



## AQABA JORDAN

Jordan's only access to the sea, Aqaba is located on the southern tip of the country on the Gulf of Aqaba. It is known as Jordan's year-round Red Sea resort and the sandy beaches and coral reefs are the most pristine on the Red Sea. This tropical paradise is surrounded by mountains with clear and warm water that offers some excellent diving for the underwater enthusiast.

The official country name is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Jordan's 4.95 million people are predominately Arabs (large percentage of Palestinian refugees) with a large minority of Circassians, Chechens and Armenians. About 96% of the population are Sunni Muslims and about 4% are Christians. Further, Arabic is the official language of Jordan (although English is widely spoken).

Aqaba offers close proximity to many of Jordan's historical and natural treasures. The city of Petra is the most famous attraction in Jordan. The word Petra in Greek means "easy to cut stone." This spectacular city (the Nabataean Kingdom's capital) was built by the Nabataeans more than 2,000 years ago. It was created as a fortress city with its elaborate carved buildings, temples and tombs carved out of solid rock from the side of the mountain. There are over 800 monuments in Petra including numerous façades engraved out of rock. The city was forgotten for 1,000 years and re-discovered in 1812.

Wadi Rum is where you will capture the romance of the Arabian desert. Wadi Rum has some of the most spectacular desert scenery anywhere in the world. The landscape of pink and pastel sand is interrupted by limestone and granite cliffs and sculpted by centuries of desert winds. It is known as Moon Valley to the locals. Lawrence of Arabia spent an extended period of time here during the Arab Revolt, and many of the scenes of the film by David Lean were shot here.

Aqaba is an intriguing city, rich in history and tradition, which delights visitors with its blend of historical old world charm, majestic architecture and modern efficiency. This combination will make your visit to Aqaba a fascinating experience.



### HISTORY

Jordan is landlocked with the exception of Aqaba, which is the only area that is open to the sea. This outlet has proved to be of great value to Jordan. In ancient times the port of Aqaba was the primary harbor for shipments from the Red Sea to the Far East, and it was the headquarters for King Solomon's large merchant fleet where he used the port to export copper.

Aqaba's harbor serviced Southern Arabia, Egypt, India and China. Evidence of Aqaba's sheer importance and role dates back to the Calcolithic period in the 4th millennium BC. Over the centuries, the control of Aqaba has been in numerous hands. Aqaba has been known to be controlled by the Edomites, the Nabataeans, the Ptolemies, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Crusaders, the Ottomans and lastly the Hashemites. The name of this fascinating city has also been changed mainly as power changed hands.

T.E. Lawrence along with Arab forces battled the Ottomans for control of Aqaba in 1917. Lawrence was key to the success in winning back Aqaba for the Arabs, and became known to all as Lawrence of Arabia. In the mid-1950's Aqaba regained its popularity with both the locals and foreign vacationers. Aqaba is Jordan's fastest growing city to date. It has flourished to become a booming resort town and tropical paradise for all to enjoy and explore.



## AQABA PLACES OF INTEREST

**1 Aqaba (Mameluk) Fort** is an ancient fortress that lies south of the city, near the waterfront. It was originally a crusader castle; however, the Mameluks extensively rebuilt it in the 16th century. The Mameluk Fort is square in shape and its inscriptions mark the latter period of the Islamic dynasty. The fort is opened daily until sunset. (Admission charge.)

**2 The Museum** is home to many artifacts from ancient times and to many collections from the southern Jordanian region. The museum is also home to the house of Sharif Hussein bin Ali, the great grandfather of the late King Hussein. It was his residence after the war, in which he lived for six years.

**3** The Aquarium is a popular point of interest in Aqaba. It is also the location of the Aqaba Marine Science Station, where the enhancement and development of better ways to protect the marine life and coral reefs are studied. A visit to the Aquarium is an opportunity to see the vast marine life of the Gulf of Aqaba.

## Beyond Aqaba

**Wadi Rum** is one of the most amazing desert landscapes in Jordan, with its numerous changes in the terrain, uniquely shaped mountains and breathtaking colors that add to this area's mystique. Wadi Rum has a desolate landscape that some consider similar to that of the moon's surface. The vast beauty of the white and pink color sands were home to T.E. Lawrence's (also known as "Lawrence of Arabia") famous Arab Revolt.

**Petra** is known as the most famous attraction in Jordan. Its existence has dated as far back as 7,000 years BC. Petra, the lost Nabataean city, is an eternal tribute to the impressive carved architecture into the natural pink rocks. The Nabataeans were an industrious Arab people who made this fascinating city home, over 2,000 years ago. There are over 800 monuments in this forgotten mystical treasure town that awaits your exploration.



## SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Aqaba and surrounding areas, we suggest you take one of the organized Shore Excursions. For further information consult your Shore Excursion brochure or contact the Manager at the Shore Excursion desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

**Bartering:** Bargaining is a common practice almost everywhere in Jordan.

**Tippling:** If not included on the bill, 10% gratuity is a good guideline. Generally, if a service is provided, a small gratuity is expected.

**Dress:** Jordan is predominantly a Muslim country and out of common courtesy, conservative dress is advisable. Short pants, jeans, tank tops and revealing clothing are not acceptable. Women and men should have their arms, shoulders and knees covered.

## LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALITIES

Jordan's traditional dish is Mansaf, which is stewed lamb served on a bed of rice and pine nuts, in a tangy yogurt sauce. You also have the choice of eating either chicken, fish, kebabs or meat and vegetable stews. Hummus, tabbouleh and Baba ghanouj (a dip made from mashed eggplant and tahini) are popular starters widely available. Jordanians enjoy sweets, a good number of sweets are soaked in honey. Baklawa (one of many desserts) is thin layers of pastry with chopped nuts in sweet honey syrup.

Locally prepared beers, wines and spirits are common drinks. Arak, an anise flavored liquor served with water and ice is a drink that is popular with Arabic dishes. Tea ('shay') and coffee ('qahwa') are the national obsessions in Jordan. These beverages are enjoyed in copious quantities by locals and are extremely strong, served in small cups and can be very sweet. Tea with fresh mint makes a refreshing alternative. Bottled water is recommended.

## SHOPPING FACILITIES

Shops are generally open from 9:30 am – 1:30 pm and 3:30 pm – 6:00 pm, Saturday through Thursday. Please note that Fridays are a weekly holiday and most businesses are closed. Many businesses are also closed early Thursday afternoon. Traditional crafts of Jordan are among the most popular tourist items. Jewelry, fabrics and dead sea products are also items of interest. Some tourist oriented stores may accept U.S. Dollars or most major credit cards.

## LOCAL CURRENCY

The unit of currency in Jordan is the Jordanian Dinar (JD). Currency is made up of 1,000 Fils or 100 Piasters. Notes are available in the following denominations: 500 fils, 1, 5, 10, 20 dinars. Coins are available in the following denominations: 5, 10, 25, 50, 100, 250, 500 fils. It is important when making purchases or changing currency to check your change, dealing with foreign currency can prove confusing.

Major currencies can be changed at the numerous banks, exchange offices, shops and hotels. Rates for cash are better than for traveler's cheques. Major foreign currencies and credit cards are widely accepted.

## POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES

The post and telephone offices are next to one another right in the center of town. Fax and telegram services are available at the post office. There are a few phones available at the pier. Please note that only local calling cards can be utilized when making telephone calls. Phone cards can be purchased at some kiosks.

