

JORDAN

Jordan officially the [Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan](#), is an [Arab](#) country in [Southwest Asia](#) spanning the southern part of the [Syrian Desert](#) down to the [Gulf of Aqaba](#). It shares borders with [Syria](#) to the north, [Iraq](#) to the north-east, the [West Bank](#) and [Israel](#) to the west, and [Saudi Arabia](#) to the east and south.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy with representative government. The reigning monarch is the head of state, the chief executive and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The king exercises his executive authority through the prime ministers and the Council of Ministers, or cabinet. The cabinet, meanwhile, is responsible before the elected House of Deputies which, along with the House of Notables (Senate), constitutes the legislative branch of the government.

History

Jordan is a young state with a long history. Born out of the ruins of WWII, the modern state and its territory east of the Jordan River can claim to have hosted some of the oldest civilisations in the world.

Ancient history

Evidence of human habitation in the area dates back about 500, 000 years, when the climate of the [Middle East](#) was considerably milder and wetter than today. Archaeological finds from [Jericho](#) (on the other side of the Jordan River, in the Palestinian Territories) and Al-Beidha (near Petra) date from around 9000 BC and can rank among the world's first cities, whose inhabitants lived in circular houses, bred domestic animals, made pottery, practised a form of ancestor worship and used sophisticated agricultural methods.

The Early Bronze Age (3000-2100 BC) also saw the occupation of the Jordan Valley by the Canaanites, a Semitic tribe. Along with other tribes in the area, the Canaanites raised defensive walls against invaders, creating a string of emerging city states. Trade gradually developed with neighbouring powers in [Syria](#), Palestine and [Egypt](#).

The decline of Egyptian influence (though artistic influence continued) around 1500-1200 BC, created opportunities for nearby tribes, such as the Hebrew-speaking people who later known as the Israelites. The innovation of the camel saddle in the middle of the first millennium BC gave a huge technological boost to the native peoples of the Arabian Peninsula.

However, in about 850 BC the now-divided Israelite empire was defeated by Mesha, king of [Moab](#), who recorded his victories on the famous Mesha Stele in the Moabite capital of Dhiban. In 586 BC the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar sacked [Jerusalem](#) and deported the exiled Israelites to Babylon.

Geography

Jordan is a [Southwest Asian](#) country, bordered by [Syria](#) to the north, [Iraq](#) to the northeast, [Saudi Arabia](#) to the east and south and [Israel](#) to the west. All these border lines add up to 1,619 km (1,006 mi). The [Gulf of Aqaba](#) and the [Dead Sea](#) also touch the country, and thus Jordan has a coastline of 26 km (16 mi).

Jordan consists of arid [forest](#) plateau in the east irrigated by oasis and seasonal water streams, with highland area in the west of arable land and Mediterranean evergreen forestry. The [Great Rift Valley](#) of the [Jordan River](#) separates Jordan, the west bank and Israel. The highest point in the country is [Jabal Umm al Damj](#), it is 1,854 m (6,083 ft) above sea level, its top is also covered with snow, while the lowest is the [Dead Sea](#) –420 m (–1,378 ft). Jordan is part of a region considered to be "the [cradle of civilization](#)", the [Levant](#) region of the [Fertile Crescent](#).

Climate

Climate in Jordan is conditioned partly by altitude, with the lowest areas such as the Jordan Valley and Gulf of [Aqaba](#) suffering from the worst summer heat and humidity. The higher central and northern areas, in contrast, can be quite cold in winter (November to February).

Population 6,342,948

Currency: 1 Jordan dinar = 1,000 fils

Getting there and around

Most visitors come to Jordan as part of a jaunt around the [Middle East](#). [Amman](#) is well connected with most cities in the [Middle East](#) and [Europe](#), but no airline has direct flights between [Amman](#) and [Canada](#), [Australia](#) or [New Zealand](#), and there are very few direct services between [Amman](#) and the [USA](#). The overland borders between Jordan and [Israel](#) & the Palestinian Territories, and Jordan and [Syria](#) are popular and generally trouble-free, though you'll have to consider the implications of a trip to [Israel](#) & the Palestinian Territories if headed on to some other states in the [Middle East](#). The ferry trip to [Egypt](#) is another popular option

. Jordan is so small that you can drive from the Syrian border in the north to the Saudi border in the south in just over five hours. There is only one domestic flight ([Amman](#) to [Aqaba](#)) and no internal public train service, so public transport here comprises of buses/minibuses, service taxis and private taxis.

Where public transport is limited or nonexistent, hitching is a common way of getting around. Hiring a car is a popular, if more expensive, alternative. Chartering a service taxi (white) or private taxi (yellow) is another alternative, and having a driver will take the hassle out of driving, although the cost will vary depending on your bargaining skills.

Public minibuses and, to a lesser extent, public buses are the normal form of transport for locals and visitors.

The two largest cities, [Amman](#) and [Irbid](#), have efficient and cheap public bus networks, but few have destination signs in English (although some have 'English' numbers), there are no schedules or timetables available and local bus stations are often chaotic. Service taxis are much more useful and still cheap.

More information

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