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ACCOMMODATION

Jordan has a good range of accommodation options to suit most budgets, although away from the main tourist centres there's not a great deal of choice. However this is generally not a problem because Jordan is so compact most attractions can be easily visited in day trips from the main centres.

Peak season is considered to be September, October, March, April and part of May and you can expect tourist numbers and hotel prices to be at their highest (or rather discounts at their lowest) during these months. Holiday weekends are also extremely busy at resorts at Aqaba and the

PRACTICALITIES

- **Newspapers & Magazines** English-language papers worth reading are the daily *Jordan Times* (200 fils; www.jordantimes.com) and weekly *Star* (500 fils; www.star.com.jo). *JO* (www.jo.jo) is a cool local magazine published in Amman, but can be hard to find. Imported newspapers include *The Times* (JD3.500), *Guardian Weekly* (JD1.500), *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* (JD1.500). The *International Herald Tribune* (JD1) has a regional section from Lebanon's *Daily Star*. Magazines include *Time* (JD2.700) and *Newsweek* (JD2.800).
- **Radio** Check out Radio Jordan (96.3 FM in Amman, 98.7 FM in Aqaba) or the BBC World Service (103.1 FM in Amman and 1323AM across the country). Try 99.6 FM for popular hits.
- **Electricity** Jordan's electricity supply is 220V, 50 AC. Sockets are mostly of the European two-pronged variety, although some places use European three-pronged sockets.
- **Weights & Measures** Jordan uses the metric system. See the front of this guidebook for a conversion table.

Dead Sea. Outside of these months, and if tourism numbers remain low, you can negotiate discounts on most hotels' published rates.

Camping

Bringing a tent just to save money on accommodation doesn't make much sense. There's no camping allowed in Jordan's nature reserves or at Petra, but cheap rooms are plentiful. Finding a secluded place to pitch a tent in a densely populated country like Jordan is far from easy so always check with the local authorities before setting up.

Some places to discreetly pitch a tent are near Umm Qais, and Ajlun castle. The only camp sites where pitching your own tent is allowed are south of Aqaba (tents catch the sea breezes in summer) and Wadi Rum and

TOP FIVE PLACES TO STAY

The following five offer unique top-end options and are so worth the splurge:

- Feinan Lodge, Dana Nature Reserve (p173) – Arabesque meets medieval monastery in a 21st-century ecolodge
- Mövenpick Aqaba (p223 or Dead Sea p145) – simply luxurious
- Dana Guest House, Dana (p173) – stunning views and sleek style
- Under the stars at a Bedouin camp in Wadi Rum (p212)
- Sofitel Taybet Zaman (p198), near Petra – designery boutique hotel in a restored Ottoman village

Shaumari Reserve, although some hotels (eg the Olive Branch Resort near Jerash) allow you to pitch a tent in their grounds.

Pre-set tents are available in Wadi Mujib and Dana nature reserves, though they are surprisingly expensive options. These should be booked in advance through Wild Jordan (p70).

One popular option is to spend the night in a Bedouin camp in the desert at Wadi Rum. Facilities can be basic but it's a great experience – see p212 for more details.

Hotels

A surprising thing about accommodation in Jordan is that some towns have no hotel at all. Other towns, like Ajlun, offer little or nothing at the budget end of the market.

In places with hotel accommodation, prebooking a room is rarely needed and you'll have little trouble finding a hotel in any price range if you just turn up, except in Aqaba at peak times (see p221 for details).

Most budget and some midrange places charge an extra JD1 to JD2 for breakfast, which is invariably little more than bad tea/coffee, bread and jam. It's cheaper to buy this sort of food at a grocery store and make your own breakfast, or you can get a better local breakfast for about the same money at a budget-priced restaurant. Breakfast is generally included in the price at midrange and top-end hotels; the latter generally have generous buffet-style breakfasts.

BUDGET

There are no youth hostels in Jordan. Some places, especially those catering to backpackers, allow guests to sleep on the roof – which, in summer, is a good place to be – for about JD2 per person. Private rooms start

at about JD3/6 for singles/doubles, but anything decent will cost about JD6/10. Prices are negotiable, especially when things are quiet.

Most budget places have 'triples' (rooms with three beds), and often rooms with four beds, so sharing a room with friends, or asking to share a room with another guest, is a way of reducing accommodation costs considerably. Some cheaper places have two accommodation choices: basic rooms with a shared bathroom, and nicer, more expensive ones with a private bathroom.

Especially in Amman, cheap places can be incredibly noisy because of the traffic and the hubbub of cafés and shops below. Try to get a room towards the back of the building. Many budget places are located above shops and cafés, which means climbing several flights of stairs to your room.

MIDRANGE

There is a reasonable selection of midrange hotels, with at least one in most towns you're likely to visit, but only in Amman, Wadi Musa (near Petra) and Aqaba will you have much choice. Rooms in midrange hotels usually have colour TV (sometimes featuring satellite stations such as CNN), fridge, heater (essential in winter) as well as telephone. For budget travellers, a quiet, clean room with reliable hot water and a private bathroom in a midrange hotel is sometimes worth a splurge; prices start at about JD15/22 for singles/doubles. Negotiation is always possible, especially if business is quiet or you're staying for several days – so it is sometimes possible to get a nice room in a decent midrange hotel for a budget price.

TOP END

There is no shortage of top-end hotels in Amman, Wadi Musa (near Petra), the Dead Sea and Aqaba. They all feature the sort of luxuries you'd expect for the prices. Most guests at these sorts of places are on organised tours; in quieter times negotiation is possible, and surprising bargains are possible when things are quiet. At other times you'll probably get the best rates from a travel agency instead of just walking in. Major credit cards are accepted in almost all top-end places. All top-end hotels add tax and service charge of 26% (see p246) but this is often included in a discounted rate.

Rental Accommodation

In Amman, the two main English-language papers, and notice boards at the cultural centres (p66), at Books@café (p93) and the University of Jordan Language Center office (p240) are the best places to check for apartments and houses to rent. Alternatively, wander around the nicer areas (just off the road between 1st and 5th circles, or Shmeisani) and look for signs on residences or shop windows advertising places to rent.

You'll pay at least JD200 per month for a furnished apartment in a reasonable area of Amman; a little less if unfurnished. A furnished apartment or small house in a working-class suburb is possible for as little as JD100 per month (usually closer to JD150), but not much in this range is advertised so ask around. For this price, don't expect everything to work.

Short-term rentals are available in Aqaba, where prices for a furnished two-bedroom apartment with a kitchen start at JD10 per night in the low season and JD20 in the high season. Most apartments in Aqaba

can only be rented for a minimum of one week, however, and must be prebooked in the peak season.

Resorts

The two main concentrations of resorts are on the Dead Sea (see p143) and Aqaba (p223), where you'll find branches of the luxurious Mövenpick, Kempinski (in Amman – and soon to be in Dead Sea and Aqaba) and Marriott chains, with multiple beaches, pools and everything else you'd expect.

ACTIVITIES

Perhaps surprisingly, Jordan offers some of the best outdoor activities in the Middle East, from hiking and climbing in its stunning deserts and wadis, to scuba diving and snorkelling in the turquoise waters off Aqaba. Don't head home without trying at least a couple of these fantastic adventures.

Aero Sports

The **Royal Aero Sports Club of Jordan** (☎ Amman 06 4873261, Aqaba 03 2033763; www.fly.to/rpacj) offers microlighting (JD50 per hour), skydiving (JD150), gliding, paragliding and even hot air ballooning from Marka Airport in Amman or, by arrangement, over the dramatic scenery of Wadi Rum.

Archaeological Digs

Many ancient sites in Jordan are still being excavated and it's possible to join an archaeological dig; note that such work is usually unpaid and you may even have to pay for the privilege.

Plan well ahead if you're interested in working on archaeological excavations. No dig director will welcome an inquiry two weeks before a season begins. Permits and

TOP FIVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WEBSITES

- American Expedition to Petra (<http://petra-archaeology.com>)
- Franciscan Cyberspot (<http://198.62.71.1/www1/ofm/fai/faimain.html>) – super detail on Madaba and Mt Nebo regions, including Madaba map and mosaics of Mt Nebo
- Madaba Plains Project (www.hesban.org) – overview and history of Hesban from Andrews University
- Virtual Karak Resources Project (www.vkrp.org) – good on history and detail on Karak castle
- East of the Jordan (www.asor.org/pubs/new.html) – online text of the book by Burton MacDonald

security forms may have to be completed, so allow up to six months for all possible bureaucratic niceties. Much of the work is also seasonal. Opportunities are nonetheless growing as field project leaders realise the advantages of taking on energetic and motivated amateurs.

When you write to dig directors, tell them what you can do. If you have special skills (like photography or drafting), have travelled in the region or worked on other digs (or similar group projects), let them know. Locals are usually employed to do the basic spade work.

To get an idea of what is going on, and where and when, contact one of the organisations listed below. All are based in Amman (☎ 06).

American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR; ☎ 5346117; www.bu.edu/acor; PO Box 2470, Jebel Amman, Amman 11181) ACOR is part of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), and prepares an extensive annual listing of field-work opportunities in the Middle East. Write to: AIA, 135 William St, New York NY 10038.

American Expedition to Petra (http://petra-archaeology.com/index.htm) Operates a six-week dig at Petra's Temple of the Winged Lions in June/July for US\$2800. An application pack costs US\$25. Contact Dr Philip C Hammond, 15810 Chicory Dr, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268, USA.

American Schools of Oriental Research (www.asor.org) Affiliated to the American Center for Oriental Research (see above).

Biblical Archaeological Society (www.bib-arch.org) Produces the magazine *Biblical Archaeological Review* and runs archaeological tours. The website lists archaeological digs that accept paying volunteers.

Council for British Research in the Levant (☎ 5341317; www.cbrl.org.uk; PO Box 519, Al-Jubeiha, Amman 11941)

Friends of Archaeology (FoA; ☎ /fax 5930682; www.arabia.com/foa, foa@nets.com.jo; PO Box 2440, Amman 11181) Established in 1960, this Jordanian-run, non-profit organisation aims to 'protect and preserve the archaeological sites and cultural heritage of Jordan'. FoA operates educational field trips for members only.

Institut Français d'Archéologie du Proche Orient (☎ 4640515; www.ifpoorient.org; PO Box 5348, Amman 11181)

University of Jordan: Archaeological Department (Map p65; ☎ 5355000, ext 3739; www.ju.edu.jo)

One particularly active programme is run at picturesque Pella, in northwestern Jordan, by the University of Sydney. For details, contact

the volunteer coordinator at **Pella Volunteers** (☎ 02 93514151; http://ad.arts.usyd.edu.au/research/pella/pellavols.html) in Australia. The nine-week programme costs around A\$3200.

Other paying digs also include those at **Tell Jalul** (www.andrews.edu/archaeology), 5km east of Madaba; **Khirbet al-Mudayana** (Wilfred Laurier University in Ontario), 48km south of Amman; and **Ya'amun** (www.uark.edu/~jcrose), 19km southeast of Irbid. Prices range from US\$1700 to US\$3500 for a six-week dig.

Boats & Other Water Sports

In Aqaba, trips on a glass-bottom boat are fun, although the amount of fish and coral that can be seen is sometimes disappointing and you need at least a couple of hours to get to the better areas. The boat trip from Aqaba to Pharaoh's Island is a good day trip that combines history and snorkelling.

A couple of resorts and private beaches in Aqaba offer everything from kayaking and windsurfing to jet-skiing.

Camel Treks

The camel is no longer a common form of transport for Bedouin; most now prefer the ubiquitous pick-up truck – in fact, it's not unusual to see a Bedouin transporting his prized camel in the back of his Toyota! For visitors, however, one truly rewarding experience is a camel trek. Enterprising Bedouin are happy to take visitors on three- to six-night camel treks from Wadi Rum to Aqaba or Petra (see p210), as well as shorter trips.

Diving & Snorkelling

The coastline between Aqaba and the Saudi border is home to some of the world's better diving spots. Although the diving and snorkelling is perhaps not quite as good as Egypt's Red Sea sites, there's plenty of coral and colourful marine life and the crowds are noticeably missing.

The advantages are that all sites are accessible from a major town (Aqaba), easy to reach for snorkellers and accessible from a jetty or the beach, so a boat is not required (which reduces the cost considerably). Also, visibility in the Gulf is usually excellent (as much as 40m, although it's usually closer to 20m), the tides are minimal, the water is shallow and drop-offs are often found less than 50m from shore.

Diving is possible all year. The best time is early February to early June for water and outside temperatures, visibility and marine life, although March and April are not good because of algae bloom.

For specific information about diving and snorkelling activities around Aqaba, see p227.

Hiking

Hiking is an increasingly popular pastime in Jordan, with the Dana Nature Reserve, Mukawir, Petra, Wadi Mujib and Wadi Rum among the most rewarding options.

Any hike will take longer, and take more out of you, than you think – walking in sand is not easy, nor is going uphill in the

hot sun. Allow yourself plenty of time, and also give yourself time to linger and enjoy the view, chat with passers-by or simply sit in the shade during the heat of the day.

Getting reliable maps is a problem, partly because they don't always exist and because they can be hard to read because of confusing topography. Try to get maps abroad as there are very few available in Jordan.

Most wadis are unsafe during winter (November to March) due to the danger of flash floods. Paths are often washed away every spring and so routes change every year according to conditions. Bear in mind that Global Positioning System (GPS) units and mobile phones are unreliable in the steep canyon walls of many wadis.

WADI WALKING

Jordan's most exciting hikes are through the surprisingly lush gorges, waterfalls, pools and palm trees of its dramatic wadis (seasonally dry river beds). You'll need some help arranging a hike here, largely because you need transport to drop you off at the beginning and pick you up at the end of your hike (generally a different location and accessed from different roads). Moreover, route-finding is difficult (there are no defined trails) and trails change year to year due to seasonal flooding. Hikes are only safe from late March/early April to early October and you should always check the weather forecast for rain and get local advice before heading off on a hike.

The following are Jordan's best wadi options:

- **Wadi Hasa** – A moderate two-day, 24km trek, all downhill, often in water, through a water playground of pools and waterfalls (including a hot waterfall) and changing scenery. One of the most beautiful wadis in Jordan. There is currently a police check along the road to the start of the trail. The full trek ends near Safi.
- **Wadi Yabis** – Day hike (12km, six to seven hours), accessed from Hallaweh village, 15km from Ishfateena, north of Ajlun. The trail descends 700m past a spring and 2000-year-old olive trees, down a canyon to a 50m waterfall and on to Wadi Rayyan dam. Spring brings wonderful wildflowers and is the best time to visit.
- **Wadi bin Hammad** – A 10km day-hike from the start of the trail at a set of hot springs to the Dead Sea Highway, 6km north of Mazra'a. The hot springs and upper (eastern) stretches are popular with day trippers, especially on Fridays. The full hike ends at the Dead Sea, or alternatively you can just do the first 90 minutes through the dramatic narrow gorge. It's a one-hour drive from the King's Highway to the start of the trail but it's hard to find without a guide; the turn-off is 11km north of Karak.
- **Wadi Fifa (Feifa)** – Walk up the wadi as far as you want from the Dead Sea Highway. A 4km hike brings you to a small waterfall and continues past water pools, a siq and lots of palm trees. The trail starts at -240m so is hot in summer – bring lots of water.
- **Wadi Ghuweir** – Full day hike (12km, seven hours) from Mansoura (near Shobak) to Wadi Feinan, past dramatic geological formations. The trail is accessed from near Shobak via a steep downhill drive, or you can start from Dana Nature Reserve. See p171.
- **Wadi Zarqa Ma'in** – From the hot spring resort of Hammamat Ma'in to the Dead Sea. Check trail regulations at the Hammamat Ma'in spa.
- **Wadi Numeira** – This wadi starts 10km north of Lot's Cave and quickly leads to a dramatic siq with pools and waterfalls. The upper wadi is only accessed via a 1.5m rope ladder.

The best places for some DIY hiking are Petra (p189), Dana Nature Reserve (p172; though most trails here require a guide), Wadi Rum (p210), Ajlun Nature Reserve (p116) and the half-day hike from Al-Beidha (p201) to Petra's Monastery.

Several longer routes are also possible if you have a tent and stove. In particular, Dana to Petra is an excellent four-day trek that takes you through Wadi Feinan, Wadi Ghuweir (see the boxed text, p237) and Little Petra.

BOOKS

British climbers Tony Howard and Di Taylor have spent a lot of time exploring the hiking, trekking and rock-climbing possibilities in Jordan. Their books include the detailed *Treks & Climbs in Wadi Rum*, the condensed, pocket-sized and more affordable *Walks & Scrambles in Rum*, published in Jordan by Al-Kutba; and *Walking in Jordan*. These books are only sporadically available inside Jordan.

Although it can be difficult to find, *Trekking & Canyoning in the Jordanian Dead Sea Rift* by Itai Haviv contains numerous trekking and canyoning routes in the wadis of Central Jordan and is well worth picking up, even though many routes are dated now.

HIKING AGENCIES

Only a tiny fraction of Jordanian travel agencies have experience in organising hiking or trekking expeditions. Those that do are generally very expensive, with an organised overnight trek costing several hundred US dollars. For a list of some agencies see p262.

Yamaan Safady (☎ 077 7222101; www.adventurejordan.com) is one of the best young hiking guides in the country. From March to October he leads weekly hiking trips for expats and locals to wonderful places such as Wadi Yabis, Wadi Hasa and beyond, as part of the Adventure Jordan Hiking Club. To get on his email list, which details upcoming hikes, send an email to yamaan@adventurejordan.com. Costs for day hikes generally start at JD25 per person with transport and guide.

The **Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature** (RSCN; ☎ 06 5350456; www.rscn.org.jo; PO Box 6354, Amman 11183) offers a wide range of guided hikes in Wadi Mujib and Dana nature reserves and can also arrange long-distance treks if given prior notice.

WHAT TO BRING

If you intend to hike while in Jordan, make sure that you come prepared. A lightweight windproof top is recommended, as is a thin fleece jacket for the evening. Lightweight waterproofs can be a good idea in spring. Bring some trainers that can get wet, plus a back up pair of shoes, if you intend to walk any of the wet wadis.

It's not advisable to wear shorts or sleeveless tops – it's inappropriate dress for conservative villages in the countryside, and you'll get burnt to a crisp anyway. Don't forget a hat, sunscreen, medical kit, knife, moleskin (for blisters), a torch (flashlight) and matches. Water purifiers and insect repellent will also be very useful.

If you plan to do a lot of hiking, a backpack hydration system such as those made by Camelbak (www.camelbak.com) can be very useful.

WHEN TO GO

The best time for hiking is undoubtedly the middle of spring (mid-March to late April), when it's not too hot, the rains should have finished, the flowers should be in bloom and the wells and springs should be full. At this time, however, Wadi Mujib and some of the wadis in Petra may still be susceptible to flooding or impassable in places – Wadi Mujib generally opens on 1 April. Always check local conditions before setting out. From late September to mid-October is also good; it's dry but not excessively hot.

Rain and floods can occur throughout the months from November to March. This is not a good time to hike or camp in narrow wadis and ravines because flash floods can sweep unheralded out of the hills.

Horse Riding

It's possible to explore the deserts around Wadi Rum on Arabian stallions, though this is for experienced riders only.

Rum Horses (☎ 2033508, 077 7471960; www.desertguides.com) is a professional French-run trekking, camel and horse trekking agency. It's on the south side of the road 6km before the turn to Wadi Rum.

Hot Springs

Jordan boasts dozens of thermal hot-water springs, where the water is usually about 35°C to 45°C. The water contains potas-

sium, magnesium and calcium, among other minerals – popular for their apparent health benefits. The most famous and popular is Hammamat Ma'in, near Madaba. Other popular spots around Jordan include Hammamat Burbita and Hammamat Afra, west of the King's Highway near Tafila; and Al-Himma springs in Mukheiba village, very close to the northern border with Israel & the Palestinian Territories. All are currently being upgraded.

Women are likely to feel more comfortable at Hammamat Ma'in, which has an area for families and unaccompanied women, and the public baths at Al-Himma – which allocates special times solely for the ladies.

Rock Climbing

Wadi Rum offers some challenging and unique rock climbing, equal to just about anything in Europe. The most accessible and popular climbs are detailed in the excellent books written by Tony Howard and Di Taylor (see opposite). Guides are necessary, and you'll need to bring your own climbing gear. See p211 for more details.

For more information see the websites www.n-o-m-a-d-s.demon.co.uk and www.wadirum.net.

Adventure Peaks (☎ 015 3943 3794; www.adventurepeaks.com; Central Buildings, Ableside, Cumbria, LA22 9BS) runs week-long climbing trips to Wadi Rum from the UK.

Running

Long-distance runners may want to combine a trip to Jordan with the annual Dead Sea Marathon (p144) or Jebel Ishrin Marathon (www.whmf.org, in German), the latter in Wadi Rum each October. Half-marathons and shorter runs are also arranged during both events.

The local branch of the Hash House Harriers ('drinkers with a running problem') organise local runs each Monday from Amman – check out www.geocities.com/hashemitehkh.

Swimming

The number of public beaches in Aqaba is slowly diminishing as they are gobbled up by upmarket hotels. The best beaches are now along the coastline south of Aqaba, but most spots have little shade and can be very busy on Fridays. The private beaches

in Aqaba are clean and available to the public for a few dinars.

Most visitors head for a float in the Dead Sea, where swimming is almost impossible because of the incredible buoyancy of the salt water. See p143 for more details.

Turkish Baths

If your muscles ache from traipsing around vast archaeological sites like Petra and Jerash and climbing up and down the jebels (hills) of Amman, consider a hammam (also known as a Turkish bath). The best places are in Wadi Musa and Amman, though there is a public hammam in Aqaba. Prices are around JD8 to JD15. At the better places you'll sweat it out in a dry- or wet-steam bath and then be scrubbed with woollen gloves, soaped with olive-oil soap, massaged and laid to rest on a hot marble platform.

Women are welcome, sometimes at separate times to men, but should make a reservation so that female attendants can be organised.

BUSINESS HOURS

Government departments, including most tourist offices, are open from about 8am to 2pm every day apart from Friday – and sometimes they also close on Saturday. Visitor centres keep longer hours. Banks are normally open from 8.30am to 3pm every day but Friday and Saturday. The opening times for post offices vary from one town to another, but tend to be from about 8am to 6pm every day except Friday, when they close about 2pm. Many sights, government departments and banks close earlier in winter.

Almost all major tourist attractions are open every day, normally during daylight hours.

Smaller shops and businesses are open every day from about 9am to 8pm, but some close for a couple of hours in the middle of the afternoon, and some do not open on Thursday afternoon and Friday. The souqs (markets) and street stalls are open every day and, in fact, Friday is often their busiest day.

CHILDREN

Taking the kids adds another dimension to a trip in Jordan, and of course it's not all fun and games. First, it's a good idea to avoid

coming in the summer because the extreme heat could really make your family journey quite unpleasant. Keeping your kids happy, well fed and clean is the main challenge.

The good news is that you'll rarely have to embark on really long journeys in Jordan, and chartering a taxi or renting a car is easy, so this shouldn't pose too great a problem.

Fresh and powdered milk is available; otherwise, stick to bottled mineral water, soft drinks or canned juices, which are plentiful. Kids already eating solids shouldn't have many problems. Cooked meat dishes, the various dips (such as hummus), rice and the occasional more or less Western-style burger or pizza, along with fruit (washed and peeled) should all be OK as a nutritional basis.

With infants, the next problem is cleanliness. It's impractical to carry more than about half a dozen washable nappies with you, but disposable ones are not so easy to come by. As for accommodation, you'll want a private bathroom and hot water.

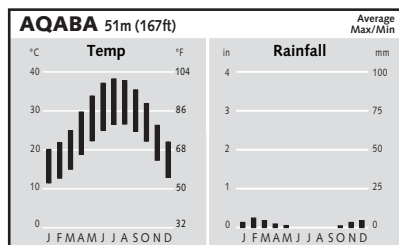
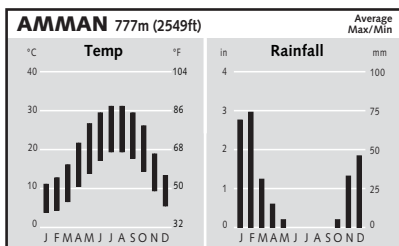
The good news is that children are as loved in Jordan as anywhere else in the Middle East. Few people bring their young ones to this part of the world, so you'll find that your kids are quite a hit. In that way they can help break the ice and open the doors to contact with local people with whom you might never have exchanged glances.

Some of the more interesting attractions for older kids will be visiting the beaches and snorkelling at Aqaba, exploring castles at Karak, Shobak and Ajlun, riding a camel at Wadi Rum or Petra, checking out the ostriches and oryx at Shaumari Wildlife Reserve, floating in the Dead Sea, beach sports and swimming pools in Aqaba and walking and enjoying picnics in a few of the nature reserves.

For more comprehensive advice about travelling with children, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* by Cathy Lanigan.

CLIMATE CHARTS

Climate in Jordan is conditioned partly by altitude, with the lowest areas such as the Jordan Valley and Gulf of Aqaba suffering from the worst summer heat and humidity. The higher central and northern areas, in



contrast, can be quite cold in winter (November to February).

COURSES

Food

For cooking courses see p60.

Language

For those taken enough by the mystery of the Arab world to want to learn something of the language, there are several possibilities, mostly in Amman (refer to the relevant chapters for full contact details of the universities and cultural centres):

British Council (☎ 06 4636147; www.britishcouncil.org.jo) Can put individuals in touch with a private tutor.

University of Jordan Language Center (☎ 06 535500, ext 3436; www.ju.edu.jo; University of Amman) Offers two-month summer courses (Jul-Aug) in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) for JD500, as well as four-month spring and autumn semesters for JD750. Tuition is 20 hours a week and there are six levels of proficiency. It's also possible to arrange evening language classes.

Yarmouk University (☎ 02 7271111; www.yu.edu.jo; Irbid) Offers 14-week spring & autumn semesters for JD1050, less for subsequent courses & an intensive 10-week summer course.

CUSTOMS

The usual goods are prohibited, eg drugs and weapons, as are 'immoral films, tapes (cassettes) and magazines' – but customs are not tough on this unless it's pornography.

Duty-free allowances for 'non-residents' (tourists) are: 200 cigarettes or 25 cigars or 200g of tobacco; two bottles of wine or one bottle of spirits; and a 'reasonable amount of perfume for personal use'.

Jordan has no restrictions on the import and export of either Jordanian or foreign currency.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Jordan is very safe to visit and travel around; remarkably so considering the turmoil, restrictions and difficulties in other nearby countries. The best general advice for all travellers is to take care – but not to be paranoid. Women who have travelled through places like Turkey will probably find that Jordan is comparatively relaxed and hassle free, but women who have not visited the region before may be annoyed at the leering and possible harassment from local men.

It is always a good idea to check the prevailing security situation before commencing your journey:

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (www.smarttraveller.gov.au)

UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (www.fc.gov.uk/travel)

US Department of State (http://travel.state.gov)

Minefields

Although the risk to travellers is very small, there are several minefields that were laid along the border with Israel & the Palestinian Territories before and during 1967. These are in the Jordan Valley (near Lake Tiberias); north of Aqaba; and in the southern Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea (they have even been known to float into the Dead Sea during flash floods). The minefields are well off the tourist trails, but if you're in these areas please take heed of warnings not to enter. It's hoped that Jordan will be mine-free by 2009.

Public Disorder

During rare political or economic crises (such as an increase in the price of staple goods or when the US invades a neighbouring country), occasional impromptu protests and acts of civil disobedience can occur. There are also frequent demonstrations in support of the Palestinians. These most often take place in Karak, Tafila and Ma'an, while the university areas of Irbid,

Mu'tah and northern Amman are sometimes volatile.

Foreigners are never targeted during these protests, but it is certainly best to avoid becoming involved. The best sources of current information are the English-language newspapers published in Amman or your embassy/consulate in Jordan.

Theft & Crime

Theft is not a real problem in Jordan, especially for people who take reasonable care. Leaving your bag under the watchful eye of a member of staff in the office of a bus station or hotel for a few hours should be no cause for concern. Shared rooms in hotels are also quite OK as a rule, but don't take unnecessary risks, and it can be a good idea to keep your luggage secured with a padlock. Be careful very late at night outside nightclubs in Amman that are patronised by intoxicated, vulnerable and comparatively wealthy foreigners.

The military keep a low profile and you'd be unlikely to experience anything but friendliness, honesty and hospitality from them, as with most Jordanians. It's generally safe to walk around day or night in Amman and other towns, but women should be a little more cautious.

Theft is not a real problem in Jordan but it's always wise to take basic precautions. Always carry your wallet (if you have one) in a front pocket, and don't have too much cash in it. The bulk of your money, travellers cheques and documents are better off in a cotton money belt worn close to the skin. It's also sensible to leave some of your money hidden as a separate stash in your luggage (eg rolled up in a pair of thick socks) in case you find yourself in deep trouble at some point.

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

In late 2000, Jordan celebrated its first ever Olympic gold medal, won by the female athlete Maha Barghouthi in the Sydney Paralympics. Jordanians are very proud of this achievement and it threw the spotlight onto people with disabilities. The benefits of this will take a long time to filter through and for now Jordan is still not a great place for disabled travellers. Although Jordanians are happy to help anyone with a disability, the cities are crowded and the traffic is chaotic, and visiting tourist attractions, such as the

vast archaeological sites of Petra and Jerash, involves lots of walking on uneven ground.

The Jordanian government recently legislated that wheelchair access must be added to all new public buildings, but nothing will ever be done to accommodate wheelchairs elsewhere. Horse-drawn carriage can be used as transport for disabled visitors part of the way into Petra. Some travellers with a disability have reported having little difficulty getting around most of Petra on a combination of donkey, horse and carriage.

The Royal Diving Club is a member of the **Access to Marine Conservation for All** (AMCA; www.amca-international.org), an initiative to enable people with disabilities to enjoy scuba diving and snorkelling.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Student discounts of 50% are available at most tourist sites, but the discounts are applied unevenly. Note that the card must be an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) and not just a university ID card.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Jordanian Embassies & Consulates

All of the following are embassies unless otherwise indicated:

Australia Canberra (☎ 02 6295 9951; www.jordan.embassy.org.au; 20 Roebuck St, Red Hill, ACT 2603)

Canada Ottawa (☎ 613 238 8090; 100 Bronson Ave, Suite 701, Ottawa, Ontario ON K1R 6G8)

Egypt Cairo (☎ 02 748 5566; fax 760 1027; 6 Al-Shaheed Basem al-Khatib, Doqqi)

France Paris (☎ 01 46 24 23 78; amb.jor@wanadoo.fr; 80 Blvd Maurice Barres, 92200 Neuilly-Seine)

Germany Berlin (☎ 030 36 99 60 0; www.jordan.embassy.de; Heerstrasse 201, 13595)

Israel Tel Aviv (☎ 03 751 7722; fax 751 7712; Rehov Abbe Hillel Silver 14, Ramat Gan suburb)

Lebanon Beirut (☎ 05 922 500; fax 922 502; Rue Elias Helou, Baabda)

Netherlands The Hague (☎ 070 416 7200; www.jordanembassy.nl; Badhuisweg 79, 2587 CD)

Syria Damascus (☎ 11 333 4642; fax 333 6741; Al-Jala'a Ave, Abu Roumana)

Turkey Ankara (☎ 0312 440 2054; fax 440 4327; Mesnie Ded Korkut Sokak 18, Çankaya); Istanbul (☎ 0212 230 1221, 241 4331; Kalipci, Sokak 119/6, Tesvikiye)

UK London (☎ 020 7937 3685, 0870-005 6952; fax 020 7937 8795; www.jordanembassyuk.org; 6 Upper Phillimore Gardens, W8 7HB)

USA New York (☎ 212 832 0119; 866 Second Ave, 4th fl,

NY 10017; Washington (☎ 202 966 2664; www.jordan.embassyus.org; 3504 International Drive NW, DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in Jordan

The following embassies and consulates are in Amman (☎ 06). Egypt also has a consulate in Aqaba (see p251 for visas to surrounding countries). In general, the offices are open 9am to 11am Sunday to Thursday for visa applications and again 1pm to 3pm for collecting visas. (Note: At the time of writing the Australian, Canadian and UK embassies were closed temporarily due to security threats.

Australia (Map p65; ☎ 5807000; www.jordan.embassy.gov.au; 3 Youssef Abu Shahhouth, Deir Ghbar)

Egypt Embassy (Map p68; ☎ 5605175; fax 5604082; 22 Qortubah St; ☎ 9am-noon Sun-Thu) Single/multiple entry visa costs JD15/19, bring a photo; pick up your visa around 3pm the same afternoon. Located between 4th and 5th circles. Consulate (Map p216; ☎ 03 2016171; cnr Al-Isteglal & Al-Akhatal Sts, Aqaba; ☎ 8am-3pm Sun-Thu).

France (Map p68; ☎ 4641273; www.ambafrance-jo.org; Al-Mutanabbi St, Jebel Amman)

Germany (Map p68; ☎ 5930367; fax 5685887; 31 Bin Ghazi St, Jebel Amman) Between 4th and 5th circles.

Iraq (Map p68; ☎ 4623175; fax 4619172; Al-Kulliyah al-Islamiyah St, Jebel Amman) Located near the 1st circle.

Israel Consulate (Map p85; ☎ 5524686; Maysaloon St, Shmeisani)

Lebanon (Map p68; ☎ 5922911; fax 5929113; Al-Neel St, Abdoun) Near the UK embassy.

Netherlands (Map p68; ☎ 5902200; www.netherlandsembassy.com.jo; 22 Ibrahim Ayoub St) Located near the 4th circle.

New Zealand Consulate (Map p82; ☎ 4636720; fax 4634349; 99 Al-Malek al-Hussein St, downtown) Located on the 4th floor of the Khalas building.

Saudi Arabia Consulate (Map p68; ☎ 5920154; fax 5921154; 1st Circle, Jebel Amman)

Syria (Map p68; ☎ 5920648, 5920684; Al-Salloum St, Jebel Amman) Located near the 4th circle.

UK (Map p68; ☎ 5909200; www.britain.org.jo; Dimashq St, Wadi Abdoun, Abdoun)

USA (Map p65; ☎ 5920101; http://usembassy-amman.org.jo; 20 Al-Umawiyeen St, Abdoun)

Yemen (Map p68; ☎ 5923771; Al-Ameer Hashem bin al-Hussein St, Abdoun Circle)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Jordan's best-known cultural event is the Jerash Festival (p113). In summer, traditional concerts and plays are held at the Odeon and Roman Theatre in Amman, as well as in the towns of Salt and Fuheis.

FOOD

In this guide we generally order restaurants by budget, starting with the cheapest. Expect to pay JD1 to JD3 for a budget meal of roast chicken, around JD3 to JD6 for a main dish in a midrange place and anywhere from JD8 upwards for a meal in a top-end restaurant. See p55.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

There is some confusion over the legal status of homosexuality in Jordan. Most sources state that gay sex is not illegal and that the age of consent for both heterosexuals and homosexuals is 16.

There is a subdued underground gay scene in Amman, so if you're keen to explore it, make very discreet enquiries. Public displays of affection by heterosexuals are frowned upon, and the same rules apply to gays and lesbians, although two men or women holding hands is a normal sign of friendship.

A few places in Amman are gay-friendly, such as the multipurpose Books@café (p93), or Abdoun's trendy cafés, such as the Blue Fig Café (p92 and p96), which pulls in a young, mixed, but discreet gay and straight crowd. Other suggested meeting places are the Roman Theatre/Hashemite Square, the top-end hotel bars in Amman and the Corniche in Aqaba.

Possible further sources of information include www.gaymiddleeast.com and the Gay and Lesbian thread of Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree bulletin board (www.lonelyplanet.com).

HOLIDAYS

As the Islamic Hejira calendar is 11 days shorter than the Gregorian calendar, each year Islamic holidays fall 11 days earlier than the previous year. The precise dates are only fixed a short time beforehand because they depend upon the sighting of the moon.

Public Holidays

During the public holidays listed below, most government offices and banks will close. Most shops, moneychangers and restaurants will remain open, and public transport will still function normally on most public holidays, although most shops will close during Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha.

Try to avoid any archaeological site, nature reserve or park on a public holiday or Friday, as they are often swamped by enormous groups of excitable kids on a school outing.

New Year's Day 1 January

King Abdullah's Birthday 30 January

Arab League Day 22 March

Good Friday March/April

Labour Day 1 May

Independence Day 25 May

Army Day & Anniversary of the Great Arab Revolt 10 June

King Hussein's Birthday 14 November

Christmas Day 25 December

The main Islamic holidays are listed below. See the Table of Islamic Holidays for equivalent dates in the Western calendar:

Islamic New Year First Day of Muharram.

Prophet's Birthday Celebrated on 12 Rabi' al-Awal.

Eid al-Isra Wal Mi'raj Another feast which celebrates the nocturnal visit of the Prophet Mohammed to heaven.

Ramadan Ninth month of the Muslim Calendar, see p244.

Eid al-Fitr Also known as Eid as-Sagheer (small feast), starts at the beginning of Shawwal to mark the end of fasting in the preceding month of Ramadan.

Eid al-Adha This is the commemoration of Allah sparing Ibrahim (Abraham in the Bible) from sacrificing his son, Isaac. It also marks the end of the Haj. Every year about 350,000 sheep are sacrificed throughout the Muslim world at this time.

The 'big feast' of **Eid al-Kabir** is not a holiday but it is when Muslims make the haj (pilgrimage to Mecca). Accommodation in

TABLE OF ISLAMIC HOLIDAYS

Hejira Year	New Year	Prophet's Birthday	Ramadan Begins	Eid al-Fitr	Eid al-Adha
1427	31.01.06	11.04.06	24.09.06	24.10.06	31.12.06
1428	20.01.07	31.03.07	13.09.07	13.10.07	20.12.07
1429	10.01.08	20.03.08	01.09.08	01.10.08	08.12.08
1430	29.12.08	09.03.09	22.08.09	20.09.09	27.11.09
1431	18.12.09	26.02.10	11.08.10	10.09.10	16.11.10

Aqaba can be in short supply and the ferry between Aqaba and Nuweiba is much busier just before and after these dates. This period lasts from 10 to 13 Zuul-Hijja.

Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, when Muslims fast during daylight hours to fulfil the fourth pillar of Islam (see p39). During this month, pious Muslims will not allow anything to pass their lips in daylight hours. One is even supposed to avoid swallowing saliva.

Although many Muslims in Jordan do not follow the injunctions to the letter, most conform to some extent. Foreigners are not expected to follow suit, but it's generally impolite to smoke, drink or eat in public during Ramadan (see p58).

Business hours during Ramadan are more erratic and it can be difficult dealing with anyone during the day who's hungry, thirsty or, worse, craving a cigarette.

Ramadan can be inconvenient at times for visitors, but all tourist attractions remain open and public transport generally functions normally. Hotel restaurants will be open, as will tourist-oriented restaurants.

INSURANCE

A travel insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is a good idea, but check the small print before you hand over the cash. Check that the policy covers ambulance fees and emergency flights home.

Some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities', which can include scuba diving, motorcycling and even trekking. You should have insurance if you plan to dive in Aqaba – decompression chamber treatment can cost JD14,000!

You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than making you pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made. See also p271.

INTERNET ACCESS

Jordan is now truly part of the cyber community, and boasts numerous Internet Service Providers (ISPs), including **Cyberia** (www.cyberia.jo).

Almost every town in Jordan has at least one public Internet centre. The most competitive rates, and the highest number of Internet centres, are found outside major universities such as Yarmouk University (Irbid) and the University of Jordan in northern Amman. Costs range from about 750 fils per hour to JD2 per hour. You'll generally pay a minimum of an hour, even if you were actually online for less.

If you have a laptop it's possible to connect to the Internet from top-end and a few midrange hotels that have direct-dial phones. **AOL** (☎ 06 5606241; www.aol.com) offers a local Internet access number as part of its global roaming services.

The easiest way to collect mail through Internet centres is to open a web-based account such as **Hotmail** (www.hotmail.com) or **Yahoo! Mail** (mail.yahoo.com). Most places are also set up for the various online chat services, such as MSN Messenger.

LEGAL MATTERS

The Jordanian legal system is something of a hybrid. Civil and commercial law is governed by a series of courts working with a mixture of inherited British-style common law and the French code. Religious and family matters are generally covered by Islamic Sharia courts, or ecclesiastic equivalents for non-Muslims.

Foreigners would be unlucky to get caught up in the machinations of Jordanian justice. Penalties for drug use of any kind are stiff and apply to foreigners and locals alike. Criticising the king can bring a jail term of up to three years! Traffic police generally treat foreign drivers with a degree of good-natured indulgence, so long as there are no major traffic laws broken. However, excessive speeding, drunk driving and not wearing a seat belt will land you in trouble. If you do get into strife, there is little your embassy can do for you but contact your relatives and recommend local lawyers.

MAPS

For most visitors the maps in this guidebook will be more than sufficient but, if you're doing some hiking or intensive exploration, a detailed map of Jordan is a good idea.

The Jordan Tourism Board's free *Map of Jordan* is worth getting hold of. The Royal

Geographic Centre of Jordan publishes a series of decent maps, including a good hiking map of Petra.

Several detailed maps should be available in your own country: ITMB's good 1:700,000 map of *Jordan* is probably the easiest map to find; Bartholomew's *Israel with Jordan* is OK, but it includes Israel & the Palestinian Territories at the expense of eastern Jordan; *Jordan* by Kümmerly and Frey is good, and probably the best if you're driving around Jordan; and the third edition of GEO Project's *Jordan* (1:730,000) also includes an excellent map of Amman.

MONEY

The currency in Jordan is the dinar (JD) – it's known as the *jay-dee* among hip young locals – which is made up of 1000 fils. You will sometimes hear *piastre* or *qirsh*, which are both 10 fils (10 qirsh equals 100 fils). Often when a price is quoted the unit will be omitted, so if you're told that something is 25, it's a matter of working out whether it's 25 fils, 25 piastre or 25 dinars! Although it sounds confusing, most Jordanians wouldn't dream of ripping off a foreigner.

Coins are 10, 25, 50, 100, 250 and 500 fils, and one dinar. Notes come in denominations of JD1, 5, 10, 20 and 50. Try to change larger notes as often as possible at larger restaurants and when paying your hotel bill.

Changing money is very easy in Jordan, and most major currencies are accepted in cash and travellers cheques. US dollars are the most accepted, followed by UK pounds and euros; you'll get nowhere with Australian or New Zealand dollars.

There are no restrictions on bringing dinars into Jordan. It's possible to change dinars back into some foreign currencies in Jordan, but you'll need to show receipts to prove that you changed your currency into dinars at a bank in Jordan.

Syrian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Israeli and Iraqi currency can all be changed in Amman, usually at reasonable rates, though you may have to shop around. Egyptian and Israeli currency are also easily changed in Aqaba. It's a good idea to talk to travellers arriving from across the border you're about to cross; you can find out the in-country rates, so you know how much to change.

Banks seem to offer slightly better rates than moneychangers for cash, but the dif-

ference is not worth worrying about unless you're going to change a huge amount. Most large hotels will change money (sometimes for guests only) but rates are always lower than those offered by the banks and moneychangers. There are small branches of major banks at the borders and at the airports.

Some of the banks are fussy about the older US dollar notes, and possibly may not even accept them.

ATMS

It is possible to survive in Jordan almost entirely on cash advances, and ATMs abound in all but the smaller towns. This is certainly the easiest way to travel if you remember your PIN.

There are no local charges on credit card cash advances but the maximum daily withdrawal amount is around JD500, depending on your particular card. All banks have large signs (in English) outside indicating which credit cards they accept.

Visa is the most widely accepted card for cash advances and using ATMs, followed by MasterCard. Other cards, such as Cirrus and Plus, are also accepted by many ATMs (eg Jordan National Bank and HSBC).

If an ATM swallows your card call ☎ 06 5669123 (Amman). Emergency numbers to contact in Amman if you lose your credit card:

American Express (☎ 06 5607014)

Diners Club (☎ 06 5675850)

MasterCard (☎ 06 4655863).

Visa (☎ 06 5680554)

Credit Cards

Most major credit cards are accepted at top-end hotels and restaurants, travel agencies, larger souvenir shops and bookshops. However, always be sure to ask if any commission is being added on top of your purchase price. This can sometimes be as much as 5%; if so, it may be better to get a cash advance and pay with the paper stuff.

International Transfers

Some major banks (such as the Arab Bank and Jordan National Bank) can arrange the international transfer of money. The Cairo-Amman Bank is part of the international service offered by **Western Union** (www.westernunion.com). **MoneyGram** (www.moneygram.com) has

agreements with several banks. Fees are high with both, so obtaining a cash advance with a credit card might be a better bet.

Moneychangers

Generally, moneychangers offer slightly lower rates than banks for cash. In theory, they do not charge commission on travellers cheques but in practice many do, so shop around. Moneychanger offices are smaller and easier to use than banks, and are generally open daily until around 9pm. Always check the rates at banks or in the English-language newspapers before changing money.

Tax

Jordan has a sales tax of 16% but this is generally only added to midrange and top-end restaurants. Midrange and top-end restaurants and hotels may also add on an additional 10% service charge. The sales tax on hotel rooms has been lowered to 7% in an effort to bolster tourism, but this figure could change at any time. The Aqaba special economic zone has a sales tax of only 5% and many Jordanians head there on shopping sprees to take advantage of the lower consumer prices.

See p248 for information on tax rebates for tourists.

Tipping

Tips of 10% are generally expected in better restaurants. Elsewhere, rounding up the bill to the nearest 250 fils or with loose change is appreciated by underpaid staff, including taxi drivers. Hotels and restaurants in the midrange and, especially, top-end categories generally add on an automatic 10% service charge.

Travellers Cheques

Most flavours of travellers cheques are accepted, with the most recognised being American Express (Amex). Always check the commission before changing.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Airport Security

All airports in Jordan have X-ray machines for checking luggage. Despite assurances that the machines are safe for camera film, it's best to keep your unexposed film in a clear Ziploc bag so it can be easily removed

for hand inspection. Don't ever put film in your check-in luggage.

Film & Equipment

Most Western brands of print film are available throughout Jordan at prices comparable with the West. Prices at tourist sights (especially Petra) are marked-up, as you'd expect. A roll of print film costs around JD3 for 36 shots, plus a similar amount to develop it.

A decent price for 100 ASA Elitechrome (36 shots) is JD5.500, but slide film is getting increasingly hard to find due to the rise of digital formats. There's currently only one place in Jordan that develops slide film and it's expensive, so wait until you get home.

Digital accessories and memory cards are widely available, though they are pricier than abroad (a 256MB memory stick/compact flash costs JD61/40). Many camera shops can burn photos onto a CD and print digital pictures.

Blank video cassettes are available in major towns in Jordan (from JD3.500 up to JD12 for digital).

Photographing People

If you take pictures of anything suggesting any degree of squalor, even the activity of the marketplace, it can offend some people's sense of pride, although hostility is rare.

A zoom lens is great for taking people shots, usually without being noticed. Some Jordanians, women in particular, object to being photographed, so ask first. Persisting in your snapping if unwelcome can lead to ugly scenes, so exercise caution and common sense. Children will generally line up to be photographed.

Restrictions

Photography in military zones such as 'strategic areas' like bridges and public buildings is forbidden. Take particular care out in the Eastern Desert as there are several sensitive military sites not far from the desert castles.

Technical Tips

The single biggest factor to take into account is light. Taking pictures in the middle of the day will almost guarantee a glary, washed-out shot. The strong contrasts of light and shade are particularly hard for your camera

to deal with. Where possible, try to exploit the softer light of the early morning and late afternoon, which enhances subtleties in colour and eliminates problems of glare. If you do need to take shots in bright light use a lens filter. As a rule, 100 ASA film is what you'll need most.

If you want your camera to continue working for your next trip make absolutely sure you don't get sand in it. A large Ziploc plastic bag and a lens brush will help keep your camera clean.

POST

Postal Rates

Normal-sized letters and postcards cost 325 fils to the Middle East, 475 fils to the UK and Europe and 625 fils to the USA and Australia.

Parcel post is ridiculously expensive, so Jordan is not the best place from which to send souvenirs home. To send anything by air to Australia, for example, the first 1kg costs JD11.600, and JD6.200 for each subsequent 1kg. To the UK and Europe, the first 1kg is JD12.350 and then JD3.400 per extra 1kg; and to the USA and Canada, it costs JD12.800, then JD7 per extra 1kg.

Amman is the best place to send parcels – see p69 for more information.

Sending Mail

Stamps are available from all post offices, and most souvenir shops where postcards are sold. Postcards and normal-sized letters can be dropped in any of the post boxes around most towns. Letters posted from Jordan take up to two weeks to reach Australia and the USA, but often as little as three or four days to the UK and Europe. Every town has a post office, but you're well advised to send things from major places like Amman, Madaba, Karak, Wadi Musa (near Petra) and Aqaba.

Of the international courier companies, **FedEx** (www.fedex.com.jo) has an office in Amman, and **DHL** (www.dhl.com) has offices in Amman and Aqaba. They are reliable but expensive (half a kilo costs around JD50 to most countries, although the per kilo rate decreases dramatically the more you send). There are also a few home-grown versions.

SHOPPING

Jordan has an interesting selection of crafts and souvenirs, though prices reflect the

generally high quality. Amman is the best place to shop for souvenirs, with everything from unimaginable tourist kitsch to superb and high-quality handicraft boutiques on offer.

Bargaining

As in most countries in the region, many prices are negotiable, except public transport, food in grocery shops and restaurants. Bargaining, especially when souvenir hunting, is essential, but shopkeepers are less likely than their Syrian and Egyptian counterparts to shift a long way from their original asking prices.

Carpets, Kilims & Embroidery

While it's still possible to stumble across an aged handmade 'Persian rug' from Iran, chances are it was knocked together in an attic above the shop. This is not to say that the carpets are lousy, but it's worth taking a close look at quality. Inspect both sides of the carpet to see how close and strong the knots or weaving are.

Designs generally tend to consist of geometric patterns, although increasingly the tourist market is being catered to with depictions of monuments, animals and the like. Rugs and tapestries made by Bedouin and Palestinian women are popular, but you need to look carefully to make sure that they are actually handmade. Madaba is famous for its traditional rugs.

Palestinian embroidery is particularly striking, usually employing red thread on a black background.

Copper & Brassware

From Morocco to Baghdad, you'll find much the same sorts of brass and chased copper objects for sale. The good thing about this stuff is that it's fairly hard to cheat on quality, but check for leaks before buying anything you actually wish to use. Popular items include large decorative trays and tabletops, Arabic coffeepots and complete coffee sets with small cups.

Duty Free

There are duty-free shops at Queen Alia International Airport and next to the Century Park Hotel in Amman (p98), plus small ones at the three border crossings with Israel & the Palestinian Territories.

Most upmarket shops offer tax rebates, meaning that if you spend over JD50, keep your receipts, fill out a tax rebate form and leave the country within 90 days, you can get the 16% tax refunded to you at a booth at the airport, just before check-in.

Export Restrictions

Exporting anything more than 100 years old is illegal, so don't buy any souvenir that is deemed by the salesman to be 'antique' – if only because it probably isn't. You may be offered 'ancient' coins around some of the archaeological sites. These may be genuine, but buying them – and taking them home – is highly illegal. If you're unsure about what is an 'antique', contact the **Customs Department** (☎ 06 4623186) in Amman.

Gold, Silver & Jewellery

Gold shops are scattered all over the bigger cities of Jordan, including downtown Amman's glittering gold souq. As a rule, gold is sold by weight, and all pieces should have a hallmark guaranteeing quality. Verifying all this is difficult, however, so the best advice is to buy items you're happy with even if you find out at home that the gold content is not as high as you were told by that nice salesman.

Silver is the most common material used by Bedouin women to make up their striking pieces of jewellery, such as earrings, necklaces and pendants laden with semi-precious stones. Silver is not only used in women's jewellery, but to make carry cases for miniature Qurans and other objects.

Take most of the talk about 'antique jewellery' with a shaker full of salt, and remember customs regulations about antiques (see above).

Handicrafts

Several chains of shops around Jordan sell high-quality handicrafts and souvenirs made by Jordanians, mostly women. Profits from the sale of all items go to local NGOs that aim to develop the status of women, provide income generation for marginalised families, nurture young artists or protect the local environment.

Products from these small-scale initiatives include silver jewellery from Wadi Musa; handmade paper products from Iraq al-Amir, Aqaba and Jerash; ceramics from

Salt; painted ostrich eggs from Shaumari; weavings from Iraq al-Amir; and traditional clothing from across Jordan. Most also produce a wide range of stylish home decor items aimed at the foreign market, including cushions, tablecloths and wall hangings.

Bani Hamida Weaving cooperative with a store in Amman. See p163.

Jordan River Foundation (www.jordanriver.jo; p98) Profits go to support the foundation, which aims to preserve traditional communities of the Jordan River Valley and Wadi al-Rayan. The main shop is located in Amman.

Noor Al-Hussein Foundation (www.noor.gov.jo/nhf.htm) This centre helps preserve traditional handicraft skills and supports vulnerable women's communities. Products are sold in shops throughout Jordan, including Aqaba (p225), though direct sales have been scaled back in recent years.

Wild Jordan (p99) Proceeds from the gift shops go to the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature's environmental programmes and to local communities. RSCN shops can be found in Amman, Azraq, Dana and Wadi Rum.

Other places that have an excellent range of ethically produced handicrafts include **Haret Jdoudna** in Madaba (p157) and **Made in Jordan** in Wadi Musa/Petra (p199).

Other Souvenirs

The ubiquitous nargileh water pipes are about the most vivid reminder possible of a visit to Jordan. Remember to buy a supply of charcoal to get you going if you intend to use the thing when you return home – a couple of spare tubes would not go astray either. This would have to be about the most awkward souvenir to cart around, however, or post home – and the chances of it surviving either way are not good.

Another simple souvenir that is much easier to carry around is the traditional Arab headcloth, or keffiyeh, and *agal* (the black cord used to keep it on your head), so characteristic of the region. The quality of keffiyehs does vary considerably. The elegant flowing ankle-length Bedouin robe known as a *jalabiyya* is available at shops all over Jordan.

A few stalls in downtown Amman sell either ouds (Arabic lutes) or *darbukkas*, the standard Middle Eastern-style drums. The latter can go quite cheaply, and even the ouds are hardly expensive. Such an item's musical value must be considered unlikely to be high – it's the kind of thing you'd buy more to display than to play.

Other souvenirs include bottles of olive oil (the best are produced by Jordan Treasure), miniature reproduction mosaics from Madaba and Hebron-style glassware from the town of Naur (outside Amman). Jordan's shopping capital of kitsch is Wadi Musa, which overflows with t-shirts, Petra reproductions and those ubiquitous bottles of coloured sand, carefully created through tiny funnels in several shops in town.

Woodwork

Also popular with foreigners are woodwork items, ranging from simple jewellery boxes to elaborate chess sets and backgammon boards. Better-quality stuff tends to be made of walnut and inlaid with mother-of-pearl. If the mother-of-pearl gives off a strong rainbow-colour effect, you can be almost sure it's the real McCoy. The actual woodwork on many of these items tends to be a little shoddy, even on better-quality items, so inspect the joints and inlay carefully.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

There's not much of a backpacker scene in Jordan, except in Wadi Musa and, to a small extent, Amman. The tours run by the budget hotels in Amman are one of the best ways to share travel expenses and meet other travellers.

When choosing a room bear in mind that single rooms are generally much smaller than doubles, so always try to negotiate a double room for a single price.

TELEPHONE

The telephone system in Jordan has recently been privatised, and there are no longer any public telephone offices to make calls from, so visitors must either use a private telephone agency, call from a hotel or shop, or buy a telephone card for one of the 1000 or more pay phones throughout Jordan.

The local telephone system is quite reliable. Local calls cost around 100 fils for three minutes and the easiest place to make a call is your hotel, where local calls are often free. Otherwise, most shopkeepers and private telephone agencies will make their telephones available for about 250 fils.

The cost of overseas calls from Jordan varies wildly. The cheapest places are the private telecommunication agencies, where calls are placed through computers or, more likely,

a mobile phone. Rates at these centres are between 150 fils and 500 fils per minute. Always check the rate beforehand.

Overseas calls can be made at any card pay-phone or from hotels but will be substantially more expensive. It's best to call overseas and then get the recipient to ring you back at your hotel. Reverse-charge telephone calls are normally not possible.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones in Jordan use the GSM system. Mobile telephones can be rented from companies such as **Mobilcom** (☎ 5857777; www.mobile.com.jo; code 077) or **Fastlink** (☎ 06 5823111; www.fastlink.com.jo; code 079), which offer a full range of plans and pre-paid cards. Rates for signing up can start at JD60 including 20 minutes mobile-to-mobile time or 50 minutes mobile-to-land time. If you have your own phone and purchase a local SIM card, expect to pay around JD25 to get started. Both companies offer pay-as-you-go services.

Per minute mobile charges are around JD1.400 for international, 120 fils around the country, or 200 fils to 280 fils to neighbouring countries.

TIME

Jordan is two hours ahead of GMT/UTC in winter and three hours ahead between 1 April and 1 October, when daylight savings time is introduced. Note that Jordan's daylight savings time is slightly out of sync with summer clock changes in Europe. There are no time differences within Jordan.

Jordan is on the same time zone as Israel & the Palestinian Territories, Syria and Egypt: see the World Times zones map on p290.

TOILETS

Most hotels and restaurants, except those in the budget category, now have Western-style toilets. Otherwise, you'll be using the local Arab (squat) variety, which are generally flushed by pouring a jug of water down them.

Toilet paper is rarely offered, except in the midrange and top-end hotels and restaurants, but is widely available in shops throughout Jordan. Always carry an emergency stash with you. Remember that the little basket which is usually provided in the toilet is for toilet paper; use it or the toilet's

contents will return to you as an overflow on the floor.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Local Tourist Offices

Jordan has a network of good tourism offices and, increasingly, visitor centres. The main tourist office in Amman is located on the ground floor of the **Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities** (www.tourism.jo) in Jebel Amman (see p70). Tourist visitor centres are located at Madaba, Aqaba, Karak, Jerash, Petra, Qasr Amra and Wadi Rum, with more to come.

The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) publishes an array of excellent brochures in most languages. Pick one up from a JTB office overseas or from any tourist office in Jordan.

Tourist Offices Abroad

You can get most information from the website of the **Jordan Tourism Board** (www.see-jordan.com). The following offices will send you a package of brochures and maps if you contact them in advance:

France (☎ 01 55 60 94 46; gsv@artide.com; 122 rue Paris, 92100 Boulogne-Billancourt, Paris)

Germany (☎ 069 9231 8870; jordan@adam-partner.de; Weser Strasse 4 60329 Frankfurt)

UK (☎ 020 7371 6496; brochure hotline 0870 7706933; info@jordantourismboard.co.uk; 115 Hammersmith Rd, London, W14 0QH)

USA (☎ 1 877 733 5673, 703 2437404; www.seejordan.org; Suite 102, 6867 Elm St, McLean, VA 22101)

VISAS

Visas are required by all foreigners entering Jordan. These are issued with a minimum of fuss at the border or airport on arrival (JD10). Note that visas are not issued at the King Hussein Bridge if you plan to enter from Israel & the Palestinian Territories. At the airport immigration counters, join the normal immigration lines to get your visa. There are moneychangers adjacent to the counters; ATMs are only available after immigration.

Tourist visas are valid for three months (ie you must enter the country within three months of the date of issue) for stays of up to one month from the date of entry, but can be easily extended for stays of up to three months (see p70).

Visas can also be obtained from Jordanian consulates or embassies outside the country.

The cost is usually around JD14/28 for a single/multiple entry visa. They are issued within 24 hours and two photos are required. In the Middle East, visas are available from Jordanian embassies in Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Israel & the Palestinian Territories (avoid this if you wish to travel elsewhere in the region), Egypt, Iraq, Yemen and the Gulf States. See p242 for the location of other Jordanian diplomatic missions.

The only reason to apply for a visa from a Jordanian consulate or embassy is if you wish to obtain a multiple-entry visa, as these are not issued at the border, or if you plan to arrive via the King Hussein Bridge.

One exception worth knowing about is that if you arrive in Aqaba by sea from Nuweiba in Egypt (and presumably also by land from Eilat) your visa should be free because Aqaba has been designated as the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Area (ASEZA) set up for free trade. If you plan to stay in Jordan for more than two weeks you have to register with the ASEZA office in Aqaba (rather than the police station). It's also theoretically possible to enter through another border crossing and ask for a special 'Aqaba visa'. Your visa should then be free but you must go straight to Aqaba and register with ASEZA within 48 hours of your arrival in Jordan. Failure to do this will incur the JD10 visa fee and a fine of JD1.500 per day.

If you will be in Jordan for less than 24 hours en route to a third country you can request a free-of-charge transit visa. This also exempts you from the JD5 departure tax but you must leave Jordan within 24 hours of arrival.

Visa Extensions

A single-entry visa is valid for one month after arrival in Jordan (it used to be two weeks but this changed in June 2005 – check what is written on your visa), after which time you need to register at a police station in order to get the full three months of your visa. Failure to do so will result in a fine of at least JD1.500 per day for every day you have overstayed.

One visa extension of two or three months is easy to obtain, and often in less than 30 minutes. Extensions are technically possible in major provincial capitals such as Aqaba, Irbid and Karak, but are best done in Amman (see above). An extension costs

nothing, and no photos are needed. After a stay of three months you may require an HIV test (JD20), though some travellers report that this is sometimes required after only one month. The maximum stay allowed is six months.

If you want another extension, wish to reside in Jordan, or there is something unusual about your visa (eg a curious number of Israeli stamps), you may be sent to the **Directorate of Residency & Borders** (Map p85 ☎ 5623348; Majed al-Iwdans St, Shmeisani, Amman; ☎ 8am-3pm

GETTING OTHER VISAS IN JORDAN

Jordan is generally not a good place to get visas for neighbouring countries other than Egypt. For addresses of embassies and consulates, see p242.

Egypt

Most nationalities are issued a visa on arrival in Egypt, including at Cairo airport and at Nuweiba for those arriving by ferry from Aqaba (the Egyptians demand payment in US dollars); however, it's important to request a visa that is valid for all of Egypt – not just the Sinai peninsula (ie as far as Sharm el-Sheikh).

The easiest place to obtain an Egyptian visa (up to three months duration) is from the consulate in Aqaba, where you'll need one passport photo, one to two hours and JD12/15 for a single-/multiple-entry tourist visa. The relatively chaotic Egyptian embassy in Amman charges a little more and issues visas the same day.

Iraq

Travel to Iraq is not advised at present. Visa applications take two to three weeks to get approval from the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad.

Israel & the Palestinian Territories

Staff at the heavily fortified Israeli embassy actively discourage visa applications as visas are available at most border crossings and many nationalities do not require them. At the King Hussein Bridge three-month Israeli visas are available, while visas of just one month's duration are available at Sheikh Hussein Bridge and the Wadi Araba/Rabin crossing.

Lebanon

Lebanese visas are readily available at Lebanese entry points but not at the Lebanon embassy in Amman. Remember that, if you are travelling to Lebanon via Syria, you will need to obtain your Syrian visa *before* you arrive in Jordan.

Saudi Arabia

The only visas currently issued to tourists seem to be transit visas, which sometimes allow you to travel along the Tapline (Trans-Arabia Pipeline) in three days, but sometimes only let you fly in and out, and spend a day in Riyadh.

Syria

If you intend to travel to Syria, make sure you have a Syrian visa before you arrive in Jordan. Only foreign residents in Jordan (ie expatriate workers and diplomats) and residents of a country without Syrian representation can be issued a Syrian visa at the embassy in Amman. Some readers have received a Syrian visa after obtaining a letter of recommendation (in Arabic) from their embassy in Amman, but this is definitely more the exception than the rule and should not be counted on.

Visas are theoretically available at the Syria/Jordan border if there is no Syrian representation in your country of residence.

You will be refused a Syrian visa, and entry to Syria, if there is any indication in your passport of entry to Israel & the Palestinian Territories.

Sun-Thu, 8am-1pm Sat) for further checking and paperwork. Take service taxi 6 or 7 to Shmeisani from downtown, from where it's a 15-minute walk. The office is next to the Shmeisani central police station (*markaz mudiret ash-shurtia*; مركز مديرية الشرطة).

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

As a woman travelling alone around Jordan for three weeks, I have found the people only helpful, hospitable and friendly.

K Millar, UK

Attitudes Towards Women

Attitudes to foreign women in Jordan can be trying to say the least. The reasons for this are complex and, of course, it would be foolish to lump everyone together into the same category. These largely Muslim societies are, by contemporary Western standards, quite conservative when it comes to sex and women, and most men have little or no contact with either before marriage – you'll soon discover that your marital status (whether you're male or female) is a source of considerable interest to pretty much anyone you meet. 'Are you married?' usually figures among the first five standard questions locals put to foreigners.

Western movies and TV also convince some men in these countries that all foreign women are promiscuous and will jump into bed at the drop of a hat.

Precautions

There will probably be times when you have male company that you could well live without. This may go no further than irritating banter or proposals of marriage and declarations of undying love. Harassment can also take the form of leering, sometimes being followed and occasionally being touched up.

You cannot make this problem go away and, where possible, you should try to ignore it or you'll end up letting a few sad individuals spoil your whole trip. Plenty of women travel through Jordan, often alone, and never encounter serious problems, so please do not become paranoid.

The first rule of thumb is to respect standard Muslim sensibilities about dress – immodest dress is still the major source of irritation to locals. Aim for knee-length dresses or loose pants and cover the shoul-

ders and upper arms. Some women go to the extent of covering their head as well, though this is not really necessary in Jordan. Bear in mind that smaller towns tend to be more conservative than big cities like Amman, and smaller towns are generally more relaxed than tiny villages in the countryside. In the trendy districts of Amman such as Abdoun and Shmeisani you'll feel comfortable dressing as you would at home.

Female travellers have reported varying degrees of harassment from local lads on the public beaches in and near Aqaba. Bikinis are permitted on the private beaches run by the hotels and diving centres (where harassment is also possible), but elsewhere in Aqaba, and along the Dead Sea (except at the upmarket hotels), dress conservatively – ie baggy shorts and loose tops, even when swimming. Never go topless.

Some women also find it's not worth summoning up the energy to acknowledge, for example, being brushed up against but some behaviour may well warrant a good public scene, emphasising the shame and dishonour involved. You'll be surprised how quickly bystanders will take matters into hand if they feel one of their own has overstepped the mark. If you have to say something to ward off an advance, *imshi* (clear off) should do the trick.

In theory, the chances of getting harassed are greater in budget hotels where there are fewer controls on who comes and goes.

Lastly, some advice for single female travellers from single female readers:

- don't go to any bar unaccompanied
- avoid eye contact with any man you don't know – wearing dark glasses can help
- a wedding ring will add to your respectability in Arab eyes, even if you're not married; a photo of your children/husband (real or fake) will clinch it
- don't sit in the front seat of a chartered private or service taxi
- on public transport do sit next to a woman if possible
- don't go outside with wet hair, as this apparently implies that you've had sex recently!
- don't venture alone to remote regions of large archaeological sites such as Petra – including Siq Al-Barid (Little Petra) – and Jerash

- always check for peep holes in rooms and bathrooms (particularly cigarette holes in curtains)
- always place a chair against your locked hotel room door in case of 'accidental' late-night intrusions
- Be particularly circumspect about declarations of undying love from Jordanian guides, even (and especially) the handsome ones!

If you suffer any harassment go to a police station, or tourist police booth, which can be found at most tourist sights. The tourist police in Jordan take reports seriously. Should the need arise, do not hesitate to call the nationwide **Halla Line/tourism complaints number** (☎ 80022228) especially for tourists, and is staffed by English-speaking police officers.

Most toiletries are easily found in Jordan, though tampons are not always readily available. You should bring your own contraceptives and any special medications.

Restaurants, Bars & Coffeeshouses

Some activities, such as sitting in coffeeshouses, are usually seen as a male preserve and, although it's quite OK for Western women to enter, in some places the stares may make you feel uncomfortable.

A few restaurants have a 'family section' where local and foreign women, unaccompanied by men, can eat in peace. In some of the local bars and coffeeshouses there is only one toilet, so try to avoid using these (same advice goes for male travellers!). Midrange bars and cafés in Amman almost always welcome women – see the Amman chapter, p95.

WORK

Working in Jordan is not really an option for most foreigners passing through, but it is possible for anyone with the right qualifications or interests who has done some planning before leaving home. Your employer in Jordan should be able to deal with the bureaucratic requirements of working permits.

Diving

If you are a qualified diving instructor, you may be able to get some work at one of the diving centres in Aqaba, particularly during the peak season (about September to March). Dive Aqaba takes a limited number of interns. See p229 for contact details.

Language Teaching

Teaching English is the most obvious avenue of work for travellers. One of the top schools in Amman is run by the **British Council** (☎ 06 4636147; www.britishcouncil.org.jo). The minimum requirements for teaching are the RSA Preparatory Certificate (the Diploma is generally preferred) or equivalent and two years' work experience. Most of the recruiting for teaching roles is done from the UK. For details contact their **head office** (☎ 020 7930 8466; www.britishcouncil.org; 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN) before coming to Jordan. If you are already in Jordan, casual vacancies occasionally arise so it can be worth dropping off your CV, addressed to the Teaching Centre Manager.

The **American Language Center** (☎ 06 5523901; www.alc.edu.jo) runs the other top language school. Like the British Council, it mainly recruits in its own country.

Volunteer Work

Those hoping to work with Palestinian refugees should contact the public information office of the **UN Relief & Works Agency** (Map p85; UNRWA; ☎ 06 5609100, ext 165; jorpio@unrwa.org; Mustapha bin Abdullah St, Shmeisani, Amman). There is no organised volunteer programme, but if you are in Jordan for a few months (they prefer longer-term commitments, rather than just a few weeks) and have a particular professional skill in education, relief or health, you may be able to arrange something. Contact them at least three months in advance.

For other volunteer opportunities check out www.jordandevnet.org.

Transport

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most visitors come to Jordan as part of a jaunt around the Middle East. Amman is well connected with most cities in the Middle East and Europe, but no airline has direct flights between Amman and Canada, Australia or New Zealand, and there are very few direct services between Amman and the USA. The overland borders between Jordan and Israel & the Palestinian Territories, and Jordan and Syria are popular and generally trouble-free, though you'll have to consider the implications of a trip to Israel & the Palestinian Territories if headed on to some other states in the Middle East (see p258). The ferry trip to Egypt is another popular option.

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Entering Jordan is painless, whether by land, air or sea, and visas and money exchange are available at all borders.

Arriving in Amman by air you'll find an airport foreign exchange booth before immigration and two after, with an ATM after immigration. Obtaining a visa on arrival takes less than a minute – queue up in the normal immigration aisle.

Passport

Your passport should be valid for at least six months after you arrive in Jordan. Always carry your passport with you when travelling around sensitive areas such as near the border of Israel & the Palestinian Territories – which means most of the Jordan Valley and anywhere along the Dead Sea Highway. Checkpoints and passport checks are common in these areas.

AIR Airports & Airlines

The national airline, **Royal Jordanian** (www.rja.jo, www.rj.com), is well run and has direct flights to most major cities in Europe and all over the Middle East. **Royal Wings** (www.royalwings.com.jo), a subsidiary of Royal Jordanian, has smaller planes for short flights from Amman to Tel Aviv (daily), Aqaba and Sharm el-Sheikh (four weekly).

The modern **Queen Alia International Airport** (☎ 06 4452000), about 35km south of Amman, is the country's main gateway. There are two terminals, only 100m apart and opposite each other. Terminal 1 is used for most Royal Jordanian flights and Terminal 2 is used by other airlines. Both terminals have ATMs, foreign exchange counters, a post office and a left luggage counter. The departure lounge has a decent café if you need to use up your remaining dinar.

The only airport hotel here is the **Alia Hotel** (☎ 4451000; aliahotel@index.com.jo; s/d JD70/85), a cou-

THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change: prices for international travel are volatile, routes are introduced and cancelled, schedules change, special deals come and go, and rules and visa requirements are amended.

The upshot of this is that you should get opinions, quotes and advice from as many airlines and travel agents as possible before you part with your hard-earned cash. Details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

ple of kilometres from the airport terminal. You should be put up here if your flight is delayed or has an enforced overnight stopover. Otherwise, you can get a 50% discount on the room rate if you have an international ticket on Royal Jordanian. If you are just transiting Amman for a few hours you can use the pool for JD5.

The former military airfield in Marka, northeast of central Amman, is used by Royal Wings for a few flights to Aqaba and Tel Aviv in Israel & the Palestinian Territories. The only other international (and domestic) airport is at Aqaba, and some international carriers stop in Aqaba en route to Amman. There are occasional charter flights between Europe and Aqaba.

The following airlines fly to Jordan and have offices in Amman (☎ 06):

Air France (Map p85; airline code AF; ☎ 5666055; www.airfrance.com; hub Charles de Gaulle, Paris)

Austrian Airlines (Map p85; airline code OS; ☎ 5694604; www.aa.com; hub Vienna)

British Airways (Map p65; airline code BA; ☎ 5828801; www.ba.com; hub Heathrow, London)

Emirates (Map p68; airline code EK; ☎ 4615222; www.emirates.com; hub Dubai)

Gulf Air (Map p68; airline code GF; ☎ 4653613; www.gulfairco.com; hub Bahrain)

KLM (Map p82; airline code KL; ☎ 4655267; www.klm.com; hub Amsterdam)

Kuwait Airways (Map p85; airline code KU; ☎ 5685246; www.kuwait-airways.com; hub Kuwait City)

Lufthansa Airlines (Map p85; airline code LH; ☎ 5601744; www.lufthansa.com; hub Frankfurt)

Middle East Airlines (Map p82; airline code ME; ☎ 4603500; www.mea.com.lb; hub Beirut)

Qatar Airways (Map p85; airline code QR; ☎ 5656682; www.qatarairways.com; hub Doha)

Turkish Airlines (Map p68; airline code TK; ☎ 4659102; www.turkishairlines.com; hub Istanbul)

Tickets

Cheap tickets to Jordan are rare and you may find cheaper deals to Cairo, Istanbul or Tel Aviv. Foreigners with a Jordanian residence card get cheaper fares inside the country.

Online ticket sales work well if you are doing a simple one-way or return trip on specified dates, but you'll have to invest some time to find the best fares.

Always remember to reconfirm your onward or return flight at least 72 hours before departure on international flights.

DEPARTURE TAX

Jordan's departure tax for foreigners is JD5, whether you are departing by air, land or sea. Middle Eastern citizens go free but Jordanians pay JD25! If you've been in Jordan for less than 72 hours (24 hours if departing by a land border) you should be exempt from the departure tax, but only if you ask.

Air tickets purchased inside Jordan from 2005 onwards should have the departure tax included in the ticket price – check with a travel agent when buying your ticket.

Australia

There are no direct flights between Australia and Jordan and most flights go via Southeast Asian capitals. One of the cheaper routes to Amman from Melbourne or Sydney is with Qantas Airways or Thai Airways International to Bangkok, and on to Amman with Royal Jordanian. Return low/high season fares start at A\$1450/1700. Gulf Air and Emirates fly from Sydney and Melbourne to hubs in the Middle East.

Flight Centre (☎ 133 133; www.flightcentre.com.au)
STA Travel (☎ 1300 733 035; www.statravel.com.au)
Trailfinders (☎ 1300 780 212; www.trailfinders.com.au)

Continental Europe

KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines and Lufthansa Airlines offer the most direct flights to Amman, and have excellent connections all around Europe and the UK. Amsterdam and Frankfurt are the two major hubs for discounted air transport in continental Europe.

One cheap airline worth considering is Cyprus Airways, which flies to Amman via Larnaca (Cyprus) from many European capitals. Royal Jordanian has weekly direct flights between Paris and Aqaba.

From Frankfurt, air fares start at €1050 for a return flight. A recommended agency is **STA Travel** (☎ 069 7430 3292; www.statravel.com), which has branches in major cities across Germany and the rest of Europe.

In Italy, recommended travel agents include **CTS Viaggi** (☎ 06 462 0431; www.cts.it), a student and youth specialist with branches in major cities. Expect to pay €660 for a return flight to Amman.

Recommended in Paris is **OTU Voyages** (☎ 0820 817 817; www.otu.fr), which has branches

across France. Other recommendations include **Voyageurs du Monde** (☎ 01 42 86 16 00; www.vdm.com) and **Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 08 25 00 07 47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr), with branches across the country. Return fares to Amman start at €1100.

Readers have recommended both www.connections.be and www.taxistop.be for discounted online tickets to Jordan.

Middle East

Jordan is a decent base from which to explore the Middle East, and there are regular flights from Amman all around the region. Flights are not particularly cheap, however, but specials (eg over the Thursday/Friday Islamic 'weekend') are sometimes available.

These are some approximate one-way fares from Amman: Abu Dhabi JD180, Baghdad JD380, Beirut JD100, Cairo JD125–JD135, Damascus JD70, Dubai JD175, Istanbul JD180, Kuwait City JD200, San'a JD220, Tripoli JD250 and Tel Aviv JD80. In Amman, the best places to start looking for air tickets are the agencies along Al-Malek Al-Hussein St, near the flyover.

In Tel Aviv, try the **Israel Student Travel Association** (ISSTA; ☎ 03 524 6322; 128 Ben Yehuda St). There's also a branch in Jerusalem (☎ 02 625 2799; 1 HaNevi'im St).

In Istanbul there are lots of travel agencies on the northern side of Divan Yolu in Sultanahmet, all of them specialising in budget air tickets. **Orion-Tour** (☎ 212 232 6300; www.oriontour.com; Halaskargazi Caddesi 284/3, Marmara Apartmani, Sisli 80220) is recommended.

The area around Midan Tahrir in Cairo is teeming with travel agencies, but don't expect any amazing deals. One of the best agencies in Cairo, though it's way down in Ma'adi, is **Egypt Panorama Tours** (☎ 02 359 0200; www.eptours.com) just outside Al-Ma'adi metro station.

New Zealand

Flights to Jordan from New Zealand generally run via Frankfurt or Bangkok. From New Zealand, you can expect to pay around NZ\$1650 for a return flight to Amman in the low season.

Flight Centre (☎ 0800 243 544; www.flightcentre.co.nz)
STA Travel (☎ 0508 782 872; www.statravel.co.nz)

UK

London and other cities in England are well connected with Amman, although some of

the cheapest airlines do not fly there directly and require a lengthy (even overnight) stop-over. Some of the airlines mentioned below offer 'open jaw' tickets which, for example, allow you to fly into Amman, but out of Beirut (Lebanon) or Damascus (Syria).

Some of the cheapest flights from the UK to Amman are on Lufthansa (via Frankfurt); Olympic Airways (via Athens); Turkish Airlines (via Istanbul); and Tarom (via Bucharest). Low season return fares start from £320.

Royal Jordanian flies direct between London and Amman daily. Expect to pay £420 for a return fare. One way to London in Amman costs JD305. British Mediterranean (part of British Airways) flies daily, mostly direct but once a week via Beirut so check the routing before booking.

The tour company **Voyages Jules Vernes** (☎ 020 7616 1000; www.vjv.co.uk) operates charter flights to Aqaba for its clients and may sell extra seats to the public.

STA Travel (☎ 0870 160 6070; www.statravel.co.uk)

Traillfinders (☎ 020 7938 3366; www.traillfinders.com)

Online travel agencies include www.lastminute.com, www.cheaptickets.co.uk and www.expedia.co.uk.

USA & Canada

There's little direct traffic between the USA and Jordan, so most flights change in Europe (London for British Airways, Paris for Delta/Air France or Amsterdam for Northwest/KLM). Alternatively, get a connection in a country near Jordan on a Middle Eastern airline. The cheapest option may be to fly into Tel Aviv and then cross the border into Jordan by bus or service taxi. However, this means that your passport will have those dreaded Israeli entry stamps – see p258.

Royal Jordanian (☎ 1800 223 0470) has direct flights between Amman and New York, Chicago and Detroit, with onward codeshare flights with America West. Flights from New York start around \$900, or \$1100 from Los Angeles (via Detroit).

Air Canada and Royal Jordanian offer flights, via London or Frankfurt, from Canada to Amman. Canadian discount air tickets are about 10% higher than those sold in the USA.

STA Travel (☎ 800 781 4040; www.statravel.com) has offices throughout the US.

Travel CUTS (☎ 1866 416 2887; www.travelcuts.com)

Canada's national student travel agency has offices in all major cities.

Online booking agencies include:

Cheap Tickets (www.cheaptickets.com)

Expedia (www.expedia.com)

Orbitz (www.orbitz.com)

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com)

LAND

Crossing the border overland into Jordan from Saudi Arabia is nigh on impossible for non-residents and travel to Iraq is currently on hold, so most travellers generally come overland from Syria or Israel & the Palestinian Territories, or by ferry from Egypt. However, there are three important things to note:

- Any indication of travel to/from Israel & the Palestinian Territories will mean that you cannot enter Syria, Lebanon and most other Middle Eastern countries, although Jordan is OK. See p258 for details
- All travellers who intend to travel to Syria should ensure they obtain a visa for Syria *before* coming to Jordan – see p251
- Jordanian visas are not available at the Israel/Jordan border at King Hussein Bridge (though they are available at other crossings)

Most travellers arrive in Jordan by bus or service taxi if travelling overland, although it's no problem bringing your own car or motorcycle (see p264).

Iraq

Travel to Iraq is not recommended at the present. Land transport crosses at the al-Karama/Tarbil border post, which is located 330km from Amman. **Jordan Regular Transport** (☎ 4622652) at Abdali bus station in Amman currently operates service taxis and minibuses to Baghdad, mostly for Iraqi citizens and using Iraqi drivers. Services leave Amman at midnight in order to get to the border at dawn. Vehicles then travel in convoys for safety into the notorious 'Sunni triangle', passing Fallujah before (*in sha'Allah*) arriving in Baghdad. A seat in a service taxi costs JD25 and JD15 in a minibus. A private car should cost around JD140.

Israel & the Palestinian Territories

Since the historic peace treaty between Jordan and Israel & the Palestinian Territories was signed in 1994, three border crossings have opened to foreigners – King Hussein Bridge, Sheikh Hussein Bridge and Wadi Araba.

BORDER CROSSINGS

Before crossing into Jordan from Israel & the Palestinian Territories, there are a few things you need to remember:

- Only change as much money as you need because the commission charged by moneychangers is often ridiculously high
- Israeli visas of one month's duration are issued at the Wadi Araba (Rabin) and Sheikh Hussein Bridge crossings, but those issued at the King Hussein Bridge are usually for three months
- Jordanian visas cannot be obtained on arrival at the King Hussein Bridge
- If you want to visit Israel & the Palestinian Territories, use the King Hussein Bridge crossing and then return to Jordan within 14 days (or three months if you extend your visa in Jordan before leaving), you do not need a second or multiple-entry Jordanian visa
- Private vehicles cannot drive across the King Hussein Bridge, but they can be taken across the other borders
- Refer to p258, for information about how to deal with the Israeli passport-stamp issue

On both sides of all three borders there are moneychanging facilities, places to eat and drink, and duty-free shops. On the Jordanian side of all three borders there is a post office and a **tourist information counter** (☎ 8am-2pm, closed Fri).

You can expect borders to be closed on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur and the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr (see p243).

King Hussein (Jisr al-Malek Hussein)/Allenby Bridge

Only 40km from Amman and 30km from Jerusalem, this **border crossing** (☎ 8am-6pm Sun-Thu, 8am-12pm Fri & Sat) offers travellers the most direct route between the two cities. It is a common way to exit, but not enter, Jordan, because Jordanian visas are not

ISRAELI BORDER STAMPS

Most countries in the Middle East and North Africa (with the exception of Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco) will not grant visas, or allow entry, to anyone who has any evidence of visiting Israel, or the Palestine Territories (which includes the West Bank). This includes Israeli exit stamps from any of the three borders with Jordan (ie from Eilat, King Hussein Bridge and Sheikh Hussein Bridge); Israeli exit stamps or Egyptian entry stamps at Rafah and Taba, both on the border; and any Jordanian entry stamps at the border of Israel & the Palestinian Territories. Travellers have even been turned away from Syria's border with Jordan for having unexplained periods of time in their passport, such as three weeks in Jordan without any evidence of a Jordanian visa extension.

Even if you do things in a convoluted fashion – eg visit Israel & the Palestinian Territories from Egypt, return to Egypt and go to Jordan on the ferry – you run a good chance of acquiring unwanted evidence in your passport. Even if the Israelis do not stamp you in or out, the Egyptians may well do so (at Rafah at least). And then if you apply for a Syrian visa, or attempt to cross the Jordan/Syria border, without a Jordanian entry stamp you'll probably be denied a visa or entry.

The only foolproof method is to visit the countries that will not accept evidence of a visit to Israel & the Palestinian Territories *before* going there, and then go to countries, such as Egypt and Jordan, that will accept Israeli visas/stamps – and later get a new passport. If you have dual citizenship, try to get two passports, but keep them separate and make sure you get the correct visas and stamps in the right passport.

If none of the above is possible or feasible, cross the border from Jordan to Israel & the Palestinian Territories at the King Hussein Bridge and go back to Jordan the same way. To be sure, leave and re-enter Jordan within the time limit specified on your Jordanian visa (ie within 14 days of your original visa or within the duration of any extension). But make sure you ask for all Jordanian and Israeli stamps to be placed on a separate piece of paper. People who have crossed from Jordan to the West Bank in small groups have asked for stamps on separate pieces of paper, but have still been caught out; for some reason, Israeli immigration officials may not stamp the first two or three passports, but then they'll stamp the next few – so it's best to cross individually or in groups of two.

If you get an Israeli or Jordanian exit or entry stamp in your passport, there's little you can do. If you report that your passport is 'lost' to your embassy in any country in the Middle East, it may be met with extreme cynicism, and even rejection. And some countries may also be highly sceptical, and even refuse you a visa or entry, if you have a brand new, unused passport issued in the Middle East.

issued at this border – so get a Jordanian visa at an embassy/consulate beforehand, or use another border crossing.

Public transport in Israel & the Palestinian Territories doesn't run during the Jewish Shabbat between sunset Friday and sunset Saturday. On Friday and Saturday it's better to arrive before 11am.

Due to the ongoing *intifada* (uprising) in the Palestinian Territories, no Jordanian buses were crossing King Hussein Bridge at the time of research. Instead, service taxis run throughout the day from Amman's Abdali bus station to (but not across) King Hussein Bridge (JD2.500, 45 minutes) or there's a single daily JETT bus (JD6.500) at 6.30am. These services may move to the

Wahadat station in the future, so check with your hotel.

The ride to the Israeli & Palestinian Territories side, although extremely short, can seem to last an eternity with repeated stops for passport and bag checks. At the time of research, it was not possible to walk, hitch or take a private car across. Buses (JD2) shuttle between the two borders. There are money-changing facilities on your way to the exit.

The historic oddity of this crossing has remained enshrined in the fact that, on leaving Jordan, you're not really considered to be leaving Jordan. Prior to 1988, Jordan laid claim to the West Bank as its own territory, and somehow this idea has remained in the approach to visas. If you

wish to return to Jordan from the Palestinian Territories on your current Jordanian visa, you need only keep the stamped exit slip and present it on returning by the same crossing (it won't work at the other crossings). You must return within the validity of your Jordanian visa or its extension.

At the Israeli border post, plead with the officials to stamp your Jordanian exit stamp rather than your passport (see opposite).

Travelling into Jordan, the Israeli exit tax is a hefty 127 NIS (around US\$29; compared to around 70 NIS elsewhere), supposedly because you're paying to leave Israel & the Palestinian Territories. Note that, if you intend to return to Israel, you must keep the entrance form given to you by the Jordanians – they may well insist on you prolonging your stay in Jordan if you cannot present it.

To get to Jerusalem from the border, take a *sherut* (Israeli shared taxi; around US\$40 for the car) to Jerusalem's Damascus Gate. Alternatively take a cheaper bus to Jerusalem or, if that's not running, a bus to Jericho and then a *sherut* to Damascus Gate. Much of the public transport in the West Bank was not running when we were there.

In all, crossing the border can take up to three hours, depending on Israeli security measures; avoid 11am to 3pm when delays are more common.

Sheikh Hussein Bridge (Jisr Sheikh Hussein)

The northernmost **crossing** (Jordan Bridge to the Israelis; ☎ 6.30am-10pm Sun-Thu, 8am-8pm Fri & Sat) links northern Jordan with Beit She'an in Galilee (Israel & the Palestinian Territories), 6km away. It's handy if you wish to visit northern Jordan, and it's the closest crossing to Jerusalem and Amman that will issue Jordanian visas on arrival.

From Irbid, regular service taxis leave the West bus station for the border (750 fils, 45 minutes). From the bridge it's a 2km walk (or hitch) to the Israeli side, from where you have to take a taxi to the Beit She'an bus station for onward connections inside Israel & the Palestinian Territories.

If you're coming from Israel & the Palestinian Territories, take a bus to Tiberias, and change at Beit She'an (6km from the border). From there, take another bus to the Israeli border (allow enough time because there is only a handful of buses per

day). After passport formalities and paying Israeli exit tax (70 NIS), a compulsory bus takes you to the Jordanian side.

From the Jordanian side, either wait for a minibus or shared taxi to Irbid (from where there are regular connections to Amman), go to Shuneh ash-Shamaliyyeh (North Shuna) by private or service taxi, or walk (3km) to the main road and flag down a minibus or service taxi.

Wadi Araba

This handy **crossing** (formerly Arava, now the Yitzhak Rabin crossing to the Israelis; ☎ 6.30am-10pm Sun-Thu, 8am-8pm Fri & Sat) in the south of the country links Aqaba to Eilat. To get there from Aqaba you'll have to take a taxi (JD5). Once at the border you can just walk across. From the border, buses run to central Eilat, only 2km away. All in, Aqaba to Eilat takes about an hour.

If you're travelling from Jerusalem and you want to skip Eilat, ask the driver to let you out at the turn-off for the border, a short walk away. Israel & the Palestinian Territories exit tax is 68 NIS here. On the Jordanian border take a taxi into Aqaba (JD5, 15 minutes) or you could negotiate a taxi fare direct to Petra (around JD25, two hours) or Wadi Rum.

BUS

Several cities in Jordan are now regularly linked to cities in Israel & the Palestinian Territories. Travelling by bus directly between Amman and Tel Aviv will save you the hassle of getting to/from the borders, but it's more expensive than crossing independently, and you'll have to wait for all passengers to clear customs and immigration.

From Amman, **Trust International Transport** (Map p65; ☎ 06 5813427) has buses from its office at 7th Circle to Tel Aviv (JD21, six hours), Haifa (JD18, seven hours) and Nazareth (JD18, seven hours), departing daily except Saturday at 8.30am. Services cross the border at the Sheikh Hussein Bridge. Buses leave from the Trust office in **Irbid** (☎ 02 7251878) at around 10am. Book tickets the day before.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you're driving from Israel & the Palestinian Territories, use the border crossings at Sheikh Hussein Bridge or Wadi Araba/Rabin (it is not possible to drive over the King Hussein Bridge).

Saudi Arabia

Getting a visa, even a transit visa, to Saudi Arabia is a very difficult feat – see p251, for details.

The main land route for public transport into Saudi Arabia is at Al-Umari, which is located along the highway south of Azraq. The other two crossing points are Ad-Durra, located south of Aqaba, and further east at Al-Mudawwara. Several companies run services to Jeddah and Riyadh from Amman's Abdali bus station.

Syria

If you want to travel directly between Damascus and Amman, it's worth taking a direct bus or service taxi. Otherwise you may end up spending more time and money once you catch a service taxi to Der'a, organise your own transport across the border, get another lift to Ramtha, perhaps another to Irbid, and then a connection to Amman. The only reason to travel this way is if you want to stop off en route at places such as Ezra'a and Bosra ash-Sham (Syria), or Jerash and Umm Qais.

If you are headed to Syria from Jordan, make sure you get a Syrian visa before arriving in Jordan (see p251), either in your home country or in İstanbul, Ankara or Cairo.

BORDER CROSSINGS

The two border crossings between Syria and Jordan are efficient and relatively painless on both sides. If you intend to drive between Jordan and Syria, the better border to cross is at Der'a/Ramtha.

Der'a/Ramtha and Nasib/Jabir are both open for 24 hours every day. The Jordanian sides both have a post office and **tourist office** (☎ 8am-5pm Sat-Thu, 8am-2pm Fri), moneychangers (open most of the time) where Jordanian dinars and Syrian pounds are changed, and places to eat and drink.

Der'a/Ramtha

Ramtha is the border most commonly used by foreigners who are using nondirect public transport and/or detouring to sights in northern Jordan. You can get direct transport between Damascus and Irbid or Amman, without stopping in Ramtha, though there are also buses to Ramtha from Amman's Abdali station (500 fils, two hours) and Irbid (250 fils). From Ramtha, service taxis and

minibuses run regularly to the border. If hitching, ask the immigration office on the Jordanian side to flag down a vehicle for a lift to the Syrian border.

Nasib/Jabir

Most service taxis between Amman and Damascus now use this crossing. It's also useful if you plan a detour to eastern Jordan (eg Azraq), as the border at Jabir is useful for connections to Zarqa or Mafraq.

BUS

The air-conditioned **Jordan Express Travel & Tourism** (JETT; Map p85; ☎ 5664146; Al-Malek al-Hussein St, Shmeisani) buses travel between Amman and Damascus (JD5, five hours) twice a day, at 7am and 3pm; book a day in advance. JETT also has a daily bus to Aleppo (JD7.500, eight hours) at 2.30pm. JETT's international terminal is just up from the Abdali bus station in Amman. **Afana** (Map p85; ☎ 4614611), next door, also has an evening bus to Damascus (JD5, five hours), leaving at 9pm, but it arrives very early in the morning and services aren't quite as reliable. Buses drop passengers off at the Baramke garage in Damascus.

The Palace Hotel in Amman (p88) has started a useful minibus service which runs between Amman and Damascus, with stops en route at Jerash, Bosra and Shaba (JD25 per person). They require a minimum of four passengers.

SERVICE TAXI

The service taxis to Damascus (three hours) are faster than the buses and run at all hours, although you'll have to wait longer in the evening for one to fill up. Service taxis take less time to cross the border than trains or buses because there are fewer passengers to process, and the drivers are experienced in helping passengers with immigration and customs formalities. These taxis are huge, yellow (or white) and American-made.

From Amman, service taxis for Damascus ('ash-Sham' in Arabic) leave from the eastern or lower end of the Abdali bus station (Map p68); from Damascus, they leave from the Baramke garage. The trip costs JD7 from Amman, and S£500 from Damascus. Service taxis also travel between Damascus and Irbid (South bus station, 2½ hours) in northern Jordan for slightly less.

THE HEJAZ RAILWAY

The Hejaz Railway was built between 1900–1908 to transport pilgrims from Damascus to the holy city of Medina, reducing the two-month journey by camel and on foot to as little as three days. For Jordan, and Amman in particular, this meant an increased boom in trade. The 1462km line was completely funded by donations from Muslims – but functioned for less than 10 years.

The trains and railway line were partially destroyed in the Arab Revolt of 1917 during WWI. The line was rebuilt as far south as Ma'an, but is now only used for cargo. There is occasional talk of introducing a tourist passenger service between Aqaba and Wadi Rum.

TRAIN

Services on the Hejaz Railway between Amman and Damascus leave Amman and Damascus on Monday and Thursday at 8am, but very few travellers take this service because it is so much slower than a service taxi (you have to change trains at the border, so figure on at least nine hours to Damascus). Tickets cost JD3 (half-priced for kids under nine). The charming old station is located on King Abdullah I St, approximately 2.5km east of the Raghadan station in Amman.

The **ticket office** (☎ 06 4895413) is officially only open from 7am on the morning of departure, although you may well find someone around at other times. To get to the station, take a service taxi from Raghadan station, or a private taxi (around 800 fils).

Elsewhere in the Middle East

For other destinations in the Middle East, travellers need time, patience – and most importantly – the necessary visas. These trips are long and hence most people end up flying.

From Abdali bus station, service taxis depart frequently for Beirut (JD20) and less frequently to Kuwait (JD30). Hijazi (see p100) has buses to Dubai (JD45), usually once a week.

JETT has services to the following surrounding cities from its international bus office in Amman:

destination	days	one way	hours
Beirut	Sun & Thu	15JD	6
Cairo	Sun & Tue	US\$58	24
Doha	daily	44JD	30
Dubai	daily	52JD	36
Kuwait	Fri	30JD	18
Manama	daily	35JD	24

Note that the fare to Cairo must be paid in US dollars, and includes the Aqaba–Nuweiba ferry ticket.

SEA

There are two boat services to Nuweiba in Egypt which leave from the passenger terminal just south of Aqaba. With both services, departure times can be subject to change so call the **passenger terminal** (☎ 03 2013240; www.abmari time.com.jo/english) before travelling to check the departure time.

The fast boat, which leaves Aqaba daily (except Saturday) at noon (get there by 10.30am), takes about an hour and costs JD26 or US\$36; children aged two to 12 pay JD14 or US\$20. It's more expensive (US\$45) to come the other way due to the difference in government taxes. You need your passport to buy a ticket. The return ferry leaves Nuweiba around 3pm.

There is also a slower ferry service (which doubles as a car ferry) that officially leaves at noon but often doesn't leave until 5pm or later, depending on the number of trucks trying to get on board. When it does leave, it should take three hours but it usually takes longer. There is sometimes talk of another service, at 6pm, but this is only during exceptionally busy times (like the haj). The cost for the slow ferry is US\$25. A car in either direction costs an extra US\$110.

Tickets for either service can be paid for in Jordanian dinars or US dollars. It's not possible to buy return tickets. Beware of buying ferry tickets in Amman because you may be charged for nonexistent first-class seats – buy the tickets in Aqaba. The worst time for travelling is just after the haj, when Aqaba fills up with *hajis* (pilgrims) returning home from Mecca to Egypt.

Most nationalities can obtain Egyptian tourist visas on arrival at Nuweiba. If you only need a visa valid for the Sinai region you can get this on the boat. If you wish to travel further than Sharm el-Sheikh you

need a full visa for Egypt. You can get this at the consulate at Aqaba (see p251) or on arrival at Nuweiba.

Whichever direction you travel in, you will have to hand in your passport to immigration authorities on the boat and pick it up at the immigration offices in Aqaba or Nuweiba.

Travellers from Eastern Europe may want to get their Egyptian visa before boarding the boat as some have been refused entry onto the ferry at Aqaba because they had no Egyptian visa.

There are money exchange facilities at the terminals at Nuweiba and Aqaba. The Jordanian side offers a decent exchange rate (at the time of research JD1 equalled €1.2) but avoid travellers cheques, which attract a huge commission.

There is a sporadic twice-weekly catamaran trip between Aqaba and Sharm el-Sheikh (officially US\$45, three hours) but this wasn't operating at the time of research.

If you are travelling from Egypt you will arrive in Aqaba too late for public transport to Petra or Wadi Rum so you'll have to overnight in Aqaba or arrange a taxi.

One thing to consider, if you don't mind an Israeli border stamp (see p258), is that it's quicker and cheaper to travel overland via Israel & the Palestinian Territories. Take a taxi from Taba to the border then another taxi on to the Arava border crossing with Jordan (or go by bus changing at Eilat bus station); the whole thing takes about an hour. Going to Egypt bear in mind that you can't get a full Egyptian visa at the border with Israel & the Palestinian Territories at Taba, only a Sinai peninsula visa, so get one in Aqaba or Amman before you go.

TOURS

Organised tours from abroad are generally divided into cultural/historical tours, overland adventures that combine several Middle Eastern countries, or activity-based holidays that involve some hiking and camel riding. See p269 for details of companies inside Jordan that can organise individual tours and itineraries.

Australia

Adventure World (☎ 02 8913 0755; www.adventureworld.com.au)

Peregrine Adventures (☎ 03 9663 8611; www.peregrineadventures.com, www.geckosadventures.com)
Yalla Tours (☎ 1300 362 844, 03 9510 2844; info@yallatours.com.au)

Israel & the Palestinian Territories

Desert Eco Tours (☎ 972 8637 4259; www.desertecotours.com) Specialises in camel, hiking and 4WD tours; based in Eilat.

UK

Abercrombie and Kent (☎ 0845 070 0610; www.abercrombiekent.co.uk)

Alternative Travel Group (☎ 0186 531 5678; www.atg-oxford.co.uk; 69-71 Banbury Rd, Oxford OX2 6PJ) Activities in Dana, Wadi Rum and Aqaba.

Cox & Kings (☎ 020 7873 5000; www.coxandkings.co.uk)

Dragoman (☎ 0870 4994 4750; www.dragoman.com)

Exodus (☎ 0870 240 5550, 020 8675 5550; www.exodus.co.uk)

Explore (☎ 0870 333 4001; www.explore.co.uk)

High Places (☎ 0114 275 7500; www.highplaces.co.uk) Ten-day hiking and scrambling trip in Wadi Rum, including a Christmas departure.

Idrisi Travel (☎ 31 0492 340632; www.idrisitravel.co.uk; Molenakkers 25, 5761 BS Bakel, Netherlands) Hiking and archaeology. British company based in the Netherlands.

Imaginative Traveller (☎ 0800 316 2717, 020 8742 8612; www.imaginative-traveller.com)

Martin Randall Travel (☎ 020 8742 3355; www.martinrandall.com)

Tribes (☎ 017 2868 5971; www.tribes.co.uk)

Voyages Jules Vernes (☎ 020 7616 1000; www.vjv.co.uk)

USA

Archaeological Tours (☎ 212 9863054; www.archaeologicaltr.com; 271 Madison Ave, suite 904, NY, NY 10016) A 14-day historical tour with archaeologists.

Journeys Unlimited (☎ 800 255 8735, 734 665 4407; www.journeys-intl.com)

Ya'lla Tours (☎ 503 977 3758; www.yallatours.com)

GETTING AROUND

Jordan is so small that you can drive from the Syrian border in the north to the Saudi border in the south in just over five hours. There is only one domestic flight (Amman to Aqaba) and no internal public train service, so public transport here comprises of buses/minibuses, service taxis and private taxis.

Where public transport is limited or non-existent, hitching is a common way of getting around. Hiring a car is a popular, if more expensive, alternative. Chartering a service taxi (white) or private taxi (yellow) is another alternative, and having a driver will take the hassle out of driving, although the cost will vary depending on your bargaining skills.

AIR

Since only 430km separates Ramtha in the north from Aqaba in the south, Jordan has only one internal flight, between Amman and Aqaba (JD39, 40 minutes). See p225 for details.

BICYCLE

Cycling is a popular option, but not necessarily always a fun one. March to May and September to November are the best times to get on your bike.

The disadvantages are: the stifling heat in summer; the few places to stop along the highways; the unpredictable traffic, with drivers not being used to cyclists; the steep streets in some cities, such as Amman and Karak; the paucity of spare parts because so few locals ride bikes; and the tendency of Jordanian children to throw stones at unwary cyclists.

There is no way to cycle along the King's Highway without getting stoned. We read it in your guidebook before leaving, but thought that kids would not stone three male adults with beards and long trousers who are looking angry. We were wrong. And there are not only *some* groups of kids who try to stone you, but basically it's becoming a major hobby for all male children between three and 20... Cycle in the morning when children are at school and plan to spend plenty of time discussing and waiting; you probably won't do more than 40km a day.

Bernhard Gerber, Switzerland

The good news, however, is that the road system is satisfactory, the roads are generally smooth and the main cities and tourist attractions are well signposted in English.

With some preparation, and an occasional lift in a bus, cyclists can have a great time. Most major sights are conveniently placed

less than a day's ride apart, heading south from the Syrian border – ie Irbid-Amman-Madaba-Karak-Dana-Petra-Ma'an-Wadi Rum-Aqaba. All these places have accommodation of some kind and restaurants, so there's no need to carry tents, sleeping bags and cooking equipment. Most other attractions can be easily visited on day trips, by bike or public transport.

The King's Highway is the most scenic route, but also the most physically demanding. The Desert Highway is boring and the traffic is heavy, while the Dead Sea Highway has extremely few stops, and is always hot. Two stretches along the King's Highway where you may want to take public transport are across the extremely wide and steep Wadi Mujib valley between Madaba and Karak, and between the turn-off to Wadi Rum and Aqaba, which is very steep, has appalling traffic and plenty of treacherous turns. The steepest climbs are those from the Jordan Valley up onto the eastern plateau in the north.

Spare parts are not common in Jordan, so carry a spare tyre, extra chain links, spokes, two inner tubes, repair kit and tool kit with spanner set. Also bring a low gear set for the hills and a couple of water containers; confine your panniers to a maximum of 15kg.

BUS

Public minibuses and, to a lesser extent, public buses are the normal form of transport for locals and visitors.

Tickets for public buses and minibuses are normally bought on the bus. For private buses, tickets are usually bought from an office at the departure point. Tickets for private buses should be bought a day in advance; on public buses and minibuses it's every frail old man, woman, and goat for themselves. Bigger private bus companies like **JETT** (Map p85; ☎ 5664146; Al-Malek al-Husein St, Shmeisani) (Amman to Aqaba), **Trust International Transport** (Map p65; ☎ 06 5813427) (Amman to Aqaba) and **Hijazi** (Map p68; ☎ 4638110) (Amman to Irbid) are generally the most reliable, comfortable and fastest because they generally don't stop en route to pick up passengers.

Unaccompanied men and women can sit next to each other, but some seat-shuffling often takes place to ensure that unaccompanied foreign men or women do not sit next to members of the opposite sex that they

Eagle Rent-a-Car (eaglerentacar@wanadoo.jo)

Europcar (www.europcar.jo) Free drop in Aqaba.

Firas Car Rental (alamo@nets.com.jo) Firas is the agent for Alamo Car Rental.

Hertz (www.hertz.com.jo) Drop-off at offices in Aqaba, Petra or Mövenpick Dead Sea Resort costs JD20.

National Car Rental (www.1stjordan.net/national) Offices in Amman and at Sheikh Hussein Bridge.

Reliable Rent-a-Car (www.reliable.com.jo) Reliable and recommended. You can reserve online; contact Mohammed Hallak. Baby seats are available.

Expect to pay JD25–JD35 per day for the smallest, cheapest sedan. This doesn't include tax or petrol, but usually includes free unlimited kilometres – undoubtedly a better deal than accepting a cheaper set-rate with a charge per kilometre.

For a three-day hire, companies will often waive the tax and include unlimited kilometres if the daily rate doesn't. Discounts of 15% or more are available for weekly hire; anything longer than one week is up for negotiation. A rate of JD20 per day for a reliable car with unlimited kilometres is a good deal.

Cars can be booked, collected and paid for in Amman or Aqaba and dropped off in the other city, but most companies charge from JD20 to JD25 for this service. Companies need a credit card for a deposit, but payment can be also made with cash; most major credit cards are accepted.

To ensure that you don't break down in the middle of nowhere, you should always hire a car less than three years old – most reputable companies won't offer anything else. Most hire cars have air-conditioning, which is a godsend in summer and vital along dusty tracks. Most cars are 'midrange' sedans though you can find cheaper rates if you are happy to squeeze into a tiny Korean hatchback. Cars with automatic transmission are more expensive, but anyone not used to driving on the right-hand side of the road should consider getting an automatic rather than a manual. Always carry a decent road map – these are not provided by car-hire agencies. Child-restraining seats are generally available for an extra fee.

Some agencies are closed on Friday and public holidays. If so, prearrange collection and delivery to avoid longer hire periods. Check the car over with a staff member for bumps, scratches and obvious defects, and check brakes, tyres, etc before driving off.

Finally, it is important to be aware that there are myriad complicated conditions and charges to remember and consider:

- Most agencies only hire to drivers over 21 years old; some stipulate that drivers must be at least 26 years
- Some offer free delivery and collection within the same city, but this is only during working hours
- Hire is often for a minimum of three days, sometimes two and only reluctantly for one day. Very rarely will any agency give a refund if you return the car early.
- Hire cars are not able to be driven outside Jordan

Insurance

Most car-hire rates come with basic insurance which involves a deductible of up to JD300 (ie in case of an accident you pay a maximum of JD300). Most agencies offer additional Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) insurance for an extra JD7 to JD10 per day, which will absolve you of all accident costs (in some cases a maximum of JD100 excess).

Insurance offered by major companies often includes Personal Accident Insurance and Theft Protection, which may be covered by your travel insurance policy from home. Always read the conditions of the contract carefully before signing – an English translation should always be provided.

If you're driving into Jordan in a private vehicle, compulsory third-party insurance must be purchased at the border for about JD35 (valid for one month). You also pay a nominal customs fee of JD5 for 'foreign car registration'.

Road Conditions

Visitors from any country where road rules are actually obeyed may be shocked by the traffic in Jordan, especially in Amman. But anyone who has driven elsewhere in the Middle East may find the traffic comparatively sedate. Indeed, provided that you can keep driving in Amman down to a bare minimum and have an idea in advance how to get to your destination, you're unlikely to encounter too many difficulties if you take reasonable care.

If you're driving around Jordan, read the following carefully:

- Many road signs are in English, but they are sometimes badly transliterated

(eg 'Om Qeis' for Umm Qais or, our favourite, 'AT TA NOURAN I QUI ES SI' for the At-Tannour Antiquities Site!). Brown signs denote tourist attractions, blue signs are for road names and green signs are for anything Islamic, such as a mosque.

- Take care when it's raining: water and sand (and sometimes oil) make a lethal combination on the roads
- The Jordanian road system makes more use of U-turns than flyovers
- One-way streets are often not signposted and can be fiendish in Karak and Irbid
- Always watch out for obstacles: pedestrians who walk along the road; cars darting out of side roads; and herds of goats and camels, even on the major highways
- Roundabouts are often large, and all drivers (local and foreign) find them totally confusing
- Petrol stations are not that common, so fill up as often as you can
- Parking in major towns, especially Amman, is a problem, but it's easy to find (and normally free) at major attractions like Jerash, Petra and Madaba
- Most roads (and even the highways) are dangerous at night because white lines are not common, obstacles (eg herds of camels) are still roaming about, and some cars have no headlights or put them permanently on high beam
- Signposting is erratic: generally enough to get you on your way but not enough to get you all the way to the destination
- Jordanians are extremely reluctant to commit to a single lane, so there's a lot of overtaking using the slow lane

Road Hazards

Despite the small population, and relatively good roads, accidents are alarmingly frequent. In 2001, there were 52,000 road accidents in Jordan with 783 fatalities (an average of 16 for every 10,000 vehicles), with a large number of victims being pedestrians and children. In 2004, nine British holidaymakers were killed in road accidents near Tafileh on the way to Petra.

The roads where accidents are more common are those frequented by long-distance trucks, eg the short stretch of Highway 65 (south of Aqaba to the Saudi border) and Highways 10 and 40 east of Amman.

In the case of an accident in a hire car, do not move the vehicle. Get a policeman from the local station to attend the scene immediately, obtain a police report (Arabic is OK) and contact the car-hire company – not obtaining a police report will normally invalidate your insurance. Depending on where you are, most reputable companies will send someone to the scene within hours. If there's any serious injury to you or someone else, also contact your travel insurance company at home as well as your embassy/consulate in Amman.

If your own private car is involved in an accident, your driving licence and passport will be held by the police until the case has been finalised in a local court – which may take weeks.

Drivers are always considered guilty if they hit a pedestrian, regardless of the circumstances.

Telephone numbers for local police stations are mentioned throughout the book, but two emergency numbers (☎ 191 and ☎ 192) are valid for police emergencies anywhere in Jordan, and should be answered by English-speaking staff. In Amman, there are separate numbers for the **Highway Police** (☎ 06 5343402) and **Traffic Police** (☎ 06 4896390 or 190) – the exact difference between the two, however, is unclear.

Road Rules

Vehicles drive on the right-hand side of the road in Jordan, at least in theory. The general speed limit inside built-up areas is 50km/h or 70km/h on multilane highways in Amman, and 90km/h to 110km/h on the highways. Note that indicators are seldom used, rules are occasionally obeyed, the ubiquitous horn is a useful warning signal and pedestrians must take their chances. The condition of the roads varies; unsigned speed humps are common, as are shallow ditches across the road, usually at the entrance to a town.

Wearing a seat belt is now compulsory, though a recent survey suggested that fewer than 30% of Jordanians used them. Traffic police are positioned at intervals along the highways. Police tend to be fairly indulgent towards foreigners, so long as they do nothing serious.

Road checkpoints are mainly for Jordanian drivers of private vehicles, and for trucks. Buses, minibuses, service taxis and private

taxis rarely need to stop; if they do, drivers just quickly show their papers to the police. Sometimes police come into a bus (there's rarely room in a minibus) to check the identification papers of passengers (usually young men). Foreigners are rarely bothered, and if you're asked to show your passport (this is more likely to happen anywhere near a border) it's probably more out of curiosity than anything else.

If you have chartered a private taxi, the driver is often waved through the checkpoint when the policeman sees smiling foreigners, obviously out for a day trip. If you're driving a hired or private vehicle, you may be stopped. Again, there's a good chance you'll be waved on unless the policeman is friendly or bored. You are only likely to be asked serious questions if you seem to be going near the border with Iraq.

Nonetheless, always keep your passport, drivers licence, hire agreement and registration papers handy, especially along the Dead Sea Highway. In recent years hire cars have been used by Palestinian militants to cross into Israel & the Palestinian Territories, so police near the border are unusually vigilant.

HITCHING Getting a Ride

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country in the world. Travellers who choose to hitch should understand that they are taking a small, but potentially serious, risk. People who choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs and let someone know where they are planning to go.

Despite this general advice, hitching is definitely feasible in Jordan. The traffic varies a lot from place to place, but you generally don't have to wait long for a lift on main routes. Hitching is only really worth it to avoid chartering expensive taxis or where public transport is limited or nonexistent, eg parts of the King's Highway and to the desert castles east of Amman.

Always start hitching early, and avoid 1pm to 4pm when it's often too hot and traffic is reduced while many locals enjoy a siesta. Also, don't start hitching after about 4pm unless it's a short trip on a road with frequent traffic, because hitching after dark increases the risk. The best places to look for lifts are junctions, tourist attractions

(eg lookouts) or shops where cars often stop. Police stationed at major junctions and checkpoints are often happy to wave down drivers and cajole them into giving you a lift.

To indicate that you're looking for a lift, simply raise your index finger in the direction you're heading. On a large truck, you may be asked for a fare; in a private vehicle, you probably won't need to pay anything. However, to avoid a possibly unpleasant situation, ask beforehand if payment is expected and, if so, how much the driver wants. Otherwise, just offer a small amount when you get out – it will often be refused.

Finally, a few general tips. Don't look too scruffy; don't hitch in groups of more than two; women should be very careful, and look for lifts with families, or in a car with another local or foreign female; trucks on some steep and windy roads (eg between the Wadi Rum turn-off and Aqaba) can be painfully slow; and make sure you carry a hat and lots of water.

Picking up Hitchhikers

If you have chartered a service taxi or private taxi you are under no obligation to pick up any hitchhikers, but if you're driving a private or hired car, the pressure to pick up people along the way can be intense. It's hard not to feel a twinge of guilt as you fly past locals alongside the road waving their arms frantically. On remote stretches where public transport is limited or nonexistent, eg across the Wadi Mujib valley, you should try to pick up a few passengers.

One advantage about picking up a hitchhiker is the chance to meet a local, and readers have often been invited to a home in return for a lift. Although you may be charged, you should never charge a local for a lift. They will assume that any foreign hitchhiker can afford to pay for transport, and that any foreigner driving a private or hired car doesn't need the extra money.

LOCAL TRANSPORT Bus

The two largest cities, Amman and Irbid, have efficient and cheap public bus networks, but few have destination signs in English (although some have 'English' numbers), there are no schedules or time-

tables available and local bus stations are often chaotic. Service taxis are much more useful and still cheap.

Taxi

There are two main types of taxis in Jordan. Yellow private taxis work like taxis anywhere. White service (*servees*) taxis run along set routes within many towns, and between most towns, as well as between Jordan and the neighbouring countries of Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia (see p257 for more information).

Both service taxis and private taxis can be chartered. Hiring a service taxi for a day is usually cheaper than hiring your own car. To charter a service taxi along a set route (eg Aqaba to Ma'an), find out the standard fare per person and then just pay for all the seats in a car (normally four). A long-distance trip in a private taxi costs more, but drivers are more amenable to stops and side trips.

If the taxi driver doesn't speak English, use the Arabic script in this guidebook or ask a local who does speak English to write down the destination(s) in Arabic.

PRIVATE TAXI

Yellow private taxis are very common in major towns like Amman, Irbid, Jerash, Ma'an, Madaba, Wadi Musa (Petra) and Aqaba, as well as in important transport junctions like Shuneh al-Janubiyeh (South Shuna) and Tafila. There is no pricing standard among taxis. Taxis in Amman are metered and most drivers will use the meter; in Wadi Musa there is a standard fare of JD1 anywhere in town; elsewhere you'll just have to negotiate a reasonable fare.

Taxis are not expensive in Jordan and, after climbing up and down the jebels (hills) of Amman, or staggering around in the infernal summer heat of Aqaba, you'll be glad to fork out the equivalent of less than US\$2 for a comfortable, air-conditioned ride across town.

SERVICE TAXI

Service taxis are usually battered Peugeot 504 or 505 station wagons with seven seats, or battered Mercedes sedans with five seats. They are always white, and usually have writing and numbers (in Arabic) indicating their route.

Because of the limited number of seats, it usually doesn't take long for one to fill up. They cost up to twice as much as a minibus, and about 50% more than a public bus, but are quicker because they stop less often along the way to pick up passengers. However, they're not always that much more comfortable than a bus or minibus, unless you get the prized front seat. To avoid waiting for passengers, or to give yourself extra room, you can always pay for an extra seat.

Lone female travellers should always ask to sit in the front seat if the back is jammed with men, otherwise it's worth paying for an extra seat. If chartering a taxi, single females should always sit in the back.

Major cities, such as Amman and Irbid, are well served by service taxis that run along set routes within each city, and often go to (or past) places of interest to visitors. As with intercity service taxis, the route is listed in Arabic on the driver's door and drivers wait until they are full before departing.

TOURS

An alternative to a pricey group tour organised from abroad is to arrange your own private mini-tour with a Jordanian travel agency. Many of these can arrange hiking or archaeological itineraries and provide a car and driver.

For hiking and activities in Jordan's nature reserves you are best off contacting the tourism department of the **Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature** (RSCN; www.rscn.org.jo/), who can arrange short activity breaks or entire itineraries (see p53). For an extended trip to Wadi Rum it's best to contact a local Bedouin agency such as **Wadi Rum Mountain Guides** (www.bedouinroads.com).

If you're travelling independently, and on a tight budget, jumping on a budget-priced organised tour from Amman to a remote place like the desert castles of eastern Jordan is far easier, and often cheaper, than doing it yourself. See p87.

The following local agencies are reliable: **Alia Tours** (☎ 06 5620501; www.aliatours.com.jo) Standard tours.

Archaeological Adventure Travel & Tourism (☎ 03 2157892; fax 2157891; a-a@index.com.jo)

Atlas Travel & Tourist Agency (☎ 06 4624262; fax 4610198; www.atlastours.net) Also offers side trips to Israel & the Palestinian Territories, Syria and Lebanon.

Desert Guides Company (☎ 06 5527230, 079 5532915; www.desertguidescompany.com; PO Box 9177 Amman) Trekking, mountain-bike and adventure trips.

Discovery (☎ 06 5697998; www.discovery1.com)

Golden Crown Tours (☎ 06 5511200; www.goldencrowntours.com) Offers archaeological, religious and adventure tours.

International Traders (☎ 06 5607014; fax 566 9905; sahar@traders.com.jo) Expensive but reliable, and the representative for American Express travel services; locations in Amman and Aqaba.

Jordan Beauty Tours (☎ 079 5581644, 077 7773978, 077 7282730; www.jordanbeauty.com; Petra)

Jordan Direct (☎ 06 5938238; www.jdtours.com; Bourmedien street, Amman) Located in Amin Marie Complex.

Jordan Eco-Tours (☎ 06 5524534; www.jordanecotours.com)

Jordan Experience (☎ 03 2155005; www.jordanexperience.com.jo; Wadi Musa) A Dutch/Jordanian venture; quite expensive.

Jordan Inspiration Tours (☎ 03 2157317, 079 5554677; www.jitours.com; Petra)

La Beduina (☎ 2157099; www.labeleduinatours.com)

Petra Moon (☎ 03 2156665; www.petramoon.com; Wadi Musa) A professional agency that also offers an interesting range of treks in remote areas of Petra and Dana.

Royal Tours (☎ 06 5857154; www.royaltours.com.jo) Part of Royal Jordanian, and good for stopover packages.

Zaman Tours & Travel (☎ 03 2157723; www.zamantours.com; Wadi Musa) Adventure tours, camping, camel treks and hiking.

Health

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Prevention is the key to staying healthy while travelling in the Middle East. Infectious diseases can and do occur in Jordan, but these can be avoided with a few precautions. The most common reason for travellers needing medical help is as a result of traffic accidents. Medical facilities in Jordan are generally very good, particularly in Amman.

BEFORE YOU GO

A little planning before departure, particularly for pre-existing illnesses, will save you a lot of trouble later. See your dentist before a long trip; carry a spare pair of contact lenses and glasses (and take your optical prescription with you); and carry a first-aid kit with you.

It's tempting to leave it all to the last minute – don't! Many vaccines don't ensure immunity for two weeks, so visit a doctor four to eight weeks before departure.

Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled, containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure

to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

INSURANCE

Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures (in many countries doctors expect payment in cash); it's also worth ensuring your travel insurance will cover repatriation home or transport to better medical facilities elsewhere. Your insurance company may be able to locate the nearest source of medical help, or you can ask at your hotel. In case of an emergency, contact your embassy or consulate. Your travel insurance will not usually cover you for anything other than emergency dental treatment. Not all insurance covers emergency aeromedical evacuation home or to a hospital in a major city, which may be the only way to get medical attention for a serious emergency.

See p244 for more on insurance.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Plan ahead for getting your vaccinations: some of them require more than one injection, while some vaccinations should not be given together. Note that some vaccinations should not be given during pregnancy or to people with allergies – discuss this with your doctor.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

Following is a list of other items you should consider packing in your medical kit.

- Antibiotics (if travelling off the beaten track)
- Antidiarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- Acetaminophen/paracetamol (Tylenol) or aspirin
- Anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- Antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- Antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions
- Steroid cream or cortisone (allergic rashes)
- Bandages, gauze, gauze rolls
- Adhesive or paper tape

REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The following vaccinations are recommended for most travellers to Jordan, though you should check with your local health provider:

- diphtheria & tetanus – single booster recommended if you've had none in the previous 10 years
- hepatitis A – a single dose at least two to four weeks before departure gives protection for up to a year; a booster 12 months later gives another 10 years or more of protection
- hepatitis B – now considered routine for most travellers
- measles, mumps & rubella – two doses of MMR recommended unless you have previously had the diseases. Young adults may require a booster.
- polio – generally given in childhood and should be boosted every 10 years
- typhoid – recommended if you're travelling for more than a couple of weeks
- yellow fever – vaccination is required for entry into Jordan for all travellers over one year of age if coming from infected areas such as sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of South America

For more on these diseases and vaccinations see Infectious Diseases, opposite.

- Scissors, safety pins, tweezers
- Thermometer
- Insect repellent that contains DEET, for the body
- Insect spray that contains Permethrin – for clothing, tents and bed nets
- Sun block
- Oral rehydration salts
- Iodine tablets or other water purification tablets
- Syringes and sterile needles (if travelling to remote areas)

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the Internet. For further information, the Lonely Planet website (www.lonelyplanet.com) is a good place to start. The World Health Organization (www.who.int/ith) publishes a superb book, *International Travel and Health*, which is revised annually and is available online at no cost.

Another website of general interest is MD Travel Health (www.mdtravelhealth.com), which provides complete travel health recommendations for every country, updated daily, also at no cost.

The Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/travel/mideast.htm) offers a useful overview of the health issues facing travellers to the Middle East.

The US embassy in Amman has a list of recommended doctors in Jordan at <http://usembassy-amman.org.jo/cons/doctors.doc>.

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Healthy Travel – Asia & India* is packed with useful information including pretrip planning, emergency first aid, immunisation and disease information and what to do if you get sick on the road. Other recommended references include *Traveller's Health* by Dr Richard Dawood, *International Travel Health Guide* by Stuart R Rose, MD and *The Travellers' Good Health Guide* by Ted Lankester, an especially useful health guide for volunteers and long-term expatriates working in the Middle East.

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Deep vein thrombosis occurs when blood clots form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of a prolonged immobility. The longer the flight is, the greater the risk. Though most clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they may cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and difficulty breathing. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights you should walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids, and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones; it results in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag try drinking plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic) and eating light meals. Upon arrival, seek exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep, etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. Their main side-effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

IN JORDAN

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

There are modern, well-equipped public hospitals in Amman, Irbid, Aqaba and Karak; smaller hospitals in Madaba, Ramtha and Zarqa; and basic health centres in most other towns. Jordan also boasts over 50 private hospitals, which cater primarily to patients from neighbouring countries, particularly the Gulf States, who are attracted by the lower medical costs. Emergency treatment not requiring hospitalisation is free in Jordan.

Most towns have well-stocked pharmacies, but always make sure to check the expiry date of any medicine you buy in Jordan. It is better to bring any unusual or important medical items with you from home,

TRAVEL HEALTH WEBSITES

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel health website before departure, if one is available.

- Australia (www.dfat.gov.au/travel)
- Canada (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index_e.html)
- UK (www.doh.gov.uk)
- United States (www.cdc.gov/travel)

and always bring a copy of a prescription. The telephone numbers for pharmacies (including those open at night) in Amman and Irbid, and for hospitals in Amman, Zarqa, Irbid and Aqaba, are listed in the two English-language newspapers. All doctors (and most pharmacists) who have studied in Jordan speak English because medicine is taught in English at Jordanian universities, and many have studied abroad. Dental surgeries are also fairly modern and well equipped.

For minor illnesses such as diarrhoea, pharmacists can often provide valuable advice and sell over-the-counter medication.

For an ambulance in Jordan call ☎ 193.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES Diphtheria & Tetanus

Diphtheria is spread through close respiratory contact. It causes a high temperature and severe sore throat. Sometimes a membrane forms across the throat requiring a tracheostomy to prevent suffocation. Vaccination is recommended for those likely to be in close contact with the local population in infected areas. The vaccine is given as an injection alone, or with tetanus (you may well have had this combined injection as a child), and lasts 10 years.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is spread through contaminated food (particularly shellfish) and water. It causes jaundice and, although it is rarely fatal, can cause prolonged lethargy and delayed recovery. Symptoms include dark urine, a yellow colour to the whites of the eyes, fever and abdominal pain. Hepatitis A vaccine (Avaxim, VAQTA, Havrix) is given as an injection; hepatitis A and typhoid vaccines can also be given as a single-dose vaccine, hepatyrix or viatim.

Hepatitis B

Infected blood, contaminated needles and sexual intercourse can all transmit hepatitis B. It can cause jaundice, and affects the liver, occasionally causing liver failure. All travellers should make this a routine vaccination. (Many countries now give hepatitis B vaccination as part of routine childhood vaccination.) The US Center for Disease Control says the level of hepatitis B is high in Jordan. The vaccine is given singly, or

at the same time as the hepatitis A vaccine (hepatyrix). A course will give protection for at least five years. It can be given over four weeks, or six months.

HIV

This is spread via infected blood and blood products, sexual intercourse with an infected partner and from an infected mother to her newborn child. It can be spread through 'blood to blood' contacts such as contaminated instruments during medical and dental procedures, acupuncture, body-piercing and sharing used intravenous needles.

Reliable figures aren't available about the number of people in Jordan with HIV or AIDS, but given the strict taboos in Jordanian society about drugs, homosexuality and promiscuity, the disease is relatively rare. Contracting HIV through a blood transfusion is about as unlikely as in most Western countries, and anyone needing serious surgery will probably be sent home anyway.

You may need to supply a negative HIV test in order to get a second visa extension for a stay of longer than three months.

Polio

Generally spread through either contaminated food or water, polio is one of the vaccines given in childhood and should be boosted every 10 years, either orally (a drop on the tongue), or as an injection. Polio may be carried asymptotically, although it can cause a transient fever and, in rare cases, potentially permanent muscle weakness or paralysis. Polio is not currently present in Jordan but is prevalent in neighbouring countries.

Rabies

Spread through bites or licks on broken skin from an infected animal, rabies is fatal. Animal handlers should be vaccinated, as should those travelling to remote areas where a reliable source of post-bite vaccine is not available within 24 hours. Three injections are needed over a month. If you've come in physical contact with an infected animal and haven't been vaccinated you'll need a course of five injections starting within 24 hours or as soon as possible after the injury. Vaccination does not provide you with immunity, it merely buys you more time to seek appropriate medical help.

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is spread through close respiratory contact and occasionally through infected milk or milk products. BCG vaccine is recommended for those likely to be mixing closely with the local population. It is more important for those visiting family or planning on a long stay, and those employed as teachers and health-care workers. TB can be asymptomatic, although symptoms can include cough, weight loss or fever, months or even years after exposure. An X-ray is the best way to confirm if you have TB. BCG gives a moderate degree of protection against TB. It causes a small permanent scar at the site of injection, and is usually only given in specialised chest clinics. As it's a live vaccine it should not be given to pregnant women or immunocompromised individuals. The BCG vaccine is not available in all countries.

Typhoid

This is spread through food or water that has been contaminated by infected human faeces. The first symptom is usually fever or a pink rash on the abdomen. Septicaemia (blood poisoning) may also occur. Typhoid vaccine (typhim Vi, typherix) will give protection for three years. In some countries, the oral vaccine Vivotif is also available.

Yellow Fever

Yellow fever vaccination is not required for Jordan but you *do* need a yellow fever certificate if arriving from an infected area, or if you've been in an infected area in the couple of weeks prior to arrival in Jordan. There is always the possibility that a traveller without an up-to-date certificate will be vaccinated and detained in isolation at the port of arrival for up to 10 days, or even repatriated. The yellow fever vaccination must be given at a designated clinic, and is valid for 10 years. It is a live vaccine and must not be given to immunocompromised or pregnant travellers.

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

The chances of getting sick from unhygienic food handling and preparation in Jordan are fairly slim. To prevent diarrhoea:

- Avoid tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (iodine tablets)

- Beware of ice cream that is sold in the street or anywhere it might have been melted and refrozen; if there's any doubt (eg a power cut in the last day or two), steer well clear
- Be careful of shellfish such as mussels, oysters and clams, particularly outside of Aqaba, as well as the raw meat dishes that are available in Lebanese restaurants in Jordan.
- Buffet meals are risky, as are empty restaurants; meals freshly cooked in front of you in a busy restaurant packed with locals are much more likely to be safe

If you do develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing salt and sugar (weak black tea with a little sugar, soda water, or soft drinks allowed to go flat and diluted 50% with clean water are also good). In an emergency you can make up a solution of six teaspoons of sugar and half a teaspoon of salt to a litre of boiled or bottled water.

A few loose stools don't require treatment but, if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an antidiarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours, is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

Where this is not possible the recommended drugs for bacterial diarrhoea (the most likely cause of severe diarrhoea in travellers) are norfloxacin 400mg twice daily for three days or ciprofloxacin 500mg twice daily for five days. These drugs are not recommended for children or pregnant women. The drug for children is co-trimoxazole, with dosage dependent on weight. A five-day course is given. Ampicillin or amoxicillin may be given to pregnant women, but medical care is necessary.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS Diving, Snorkelling & Swimming

Stonefish have a very nasty habit of lying half-submerged in the sand, so wear something on your feet if you're walking into the sea (as opposed to jumping into the deep water from a jetty or boat). If stung by a stonefish, see a doctor immediately. Other

nasty creatures to avoid are lionfish which, like the stonefish, have poisonous spikes, and jellyfish, whose sting can be painful. If stung by a jellyfish, douse the rash in vinegar to deactivate any stingers which have not 'fired'. Calamine lotion, antihistamines and analgesics (and urine) may reduce the reaction and relieve the pain. Coral cuts are notoriously slow to heal and, if they're not adequately cleaned, small pieces of coral can become embedded in the wound.

It is important to remember that, if you dive to any depth, it is dangerous to go to certain altitudes until six hours have elapsed. This includes the road to Petra and most roads out of Aqaba. Deeper dives require an even longer wait.

Aqaba has an excellent hospital where cuts, bites and stings can be treated. Most importantly, it has decompression chambers for the 'bends'.

Heat Illness

Read this section carefully, especially if you are travelling to Jordan between May and September. Despite the warnings, some visitors get themselves into trouble hiking through the desert in the heat of the day, especially around Wadi Rum.

Heat exhaustion occurs following heavy sweating and excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt. This is particularly common in hot climates when taking unaccustomed exercise before full acclimatisation. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration already occurs by the time you feel thirsty – aim to drink sufficient water such that you produce pale, diluted urine. The treatment of heat exhaustion consists of fluid replacement with water or fruit juice or both, and cooling by cold water and fans. The treatment of the salt loss component consists of salty fluids as in soup or broth, and adding a little more table salt to foods than usual.

Heat stroke is much more serious. This occurs when the body's heat-regulating mechanism breaks down. Excessive rise in body temperature leads to sweating ceasing, irrational and hyperactive behaviour and eventually loss of consciousness and death. Rapid cooling by spraying the body with water and fanning is an ideal treatment. Emergency fluid and electrolyte replacement by intravenous drip is usually also required.

Insect Bites & Stings

Mosquitoes may not carry malaria but can cause irritation and infected bites. Using DEET-based insect repellents will prevent bites. Mosquitos also spread dengue fever.

Bees and wasps only cause real problems to those with a severe allergy (anaphylaxis). If you have a severe allergy to bee or wasp stings you should carry an adrenaline injection or similar. For general bug bites, calamine lotion or a sting relief spray will give relief and ice packs will reduce the pain and swelling.

Scorpion stings are notoriously painful and in Jordan can actually be fatal. Scorpions often shelter in shoes or clothing so check your shoes in the morning.

Bed bugs are often found in hostels and cheap hotels. They lead to very itchy lumpy bites. Spraying the mattress with an appropriate insect killer will do a good job of getting rid of them.

Scabies are also frequently found in cheap accommodation. These tiny mites live in the skin, particularly between the fingers. They cause an intensely itchy rash. Scabies is easily treated with lotion available from pharmacies; people who you come into contact with also need treating to avoid spreading scabies between asymptomatic carriers.

Snake Bites

To minimise your chances of being bitten always wear boots, socks and long trousers when walking through undergrowth where snakes may be present. Don't put your hands into holes and crevices, and be careful when collecting firewood.

Half of those bitten by venomous snakes are not actually injected with poison (envenomed). If bitten by a snake, do not panic. Immobilise the bitten limb with a splint (eg a stick) and apply a bandage over the site, with firm pressure, similar to bandaging a sprain. Do not apply a tourniquet, or cut or suck the bite. Get the victim to medical help as soon as possible so that antivenin can be given if necessary.

Water

Tap water in Jordan is generally safe to drink, but for a short trip it's better to stick to bottled water, or boil water for 10 minutes, use water purification tablets or

a filter. In the Jordan Valley, amoebic dysentery can be a problem. The tap water in southern Jordan, particularly Wadi Rum, comes from natural springs at Diseh and so is extremely pure.

TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN

All travellers with children should know how to treat minor ailments and when to seek medical treatment. Make sure the children are up to date with routine vaccinations, and discuss possible travel vaccines well before departure as some vaccines are not suitable for children less than one year old.

In hot, moist climates any wound or break in the skin may lead to infection. The area should be cleaned and then kept dry and clean. Remember to avoid contaminated food and water. If your child is vomiting or experiencing diarrhoea, lost fluid and salts must be replaced. It may be helpful to take rehydration powders for reconstituting with boiled water. Ask your doctor about this.

Children should be encouraged to avoid dogs or other mammals because of the risk of rabies and other diseases. Any bite, scratch or lick from a warm-blooded, furry animal should immediately be thoroughly cleaned. If there is any possibility that the animal is infected with rabies, immediate medical assistance should be sought.

Travel with Children from Lonely Planet includes advice on travel health for younger children.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Emotional stress, exhaustion and travelling through different time zones can all contribute to an upset in the menstrual pattern. If using oral contraceptives, remember some antibiotics, diarrhoea and vomiting can stop the pill from working and lead to the risk of pregnancy – remember to take condoms with you just in case. Condoms should be kept in a cool dry place or they may crack and perish.

Emergency contraception is most effective if taken within 24 hours after unprotected sex. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (www.ippf.org) can advise about the availability of contraception in different countries. Tampons and sanitary towels are easily available in Amman but not necessarily in smaller towns.

Travelling during pregnancy is usually possible but there are important things to consider. Have a medical check-up before embarking on your trip. The most risky times for travel are during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, when miscarriage is most likely, and after 30 weeks, when complications such as high blood pressure and premature delivery can occur. Most airlines will not accept a traveller after 28 to 32 weeks of pregnancy, and long-haul flights in the later stages can be very uncomfortable. Antenatal facilities

vary greatly between countries in the Middle East and you should think carefully before travelling to a country with poor medical facilities or where there are major cultural and language differences from home. Taking written records of the pregnancy, including details of your blood group, is likely to be helpful if you need medical attention while away. Ensure your insurance policy covers pregnancy delivery and postnatal care, but remember insurance policies are only as good as the facilities available.

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