

Climate

Although Jordan is a relatively small country, with an area of around 100,000 square kilometres, in three distinct climatic zones. The largest of those is of course desert, which covers around 80% of the country. The western mountain heights is where most of the cities, towns and archaeological sites reside, while the Jordan Valley, averaging around 300 metres below sea level has an entirely different climate than the rest of the country.

Jordan has 4 distinct seasons; winter and spring are relatively short, while summers are long, dry and relatively hot. The low humidity means that even temperatures in the low thirties are bearable. Jordan does not get the extreme heat that the gulf countries are accustomed to, and temperatures rarely go over 35 degrees Celsius even in the peak of summer.

Nights are relatively cool in all the highlands. Jordan averages about 310 days of sunshine per year. The rainy season starts at the end of November and continues into March. Snow occasionally falls in Petra, Amman and some of the western mountain ranges during December- February.

In brief, Jordan has hot, dry summers, and wet, relatively cold winters. The peak season is between March till May, and from September till November, though summers are nowhere as hot as the gulf.

Required clothing

Lightweight cotton clothes are advised in the summer, with a sweater for cooler evenings, especially in the inland areas. waterproof mediumwear is recommended for the winter.

Koeppen-Geiger classification:

The Climate of Jordan can be classified as BSh climate, a hot Climate with dry summers and the annual average Temperature above 18°C. The eastern and southern areas of Jordan have a BWh Climate; a hot, dry desert climate with annual average temperatures above 18°C

Tipping

Tipping in Jordan is a part of the culture and in most cases leaving a tip is good etiquette, unless of course the service was terrible. Many industries, such as restaurants, pay lower wages to the employees with the expectation that they will receive tips. Therefore, it's important that you give generously when you get amazing service. A tip of 10% is standard in almost all circumstances. If you find a charge has already been added to your bill (which is common), consider giving the worker a small tip anyway, since they will likely not receive that percentage.

tipping etiquette for

Spas:

it's nice to give 5-10 JD directly to the person who does your treatment.

Taxi driver:

you should round up and let them keep the change. You can also give a few dinars if you have large or heavy bags that they have helped you with.

Restaurants:

it's generally expected you give an addition 5-10% if the service was good. The wages are typically low, and they will really appreciate the gesture.

You can also feel free to tip your bartender. A small percentage, or even a JD per drink will go a long way.

Hotels:

Hotel workers in Jordan are well versed in the etiquette of tipping. In almost all cases they will expect something for any service they provide. For example, a porter should be tipped 1-2 dinars per bag. Maids should be tipped at least 2 JD per night, and it's polite to tip room service 2-5 JD as well. The concierge should be tipped 5-20 JD depending on the task or flavour you request.

There will likely be a 10% fee included in your bill, however this is usually reserved for behind the scene staff and not those you encounter daily.

Hairdresser:

there isn't a set custom for tipping your hair dresser or stylist. Some people like to round up, others add 10-20%, and some don't tip at all. This is another case where you should decide based on the experience you received, and how well the job was done. If you love your new hair do, then they will certainly appreciate a tip. It's a great way to let them know they did an amazing job, and that you're pleased with the service.

TIME ZONE

Jordan is two hours ahead of GMT during winter, and three hours ahead during summer. So do not forget to set your watch according to the local time while you travel to Jordan.

ELECTRICITY

The electrical current is based on 220 AC volts, 50 cycles, and requires rounded two prong wall plugs. Visitors from the US will need a transformer while travelling to Jordan; most hotels will provide one.

VISAS

All foreign nationals planning to travel to Jordan require tourist visas. A visa can also be obtained at Amman's Queen Alia International Airport and most land and sea borders (except Allenby Bridge) for most nationalities.

Visas can be arranged free of charge for visitors staying in Jordan for a minimum of two nights, provided you send us full passport details prior to arrival.

DEPARTURE TAX

A departure tax of currently JD 10 per person (around US\$ 15) is paid at all borders when departing Jordan, and it is currently included with your flight ticket, but is payable if you cross over land borders. If you are leaving Jordan through a land border it is advisable to keep a JD 5 bill with you at the end of your tour to pay the departure tax.

HEALTH

No vaccinations are needed for visitors travelling to Jordan. During your stay, it is preferable to drink only bottled water, although it is alright to shower and brush your teeth using tap water.

PHOTOGRAPHY

If you are planning to take photographs of locals during your travels in Jordan, always ask their permission first. Your guide can assist you in this. Do not take photographs of military installations or airports. It is advisable to carry your camera in a dust-proof bag

SHOPPING

Travelling to Jordan is a dream come true for shopping enthusiasts as it is a shoppers' paradise offering hand-blown glassware, inlaid boxes, silver, gold, jewellery, brass, copper, carpets, antiques, leather wear, spices, perfumes, alabaster, embroidered covers, wall hangings and furniture. It is prohibited to export any ancient artefacts. Be careful when investing in "genuine antiques" which in many cases are excellent forgeries.

CURRENCY

The local currency is the Jordanian Dinar, or "JD", which is divided into one hundred piasters or one thousand fils. The dinar is pegged to the dollar. The current exchange rate is JD 71 per 100 US\$. Although US\$ are widely accepted, it is prudent to carry Jordanian dinars while you travel through Jordan.

Coins in current circulation are of 1, 2.5, 5 and 10 piastres, and 0.25, 0.5 and 1 dinar.



Regarding banknotes, denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20 and 50 dinar are in use.



CREDIT CARDS AND TRAVELLER CHEQUES

You will notice that Visa, MasterCard and to a lesser extent American Express cards are accepted in most shops while travelling in Jordan. Traveller's cheques can be exchanged for cash at exchange shops, though you should expect to pay a commission of up to 5% for doing so

Religion

Jordan is an ideal destination for those seeking cultural knowledge and spiritual enrichment. Jordan values its ethnically and religiously diverse population, consequently providing for the cultural rights of all its citizens. This spirit of tolerance and appreciation is one of the central elements contributing to the stability and peace in Jordan. More than 92% of Jordanians are Sunni Muslims and approximately 6% are Christians. The majority of Christians belong to the Greek Orthodox Church; but there are also Greek Catholics, Roman Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and a few Protestant denominations. Several small Shi'a and Druze populations can also be found in Jordan.

Religious Composition of Jordan

The vast majority of Jordan's population, about 97.2%, adhere to Islam. It is the official or state religion of the country. About 20,000 to 32,000 Jordanians identify as Druze and these people reside primarily in the north of the country.

Christianity is the biggest minority religion in Jordan and Christians account for 2.2% of the population. Most of the Christians are Greek Orthodox. Other Christian denominations active in Jordan include Roman Catholicism, Coptic Orthodox, Protestantism, etc. Buddhists and Hindus make up 0.4% and 0.1% of the population of Jordan, respectively. Less than 0.1% of the country's population practice Judaism and folk religions.

The Official Religion of Jordan

Most of the Muslims in Jordan are Sunnis. Shiites comprise only a small percentage of the Muslim population in the country. Prior to the 1980's, the Islamic population of Jordan was less orthodox in their religious practices. They exhibited less adherence to Islamic teachings and often practiced a syncretic form of religion where they combined their indigenous traditional religious beliefs and practices with those of Islam. Things, however, changed after the 1980's. There was an Islamic revival in Jordan. The Jordanian society underwent great changes during this time. More women now adhered to the strict Islamic dress code for women. Mosque attendances also rose during this time. There was an overall increase in the number of Jordanians who more strongly adhered to Islamic principles and beliefs.

Religious Freedom and Tolerance in Jordan

Although the state religion of Jordan is Islam, the Constitution of the country provides for freedom of religion to its citizens. One can practice one's own religion in the country as long as it does not violate morality and public order. Conversions of one's religion, especially from Islam to some other religion, is highly frowned upon and can lead to immense societal pressure bestowed on the converted person and his or her family. However, conversion to Islam is mostly free of any legal complications and is usually encouraged. Although Muslims and Christians peacefully co-inhabit in Jordan, some of the smallest minorities do complain about discrimination. The government also puts some restrictions on the religious organizations and missionaries active in the country, especially if they are affiliated to non-Islamic faiths. Overall, however, the Jordanian society is generally more tolerant of the religious faiths of others than many other countries in the Arab world.

Food

Though popular Jordanian food usually consists of influences from its neighboring countries, this country has its own distinct way of cooking that enhances the flavors. Visitors should embrace Jordanian food and sample as much as possible. From freshly baked sweet treats to mezze feasts, there is plenty of local cuisines to try.

The local popular Jordanian food tends to consist of rice, yogurt, lamb, olives, and a range of herbs and spices. Baked pastries are also very popular in Jordan especially sweet dishes such as baklava. As Jordan is positioned in the Levant it takes many influences from North African, Persian, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern food. From delicious savory dinners to sweet desserts, there are plenty of food options to suit all taste buds and budgets. At most restaurants in Jordan, visitors are likely to find a large number of mezze dishes. This style of eating is popular in Jordan and consists of hot appetizers and cold appetizers which are shared across the table

Popular Jordanian food

Mansaf

Mansaf is one of the most popular dishes in Jordan and will be found in most restaurants. It is a lamb dish that is cooked in fermented yogurt and served with rice or bulgur. There are many variations of mansaf but the main base of the dish (lamb and yogurt) remains the same. Although it is a popular Jordanian dish, mansaf can also be found in Saudi Arabia and Palestine.

Baklava

Baklava is one of the most popular sweet foods in Jordan and it has also become very popular internationally. It is a filo based pastry with a layer of nuts and a pistachio and honey center. It is sold widely across the country and is a popular breakfast item.

Jordanian Falafel

Another popular food around the globe is falafel. Falafel is a traditional Egyptian food but Jordan is known for preparing some of the best tasting falafel in the Middle East. This savory snack consists of ground chickpeas and spices that are combined together into round bitesize shapes. In Jordan, they can be eaten as a snack, side, or, even as a sandwich filling. Falafel will be served in many cafes and street food stalls across the country and it is eaten for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Knafeh

Knafeh is a delicious filling pastry that is made from creamy cheese, rose water, and sugar. It is typically used as a dessert and boasts a crunchy base which compliments its soft topping. Knafeh is a popular Middle Eastern dish and can be found in many restaurants and some bakeries.

Tasty Knafeh in the streets of Amman

Labneh

Labneh is a traditional breakfast delicacy that is served in most cafes across Jordan. It is a rich thick yogurt paste which is usually spread onto freshly baked bread. Jordan is home to a large number of bakeries that serve homemade bread and pastries making it very easy to find. The flavor of Labneh often gets compared to sour cream and it is also used as a side dip with savory dishes and salads.

vegetarian

vegetarian food in Jordan

As a vegetarian, you might think of Jordan as a country that isn't known for its vegetarian dishes. Although Jordanians love their meat, such as shoarma, kebab and mansaf – the national dish made with lamb meat – you can still find a wide range of vegetarian options in Jordanian cuisine. Better Places Travel expert Elena suggests tips on how to eat delicious vegetarian food throughout your journey in Jordan.

The mezze is the most popular way in which meals are prepared in Jordan. Similar to Spanish tapas, you get a variety of plates and platters with different dishes, allowing you to put together your own meal and try various foods. This is a relatively easy way of avoiding meat-based dishes.

You should always be clear about the fact that you do not eat any meat. The term vegetarian is relatively unknown in the Middle East, so many Jordanians will not understand what you do and don't eat. For example, some Jordanians don't consider chicken or fish as meat. Extra tip: tell people you are allergic to meat and that eating it makes you ill. People will not go into discussion with you about your choices for not eating meat, let alone make you ill on purpose.

Smoking

Many Jordanians enjoy smoking, and it's a custom that's allowed almost anywhere and everywhere, including taxis, public transport, streets and shopping malls. And who hasn't heard of the people's most favored smoking apparatus, the hubbly bubbly – or the argeeleh as it is called in Arabic. You'll find an argeeleh at almost every café in Jordan. Choose your favorite flavour and smoke away.

Language

Jordan ranks 4th in region, 63rd worldwide in English proficiency index

Every work field in Jordan requires English, and being proficient in languages is a great way to secure a good job

arabic is the main language, english is spoken too

You will get around fine, just speak slowly, even if someone doesn't understand english they will ask around for someone who does, jordanians are very helpful people.

Drinking

Alcoholic Drinks

In a predominantly Muslim country where alcohol is considered haram (forbidden) for most of the population, discreet imbibing of alcohol is acceptable for non-Muslims and the country supports a small wine industry and also a microbrewery. The latter was set up by a Christian Jordanian engineer who brought the concept of home-brewing from the US. The resulting Carakale brand

(www.carakale.com/home) is a full-bodied beer much appreciated by aficionados.

Unlike the nascent brewing industry, viticulture has an ancient regional lineage. In contrast to neighbouring countries, however, Jordan's modern tradition of wine production was only revived a generation ago – almost single-handedly by Omar Zumot. A Christian from Amman who studied winemaking at a monastery in France, Zumot's organically produced St George wines give the lighter Mt Nebo wines a run for their money. If you're not convinced, it's easy to try both in top-end restaurants throughout Jordan.

In addition to beer and wine, arak (an aniseed-derived spirit) is drunk with enthusiasm by Christian Jordanians, in Amman and Madaba especially. Dilute with water to avoid the after-effects!

Tea & Coffee

Tea and coffee are the major social lubricants in Jordan.

Tea (shai) is probably the more popular drink, taken without milk and in various degrees of sweetness: with sugar (sukkar ziyada), a little sugar (sukkar qaleel) or no sugar (bidoon sukkar). In most cafes you can ask for refreshing mint tea (shai ma n'aana). Zaatar (a blend of spices that includes hyssop, sumac and sesame) and marrameeya (sage) herbal teas are especially delicious in Dana.

Coffee (qahwa) is served strong, sweet and flavoured with cardamom, and usually contains thick sediment. You can specify a small espresso-sized cup (finjan) or large cup (kassa kabira). In traditional Bedouin areas, coffee is served in small porcelain bowls or small glasses and the host will always refill a guest's coffee cup. A good guest will accept a minimum of three cups but not more than five; gently 'dancing' the cup from side to side indicates you've had enough.

For men, Jordan's coffeehouses are great places to watch the world go by, write a letter, meet the locals and play a hand of cards, accompanied by the incessant clacking of domino and backgammon pieces and the gurgling of fruity nargileh (water pipes). Foreign women, with a bit of courage and modest attire, are

usually tolerated. Traditional coffeehouses don't generally serve food.

Sahlab is a delicious traditional winter drink, served hot with milk, nuts and cinnamon. Look for it at hot-drink vendors, recognisable by their silver samovars.

Jordanian Culture

Orientation

Identification. The Emirate of Transjordan was the name given to this small state when it was recognized in 1921, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the promulgation of the Balfour Declaration. It was not until 1946 that Transjordan became a completely sovereign state. In 1950, Transjordan merged with part of Palestine to form the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Amman is the capital and the largest city.

Linguistic Affiliation.

Arabic is the official language. English is taught to all students and is widely spoken.

Symbolism.

The flag has black, white, and green horizontal stripes with a red triangle on the hoist side bearing a white seven-pointed star. The flag of the Palestinian people is identical but does not have the white star.

History and Ethnic Relations

Emergence of the Nation. The Nabateans built the capital of their ancient Arab kingdom, Petra, in what is now Jordan between 400 B.C.E. and 160 C.E. From Mount Nebo in western Jordan, many people believe that Moses saw the Promised Land. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed after four hundred years of rule, Britain divided up the Fertile Crescent, and modern Jordan was born.

National Identity.

Jordan is the only Arab country where Palestinians can become citizens. The differentiation between Jordanians, Bedouins, and Palestinians is clear in this society. Jordanians are defined as residents who have lived east of the Jordan River since before 1948. Palestinians are defined as residents whose birthright extends back to areas west of the Jordan River. People of Bedouin descent are considered to be of the purest Arab stock.

Ethnic Relations.

In deserts with little vegetation and water, Bedouin families have lived in the traditional way for thousands of years. They roam freely and pay little attention to borders. Bedouins form the core of the army, occupying key positions, even though their political influence is diminishing. Palestinians are typically referred to as educated, hard-working people, and their influence in Jordan has resulted in a greater emphasis on education and the development of a richer, global economy. Jordanians who no longer espouse the Bedu nomad lifestyle are gradually accepting the standards of the modern Arab world.

Urbanism, Architecture, and the Use of Space

Most people live in one- or two-room apartments or houses. Affluent urban families live in larger apartments or individual homes. Buildings and homes are made of concrete, and some are made of mud and stone, with a design that allows more floors to be added, to create apartments for married sons. Privacy is very important, and many homes and other buildings open into private courtyards with concrete walls. Nomadic farmers live in tents made from the hides and fur of their animals. Amman's appearance reflects a Western influence, with modern hotels and commercial buildings. Streets are identified and numbered in an inefficient manner, and maps are hard to read and often useless.

Food and Economy

Food in Daily Life. An ancient legend tells of an Arabian shepherd who six thousand years ago put his supply of milk in a pouch made from a sheep's stomach before making a journey across the desert. The rennet in the lining of the pouch, combined with the heat of the sun, caused the milk to form curds, and cheese was discovered. Bedouin farmers keep herds of goats and sheep whose milk is used to produce cheese and yogurt. A popular cheese is called halloumi (similar to feta), made from goat or sheep milk and often served in a sandwich of pita-style bread or cubed in salads. Rice, legumes, olives, yogurt, flat breads, vegetables (cauliflower, eggplant, potatoes, okra, tomatoes, and cucumbers), lamb or chicken, and fruits (apricots, apples, bananas, melons, and oranges) form the basis for most meals. Main dishes of rice with spices are eaten almost daily. The main meal typically is served during the middle of the afternoon. A covering is placed on the floor, with a large tray of rice and meat placed in the center surrounded by small dishes of yogurt and salad. Torn pieces of bread are folded in half and used to scoop the food. The left hand is never used to feed oneself.

Food Customs at Ceremonial Occasions. When people visit family and friends, tea, Turkish-style or Arabic-style coffee, or fruit juice is served. Often this meal includes sweets, especially on holidays. The national main dish is Mansaf, which consists of lamb cooked in dried yogurt and served with seasoned rice on flat bread. Mansaf is always served on holidays and special family occasions such as visits to relatives or friends, engagements, and weddings.

Basic Economy.

The economy is based on free enterprise. The service sector, consisting of government, tourism,

transportation, communication, and financial services contributes the most to the economy, employing 70 percent of the workforce. Amman has developed into a regional business center.

Land Tenure and Property.

Land ownership is the goal of many, but few can afford the cost. Except for the very wealthy, most people live in rented housing.

Commercial Activities.

Because most of the country is desert, less than 4 percent of the land is cultivated. Natural resources are scarce, and no oil has been found. The country's archaeological sites draw more than two million visitors a year.

Major Industries.

Potash, phosphate, and gypsum mining and the manufacturer of cement, fertilizers, and refined petroleum products are the largest industries.

Trade.

Jordan is among the world's top three potash exporters. Since the Gulf War, the number of immigrants has increased greatly, leading to a severe trade deficit and a labor market that has not produced enough jobs.

Division of Labor.

Jordan's economy is heavily impacted by its location in the Middle East, the arid landscape, its relationship with its neighbors, and its dependence on foreign aid. Its largest sectors are finance, which employs 22 percent of its labor force; transportation, which employs 16 percent; and the industrial sector, which employs 17 percent. Tourism offers the greatest prospect for development.

Social Stratification

Jordan's political and social systems are a mix of new and old, traditional and non-traditional, Bedouin and Palestinian.

Classes and Castes.

All social and political systems of Jordan are centered around extended patriarchal family units based on ancestry and wealth. Family units are often led by sheikhs whose rule depends on the size of their families, their wealth, and the will of their personalities. After the death of a sheikh, the eldest son ascends to the position of head of the family.

Symbols of Social Stratification.

The emerging modern Arab culture values a college education, Mercedes cars, and a home in an urban area as symbols of success. However, in traditional Arab culture, camel breeders are still considered to be highest on the social scale. Traditional clans consider anyone outside their clan to be inferior, so the tradition of only marrying a person from within their families continues.

Political Life

Government. Since 1951, Jordan has been a constitutional hereditary monarchy with a parliamentary form of government. It is politically stable, with freedom of religion, the press, and private property guaranteed. There is an ongoing program of democratization. In 1989 parliamentary elections were instituted, and since that time, martial law has been lifted and political parties have been legalized. Elections were held in 1993 and 1997.

Leadership and Political Officials.

In 1999, King Hussein, the longest-serving head of state in the world, died. Hussein's oldest son, Prince Abdullah, succeeded him. King Abdullah Ibn al-Hussein has indicated that he intends to follow his father's policies. He wields wide power over the government and appoints the prime minister.

Jordan's present legislative branch consists of an eighty-member elected Lower House and a forty-

member Upper House. After a bill is approved by the Lower House and Senate, it is given to the King, who either grants consent by Royal Decree or returns the bill unapproved. Jordan's Constitution guarantees an independent judicial branch, dividing the courts into three categories: civil, religious, and special courts. The Jordanian civil legal system has its foundations in the Code Napoléon, a French legal code.

Social Problems and Control.

Many of the country's laws are based on the Koran and the Hadith, a collection of Mohammed's sayings. These laws are enforced in religious courts called Sharia courts, which have jurisdiction over personal matters. Chastity is demanded of all single women. If a woman's chastity is compromised, a male relative may feel obligated to murder her to save the family's honor. When these cases go to court, often the charges are dropped or the murderer receives a short sentence. Jordan has a low crime rate by international standards, with few petty crimes such as robbery reported.

Military Activity.

Jordan maintains an army, an air force, and a small navy. The total strength of the armed forces in 1998 was 104,000 active members and 35,000 reserves. There is a paramilitary force that includes twenty thousand civil militia members and ten thousand public security officers. Jordan is a leader of peace efforts in the Middle East and is at peace with its neighbors.

Nongovernmental Organizations and Other Associations

Nongovernmental organizations are involved with the environment, women, children, and economic issues. The royal family is supportive of many charitable foundations. Thirty miles north of Amman, Jerash hosts an annual summer Festival of Culture and Arts administered by the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation. The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development has social development centers throughout the country that help women and children.

Gender Roles and Statuses

Division of Labor by Gender. Most women have their lives controlled by their closest male relatives. Despite the limitations placed on them, they have made advances in education in a country where the

practice of educating women only began three or four decades ago. Balancing customs and traditions at home with obedience to their husbands and the demands of a career remains a difficult challenge. When women work, they receive extensive benefits and sometimes equal pay. The 1997 census placed the proportion of women in the workforce at 14 percent, up from 8 percent in 1979. The unofficial unemployment rate for women is 65 percent.

The Relative Status of Women and Men. Sons are prized, and this status continues throughout adulthood. Most Muslim women cover their heads with scarves. A small minority cover their heads and faces with a veil. Segregation of the sexes occurs in all public situations, and there is limited interaction between men and women. It is common for women to eat apart from men in restaurants. Unless they are married or related, men and women do not sit together on public transportation.

Marriage, Family, and Kinship

Marriage. Getting married and having children are top priorities. Most marriages are arranged by the father of the bride. Often cousins marry each other, and the couple may barely know each other until the engagement is announced. The wedding has two celebrations: an engagement party and a wedding party. After the engagement party, the process of dating and getting to know each other begins. After the engaged woman and man have signed the papers at the engagement party, they are legally married. If they choose not to proceed, even though they have not lived together, they must divorce. Brides must be virgins on the wedding night. After marriage, every aspect of a woman's life is dictated by her husband. She cannot obtain a passport or travel outside the country without his written approval. At any time, a husband may take another wife. Polygamy with up to four wives is legal. Divorce is legal. When there is a divorce, custody of the children automatically goes to the father, and for this reason, women choose to remain in a marriage even when there are other wives. Divorced women are viewed as outcasts.

Domestic Unit. The typical family is extended, with family size decreasing since 1979 to about six members per family. The scarcity of natural resources, especially the chronic shortage of water, makes population control vital. To slow the rapid growth rate, birth spacing programs have increased awareness of the benefits of family planning, and many wives now use contraceptives.

Inheritance.

Inheritance is guided by Islamic law. A woman receives half the amount that a man receives.

Kin Groups.

Kinship relationships are patriarchal. Extended family ties govern social relationships and tribal organization.

Socialization

Infant Care. Women are primary caregivers for infants and small children. After the first son is born, the father and mother take the name of the son. If the son's name is Mohammed, the father becomes Abu Mohammed, meaning "father of Mohammed," and the mother becomes Om Mohammed, or "mother of Mohammed."

Child Rearing and Education.

Children love to belly-dance with people watching and clapping their hands and women making a vocal expression by moving their tongues rapidly back and forth between their lips. Primary education is free and compulsory, starting at the age of six years until a child is sixteen years old. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees provides schooling for Palestinian refugees. Outside the classroom, children participate in few activities away from the family.

Higher Education.

All students are required to take an extensive examination called Tawjehieh before graduating from secondary school and as a prerequisite for entering universities and colleges. The top male and female students attend state universities and numerous private colleges. The literacy rate is over 86 percent.

Etiquette

Greetings and farewells are lengthy and sincere. Even answering a telephone involves saying "how are you?" in several different ways. Visitors and/or friends frequently are invited into homes for dinner, where they are showered with kindness and food. Women dress modestly and often are offended by

exposed flesh. Most Muslims do not drink alcohol. Shoes are always removed before entering a mosque, and this custom extends to homes as well. Shib-shibs (flip-flop sandals) are always put on before entering a bathroom, the feet and are never put on a coffee table, footstool, or desk. It is forbidden and disrespectful to expose the bottoms of the feet. Same-sex friends hold hands, hug, and kiss in public, but there is limited touching between men and women. A man does not shake hands with a woman unless she offers her hand first.

Religion

Religious Beliefs. The state religion is Muslim, as indicated in the constitution. Ninety percent of the population adheres to the Sunni branch. About 6 percent of the people are Christian.

Religious Practitioners. Imams, leaders of prayer in a Muslim mosque, hold an important role in this Muslim country. In most smaller and rural communities they are the political leaders as well.

Rituals and Holy Places.

Jordan has a rich religious history. For Jews and Christians, it is part of the Holy Land, sacred for its connection to the Jewish patriarchs Abraham and Moses, as well as Christian biblical figures such as John the Baptist. Jordan is equally important in the history of Islam, as many tombs of Prophet Mohammed's companions are located in Jordan. Jordan is where the non-Arab world first contacted Islam more than fifteen hundred years ago.

One of the five essential Pillars practiced by Muslims is the recitation of prayers five times a day. Calls to prayers are announced publicly by mosques and can be heard throughout the nation. The devout unroll a small prayer rug and face Mecca to pray. Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is a time of fasting from sunrise until sunset. Most public restaurants do not open for business until just before sunset. Throughout Ramadan and the celebration commemorating its end, of families mark the occasion with large feasts and special sweets. Another Pillar of Islam is the Hajj, the holy pilgrimage made at least once during a lifetime to Mecca. Many pilgrims travel through Jordan on the way to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

Medicine and Health Care

Excellent medical care is available, especially in Amman. For the typical family, finding the money to pay for medical insurance and preventive care is difficult. Life expectancy is sixty-seven years for men and seventy years for women. Most children are fully immunized.

Secular Celebrations

Jordanians follow the Islamic calendar. National holidays include Arbor Day (15 January), Arab League Day (22 March), and Independence Day (25 May). Religious holidays include Id al-Fitr (the end of Ramadan), Id al-Adha (the Feast of the Sacrifice), the Islamic New Year, the birthday of Mohammed, and Leilat al-Meiraj (the Ascension of Mohammed).

The Arts and Humanities

Support for the Arts. In 2000, King Abdullah ordered that government workers be given Fridays and Saturdays off, hoping they would find time to develop new interests and travel to sites such as Petra. The government promotes cultural festivals, encourages the revival of handicrafts, and takes steps to preserve the country's archaeological and historical heritage.

Literature.

The country's most famous poet is Mustafa Wahbi al-Tal, who is among the major Arab poets of the twentieth century. Al-Tal was a political and social activist who devoted twenty years of his life to regaining the rights of gypsies and became a member of the gypsy community.

Graphic Arts.

Folk art survives in tapestries, leather crafts, pottery, and ceramics. Wool and goat hair rugs with colorful tribal designs are manufactured.

Performance Arts.

Popular culture takes the form of songs, ballads, and storytelling. Villagers have special songs for births, weddings, funerals, planting, plowing, and harvesting.

The State of the Physical and Social Sciences

Since the 1960s, a number of higher learning institutions have opened in Jordan, foremost among them the University of Jordan (1962) in Amman, Yarmouk University (1976) in Irbid, and Jordanian University Science and Technology (1996) in Irbid. These centers are recognized for their Islam, Arabic language, and Middle East peace and conflict studies.

THE 7 BIGGEST DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WESTERN AND JORDANIAN CULTURES

1. Clothing in the Jordanian Culture

Photo: Lauras Eye

It's pretty obvious that clothing is a major difference in culture. Especially with locals and tourists, different ways of clothing often lead to misunderstandings. If you show too much skin it can come across as disrespectful and offensive in Jordan.

You will also notice that Jordanians pay more attention to dress well than people in the West. You would rarely see someone walking down the street in scruffy looking clothes! In Jordan, both men and women, expose as little skin as possible and always cover upper arms.

2. Culture around invitations

Here is something worth knowing: When being offered something, it is actually considered polite to refuse a few times before accepting!

If you genuinely don't want to accept, this is a way of saying no in a socially acceptable way. With a big smile and right hand over your heart saying 'shukran shukran' (which means 'thank you, thank you'). Although, you might have to say this a few times due to the ritual of polite insistence...

A tip for female travelers in Jordan: If you're happen to be invited to a local family for dinner, it might be handy to wear trousers instead of skirts or low cut waists. Also bring a scarf with you. Most of the people sit on the ground to eat and you need to bend over to reach the food. On this way you're sure to not show any cleavage, whether it's on the front or the back! Jordanians also eat with their right hand, as the left one is for the toilet. You might want to do the same if you don't want people looking at you in a confused way 😊

Another cultural difference exists around gift giving: Be aware when complimenting someone's possessions. As opposed to in the West, if you show interest in an object your host is supposed to give it to you!

3. Interactions between men and women

Men and women interact very differently with each other in Jordanian and Western culture. Public displays of affection between a man and a woman like holding hands or kissing are not recommended, even if the couple is married. Though you see more couples holding hands these days, a kiss on the lips

is still kept for inside the house.

It is less known that Islamic women cannot interact freely with men outside their direct family (e.g. father, brother, closest cousins). Therefore, it is also common for a man to only greet the husband. Greeting the wife could be interpreted as showing too much interest.

Tip for male travelers: A woman might place a hand on her heart when greeting you, which means that she would not like to shake hands with a strange man.

A tip for female travelers: You might automatically look everyone in the eyes at home. It's considered a sign of honesty in the West. Though, in the Middle East it might be considered as an invitation to something more than that!

4. Status of women

You will notice a big difference regarding the status of women in Jordan and in Western countries. In the Middle East, most women are staying at home, taking care of the family and children instead of having a career of their own. However, many women actually go to university (and even more so than boys) but once married don't work in their profession.

Motives of decision making are also different, with the Western culture being more individualistically oriented. Jordanian women, on the other hand, are more focused and make decisions based on the collective interest of the family.

In order to empower more women to work and to be self-sustainable, we organize different activities around Jordan. If you are interested, consider joining one of our excursions to the Iraq Al Amir Women Cooperative Society in Amman or the Looming Ladies of Udruth in Petra. The women there have numerous skills to teach you, like producing soap or Bedouin weaving! Click here for more info: <https://in2jordan.com/tours/workshops-in-jordan/>

5. Customs around social interaction

Photo: petergustafson9

Jordanians are very energetic with regards to social interaction. Even if they are strangers they will hang around for a chat and exchange opinions. Westerners, who are not used to lengthy conversations with strangers, can often come across as cold or uninterested if not being too chatty when in a shop, for example.

So, when travelling in Jordan, have a chat with shopkeepers, they are genuinely interested where you come from.

Jordanians also shake hands more often – also with strangers. You'll notice that sometimes Jordanians also shake hands with each other while in conversation when agreeing on something or joking around.

6. Muslim men can have up to four wives

In Jordan, Muslim men are allowed to have up to 4 wives – unimaginable in Western culture! Still, in Jordan polygamy is restricted and the first wife has to give her consent. It is not very common anymore, though.

7. Family is important

Family is very important in Jordanian culture. Here, people like to stay close to their family and relatives, and daily visits are not uncommon. If the family is not in close proximity, you'll see a lot of people talking on the phone or Skype to their relatives, sometimes for hours or while doing other things. Respect for the elderly is also a big part of the culture, as well as taking care of parents when they grow old.

History

c. 9000 BCE

City of Jericho founded in region of Jordan.

c. 7000 BCE - c. 5000 BCE

Community of Ain Ghazal flourishes in Jordan.

c. 2334 BCE - c. 2100 BCE

Region of Jordan part of the Akkadian Empire.

c. 2000 BCE

Arrival of the Hyksos in Jordan.

c. 1570 BCE

Hyksos driven from Jordan by the Egyptians.

1458 BCE - 1425 BCE

Region of Jordan flourishes under reign of Egyptian pharaoh Thutmose III.

c. 1200 BCE

Invasion of Jordan region by the Sea Peoples.

c. 1115 BCE - 612 BCE

Jordan is part of the Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian Empire.

549 BCE - 330 BCE

Jordan is part of the Achaemenid Empire of the Persians.

331 BCE - 323 BCE

Jordan taken by Alexander the Great in his conquest of Persia.

c. 175 BCE - 164 BCE

Foundation of Hellenistic Jerash in Jordan.

c. 168 BCE - 106 CE

The Kingdom of Nabatea flourishes in region of modern-day Jordan.

129 BCE - 102 BCE

Jerash in Jordan, is ruled by successive warlord-kings.

c. 99 BCE - 63 BCE

Jerash in Jordan is ruled by the Hasmonean Kingdom.

63 BCE

Jerash in Jordan becomes part of the Roman province of Syria.

106 CE - c. 634 CE

Jordan is part of the Roman Empire.

106 CE

Jerash in Jordan becomes part of the Roman province of Arabia.

129 CE - 130 CE

Roman emperor Hadrian visits Jerash in Jordan, a visit commemorated by a triumphal arch.

c. 375 CE - c. 425 CE

Reign of Queen Mavia of the Tanukhids in the regions of Syria and ancient Jordan.

454 CE

The Roman Baths of Flaccus at Jerash in Jordan are constructed.

c. 535 CE

A new theatre is built at Byzantine Jerash in Jordan.

600 CE

Jerash in Jordan has 15 churches.

c. 611 CE

Last Christian inscription at Jerash, Jordan.

629 CE

Battle of Mu'tah: Muslims attempt to capture the village east of the Jordan River from the Byzantine Empire to show their expanding dominance, resulting in a Muslim defeat.

c. 634 CE - c. 638 CE

Muslim Conquest of Levant; Arabs take Jordan from Rome.

636 CE

Jerash in Jordan is conquered by the Arabs.

661 CE - 750 CE

Jordan is part of the Umayyad Empire.

734 CE

Palace of Khirbat Al Mafjar is built by Walid Ibn Yazid near Jericho in the Jordan Valley.