



# JORDAN THROUGH THE AGES - NORTH TO SOUTH

April 06 - April 23, 2025

Organized by Dr. Barbara A. Porter, Archaeologist and  
Former Director of ACOR Jordan

*Spiekermann Travel, Inc. is hosting the following study program in Jordan in 2025 to be led by Barbara A. Porter, who was director of ACOR (American Center of Research) in Jordan from 2006 to 2020. ACOR will be your base in Amman. Group discussions will be fostered on a regular basis and bus time will allow for sharing of information. Lectures will take place in the evening at ACOR. Spiekermann Travel can arrange trips in the region both before and after the Jordan sojourn and assist with travel arrangements when you book for this study tour through them. You might consider hiking on the Jordan Trail before.*

*ACOR was founded in 1968 and has grown with Amman through the decades. Its permanent headquarters were completed in 1986 and encompass offices, a major research library, conservation labs, and storage space for archaeological material, and a hostel which will be your home away from home. The library of some 40,000 volumes concerned with Jordan and the region from ancient to modern times is available to all residents at all times and a reading shelf for the tour will be set up with recommended books. Evening meals in Amman will be at ACOR where the program of the day can be discussed and plans for the next day reviewed.*

*The local guide will accompany us on all excursions and provide many insights into the country and its people. We will ensure that you have the chance to meet with individuals involved in preserving Jordan's past as well as those involved in current issues.*

**Ihab Zaki**  
**Managing Director**

**Sunday, April 06**

**Arrive in Amman (JORDAN)**



Upon arrival at **Queen Alia Airport** in Amman, meet and transfer to ACOR in Tla Ali ([www.acorjordan.org](http://www.acorjordan.org)) for check-in. ACOR (American Center of Research, formerly American Center of Oriental Research in Amman) is a purpose-built building that opened in 1986 across from the University of Jordan. Barbara Porter was ACOR director from 2006 to 2020 and lived on the premises. From 2020 to 2022, there was a major renovation project to modernize the building.

**Note: Standard check-in time is 3:00 pm. If you arrive on April 05 or early morning of April 06; an extra hotel night needs to be booked.**

**Monday, April 07**

**Amman (Downtown)**



Begin the day at the **Jordan Museum** in downtown (the Balad) of Amman, known as "Rabbath Ammon" in the Iron Age and Philadelphia in Hellenistic and Roman times when it was one of the Decapolis cities. Afterwards we plan to visit the **Roman Theater** and its ethnographic museums and pass by the restored **Nymphaeum**. We also intend to visit the **Duke's Diwan**, a meeting place in a heritage structure built in 1924, which once served as the Central Post Office. Mamdouh Bisharat, whom we hope to meet to discuss preservation issues, maintains it. Also included is a brief stop at the adjacent souks (gold, textiles etc.). After lunch at **Wild Jordan**, headquarters of the **RSCN** (Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, [www.rscn.org.jo](http://www.rscn.org.jo)), we shall visit some galleries and nearby shops off Rainbow Street. The day will end on the **Amman Citadel** with its multiple levels spanning prehistory to the early Islamic Umayyad period as also reflected in the **Archaeological Museum**, the **Roman Temple** restored by ACOR in the 1990s, and the early Islamic **Umayyad Palace Complex**, which was the focus of a Spanish archaeological mission. Enjoy an **evening orientation**, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Tuesday, April 08**

**Jerash - Ajlun**



Begin the day with a drive to **Jerash (ancient Gerasa)**, an amazing Decapolis city, just 31 miles north of Amman. A full site tour will encompass Roman period structures (hippodrome, theaters, markets, temples etc.) and Byzantine churches, as well as the site museums (old and new) with objects uncovered from more than one hundred years of excavation, including some spectacular recent finds of Roman marble sculptures. For lunch we plan to eat at the RSCN Rangers Lodge in Ajlun as designed by architect Ammar Khammash and afterwards visit **Ajlun Castle**, a 12<sup>th</sup> century Islamic fortress. Return to ACOR for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Wednesday, April 09**

**Amman (North Tour)**



Begin the day with a drive to **Irbid**, the third largest city in Jordan, and visit the **Darat as Saraya Museum** founded by the Department of Antiquities in 2005 as an archaeological museum displaying exclusively excavated objects and placed in a grand Ottoman courtyard building. We will then head to the site of **Umm Qais (ancient Gadara)** overlooking the Golan Heights. An Ottoman village covers the ancient tell, and Roman & Byzantine ruins are to be seen as well as a small site museum in an Ottoman home. If they are open, we will explore the **underground water tunnels** cleared by the German excavators. Lunch will be at the Umm Qais Rest House, built in the early 1990s as part of an ACOR project funded by USAID with architect Ammar Khammash. We will drive back to Amman via the Jordan Valley and stop at the Rest House at **Pella** (another ACOR project) to get a sense of this major multi-period site excavated by an Australian team for more than 40 years. Return to Amman via the Jordan Valley passing many tells (archaeological mounds) and return to ACOR for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, April 10

Amman (Madaba & Mt. Nebo)



Begin the day with a visit to **Tall Hisban** en route to **Madaba** where the visit will encompass the famous Church of the Map (**Saint George's Orthodox Church**) and the **Madaba Archaeological Park** (East and West) set up by ACOR in the 1990s with USAID funding. The western part is now being developed as a future museum above the **Burnt Palace** as part of the Madaba Regional Museum Project ([www.madabamuseum.org](http://www.madabamuseum.org)). There will be time to wander around to shop or explore the underground tunnels below the **Cathedral** and visit the **Madaba Museum**, refurbished as a storage facility for the many objects excavated in the Madaba Plains Region. Enjoy lunch at Haret Jdoudna, an example of Ottoman period vernacular architecture. Then continue the drive to **Mt. Nebo** and the **Memorial of Moses** under the protection of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum and afterwards visit the **Church of St. Lot and Procopius at Khirbet Mukhayyat**. Return to ACOR for dinner and overnight. (B,L,D)

Friday, April 11

Amman (Rihab & Umm al Jimal)



Journey northeast towards **Umm al Jimal**. En route, visit the Byzantine churches at **Rihab**, recently conserved by a UNESCO project with German Jordan University. Then proceed to **Umm al Jimal**, where members of the local group Hand by Hand will conduct the tour and arrange lunch for us cooked by women from the town. This site is a well-preserved Byzantine town built on Nabataean and Roman foundations and inhabited into the Umayyad period and settled by Druze families in the early 20th century. For some fifty years, Calvin University with the Department of Antiquities has been involved with the site. In recent years, the focus has been on preservation and site management, including a site museum (see [www.ummeljimal.org](http://www.ummeljimal.org)). Have some time to explore the extensive site on your own. Return to ACOR for dinner, talk, and overnight. (B,L,D)

Saturday, April 12

Amman (Eastern Desert Castles)



Begin the day with a visit to **Qasr Hallabat** and its bath complex at **Hammam as Sarab** restored by a Spanish mission and then other significant Umayyad period (7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> century) complexes displaying a wide variety of architectural forms, including **Quseir Amra** with its marvelous wall paintings partly restored by an Italian team with World Monument Fund support, and **Azraq**, made of locally quarried basalt, which makes the fortress darker than the others, and is famous for its ties to T. E. Lawrence. Enjoy lunch at the RSCN Azraq Lodge, where the restaurant features local Chechen food. After lunch head to visit **Qasr Kharana** then return to ACOR for overnight and prepare for the trip south the next day. (B,L,D)

Sunday, April 13

Amman - Dana (South)



Journey south on the Desert Highway to visit **Umm ar Rassas**. At this World Heritage site, the focus will be the **Church of Saint Stephen**. En route to the King's Highway, stop at **Lehun** for a brief visit to the **archaeological park** created by the Belgian archaeological mission and from which one has a spectacular view of the **Mujib Dam**. The route will follow the King's Highway, and we intend to visit **Busayra**, the Iron Age capital of the Edomites. After a site tour, we plan to have lunch organized by the local company Busayra Foundation for Cultural Heritage, founded by Safa Al-Rfooh, formerly a site steward for USAID SCHEP ([www.usaidschep.org](http://www.usaidschep.org)) as implemented by ACOR. After lunch, drive to the RSCN **Dana Nature Reserve** for check-in, enjoy dinner and a chance to discuss sustainability & eco-tourism then overnight. (B,L,D)

Monday, April 14

Dana - Wadi Musa



After a morning walk around the Ottoman-period **Dana village** with its vernacular architecture or a short hike, enjoy lunch at the Dana Rest House. Afterwards drive along the King's Highway to **Shobak**, the **Crusader Castle**, which was known as Montreal, for a visit. Drive to **Wadi Musa** and upon arrival transfer to *Petra Moon Hotel* for check-in. Time permitting, visit the new **Petra Museum** across the way. Dinner and overnight at the *Hotel*. (B,L,D)

Tuesday, April 15

Petra



Begin a full-day tour, which includes some unusual paths, with a visit to the **Aslah Complex**, spend time at the **Temple of the Winged Lions**, as well as the **Petra Church**, the **Blue Chapel**, and **Ridge Church** (all ACOR projects). Lunch at the Basin Restaurant. Depending on ability and interest, some may climb to the **Deir**, the Crusader Castle of **al Habis** or the **High Place**. Walk out at your own pace before sunset and plan time to visit the new **Petra Museum** before its evening closure (likely 8:00 PM), either for your second time or first. Inside the museum no guiding is allowed so it is a perfect place to take in information at your leisure on Petra. Return to the *Hotel* for overnight (dinner on own). (B,L)

Wednesday, April 16

Petra



Begin another full day in Petra with **Umm al Biyara** as the intended goal for some (strenuous hike). This mountain looms over the Petra City Center and on top is an Edomite Iron Age settlement as well as a fascinating Nabataean grotto. Individuals can continue any visits not done the previous day or just explore side wadis or various complexes, including the **Great Temple** in the City Center. This program may vary depending on weather. Picnic lunch provided. Enjoy a planned group dinner and overnight at the *Hotel*. (B,Boxed L,D)

Thursday, April 17

Petra - Wadi Rum



Enjoy breakfast and then begin the drive to **Wadi Rum**. En route, stop at **Humayma**, an important Nabataean and Byzantine site, later the seat of the Abbasid dynasty which overthrew the Umayyads. Continue the drive to **Wadi Rum** for an afternoon tour of the main attractions and a jeep ride. Wadi Rum is one of five UNESCO World Heritage sites in Jordan and is the only one that is a cultural and natural mix. Overnight in a camp in Wadi Rum, enjoy dinner and relax under the stars. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, April 18

Wadi Rum - Aqaba



After breakfast at the camp and a visit to the **Nabataean Temple**, drive to **Aqaba** through the impressive Wadi Yutm gorge and have a day visiting the early Islamic site of **Ayla** and the **Mamluk Fort**. The fort was built by Crusaders in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, destroyed in 1187, and rebuilt in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is situated on the coastline. The fortress served as a strategic base for overthrowing the Ottoman Empire. A boat ride and fish lunch are planned. In the afternoon, transfer to *Movenpick Tala Bay Hotel* for check-in and an evening to explore and relax in the luxurious *Hotel* on the Gulf of Aqabaa and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, April 19

Aqaba - Dead Sea



After breakfast, begin the drive heading north towards the **Dead Sea** to the entrance of the **RSCN Faynan Reserve**. Begin with a visit to the small **Faynan Museum**, set up by the Department of Antiques and foreign researchers (see [www.faynanheritage.org](http://www.faynanheritage.org)). We will be trucked in by local Bedouin guides to the famous **Feynan Eco Lodge**. After lunch, visit sites, such as the **Feynan Copper Mines**. The evening will be spent in the award-winning lodge where we can enjoy looking at the stars or relaxing on the terrace after dinner. Overnight at the Lodge **(B,L,D)**

*Note: The rooms are candlelit and the Internet is limited, so use this evening to enjoy nature. Also bring just a small bag for your overnight stay as the rest can remain on our bus.*

Sunday, April 20

Dead Sea



After breakfast at the lodge, we will be returned to the entrance of the reserve and meet our bus driver for the journey north to **Ghawr as Safi** for a general introduction at the Jordan Southern Ghawr Company. They will arrange our visit to the nearby medieval sugar mill complex at **Tawahin as Sukar**. Afterwards we will enjoy an ecotourism lunch experience organized by the Company. Continue north to visit the **Museum at the Lowest Point on Earth** below the Byzantine church complex of **Deir 'Ain 'Abata**, dedicated to St. Lot. We then proceed to *Movenpick Hotel* for check-in, enjoy a group dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, April 21

Dead Sea - Amman



Enjoy the Dead Sea experience either in the late afternoon and evening the previous day or this morning. Depart around 11:00am for the **Baptism Site** situated just north of the Dead Sea. Afterwards, head to visit the **Dead Sea Panorama Museum** with its excellent displays on geology, ecology, history, and nature and enjoy lunch at the Panorama Dead Sea Complex with its magnificent views of the Dead Sea. Time permitting, we hope to visit the Hellenistic Palace complex of **Qasr al Abd** restored by the French in the 1980s in **Iraq al Amir**, a valley just west of Amman. Drive to *ACOR* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, April 22

Amman (Art and Culture Scene)



This day is devoted to some of the varied cultural places in Amman. Visit the **Darat al Funun** (the Khalid Shoman Foundation) on Jabal Weibdeh and **Tiraz: Home of Arab Dress**, featuring the textile collection of Widad Kawar, in Jebel Amman. Then visit a few shops to understand the range of handicrafts in Jordan. Lunch will be at a special restaurant. Time permitting we may visit Salt to the north of Amman as it has interesting traditional architecture and markets. Return to *ACOR* for dinner and overnight **(B,L,D)**

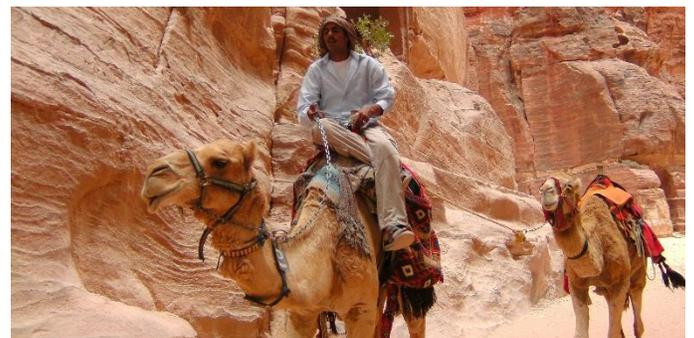
Wednesday, April 23

Amman - USA



Transfer to **Queen Alia Airport** for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

*"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients".*



**Tour Cost(Land Only): \$7,995.00**  
*Per person in double occupancy*

**Single Supplement: \$1,200.00**

*Price is based on a minimum of 7 participants and maximum of 14 participants*

**Trip Grade: III Lodging level:\*\*\*-\*\*\*\***

**About your Lecturer, Dr. Barbara A. Porter**, she has led numerous archaeological tours from Algeria to Iran in the decade before becoming the Director of the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman in 2006, a position she held until March 2020. She presided over ACOR's 50th anniversary year in 2018 and her public lecture about ACOR is available on their website ([www.acorjordan.org](http://www.acorjordan.org)). Included there are some 13,000 of her slide images from travels from 1977 to 2005 and subsequent digital photos in ACOR's Digital Archives. She received her A.B. from Bryn Mawr College and her M.A., M. Phil., and Ph.D. from Columbia University's Department of Art

History & Archaeology. Her dissertation was on cylinder seals from Syria in the Middle Bronze Age. From 1978 to 1986, she was on the curatorial staff of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Egyptian Art and Ancient Near Eastern Art) in New York and afterwards lectured frequently in the museum's galleries. In the 1990s, she taught in the Art History Department of New York University.

She grew up in Lebanon in the 1960s and later served as a board trustee for the American Community School at Beirut from 1996 to 2019 so returned to Lebanon often in that period. In the 1980s, she participated in two seasons of the Yale University excavations in northeastern Syria at the site of Tell Leilan. In her 14 years in Jordan, she came to know the country well and was involved in cultural heritage initiatives in many places, particularly Petra. She currently lives in Washington, D.C. and has resumed leading tours to the Middle East.



#### **Tour Includes:**

- All transfers with assistance and luggage portage.
- Arrival and departure assistance at Queen Alia airport with Jordanian gratis visa on arrival.
- Jordan Entry Visa.
- All mentioned accommodations in ACOR in Amman and in First-Class (4\*) hotels outside Amman.
- English speaking guide throughout the tour.
- Transportation within country using A/C private deluxe coach and jeep tour in Wadi Rum with an experienced Bedouin driver.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- One soft drink and a half bottle of water per person with lunches and dinners outside of Amman.
- Sightseeing as mentioned in the itinerary.
- Entrance fees to all visited historical sites and museums.
- Boat ride on April 18.
- Gratuities for guides, drivers, restaurant, and hotel staff.

#### **Tour does not include:**

- International Airfare USA-JORDAN-USA.
- Any extra night pre or post tour dates with the transportation from/to the airport.
- Beverages, with or without meals and meals not mentioned.
- Items of a personal nature (laundry, phone calls, emails, excess luggage, etc.).
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or early arrival.
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Travel protection insurance. (Highly recommended)

#### **Trip Grade**

**III Challenging:** Parts of the trip are physically challenging, involve some hiking on unpaved terrain or in sand.

#### **Lodging Level:**

**\*\*\* Superior:** ACOR Research Center, lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to western standards. (4 stars)

