750; ☎ 11am-late) Also known as 'Al-Sharq', this is a spit-and-sawdust bar that serves a range of beers, spirits and the local arak (if you dare) for JD4. Cheap meals are also available with the slowest service in central Amman thrown in at no extra cost. If you've had a bit to drink, mind your head on the stairs on the way down.

Salamon Bar (Map p82; ☎ 079 5902940; off Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; ☎ noon-midnight) Next to the entrance to the Venecia Hotel; this is more modern than the others mentioned here and has beer on tap, but it's tiny and full of smoke.

Other local dives include the **Auberge Café** (Map p82; Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; ☎ 10am-midnight) and **Jordan Bar** (Map p82; ☎ 079 5796352; off Al-Amir Mohammed St; ☎ 10am-midnight), a cosy place with an earthy charm that hasn't changed in years. A large Amstel here costs JD1.750.

WOMEN WELCOME

Among the midrange hotels, Hisham Hotel (p90) has a cosy 'English pub' where a pint of draught lager costs about JD2.500.

Rovert Return (Map p65; ☎ 5814844; Ali Nasouh al-Taher St, Sweifieh; beer JD2.750-4.300; ☎ 1pm-late) A godsend for homesick *Coronation St* junkies, this is a popular and cosy English pub with wood panelling and a lively atmosphere, though the drinks aren't cheap at JD4.300 (over US\$6) for a pint of Kilkenny. The comfort food (mains JD4.500 to JD5.500) includes authentic fish and chips and roast beef with gravy. The entrance is round the back of the building and can be hard to find; look for the red 'Comfort Suites' sign.

Big Fellow Irish Pub (Map p68; ☎ 5934766; Abdoun Circle; pint of Guinness/Kilkenny JD4.600; ☎ noon-2am) It looks like an Irish pub, it even smells like an Irish pub, but with Arabic music sliding

out of the stereo, it doesn't really sound like an Irish pub. If in doubt, tucking into a Guinness pie (JD5.500) and a bread and butter pudding (JD2.500) should put you in the right frame of mind. There are live screenings of international sports events. As it's run by the Sheraton, prices for food and drinks are higher than elsewhere, with 26% tax.

Grappa (Map p68; ☎ 4651458; Abdou Qader Koshak St, Jebel Amman; beer JD2.500-4, mains JD2.500-7.500; ☎ 6pm-1.30am) Stylish wooden benches and B&W photos on the wall give this rustic bar a hip feel but it's the views, huge windows and summer terrace seating that really draw the crowds. There are decent pizzas, salads and *manaqesh* (Arabic bread with herbs) but the drinking takes priority.

Champions (Map p85; ☎ 5607607; Amman Marriott, Isam al-Ajlouni St, Shmeisani; ☎ 6pm-midnight) An upmarket but popular American-style sports bar at the Amman Marriott.

Living Room (Map p68; ☎ 4655988; Mohammed Hussein Haikal St; ☎ 1pm-1am) Part lounge, part sushi bar and part study (think high-backed chairs, a fireplace and today's newspaper), the Living Room is so understated that it's easily missed. There's a full bar and quality bar meals, from North American steaks to salmon with cream cheese. The fine music seals it as a great place to hang out over a delicious iced tea with lemon grass and mint.

Blue Fig Café (p92) is a great place to spend an afternoon or evening, with a chic crowd, pleasant atmosphere, live music on most Wednesday and Saturday nights and occasional exhibitions. A glass of wine costs JD1.700 to JD3.

Cafés & Juice Bars

Some of the cafés in downtown are great places to watch the world go by, write letters, smoke a scented nargileh, meet locals and play cards or backgammon. The first group of cafés listed below are generally men only with scarcely a local woman to be seen, although foreign women with some gumption and very modest attire, especially if accompanied by a male, will be welcome.

MOSTLY MEN

Arab League Café (Map p82; Al-Malek Faisal St, downtown; ☎ 10am-midnight) This is a popular male domain, full of retirees playing cards.

Auberger Café (Map p82; Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; ☎ 10am-midnight) One floor below the Cliff Hotel and very popular with local men. You'll have to make your way through the tobacco haze to reach the balcony which overlooks the main street and is a good place to smoke a nargileh (JD1). There are no pretensions to luxury but it wears a certain downmarket authenticity as a result.

Peace Café (Map p82; ☎ 079 5297912; Al-Amir Mohammed St, downtown; ☎ 9am-midnight) This place is reached via a filthy staircase and is fairly basic, but if you can get one of the two balcony tables overlooking the street, you'll have one of the prime vantage points in downtown.

WOMEN WELCOME

Around Hashemite Sq and along Hashemi St, the dozen or more cafés are decent places for people-watching, especially in summer.

The place in Amman to be seen at night is anywhere around Abdou Circle and there are plenty of very cool cafés. You could probably take your pick – fashions change frequently in this part of Amman.

Al-Rashid Court Café (Map p82; ☎ 4652994; Al-Malek Faisal St, downtown; tea or coffee 400 fils; ☎ 10am-midnight Sat-Thu, 1-11pm Fri) Also known as the Eco-Tourism Café, the 1st-floor balcony here is the place to pass an afternoon and survey the chaos of the downtown area below. Competition for seats is fierce! It's also one of the best places for the uninitiated to try a nargileh (JD1.250). Although you won't see any local women here, they're well accustomed to foreign tourists. To find it look for the flags of the world on the main façade; the entrance is down the side alley.

Al-Sendabad Coffee Shop (Map p82; downtown; ☎ 4632035; ☎ 10am-midnight) About 150m west of the Roman Theatre, this place has great views over the city (though not the theatre) and is kept clean by the friendly staff. It's a great place to smoke the nargileh (JD1), especially on the roof in summer.

Shaher's Penthouse Cafeteria (Map p82; Sahat al-Malek Faysal al-Awal St, downtown; coffee 500 fils; ☎ 9.30am-11pm) Has a traditionally decorated indoor dining area and a better outdoor terrace overlooking the street far below. Hussein, the resident musician, will happily play the oud or violin to provide a cultured counterpoint to the street noise below.

Darat al-Funun (Map p82; Nimer bin Adwan St, downtown; drinks 300 fils) Definitely the most peaceful place to escape from downtown, surrounded by the ruins of a Byzantine church and the ghosts of TE Lawrence. Drinks are cheap, with coffee at JD1 and tea for 300 fils.

El Farouki (Map p85; ☎ 5678580; 11 August St, Shmeisani; coffee JD1.500) Not hip but a solid old-fashioned coffee shop if you need a quiet break, with good coffee, crêpes and cakes. The coffee comes with a biscuit, a chocolate and 26% tax.

Tche Tche Café (Map p68; ☎ 5932020; Abdou Circle; ☎ 10am-11pm) You'll have to arrive early to get a seat in this bright and buzzy café. Far from a traditional teahouse it's full of Jordanian women smoking the nargileh, sipping on fruit smoothies and nodding their heads to Arabic pop. The ice cream and pecan waffles are great.

Palestine Juice (Map p82; Al-Malek Faisal St; ☎ 7am-11pm) An overflowing fertile juice stand that serves refreshing carrot or orange juice, or banana with milk for 500 fils (small glass) or JD1 (large).

ENTERTAINMENT Cinemas

There are several modern cinema complexes that offer recent releases. Tickets cost JD4 before 6pm and JD5 after 6pm but the quality of sound, vision and chairs is high. Programmes for cinemas are advertised in the English-language newspapers (see p67).

Century Cinemas (Map p68; ☎ 4613200; www.century-cinemas.com; 3rd Circle, Jebel Amman) In the Zara Centre behind the Grand Hyatt, with several fast-food outlets.

Cine Le Royal (Map p68; ☎ 4603022; 3rd Circle)

Galleria (Map p68; ☎ 5934793; Abdou Circle)

Grand Theaters (Map p65 ☎ 5518411; Mecca Mall) Far from the centre unless you are shopping.

A few other cinemas show kung fu flicks and other B-grade movies but these are often dubbed into Arabic and, apart from the violence, are heavily censored. In downtown, the better ones are **Al-Hussein Cinema** (Map p82; Cinema al-Hussein St) and the **Raghdan** (Map p82; Basman St).

Also in downtown, **Books@café** (p93) has film nights on Mondays (JD2). The various cultural centres (p66) also show foreign films regularly.

Exhibitions & Music

The various foreign cultural centres regularly organise lectures, exhibitions and also musical recitals. The large, modern **Royal Cultural Centre** (Map p85; ☎ 5661026; Al-Malekah Alia St, Shmeisani) occasionally hosts concerts and plays, usually in Arabic, as does the **King Hussein Cultural Centre** (Map p68; ☎ 4739953; Omar Matar St, Al-Muhajareen). Events are sometimes advertised in the local English-language newspapers.

Darat al-Funun (p83) often features recitals of classical and traditional music; check with the gallery for a schedule of upcoming events. The Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (p84) sometimes has visiting exhibitions of contemporary art.

Nightclubs

JJ's (Map p68; Grand Hyatt Amman, Al-Hussein bin Ali St, Jebel Amman; admission Thu JD5; ☎ 8.30pm-late Mon-Sat) The Grand Hyatt's disco is particularly popular on Thursday night when you'll pay for the privilege of rubbing shoulders with Amman's beautiful people.

Harir Lounge (Map p68; ☎ 5925205; Abdou Circle; ☎ 1pm-1am, until 3am Sat & Sun) Less style and more glamour at this ostentatious upper-floor lounge and restaurant. DJs or a live band (Monday and Thursday) provide the bass and there are sometimes international DJs on the weekends.

Nai (Map p85; ☎ 5689671; Howard Johnson Alqasr Plaza Hotel, 3 Arroub St, Shmeisani; ☎ 6pm-2am) A Howard Johnson hotel is not the first place you'd look for a superhip Ottoman-style lounge/club/mezze bar but Nai is definitely one of the hottest places in town. Mondays and Thursdays get people off the sofas with international DJs and a cover charge (JD10; bookings advised) and there's an Arabic band the first Thursday of the month. The daily specials (6pm to 9pm) are a nice touch, from Saturday and Tuesdays all-you-can-eat sushi (JD15) to Wednesday's all-you-can-drink cocktails (JD10).

Kanabayé (Map p68; ☎ 4642830; 3rd Circle, Jebel Amman) A quieter cool place for a drink, the low orange couches (*kanabayé* in Arabic) and dark seductive browns lend this lounge bar a sexy feel and there's a summer terrace during the day. Thursday is clubbing night, Friday and Saturdays have DJs, Wednesday is Ladies' Night and Tuesday is Latin salsa night.

Sport

Football (soccer) is followed religiously by most locals. The capital's two main teams are Wahadat (generally supported by Palestinians) and Faisaly (supported by other Jordanians). The games are mostly played on Friday at the Amman International Stadium, located near Sports City in Shmeisani (around JD2).

SHOPPING

Amman is the best place in Jordan to shop for souvenirs. There are several high-quality handicraft boutiques, concentrated on Rainbow St and near the InterContinental Hotel, which are run to benefit women, threatened communities and the environment. The main hotels also have branches of the top-end Souq Zara boutiques.

For the latest in Saddam Hussein memorabilia (bank notes, photos etc), check out the stalls en route to the Roman Theatre in downtown.

Mall mania is sweeping through areas of Amman. The biggest monster is **Mecca Mall** (Map p65; ☎ 5527945; Makkah al-Mukarramah Rd) in the northwestern suburbs, with a cinema, bowling alley, video arcade and dozens of restaurants. **Abdoun Mall** (Map p65; ☎ 5920246; Al Umawiyeen St) is a smaller version of the same thing. More are bound to follow.

Amman has a **duty-free shop** (Map p85; ☎ 5678147; Tunis St, Shmeisani; ☎ 8am-10pm Sat-Thu, 2-10pm Fri) Tourists can buy duty-free products here, including 1L of booze and 200 cigarettes, during the first 14 days of their visit. Bring your passport.

Photography & Film

There are plenty of places around town that sell film, although the better places for developing tend to be in Shmeisani or Abdoun. You can get passport photos taken on the spot in downtown at places on Al-Malek al-Hussein, Hashemi, Al-Malek Talal and Quraysh Sts.

Salam Centre (Map p68; ☎ 5922744; Abdoun Circle; ☎ 9am-9pm) One good place, among many, offering memory cards, battery chargers and video cassettes.

Souvenirs

Al-Alaydi Jordan Craft Centre (Map p68; ☎ /fax 4644555; off Al-Kulliyah al-Islamiyah St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 9am-6pm Sat-Thu) It's difficult to leave here

without spending money, with an overwhelming selection spread over several floors. Items include jewellery, Hebron glassware, Palestinian embroidery, kilims and wood carvings, with old kitchen implements and Bedouin tent accessories on the top floor. Prices are marked in both dinars and US dollars.

Al-Burgan (Map p68; ☎ 4652585; www.alburgan.com; 12 Tala't Harb St; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Sat-Thu) Has a smaller selection of items but the staff are knowledgeable and prices are reasonable. It's behind Jordan InterContinental Hotel.

Artisana (Map p68; ☎ /fax 4647858; Mansour Kraishan St, Jebel Amman; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Sat-Thu) In the same area, this is another excellent smaller showroom with a wide range that includes scarves, bottles of holy water from the Jordan River and repros of the famous 6000-year-old statues from Ain Ghazal.

Bawabet al-Sharq (Map p82; ☎ 4637424; Abu Bakr as-Siddiq St; ☎ 9am-7pm) The 'Gate of the Orient' has locally made (some on site) home décor items tending towards the kitsch. Sales benefit several Jordanian women's groups.

Beit al-Bawadi (Map p65; ☎ 5930070; Fawzi al-Qawoaji St; ☎ 9am-6pm Sat-Thu) The place for quality ceramics, created to support local artisans, who you can see working in the basement. Designs are both traditional and modern (lampshades and dinner sets), some decorated with Arabic calligraphy, and pieces cost around JD30 to JD60. The top floor has the discounted items. Credit cards are accepted.

Jordan River Foundation (Map p82; ☎ 4613081; Bani Hamida House, Fawzi al-Malouf St, downtown; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Sat-Thu, 10am-6pm Fri) There's an emphasis on home design here, with cushions, camel bags, candles, embroidery, baskets (from Wadi Rayan in the Jordan Valley) and Dead Sea products, all at high prices to match the high quality. Also here is the showroom of Bani Hamada (see p163), which has excellent community-made weavings (a 1.8m by 1.27m weaving costs JD297).

Oriental Souvenirs Store (Map p68; ☎ 4642820; 3rd Circle, Jebel Amman; ☎ 8am-7pm Sat-Thu) More rustic than the others listed here but it's something of an Aladdin's Cave. It's friendly and family run.

Silsal Ceramics (Map p65; ☎ 5931128; Innabeh St, North Abdoun; ☎ 9am-6pm Sat-Thu) Has a small showroom of superb modern pottery with price tags that are surprisingly reasonable. If

you're coming along Zahran St from 5th Circle, it's the third small street on the right.

Wild Jordan (Map p82; ☎ 4633587; Othman bin Affan St, downtown; ☎ 9am-7pm) The nature store at the Wild Jordan Centre sells ecotourism products made in Jordan's nature reserves, including silver, organic herbs and jams from Dana, painted ostrich eggs from Shaumari, and candles made by Bedouin women as part of an income-generation project in Feinan, all decorated with unique nature-inspired designs. All profits go back to the craftspeople and the nature reserve projects.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

For information about international services to/from Amman, see p254.

Air

Amman is the main arrival and departure point for international flights, although some touch down in Aqaba as well.

Royal Jordanian Airlines head office (Map p85; ☎ 5607300; www.rja.com.jo; Al-Malekah Nour St) is inconveniently located in the Housing Bank Centre (9th floor) in Shmeisani. There are more convenient offices in the **Jordan InterContinental** (Map p68; ☎ 4644267; fax 4642152) and along **Al-Malek al-Hussein St** (Map p68; ☎ /fax 5663525), up from the Abdali bus station.

The Royal Jordanian subsidiary, **Royal Wings** (☎ 4875201; fax 4875656), has an office at Marka Airport, but it's easier to book and confirm tickets at any Royal Jordanian office in town.

See p254 for a list and contact details of airlines offices that fly to Amman.

Bus

Tickets for private buses should be booked at least one day in advance.

BUS, MINIBUS & SERVICE TAXIS

At the time of research, the three main bus stations in Amman were Abdali bus station for transport to the north and west, Wahadat bus station for the south, and Raghadan bus station for Amman and nearby towns.

However, the Abdali bus station has been slated for closure for some years now, with services due to move to a new station on the northern outskirts in Tabarbor, or possibly to the newly rebuilt Raghadan bus station in downtown. Ask your hotel or the Ministry of Tourism office for more information.

Service taxis are generally faster and take less time to fill, but they're also more expensive. They depart from the same stations as the minibuses and departures are more frequent in the morning.

Abdali Station

Abdali bus station (Map p68; Al-Malek al-Hussein St) is a 20-minute walk (2km uphill) from downtown; service taxi 6 or 7 from Cinema al-Hussein St goes right by. Regular service taxis depart Abdali for Wahadat bus station (150 fils) throughout the day.

Minibuses take up the top end of the station, then (going downhill) there are the service taxis, private bus company offices, service taxis for Irbid, King Hussein Bridge and Damascus and then buses for Madaba and Mafraq.

From Abdali, minibuses leave for the following destinations (when full):

Destination	Cost (fils)	Duration (hr)
Ajlun	500	2
Deir Alla (for Pella)	500	1
Fuheis	150	¾
Irbid	600	2
Jerash	400	1¼
Madaba	270	¾
Ramtha	500	2
Salt	200	¾
Zarqa	200	½

From Abdali station, there are also service taxis to Irbid (JD1), Ramtha (JD1), Salt (450 fils, 45 minutes) and the King Hussein Bridge (JD2, 45 minutes), as well as international destinations (see p257).

It's worth bearing in mind that there are far fewer departures on Friday, when the lower half of the bus station is transformed into a giant flea market.

Raghadan Station

The newly renovated Raghadan station (Map p82) in downtown Amman is a few minutes' walk east of the Roman Theatre. It had not reopened at time of research but expect it to operate service taxis (for surrounding suburbs), local city buses and, most probably, minibuses to Madaba (270 fils, 45 minutes), Salt (200 fils, 45 minutes), Wadi as-Seer (200 fils, 30 minutes) and Zarqa (200 fils, 30 minutes).

Wahadat Station

Almost all buses and service taxis headed south leave from Wahadat station (Map p65), way out in the southern suburbs by Middle East Circle (Duwaar Sharq al-Awsat). To reach the station, take a service taxi or bus 23 from Abdali station, or service taxi 27 from Italian St (Map p82). A private taxi will cost around JD1 from downtown.

For Petra (actually Wadi Musa) minibuses and service taxis (JD3) depart when full from the far corner of the lot between around 7am and 4pm. The local fare is JD1.800 but minibus drivers almost always charge foreigners JD3. If you have a dispute over fares go to the nearby blue huts of the tourist police. A chartered service taxi should cost JD15 to Petra.

Buses to Aqaba (JD3.500, five hours) leave every hour or so until midnight. There are regular buses to Karak (800 fils, two hours), Shobak (JD1.500, 2½ hours) and Ma'an (JD1.100, three hours). Most services dry up around 4pm.

For Dana there is one bus a day at around 11am for Qadsiyya (JD1.500, three hours); otherwise take a bus to Tafila (JD1.100, 2½ hours) and change.

Buses and minibuses also leave regularly for Madaba (350 fils, 1 hour) but it's more convenient to catch one from Abdali or Raghadan station.

There are semiregular service taxis to Karak (JD1.400, two hours), Ma'an (JD1.200, three hours) and also infrequently to Aqaba (JD5, four hours).

Muhajireen Bus Station

If you want to go to the Dead Sea, minibuses leave from the small minibus station opposite the Muhajireen Police Station (the corner of Al-Ameerah Basma bin Talal Rd and Ali bin Abi Taleb Rd; see Map p68). You may find a local bus direct to Suweimah (600 fils) or even Amman Beach; if not you'll have to go to Shuneh al-Janubiyyeh (South Shuna; 500 fils, 45 minutes) and change for Suweimah, from where you'll have to hitch.

Minibuses leave frequently from the same station for Wadi as-Seer (130 fils, 30 minutes).

PRIVATE COACHES

The domestic **JETT office** (Map p85; ☎ 5664146; Al-Malek al-Husseini St, Shmeisani) is about 500m north-

west of the Abdali bus station. Services to Petra and Hammam Ma'in have been cut in recent years but it might be worth asking if they've been reinstated. There are currently five buses daily to Aqaba (JD4.300, four hours) between 7am and 5pm and one bus to King Hussein Bridge (JD6.500, one hour, 6.30am), for crossings into Israel & the Palestinian Territories.

Trust International Transport (Map p65; ☎ 581 3427) has seven daily buses to Aqaba (JD5, four hours) between 7.30am and 7pm. All buses leave from the office inconveniently located at 7th Circle, near the Safeway shopping centre – it's best to charter a taxi to/from downtown. Trust also has a **booking office** (Map p68; ☎ 4644627) at the Abdali bus station.

Afana (Map p85; ☎ 4614611) is a slightly less reliable private company with five departures a day to Aqaba (JD3.500) between 7am and 7pm from its office next to the JETT International office.

Hijazi (Map p68; ☎ 4638110) has regular buses to Irbid (870 fils, 1½ hours) from Abdali station.

Car

Listed are some of the more reliable rental agencies. Most take major credit cards and offer cars no more than three years old. Read p265 before hiring a car. Most companies have an office at Abdullah Gardens (Map p85), where there is a collection of around 50 car-rental companies, allowing you to shop around and compare prices. Charges, conditions and insurance costs (and waiver fees in case of accident) can vary considerably; most don't include 16% tax. The smaller companies offer compact cars for as low as JD15 per day but aren't as reliable as the bigger players listed here:

Avis (Map p85; ☎ 5699420, 24hr 777-397405; www.avis.com.jo; King Abdullah Gardens) Branches at the airport, Hotel Le Royal and Hotel InterContinental. Daily rate from JD30. Free drop off at King Hussein Bridge or the airport; elsewhere JD25.

Budget (Map p85; ☎ 5698131; budget@go.com.jo; 125 Abdul Hameed Sharaf St) Charges from JD25 per day including unlimited kilometres and theft insurance.

Eagle Rent-a-Car (Map p85; ☎ 5693399, 24hr ☎ 079 5546021; eaglerentacar@wanadoo.jo; Abdul Hameed Sharaf St) Rates start from JD25 per day with unlimited kilometres, plus JD7 Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) per day.

Europcar (Map p85; ☎ 5655581; Isam Al-Ajlouni St; www.europcar.jo) Branches at Radisson SAS and Abdullah

Gardens. Weekly hire JD140, CDW JD10 per day, free drop in Aqaba. Contact Jeff Abdel Massih.

Firas Car Rental (Map p68; ☎ 4612927, 079 5846454; alamo@nets.com.jo; 1st Circle) Rates are JD25 to JD28 per day with unlimited kilometres. CDW is JD7 per day. Firas is the agent for Alamo Car Rental.

Hertz (Map p85; ☎ 5624191, 24hr line at airport ☎ 4711771; www.hertz.com; King Abdullah Gardens). Offices at the airport, Grand Hyatt & Sheraton. Daily/weekly rates JD35/210. CDW costs JD10 per day with no deductible, or JD7 with a deductible of JD100. Drop off at offices in Aqaba, Petra or Mövenpick Dead Sea Resort cost JD20.

National Car Rental (Map p85; ☎ /fax 5601350, 24hr line ☎ 079 5591731; www.1stjordan.net/national) Offices in Amman Marriott, Le Meridien & Shepherd Hotels. Charges are from JD25 per day (including CDW); daily/weekly rates around JD30/200.

Reliable Rent-a-Car (Map p65; ☎ 5929676, 079 5521358; www.reliable.com.jo; 19 Fawzi al-Qawoaji St, Abdoun) Cars JD20 to JD25, CDW JD5 extra. Offers free drop off and pick up in Madaba and the airport, will deliver the car to you anywhere in Amman and even drive you to the edge of town if you are nervous about Amman traffic. Baby seats are available. You can reserve online; contact Mohammed Hallak.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airports

Queen Alia International Airport is 35km south of the city. The **Airport Express bus** (Map p68; ☎ 0880 022006; 4451531) runs between the airport and the upper end of Abdali station, passing through the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Circles en route. Buses (JD1.500, 45 minutes) run every half-hour or so between 7am and midnight. From the airport, buses depart from outside the arrivals hall of Terminal 2. Buy your ticket from the booth at the door. The last buses to the airport leave at 10pm and midnight; the first bus leaves at 6am.

With the impending scaling down of the Abdali bus station, the service could shift

to either the new station at Tabarbor or the Raghadan bus station.

Anyone travelling on Royal Jordanian can check in their bags, pay the departure tax (JD5) and catch a shuttle bus (JD2, half-hourly between 8am and 9pm) to Queen Alia International Airport from the **Royal Jordanian city terminal** (Map p65; ☎ 5856855; fax 5857224), but it's inconveniently located on 7th Circle. Make sure to check in at least three hours before departure.

There are branches of **Avis** (☎ 4459040) and **Hertz** (☎ 4711771) at the airport and most other car-rental companies will meet you at the airport or otherwise let you pick up the car there.

The other option is a private taxi (JD12 to JD15). With the convenience of the Airport Express, it's difficult to see why you'd need to take a taxi, unless you have a very early flight.

To get to Marka Airport, take a service taxi from Raghadan station (150 fils).

Public Transport BUS

The local bus system is confusing, with nothing labelled in English. Buses 26, 27, 28, 41 and 43 can be useful for getting to downtown. If bus travel is your thing, ask around the bus section of Raghadan station to see what's headed your way, but you'll need patience and decent Arabic. Tickets cost around 50 fils.

For 7th circle, take bus 41 or anything headed to Wadi as-Seer.

TAXI Private Taxi

Most drivers of private taxis use the meter as a matter of course, but gently remind

AMMAN'S TAXIS

On any given day, Jordan's capital is home to an estimated 16,000 yellow taxis and counting. One will never be far away and they often find you before you find them – hopeful honking at tourists in case they missed the obvious is a favourite pastime. Although Amman inducted its first female taxi driver in 1997, all the others are male. Most drivers are fast and friendly, often more interested in finding out where you're from than keeping an eye on the road.

Making the effort to talk with them is illuminating, shedding light on the latest citywide gossip or scandal, to their take on the problems of the Middle East (many are Palestinians with stories to tell). Most work very hard for their money. A good day can yield JD35 (before overheads) in winter, and double that in summer. A bad day will bring as little as JD15 – not much for up to 15 hours' work.

SERVICE TAXI ROUTES

All departure points are listed on the Map p82.

Service taxi 1 From Basman St for 4th Circle.

Service taxi 2 From Basman St for 1st and 2nd Circles.

Service taxi 3 From Basman St for 3rd and 4th Circles.

Service taxi 4 From the side street near the central post office for Jebel Weibdeh.

Service taxi 6 From Cinema al-Hussein St for the Ministry of the Interior Circle, past Abdali station and JETT international and domestic offices.

Service taxi 7 From Cinema al-Hussein St, up Al-Malek al-Hussein St, past Abdali station and King Abdullah Mosque, and along Suleiman al-Nabulsi St for Shmeisani.

Service taxis 25 & 26 From Italian St, downtown, to the top of Jebel al-Ashrafiyeh' and near Abu Darwish Mosque.

Service taxi 27 From Italian St to Middle East Circle for Wahadat station.

Service taxi 35 From opposite the Amman Palace Hotel, passing close to the Muhajireen Police Station.

Service taxi 38 From downtown to Makkah al-Mukarramah Rd.

them when they don't. You need to be especially careful when you're laden with bags and searching for your hotel or heading out in the evening to an expensive restaurant.

The flagfall is 150 fils and fares are cheap; from downtown to Abdali costs around 600 fils while to Shmeisani shouldn't cost much more than JD1.

Service Taxi

Most fares cost about 130 fils per seat and you usually pay the full amount regardless of where you get off. After 8pm, the price for all service taxis goes up by 25%.

There can be long queues at rush hour (8am to 9am, and 5pm to 6pm). The cars queue up and usually start at the bottom of a hill – you get into the last car and the whole line rolls back a car space and so on. Always double check that your taxi is going to your destination before climbing in.

Car & Motorcycle

If you must drive in downtown Amman and are fortunate enough to find a parking spot, remember that parking machines operate along many main streets. It costs 150/250 fils for 30 minutes/one hour.

AROUND AMMAN

There are a number of worthwhile sights within easy reach of Amman, including Salt – an attractive town with good remnants of Ottoman architecture – and Wadi as-Seer, just outside the bustling capital, which combines evocative ruins with beautiful landscapes.

Also within striking distance of Amman is the Dead Sea (p143), Madaba (p150), Jerash (p108) and Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan (p141), which are high on the list of must-sees for most visitors to Jordan. The desert castles (p133) are another popular day trip from the capital.

KAN ZEMAN

The historic 19th-century inn of **Kan Zeman** (☎ 4128391; fax 4128395; lunch/dinner buffet JD8/12; ☎ noon-4pm & 7pm-midnight) is one of Amman's longest standing top-end restaurants. Expats in Amman give the food mixed reviews and it's definitely aimed at tour groups but the vaulted ceilings lend it a unique ambience and there's live music after 7pm. If you don't want the full buffet, snack on a *manaqesh* (baked thyme pastry), washed down with a glass of *sefeeha* (a lemon and mint drink) or the local Kan Zeman red wine (JD2.500). The restaurant is part of a tourist complex with a few **handicraft stores** (most open after 6pm).

Kan Zeman is a bit of a hike from Amman, around 15km south of 8th Circle in the village of Al-Yadoudeh, 3km east of the Desert Highway, so you'll have to factor in a significant taxi fare (at least JD4 one way). If driving, take the signed turn off to Al-Yadoudeh village and follow the signs for 3km to the hilltop site. It's sometimes known as the Saha-tain Restaurant.

WADI AS-SEER & IRAQ AL-AMIR

عراق الأمير وادي السير
The narrow, fertile valley of Wadi as-Seer, to the west of Amman, is quite a contrast to the bare treeless plateau around Amman

كان زمان

to the east. Spring (particularly April and May) is the best time to visit, when black iris (the Jordanian national flower) and other colourful flowers are plentiful.

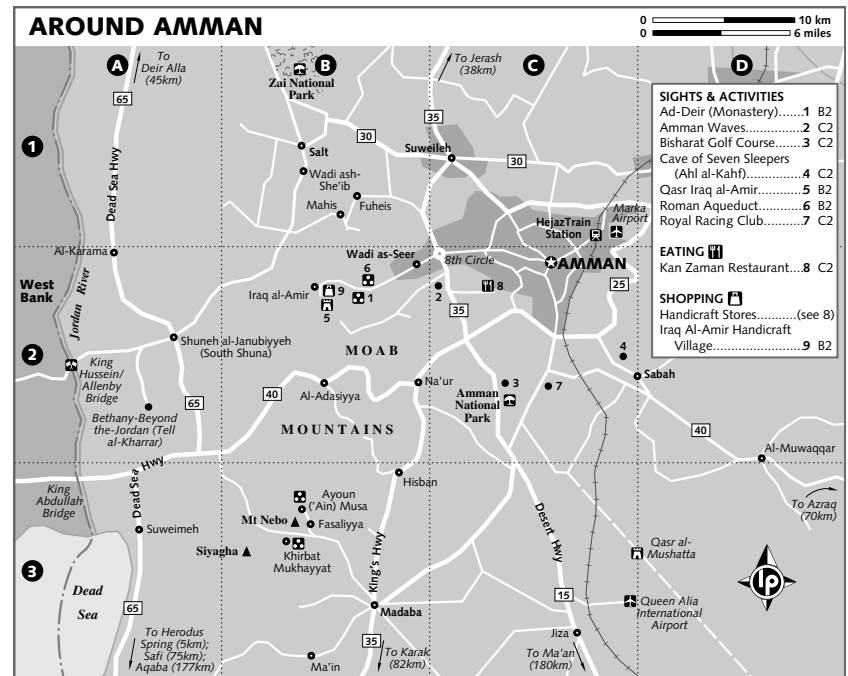
Wadi as-Seer is a largely Circassian village, and now virtually part of sprawling western Amman. About 10km down the lovely valley is the village of Iraq al-Amir with its castle and caves. Along the way (about 4km past Wadi as-Seer), and next to the sleepy Al-Yanabeea Restaurant, is part of an ancient **Roman aqueduct** on the right. Shortly after, look up to the hillside on the left to a façade cut into the rock, known as **Ad-Deir** (monastery), although it was probably a medieval dovecote (a place to house pigeons). The actual façade is fenced off.

The **Iraq al-Amir** (Caves of the Prince) are on the right of the road about 6km past Al-Yanabeea Restaurant if you're coming from Amman. The caves are arranged in two tiers – the upper one forms a long gallery (partially damaged during a mild earthquake in 1999) along the cliff face. The 11 caves were apparently used as cavalry stables and locals have used them to house their goats

and store chaff. Steps lead up to the caves from the paved road; opposite is the village of Iraq al-Amir and the **Iraq al-Amir Handicraft Village** (☎ closed Fri), which has a small weaving centre supporting 61 women who produce pottery, fabrics, foodstuffs, carpets and paper products.

About 700m further down the road, just visible from the caves, is the small but impressive **Qasr Iraq al-Amir** (admission free; ☎ daylight hr), also known as the Qasr al-Abad (Palace of the Slave). Mystery surrounds its construction, and even its precise age, but most scholars believe that Hyrcanus, of the powerful Jewish Tobiad family, built it between 187 and 175 BC as a villa or fortified palace. It's one of the very few examples of pre-Roman construction in Jordan. Although never completed, much of the palace has been reconstructed.

The place is unique because it was built from some of the biggest blocks of any ancient structure in the Middle East – the largest is 7m by 3m. The blocks were, however, only 20cm or so thick, making the whole edifice quite flimsy and susceptible



to the earthquake which flattened it in AD 362. Today, the setting and the animal carvings on the exterior walls are the highlights. Look for the carved panther fountain on the ground floor, the eroded eagles on the corners and the lioness with cubs on the upper storey of the back side.

The gatekeeper will open the interior, as well as a small museum (which includes drawings of what the complex once looked like) for a tip of JD1. If he's not around, ask for the *miftah* (key) at the small shop near the gate.

Getting There & Away

Minibuses leave regularly from the station on Al-Ameerah Basma bin Talal St (Map p68) in Amman for Wadi as-Seer village (130 fils, 30 minutes); and less frequently from the Raghadan station in downtown. From Wadi as-Seer, take another minibus (100 fils) – or walk about 10km, mostly downhill – to the caves; look for the signpost to the Iraq Amir Handicraft Village, which is virtually opposite the stairs to the caves. Alternatively take bus 26 from Shabsough St in downtown to its terminus and then change to a bus for Wadi as-Seer or take a taxi. From the caves, it's an easy stroll down to the *qasr* (but a little steep back up).

If you're driving, head west from 8th Circle and follow the main road which twists through Wadi as-Seer village.

CAVE OF SEVEN SLEEPERS (AHL AL-KAHF)

أهل الكهف

The legend of the 'seven sleepers' has several parallels throughout literature. It involves seven Christian boys who were persecuted by the Roman Emperor Trajan, then escaped to a cave and slept there for 309 years. This is one of several locations (the most famous being Ephesus in Turkey) that claim to be that cave. Inside the **main cave** (admission free; ☎ 8am–6pm) – also known as Ahl al-Kahf (Cave of the People) – are eight smaller tombs which are sealed, though one has a hole in it through which you can see a creepy collection of human bones. Above and below the cave are the remains of two mosques. About 500m west of the cave is a large **Byzantine cemetery**, whose tombs are sadly full of rubbish.

The cave is to the right of a large new mosque complex in the village of Rajib, off the road from Amman to Sabah. Buses

from Amman to Sabah pass 500m from the mosque; catch them at Wahadat station (couple of 100 fils, 15 minutes). Alternatively, take a minibus from Quraysh St in downtown, ask for 'al-Kahf' and the driver will show you where to get off to change for a Sabah bus. The easiest way there is by chartered taxi (JD3 one way).

SALT

السلط

☎ 05 / pop 66,000

In Salt we were invited into two houses...At one house, we had singing in Arabic from the eldest son, and then we had to demonstrate disco-dancing to a cassette of *Saturday Night Fever*, while the whole family stood around clapping. It was most embarrassing!

Mark Hilton, UK

The friendly town of Salt is about 30km northwest of downtown Amman and set in a steep-sided narrow valley. It was the region's administrative centre under Ottoman rule, but was passed over as the new capital of Trans-Jordan in favour of Amman. Con-

sequently, Salt, which has a large Christian population, has retained much of its charm. Salt was apparently named from the Greek word *saltus* meaning 'forests' (although these are long gone); or from *sultana* for the grapes that were once abundant in the region.

Salt is pleasant and easy to walk around but isn't one of Jordan's highlights, so you could miss it if you don't have much time.

The friendly **tourist office** (☎ 3555652; Dayr St; ☎ 8am–3pm Sun–Thu) is upstairs in the impressive old residence of Beit Mismar, but is of minimal use.

Sights & Activities

There are some fine examples of **Ottoman architecture** (see right) in town dating from the late 19th- and early 20th-century. Few of these gracious limestone buildings are open to the public, but some of the façades are quite elegant. The town has recently renovated several façades and rebuilt a series of stairways leading up to fabulous views from atop Jebel al-Qala'a.

Salt Archaeological Museum (☎ 3555651; admission free; ☎ 8am–7pm, to 4pm winter Nov–Apr) is well laid out in a nice Ottoman-era building. Downstairs focuses on glass and pottery (some dating back 5000 years), spanning the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic eras, mostly from around Salt but also from Deir Alla and Tell Nimrin (from where Joshua is thought to have led the Israelites across the River Jordan into the Promised Land). Upstairs are some examples of local traditional dress, displays on traditional farming activities and mosaics fragments from churches around Salt. Fifteen minutes should do it.

Visitors can watch weaving, pottery, mosaics and other handicrafts being made at the **Salt Handicraft Training Centre** (☎ 3550279; Nageb al-Daboor district; ☎ 8am–3pm Sun–Thu), 3km out of town. The centre specialises in both training and production and has a showroom for the finished products. A taxi here costs JD1 to JD2 from the centre; ask for the Balkhar Islamic School (*Bejanib Maddaris al-Balkhar al-Islamiy*). The turn-off is at a set of traffic lights by a bridge, 2km from Salt along the road to Amman.

If you have a car it's worth exploring **Wadi ash-Shu'aib**, a refreshing valley named after the prophet Jethro (Shu'aib in Arabic), which offers some hiking opportunities and interesting caves.

The tomb of Prophet Yusha (Joshua) is a 10-minute walk south of town but is of little specific interest.

Walking Tour of Salt

The following route takes you on a circular tour of Salt's backstreets, taking in its bazaars and old Ottoman architecture. Budget around an hour, including a short visit to the museum.

From Salt bus station walk up Dayr St, past the impressive doorway of **Beit Mismar** and the lovely balcony columns of **Beit Muasher**, both grand old Ottoman residences. Continue along Dayr St as it passes the curved walls of Salt's Orthodox church to the recently restored **Beit Abu Jaber**, which is due to reopen in 2006 as a local museum. Head across the plaza and take the stairs up to the right of the mosque, curving round to the entry of the former **English Hospital** (look for the letters 'E.H.' on the green gate). From here you could wind your way uphill for fine views over the town.

Alternatively, return to the plaza and head down **Hammam St**, Salt's most atmospheric backstreet, past the ornate **Ottoman mosque** to the junction with Maydan St. Across the street is the colonnaded entry of **Muhammed al-Bashir's House** (built 1890–1910), now a traditional coffeehouse (with a tree in front). Next door is Beit al-Sulibi (1920–30).

Break for lunch at the **Al-Salam Restaurant** (below) and then visit the **archaeological museum** (left) before heading back to the bus station or taking a taxi to the **Salt Handicraft Training Centre** (left).

Sleeping & Eating

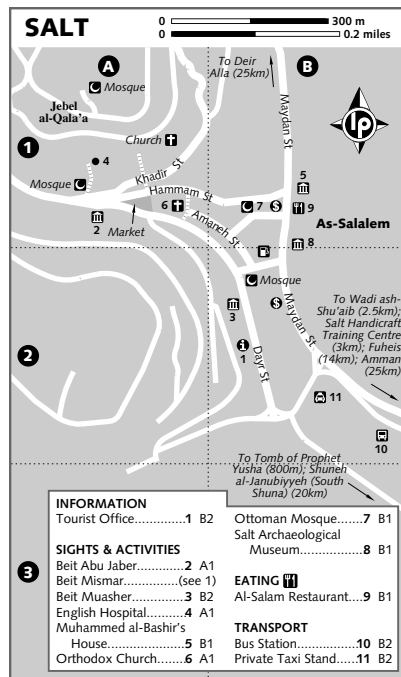
There is nowhere to stay in Salt.

The northern end of Maydan St is lined with traditional cafés, full of men drinking tea and smoking nargilehs. Basic restaurants along the same street and by the bus station serve kebabs.

Al-Salam Restaurant (☎ 3552115; Maydan St; meals JD1.500; ☎ 7am–10.30pm Sat–Thu) One of the best places in town for cheap Arab food, including chicken and shish kebabs. It's opposite the Arab Bank.

Getting There & Away

The bus station is on the main road south of the town centre. There are minibuses



to Salt (200 fils, 45 minutes) from Amman's Abdali and Raghadan stations, via Amman University, and occasional service taxis (450 fils) from Abdali. From Salt, minibuses head down the Jordan Valley to Shuneh al-Janubiyyeh (South Shuna; 250 fils, 45 minutes), and to Wadi as-Seer (200 fils, 30 minutes) and Fuheis (200 fils, 30 minutes), with which Salt can be combined as a day trip from Amman. Taxis (JD5) can be chartered to Amman.

FUHEIS

فحيص

☎ 06

This pleasant village, located at a cool 1050m above sea level (15km northwest of Amman), is famous in Jordan for producing fruit and cement, but is of more interest to visitors for its fine places to eat. First built in about 2000 BC, Fuheis is now an overwhelmingly Christian village, with several Orthodox and Catholic churches, three of which are just down from the minibus stop.

Fuheis used to have several galleries and workshops producing ceramics, mosaics, paintings and embroidery but at the time of research only one was operating, in the Zuwwadeh Restaurant.

Eating

Fuheis has two excellent restaurants, both easy to spot from the final minibus stop in the Al-Rawaq neighbourhood. The food is excellent, the atmosphere is charming and alcohol is served.

Zuwwadeh Restaurant (☎ 4721528; starters JD1-2, mains JD2-6; ☎ 10am-midnight) The food here is fabulous, especially the *fatteh* (fried bread) with hummus, meat or chicken and pine nuts (JD3.500/5.500/7.500 for a small/medium/huge), which is almost worth the trip from Amman on its own. The 'wedding *fatteh*' adds tomato and cardamom. Choose between shady outdoor tables or a pleasant indoor dining area. Most nights there are also live oud performances upstairs (after 7pm). Bookings are a good idea at weekends.

Hakoura Restaurant (☎ 4729152; starters 800 fils, mains JD2.500-5; ☎ 10am-midnight) Similarly good and a little cheaper (a small *fatteh* costs JD2.500), Hakoura is an artistic place with a commitment to traditional hospitality, soulful music and modern art, with some excellent food thrown in. There's live music on Thursday evenings.

Getting There & Away

Fuheis is easy to reach by minibus from Abdali bus station in Amman (200 fils, 45 minutes). The town is also connected to Wadi as-Seer and Salt (each 200 fils, 30 minutes), so you could visit all three places in a day. If you're eating at one of the restaurants until late, you may need to prearrange a chartered taxi back to Amman (before/after 6pm JD3/5).

The minibus stop in the older Al-Rawaq neighbourhood (also known as il-balad) is at a roundabout, close to the two restaurants and marked by a statue of St George (known locally as Giorgis) slaying a dragon.