



A VISIT TO JORDAN

Jordan is a country in the Middle East of about 5 million people. In Arabic it is called "**Al-Urdunn**." It is about 80 percent as big as state of PA [37,300 sq. miles]. The official name is **The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**. (Al-Mamlakah al-Haashimiyyah al-Urdunniyyah) "**Hashemite**" means related to **Hashim**, the Prophet Muḥammad's great grandfather. So the King of Jordan is a direct descendent (Sharif) of the Prophet Muḥammad.



Jordan is bordered by Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the West Bank, and Israel, as well as the Jordan River and Dead Sea in the west, and the Red Sea in the south.

The capital is ^c**Amman**, a city of over 1 million people. Other major cities include Irbid and Zarqa.

^cAmman, is the ancient city of the Ammonites mentioned in the Bible. Believe it or not, the ancient Greeks and Romans called it **Philadelphia** (The name Philadelphia comes from Greek--the City of Brotherly Love, as we all know...so William Penn did not think of it first.) Ancient Philadelphia was an important city in the Roman Empire, and there are many important Roman ruins in Jordan. There is a large Roman amphitheater right in the middle of ^cAmman.

Over 2,000 years ago, the **Nabateans** flourished in the area that is now Jordan. They were an Arab people, and their alphabet eventually became the Arabic alphabet used today. They built their capital at **Petra**, "The Rose City." Petra is an amazing place--all the buildings are carved into the red sandstone. If you have seen the movie "Indiana Jones and Last Crusade," then you have seen some of Petra's unique scenery. The Nabateans grew very rich because they controlled the trade routes from the Arabian Peninsula up to the north and west. So the **Romans** wanted their wealth and conquered them about 100 A.D. The Romans ruled the area which is now Jordan for several centuries. In addition to the Roman ruins in Petra and ^cAmman, **Jerash** was a major Roman city. There are many Roman temples, baths, and other buildings still standing in Jerash. It is famous for its mosaics and temples.

Map courtesy World Factbook 2001.

The **Arabs** brought **Islam** to the area which is now Jordan in the middle of the 7th century. From about

1100 to 1300 A.D. European Christians fought the Arab and Turkish Muslims in the **Crusades**. The Europeans wanted to bring all of the Holy Land under Christian control, and for a time they established a Kingdom of Jerusalem. In Jordan today you can see several large castles built by the armies during the Crusades. An important Crusader castle is at **Kerak**, while an important Muslim one is at **Ajlun**.

The **Ottoman Turks** conquered the Middle East in 1516, and ruled this area for 400 years. When the Ottoman Empire fell apart after World War I, the British and French carved up the Middle East and created the modern countries of Lebanon, Trans-Jordan, Syria and Iraq.

Today Jordan has both a king and an elected legislature. This system of government is called a "parliamentary monarchy." (similar to the system in Great Britain.) Jordan's King is His Majesty **King Abdullah ibn Al-Hussein** (King Abdullah II.) His wife is **Queen Rania**. King Abdullah became King after his father, **King Hussein**, passed away in February 1999. King Hussein had ruled Jordan for 46 years. He married an Arab-American woman, Elizabeth Halaby, who took the name **Queen Noor**.

Other interesting and beautiful sights you can see in Jordan include the **Dead Sea**, which is the lowest point on earth below sea level and the water is so salty that it's almost impossible to sink. The Red Sea resort of **Aqaba**, famous for its underwater scenery, and **Wadi Rum**--the desert valley where the much of the movie "Lawrence of Arabia" was filmed. The Christian mosaics at **Madaba** are also famous archeological sites.

To learn more about Jordan you can go to these web sites:

http://www.arab.net/jordan/jordan_contents.html

<http://www.wtgonline.com/data/jor/jor.asp>

<http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/>