



## USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT JORDAN

### 1. SAFETY AND SECURITY

The security situation in Jordan is relatively good. Public order is generally good and criminality comparatively low.

During 2011, following the 'Arabic spring', demonstrations have routinely taken place after Friday noon prayers in Amman and in most other major cities. While the majority of protests are peaceful, you are recommended to avoid public demonstrations. You are advised to avoid down town Amman at the time around Friday prayers.

There remains a general threat from terrorism in Jordan. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. There have been a small number of such attacks in the past few years. It is recommended to keep up-to date on regional developments and news.

You are recommended to take extra care at all borders. Regarding travels from Jordan to Iraq, there have been incidences when passengers have been handed over to kidnappers once in Iraq. Jordan's land borders are also prone to periodic closure. At present this applies in particular to border crossings with Syria. You are advised against all travel to Syria at the time being, due to civil unrest and increased violence in the country.

Women are recommended to be careful if taking a taxi alone at night. Do not accept lifts from strangers. You are advised to use a regular taxi driver whom you trust and to keep his telephone number with you.

You are always recommended to check the latest security information with your foreign ministry/home office before your travels, and to register with your embassy in Jordan upon arrival.

#### **Emergency phone numbers**

Police: 191 and 192

Ambulance: 193

#### **The traffic**

The biggest threat to your safety while in Jordan is the traffic. The traffic culture and old cars contribute to a high number of accidents per year. While the traffic situation is difficult, the roads are of relatively high standard.

Security checks are frequent along the roads. You are therefore recommended to always carry your passport, or passport copy, with you.

### 2. INSURANCE

Prior to your departure, be sure to arrange a comprehensive travel and health insurance covering the time of your stay in Jordan.



### 3. MONEY

The currency in Jordan is the dinar (JD). It is known as the *jay-dee* among young locals. One dinar makes 1000 fils. You will sometimes hear *piastre* or *qirsh*, which are both 10 fils (10 qirsh equals 100 fils). If you are told that something is 25, it is a matter of working out whether it is fils, piastre or dinars. It sounds confusing but most Jordanians would never cheat a foreigner.

#### Money exchange

Changing money is easy in Jordan. Most major currencies are accepted in cash and travelers' checks. US dollars are the most accepted, followed by UK pounds and Euros.

There are no restrictions on bringing dinars into Jordan. It is possible to change dinars back into some foreign currencies in Jordan. You need however to show receipts to prove that you changed your currency into dinars at a bank in Jordan.

Syrian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Israeli and Iraqi currencies can all be changed in Amman. Egyptian and Israeli currencies are also easily changed in Aqaba.

Banks apparently offer slightly better rates than money changers for cash. Most large hotels will change money but at lower rates. 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

ATMs are available in all but the smaller towns. There are no local charges on credit card cash advances but the maximum daily withdrawal amount is around JD 500, depending on your particular card. Visa is the most widely accepted card for cash advances and ATMs, followed by MasterCard. Other cards, such as Cirrus and Plus, are also accepted by many ATMs.

#### Credit cards

Most major credit cards are accepted at top-end hotels and restaurants, travel agencies, larger souvenir shops and bookshops. Be sure to ask if any commission is being added on the price.

#### International transfers

Some major banks, such as the Arab Bank and Jordan National Bank, can arrange international money transfers. The Cairo-Amman Bank is part of the international service offered by Western Union. Money Gram has agreements with several banks. Due to high fees, a cash advance with a credit card might be better.

#### Exchange offices

Exchange offices are smaller and easier to use than banks. They generally stay open until around 9 pm daily. Check the rates at banks or in the English-language newspapers before changing money.

#### Travelers' checks

Most travelers' checks are accepted, the most recognized being American Express. Check the commission before changing.



## 4. VISAS

Visitors to Jordan from non-Arab countries need a visa. Visas are, for many nationalities, easily obtained on arrival at most border points. Jordanian visas are however not issued at the Allenby - King Hussein Bridge if entering from Israel & the Palestinian Territories.

If you would like a multiple entry visa you can only apply for this at Jordanian diplomatic missions abroad.

Tourist visas are normally valid for three months (i.e. you must enter the country within three months from the date of issue), and good for a stay of one month from the date of entry. They can easily be extended for stays up to three months (see below).

In the Middle East, visas are available from Jordanian embassies in Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Israel & the Palestinian Territories, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen and the Gulf States.

To enter Jordan your passport should have at least 6 months before expiry.

*Visa regulations are subject to change; always check with the Jordanian embassy/consulate in your country prior to your travels.*

### Visa extensions

A single-entry visa is valid for one month upon arrival in Jordan (always however check what is written on your visa). You need to register at a police station in order to get a three months visa. Failure to do so will result in a steep fine.

Extensions are possible in major provincial capitals such as Aqaba, Irbid and Karak, but are best done in Amman. The maximum stay allowed is six months.

You must undergo an HIV test if you intend to stay in Jordan for more than 30 days.

*Students travelling with AMBergh are assisted with the visa extension procedure.*

## 5. GETTING THERE AND AWAY

### Land

#### To/From Israel and 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 (40 km from Amman and 30 km from Jerusalem), Sheikh Hussein Bridge (the northernmost crossing) and Wadi Araba (linking Aqaba to Eilat). Israeli visas are issued at all border crossings. Jordanian visas cannot be obtained on arrival at the King Hussein Bridge.



Service taxis run from Amman's Abdali bus station to King Hussein Bridge. There is also a daily JETT bus. Jordanian taxis and buses do not cross the border. Buses shuttle between the two borders. Public transport in Israel and the Palestinian Territories does not run during the Jewish Shabbat between sunset Friday and sunset Saturday.

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 have to wait for all passengers to clear customs and immigration. From Amman, Trust International Transport has buses from its office at 7<sup>th</sup> Circle to Tel Aviv, Haifa and Nazareth.

*Please 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. As visa regulations are subject to change, always check with respective country's embassy/consulate or other up-dated travel information prior to your travels.*

### **To/From Syria**

You are advised against all travel to Syria at the time of writing, due to civil unrest and increased violence in the country.

### **To/From Iraq**

Due to the security situation in Iraq and its border regions, this route is not recommended. There have been incidences when passengers have been handed over to kidnappers once in Iraq. Make sure to get up-to-date information on the security situation if considering this route.

### **To/From Saudi Arabia**

Getting a visa, even a transit visa, to Saudi Arabia is very difficult for most nationalities. Several companies run services to Jeddah and Riyadh from Amman's Abdali bus station. Jordan-bound buses can be taken from almost any point in Saudi Arabia or the Gulf. Waiting time at customs and passport control is not too long, but allow for up to 5 hours on the Saudi side. The trip from the border to Amman is 3 hours and up to 20 hours on the Saudi side of the border to Dammam, Riyadh or Jeddah.

### **By bus**

Long distance services operate from a number of Middle Eastern destinations including Tel Aviv and Damascus.

### **By boat**

Jordan can be entered at the port of Aqaba via the Egyptian port of Nuweiba. There are two services, a speedboat and a cheaper ferry. The ferry might take up to eight hours, and is not recommended in bad weather. The speedboat makes the crossing in about one hour, boarding and disembarking may add to delays.

### **By train**

Services of Al-Hijaz railway (Damascus-Amman) have been suspended since mid 2006 due to damage to the tracks. It is unclear the train services will resume. There are no other passenger trains in Jordan.

### **Air**

Jordan's national airline is Royal Jordanian Airlines. A number of foreign carriers serve Jordan, including British Airways, Air France, Lufthansa, Turkish Airlines, Egypt Air, Emirates and Delta Airlines. Low



cost airlines Sama and Air Arabia fly between Jordan and destinations all over the Middle East. Queen Alia International Airport is the country's main airport. It is 35 km south of Amman, approximately 45 minutes from downtown Amman. Transport into Amman is provided by the Royal Jordanian bus service to the city terminal near the 7<sup>th</sup> circle, or by taxi.

In addition to Queen Alia, Jordan has two other international airports: Marka International Airport in East Amman (serving routes to nearby Middle Eastern countries, and Aqaba), and King Hussein International Airport in Aqaba.

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

## 6. TRANSPORTATION WITHIN JORDAN

Always carry your passport with you when travelling around sensitive areas such as near the border of Israel & the Palestinian Territories, i.e. most of the Jordan Valley and anywhere along the Dead Sea Highway. Checkpoints and passport checks are common in these areas.

### By taxi

You can easily find a taxi in most cities. Taxi fares are reasonably cheap. Taxi cars are bright yellow and generally in good condition. All yellow taxis should have a meter. Most drivers outside Amman do however not use the meter, you need to agree on a price before departing. Day rates for taxis can be negotiated. When negotiating taxi rates, ask if the agreed-on rate is the total or the cost per person.

So called service taxis (*servis*) cover much the same routes as buses. Service taxis are more expensive than minibuses, but a lot faster and more convenient. Service taxis are generally white or beige in color.

### By car

Jordanian roads and road signs are of good quality. Apart from the chaotic roads in and near Amman, it is easy to drive around this country. Just be careful of other drivers and non reliable traffic behavior. You can hire cars at the main airports, some resorts and bigger cities. If you rent a car and drive yourself, you should have an international driver's license. Make sure you have good insurance coverage. Front seatbelts are required by law.

### By bus, coach or minibus

Amman's local bus traffic is irregular and not very frequent. Many opt for taxi or service taxi instead. There are many bus companies offering direct services to most major cities and towns, like Amman, Aqaba, Petra, Jerash and Irbid. Companies include Alphadt, JETT and Rum Tourist Transport. There are also minibuses.

Smaller service taxis ply the same routes and are often more expensive but also faster and more convenient.

### By plane

The only domestic air route is between Amman and Aqaba.



## 7. THE WEATHER

The Jordan Valley and the area around Aqaba is warm during winter months, January-February, with chilly evenings. In the summer, June-August, this area is extremely hot. In the Eastern Desert, the winter can be bitterly cold and dry and the summer intensely hot. The central hills can receive snowfall in the winter and evenings are cool in the summer. Rain falls between November and March. Lightweight clothes are advised between May and September. Thick winter clothes are essential for winter and a warm layer is necessary for cool summer eves. Rainwear is needed from November to April.

## 8. FOOD AND DRINKS

### Food

The Jordan cuisine is highly varied. It has many influences from Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, and as such enjoys being one of the world's most sophisticated cuisines. Popular meals range from *falafel* (chickpea balls), *foul* (bean paste), *hummus* (chickpea paste), *kubbe* (grain balls stuffed with meat), *tabouleh* (parsley sallad), and a variety of kebabs, to stuffing of vegetables (grape leaves, eggplants, etc.), meat, and poultry. The national dish of Jordan is *Mansaf*: lamb seasoned with aromatic herbs, sometimes lightly spiced, cooked in yoghurt, and served with huge quantities of rice.

### Water

The quality of tap water is generally poor. You are recommended to drink bottled water, easily available in stores at a reasonable price.

## 9. BUSINESS HOURS

Friday is the weekly holiday when government offices, banks and most offices are closed. Most businesses and banks take half-day off on Thursday. Some businesses and banks take half day off, or complete holiday, on Sunday.

Government departments are open from 8 am to 2 pm daily except Friday. Banks are open from 8:30 am to 1 pm. Some have recently introduced afternoon hours from 4 to 6 pm. Small shops are open long hours, from around 9 am until 8 or 9 pm, often closing for a couple of hours in the mid-afternoon. Most Muslim shop owners close early or do not open on Friday, and Christians follow similar rules on Sunday. Markets and street stalls downtown remain open all week long, and Friday is their busiest day of the week.

Museums are generally open every day except Tuesday.

During Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting, business hours are shorter.

### Public holidays

Holidays in Jordan are either religious, Islamic or Christian, or celebrations of important events in Jordanian or Arab history. Non-Islamic holidays are fixed, while Islamic holidays vary according to the Muslim lunar calendar.

The Islamic holidays include:

*Eid al-Fitr*: also known as *al-Eid as-Saghir* (the little feast), a three day celebration that marks the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting.



*Eid al-Adha*: commonly known as *al-Eid al-Kabir* (the big feast), at the end of the month of *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). It commemorates the Prophet Ibrahim's offering of Isma'il for sacrifice. During these four day celebration, families who can afford slaughter a lamb and share the meat with poorer Muslims.

*Hijra New Year*: Islamic New Year

*Moulid al-Nabi*: The Prophet Muhammad's birthday

*Eid al-Isra waal Mi'raj*: The feast celebrating the nocturnal visit of Prophet Muhammad to heaven.

### Public holidays 2011

As Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon, the dates given below are approximations. Easter holidays are only observed by Christian business establishments. During Ramadan, the lunar month before Eid Al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Many restaurants are closed during the day and there may be restrictions on smoking and drinking. Some disruption may continue into Eid al-Fitr itself. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha may last anything from two to 10 days, depending on the region.

New Year's Day:	1 Jan
Mawlid al-Nabi (Prophet's Birth):	15 Feb
Good Friday:	22 Apr
Easter Monday:	25 Apr
Labour Day:	1 May
Independence Day:	25 May
Army Day:	10 Jun
Prophet's Ascension:	28 Jun
Ramadan begins:	1 Aug
Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan):	31 Aug
Eid al-Adha (Sacrifice Feast):	7 Nov
Islamic New Year:	26 Nov
Christmas:	25 Dec

### Public holidays 2012

New Year's Day:	1 Jan
Mawlid al-Nabi (Prophet's Birth):	4 Feb
Good Friday:	6 Apr
Easter Monday:	9 Apr
Labour Day:	1 May
Independence Day:	25 May
Army Day:	10 Jun
Prophet's Ascension:	17 Jun
Ramadan begins:	20 Jul
Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan):	19 Aug
Eid al-Adha (Sacrifice Feast):	25 Oct
Islamic New Year:	15 Nov
Christmas:	25 Dec



## **10. ELECTRICITY**

220 volts/50 cycles AC is used. There are several types of electrical out-lets, adapters are recommended.

## **11. TIME**

Jordan is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. Daylight Savings Time occurs between April and October.

## **12. INTERNET**

There are Internet cafes throughout the country. The Internet, like other forms of media in the country, is subject to government control. Access to Internet remains largely unfettered. However, media laws and regulations encourage some measure of self-censorship in cyberspace, and the authorities have increased restrictions on Internet use in cyber cafés.

## **13. TELEPHONE/MOBILE**

Country code: 962. Card phones are available in most big cities and major tourist sites, cards can be purchased at numerous shops. Roaming agreements exist with many international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good.

## **14. STANDARD MAIL/POSTAGE**

Packages should be left opened for custom officials. The Central Post Office in Amman ([www.jordanpost.com.jo](http://www.jordanpost.com.jo)) is the only post office where packages can be sent. Airmail to Western Europe takes three to five days. For a higher charge, there is a rapid service guaranteeing delivery within 24 hours to around 22 countries.

**Post office hours:** Sat-Thurs 8 am to 7 pm in summer and 7 am to 5 pm in winter, Fri 7 am to 1 pm.

## **15. CLOTHING**

You will hardly ever see Jordanian men wearing shorts in public. Long trousers are essential whatever the weather. Covering shoulders is recommended to men and women. You will see Jordanian women dressed in the latest western fashions as well as the more traditional Islamic clothing. As a foreigner, you will catch enough attention without wearing tight and short clothes. Longer sleeves, looser wear, and knee-length pants and skirts would most likely make you more comfortable. In Aqaba on the Red Sea, less conservative clothing is normal. In touristy places like Amman, Petra and Wadi Rum, people are used to western style of clothing. In other parts of the country it is recommended to keep a more modest style of clothing.

## **16. WOMEN TRAVELING ALONE**

Women are advised to take caution when travelling alone; there have been isolated incidents of harassment.



## 17. HEALTH

### Medicine

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

The telephone numbers for pharmacies 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, 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 diarrhea, pharmacists can often provide valuable advice and sell over-the-counter medication.

### Ambulance

For an ambulance in Jordan call 193.

### Hospitals

There are modern, well-equipped public hospitals in Amman, Irbid, Aqaba and Karak, smaller hospitals in Madaba, Ramtha and Zarqa, and basic health centers in most other towns. You also find over 50 private hospitals in Jordan. Private hospitals are primarily frequented by patients from neighboring countries, attracted by the lower medical costs. Emergency treatment not requiring hospitalization is free in Jordan.

The US embassy in Amman has a list of recommended doctors in Jordan at:

[http://jordan.usembassy.gov/acs\\_medical\\_assistance/list-of-doctors-2010-2.pdf](http://jordan.usembassy.gov/acs_medical_assistance/list-of-doctors-2010-2.pdf)