



## LIFESTYLE HOLIDAYS – JORDAN

### Jordan Mountain Biking Tour – 10 days ex Madaba



This is an exciting biking journey through an ancient land rich in culture, full of history, fascinating natural wonders and archaeological treasures. We ride off-road tracks parallel to the ancient Kings' Highway - the world's oldest trade caravan route. We'll take in many of the 'must see' locations and experience its warm and traditional hospitality, including feasting on a Bedouin Zarb (a special meal of meat and vegetable cooked under the sand in the desert). We will be supported by 4x4 vehicles available throughout 99% of the riding time and accompanied by our English speaking cycling and support guide throughout the trip. We'll visit the spiritual site of Mount Nebo and experience the stunning views across to the 'Promised Land' before descending to the shores of the Dead Sea - an incredible 400 meters below sea level! We'll take time for a buoyancy experience in what is one of the most spectacular natural and spiritual landscapes in the world. We then traverse one of the longest canyons in Jordan before arriving at the mountain plateau of Dana where the magnificent panorama includes the Wadi Araba desert below. We then descend to explore the splendours of Petra - one of the world's most unique heritage site. We'll ride through the "vast echoing and God-like" desert of Wadi Rum and experience first-hand the nomadic life of the Bedouin and their pleasant hospitality while camping in Bedouin tents made of goat hair. We'll complete our tour with a cool dip in the Red Sea, the opportunity to snorkel over coral reefs or simply relax on the beach and a well-earned drink!

**Jordan is a Kingdom steeped in history and culture** - From the moment you arrive, you get a sense of its rich heritage, all around are remnants of ancient civilizations long since passed, yet they still remain, stamped into the very fabric of this amazing Kingdom and etched into the soul of the people who live here.

**Riding to suit everyone** - Mountain biking is definitely another unique way to experience Jordan's magnificent landscapes and nature beauty. Almost all (99%) of the riding is fully-supported and there offering opportunities to sit out rides or extend the daily riding for those who want more!

**Great accommodation** - On this tour you'll experience a variety of accommodation, from the luxury of a five star hotel, resorts and exclusive camps and lodges. You'll dine on local delicious Jordanian cuisine which shares many of its characteristics with Middle Eastern food

## Tour Itinerary

### Day 1. Arrival in Madaba

Today is arrival day and there are no activities planned apart from a group meeting in the evening (typically at 4pm). At the group meeting your tour leader will brief you through the itinerary, answer questions and make sure you are fully prepared to start the next day. We head to one of our favourite local restaurants in Madaba for a welcome dinner and an opportunity to experience some of Jordan's delicious cuisine.

**Accommodation: Hotel**

**Meals: Dinner**

**No cycling**

### Day 2. Madaba, Mount Nebo & Mukawir

Madaba is famous for its exquisite 6th-century mosaics. Its history dates back at least 3500 years. We'll take the opportunity this morning to walk around this little town and visit the Church of St. George in the middle of town. The church is the home of the Mosaic Map of Palestine, which represents the Holy Land and its surrounding regions. The mosaic was made around 560 CE, originally composed of over 2.3 million pieces, and measured a staggering 25 by 5 meters. You can also visit the Mosaic School and the Archeological Museum. A short drive then takes us to Mount Nebo, known as Pisgah in the Bible, is where the Bible says Moses lived out his remaining days and viewed the Promised Land which he would never enter (Deuteronomy 34: 1-8). Mount Nebo offers a fantastic view westward, with a vista that includes the Dead Sea, the West Bank, the Jordan River, and, on a clear day, Bethlehem and Jerusalem. After exploring Mount Nebo, we head to our bikes store—located next to Mount Nebo—where you shall choose a suitable bike and helmet and get ready to start with our biking journey. The first stage of today's ride will take us south between little villages and farms to reach Ma'in village then turn east to connect with the Kings Highway after 11 km.



The King's Highway twists and winds its way through the heart of Jordan, connecting Madaba, Karak, Tafleh, Shobak and Petra. It is the world's oldest continuously used communication route, and is mentioned early in the Bible. In Numbers 20, Moses requests the king of Edom to allow his people to "travel along the king's highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory." Although we call it a highway, but it is actually a local road—2 sides of 1 lane each, with relatively low traffic. After 20 km, we reach Libb junction. Leaving the King's Highway behind, we ride west for another 16 km on a hilly narrow road through the villages of Bani Hamida to reach the hill of King Herod's palace remains where John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded. There we take a short hike to the top of the hill and enjoy a wonderful panorama for the Dead Sea. We then go to the nearby village of Mukawir where we get hosted by a local family over lunch—a great opportunity for a genuine local interaction opportunity. This is part of our responsible tourism programs to support the local communities at the places we visit. We then ride downhill a 1000 meters to spend the night by the Dead Sea—the lowest spot on earth.

**Accommodation: Hotel**

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

**Cycling: 78km / 48, 5hrs riding**

### **Day 3. The Dead Sea & Karak Crusader Castle**

This morning you have the opportunity to enjoy the Dead Sea's special buoyancy experience.

The Dead Sea is famous geographically as "the lowest point on earth," lying some 400 meters below sea level. It is 75 km long and from 6 to 16 km wide. It is fed by the Jordan River, but it has no outlet. As its name suggests, the Dead Sea is entirely devoid of plant and animal life. This is due to an extremely high content of salt and other minerals—350 grams of salt per kilogram of water, as compared to about 40 grams in the world's oceans. This concentration is caused by a rapid rate of evaporation. These natural elements give the waters of the Dead Sea certain curative properties, recognized since the days of Herod the Great over 2000 years ago. We then mount our bikes and cycle south by the Dead Sea on the Dead Sea route for the next 50 km. We'll choose a convenient spot to have a picnic lunch and rest before we start the 25 km climb to reach Karak Crusader Castle at the top of the Eastern Plateau (from 310 below sea level to 800m above sea). This is a good challenge for those who seek it, but if you don't feel such a long uphill is for you, we will be happy to give you a lift—no worries at all. Upon reaching Karak, we check in a hotel for and rest, have dinner and why not go for a walk in the old part of town.

**Accommodation: Hotel**

**Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

**Cycling: 71km / 44mi, 6hrs riding**



### **Day 4. Wadi Hasa to Dana Nature Reserve**

This morning we shall explore Karak Crusaders Castle. Karak had been a prized possession of a number of civilizations and was the capital of the Crusaders. The magnificent Crusader fortress of Karak, which made Karak the new capital of the province; superbly situated on the King's Highway where it could control all traffic from north and south and grow rich by the imposition of road-tolls. This castle soars above its valleys and hills like a great ship riding waves of rock; an excellent example of the Crusaders' architectural military genius. Leaving Karak on the Jordanian Eastern Plateau riding on Kings Highway again (very low traffic) passing agricultural fields, ruins and several small villages to reach Al Hasa canyon received with amazing views of its landscape. We make our descent into the wadi's belly before we start the 800 m climb over the next 22 km to reach the top of Al Hasa Canyon's southern bank. The ride is fully supported by a 4x4 vehicle, so at anytime if you feel you've had enough biking we are there for you. We then choose a good spot to have a nice picnic lunch before we transfer 37km (avoiding Tafila town) to Dana village on the edge of Wadi Dana – the main wadi system of Dana Biosphere Reserve. We'll have the opportunity to enjoy the fascinating nature surrounding the village on a self-guided trail. Dana Biosphere Reserve is Jordan's largest nature reserve, covering some 320 square kilometers of spectacular mountains and wadis along the face of the Great Rift Valley. From scorching sand dunes in the west to cool mountain tops in the east, the Dana Biosphere Reserve is home to a great variety of wildlife. There are plants and animals characteristic of true desert, of Mediterranean forests and of the dry plains of Russia. In fact, Dana is really a melting pot of species from three continents: Europe, Africa and Asia. The Dana Village area, overlooking the scenic Wadi Dana, has been occupied since about 4000 BC. Archaeological evidence indicates that Palaeolithic, Egyptian, Nabatean,

and Roman civilisations have been drawn to the area by the fertile soil, water springs, and strategic location. Today, Dana Village is inhabited mostly by clans of the “Al Ata’ata” tribe, which settled in the area during the Ottoman period, about four hundred years ago, and built the present village. Over the years, many of the families in Dana Village have moved to the nearby village of Qadissiya, in search of better jobs, schools, and housing.

**Accommodation: Hotel                      Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner                      Cycling: 57km / 35mi, 4.5hrs riding**

**Day 5.                      Shobak Castle & Wadi Araba Scenic Trail**

This morning, we’ll proceed riding on the Kings Highway towards Shobak and stop enroute to explore the remains of Shobak Castle –another castle in the great chain of Crusader fortresses which stretches across Jordan. The stronghold, known as Mount Realis (Montreal), was constructed in 1115 CE by Baldwin I. We ride further through two small villages connected with a challenging climb to reach the beginning of a charming off-road track that contours around the edge of the Eastern Plateau and owns magnificent views to the breath-taking Wadi Araba Desert. The route is highly rewarding and includes some challenging climbs. The ride is fully supported by a 4x4 vehicle, so at anytime if you feel you’ve had enough biking we are there for you. Then we’ll have the two options—those who fancy single tracks can accompany our guide on a single trail descend down to Beidha and those who would rather enjoy a relaxed descend and enjoy the beautiful rock domes view of Beidha can accompany our support vehicle on-road. Both routes end at Little Petra with a chance to explore the site, before we head to the nearby Wadi Musa - the Valley of Moses. This little town is just a couple of minutes from the Petra and it is our base for exploring the remarkable rose-hued ruins.

**Accommodation: Hotel    Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner                      Cycling: 70km / 43mi, 6hrs riding**



**Day 6.                      Petra**

On the morning of day 6, we make our entrance to Petra accompanied by a local tour guide who will give us a brief of the history of the hidden city through the Siq (gorge) to the Treasury monument and further down to the Basin of the magnificent city. After that you are on your own to explore as you like. Your tour guide will be able to recommend sites to visit in Petra. Petra is one of the world's heritage sites and one of the world's new wonders. An ancient rock city was the capital of the Nabatean Kingdom. Built around 2,300 years ago, the imposing rose-stone palaces are an impressive testament to the power and influence of the Nabateans, who controlled trade around the area in the 3rd century BC. Petra is surrounded by hills in which tombs have been carved into the pink sandstone. The site includes some 800 structures. The Victorian traveler and poet Dean Burgon gave Petra a description which holds to this day -"Match me such a marvel save in Eastern clime, a rose-red city half as old as time." Yet words can hardly do justice to the magnificence that is Petra.

**Accommodation: Hotel    Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner                      Cycling: Optional riding**

**Day 7. Petra to Wadi Rum across the Desert**

On Kings Highway again this morning we take a short transfer to Rajif at 1565 m, mount our bikes and ride down to Delagha village then connect with an off-road desert track and head southeast through an amazing desert landscapes and passing by scattered Bedouin camps towards Old Humaimah—and old caravans station, where we stop for lunch and rest. We then proceed our ride until we reach the desert highway where we meet our van and transfer to Rum Bedouin village where we shall meet our Bedouin host and transfer by jeeps into the heart of Wadi Rum Protected Area to settle down at our Bedouin campsite, watch an enchanting sunset and feast on a well-deserved 'Zarb' - a traditional Bedouin dish of meat and vegetables cooked underneath the desert's sand, and a night under the Milky Way. Wadi Rum is a valley cut into the sandstone and granite rock in south-west Jordan. It has been inhabited by many human cultures since prehistoric times and is dotted with massive rock formations. It is virtually untouched by humanity and its destructive forces. Here, it is the weather and winds that have carved the imposing, towering skyscrapers, so elegantly described by T.E. Lawrence as "vast, echoing and god-like". Much of David Lean's Lawrence of Arabia was filmed in Wadi Rum.

**Accommodation: Bedouin Campsite Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner Cycling: 55km / 34mi, 5hrs riding**



**Day 8. Experience Wadi Rum Desert and Ride Through the Charming Mudflats of Disi**

After breakfast we'll accompany our Bedouin host on a tour around this beautiful desert. We'll be going on a jeep tour and taking little pleasant hikes. We'll also stop at the big sand dune for an opportunity to take off our shoes and run down it's soft sand—sounds childish, but lots of fun. We then look for a shaded spot by the foot of some mountain and have some lunch and a desert siesta, before we head to the mudflats of Disi—a vast flat area surrounded by amazing sandstone formations—where we set off on a charming bike ride and enjoy the beautiful scenery of the colorful sandstone massive desert mountains. After another magical sunset, we return to our Bedouin campsite to spend another peaceful desert night.

**Accommodation: Bedouin Campsite Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner Cycling: 50km / 31mi**

**Day 9. Aqaba - The Red Sea**

This morning we say good bye to our Bedouin friend and transfer down to one of Aqaba's top south beach resorts for an opportunity to experience the pleasant waters of the Red Sea—whether you'd like to swim, snorkel or just relax on the beach with a cold drink in hand, the choice is yours. In the evening, why not go for a walk in Aqaba downtown and gather over a nice farewell dinner at one of Aqaba favorite traditional restaurants.

**Accommodation: Hotel**

**Meals: Breakfast**

**No Cycling**

**Day 10. Departure Day**

Free day in Aqaba. A group airport transfer will be arranged depending on the flight schedule. The ride from Aqaba to the Airport in Amman is a 3 hour drive.

**Meals: Breakfast**

**No Cycling**

## Tour Information



### Included in the tour price:

- 9 nights in a variety of accommodation including 5\* to 3\* hotel, basic lodge and Bedouin Camp (based on twin share)
- All meals as indicated in itinerary
- A 4x4 support vehicle
- Experienced English speaking cycling guide and support guide
- Local guide at Petra and local Bedouin guide in Wadi Rum
- Entrance fees: Mosaic Map Church, Archaeological Park, Mount Nebo, Mukawir, Karak Castle, Petra 1 day pass, Wadi Rum and private beach facilities in Aqaba
- Water and fruit during cycling

### Tour Grade

This tour is graded 5/6 active (on a scale of 1-10 with 9/10 being extreme).

### Not Included:

- Drinks & personal snack bars (e.g. Power Bar, etc.)
- Travel insurance
- Bike Hire
- Laundry
- Passport or travel visa requirements
- Single accommodation supplement

### Recreational Riders & Sightseeing Passengers:

Whilst this tour is graded moderate, we are happy to cater to a small number of recreational riders who may wish to take part with shorter daily rides. We also welcome limited numbers of non-riders on our tours. If you are keen to experience South Africa, but prefer to do this on four wheels rather than two, please do not hesitate to check our availability on your departure of choice.