

Bird Watching In Jordan

Day 01: Arrival at QAIA – Meet & Assist – Transfer to the hotel in Amman for overnight

You will arrive at Amman airport and will be met by our representative at the airport; you will transfer to your hotel in Amman for overnight.

Day 02: Visit Jerash and Ajloun – overnight and dinner at Ajloun Nature Reserve



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Following breakfast in the hotel we will transfer to Jerash about 45 minutes drive. On route to Jerash, we will stop at a small river related to Biblical story(Jabbok River) there where will have the opportunity to see some birds such as Cetti's Warbler, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, White Wagtail, Blackcap, Palestine Sunbirds, Steppe Buzzards, White-breasts Kingfisher, Black-Eared Wheatear, Red-rumped Swallow and a Syrian Woodpecker.



Jerash is regarded as one of the best preserved Greek-Roman cities in the world. There are two Theatres, colonnaded streets and fantastic triumphal arches. Approximately 800 columns are still standing. Here you will have the chance to see birds like Ortolan Bunting, Hooded Crows mobbing Lesser Kestrels, Graceful PriniasLunch at a local restaurant in Jerash .

Cetti's Warbler



After Jerash we will continue to Ajlun about 30 minutes drive and visit Ajlun Castle (also known as Qal'at Ar-Rabad). It was built in 1184 by 'Izz ad-Din Usama bin Munqidh, a general of Saladin, who defeated the Crusaders in 1187. A fine example of Islamic architecture, the fortress dominated a wide stretch of the northern Jordan Valley and passages to it. From its hilltop position, Ajlun Castle protected the communication routes between south Jordan and Syria, and was one of a chain of forts that lit beacons at night to pass signals from the Euphrates as far as Cairo. Today, Ajlun Castle is a splendid sight with

a fascinating warren of towers, chambers, galleries and staircases to explore, while its hilltop position offers stunning views of the Jordan Valley



Continue to Ajlun Nature reserve is located in the Ajlun highlands , It consists of Mediterranean-like hill country, dominated by open woodlands of Oak and Pistachio trees Green, Steppe Eagle, European Greenfinches ***Eastern Olivaceous Warbler ...***





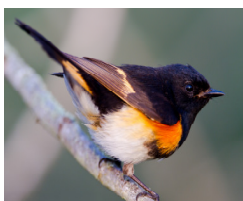
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Day 03: Visit Desert Castles and Azraq Wetlands. Overnight and dinner at Azraq Lodge

After breakfast in Ajloun we will head towards the Desert Castles and Azraq nature reserve to the east of Amman. The first stop is at the impressive Kharaneh Castle and Amra bath house, both from the Omayyad period, around the 8th Century.

On the stony plains of the eastern desert we will look for Temminck's Horned Lark and perhaps **Red-rumped Wheatear**



Qasr al Amra, an Omayyad bath-house, is situated on Wadi al Butm where we will eat our picnic lunch and then explore the tree-lined wadi for migrant birds – we may be lucky and discover a migrant Thrush Nightingale or Collared Flycatcher, amongst **the Lesser Whitethroats**, Redstarts and other more common migrants.

Continue to Azraq about a 30 minute drive for lunch in a local restaurant. Following lunch we will visit the Azraq wetland reserve. The huge spring-fed oasis at Azraq was once one of the most important wetland sites in the Middle East. The wetland reserve still contains a few pools and there are board walks and a hide from which we hope to see some water birds. A dawn visit the following day will give you the chance to see more species such as



Species, like Little Crake, Squacco Heron, 6 Water Rails, many tame **Blue throats** and a Lesser Grey Shrike. In addition it might be possible to see water buffalo and a rare Jackal from the hide – a difficult mammal to see in Jordan.



Day 04: Visit Shaumarie, Wetlands and Azraq Castle overnight and dinner at Azraq Lodge

This morning a pre-breakfast walk will take us the short distance across the road and into some suitable habitat where perhaps we will find a Desert Finch, a Wood Warbler or an Ortolan Bunting. The black basalt desert on the road to Baghdad has a barren appearance but is home to the unique black morph of the **Mourning Wheatear** and the dark race of the Desert Lark – both adapting to the desert colour. Bi-maculated Larks and Pale Rock Sparrows can only be expected if winter rain has brought a flush of green grass to the area. This is a little explored area often good for migrants.



Visit of Azraq Castle, a Roman castle made of basalt blocks where T. E. Lawrence stayed in 1917 and started to write the Seven Pillars of Wisdom. After lunch we will spend the remainder of the day visiting the Shaumari Wildlife Reserve. Shaumari is the site of an ambitious breeding programme for some of Jordan's extinct desert fauna. Most famous is the herd of Arabian Oryx, which now numbers over 200, as well as the Syrian Ass (or

Onager), gazelles and a small population of Ostrich. Shaumari is also a good area for desert birds, including **Desert Wheatear** and Hoopoe Lark, and the tall trees attract a large variety of migrants.

Day 05: Visit Mount Nebo, Madaba and Dana – overnight and dinner at Rummana Camp

After breakfast, you will make a journey that crosses several ancient paths. Transfer to Mount Nebo where you can enjoy the breath taking views from which Moses last looked upon the Holy Land. Mount Nebo became a place of pilgrimage for early Christians from Jerusalem and a small church was built there in the 4th century to commemorate the end of Moses' life. You will then head to nearby Madaba, City of Mosaics where you will see the Greek Orthodox Church which houses the famous 6th century map of the Holy Land.



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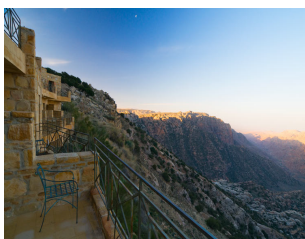
We will arrive at our campsite overlooking the Dana Wild lands Reserve in the late afternoon in time to allocate tents and photograph the dramatic view in the rich evening colours. The campsite buildings have been designed to merge into the landscape with its curious white sandstone domes. Here, Orange-tufted Sunbirds flit between the tents on the borrag flowers and Black-eared Wheatear and Hoopoe sing from the crags above our heads. A short walk away from the camp after dark may allow us to hear Scop's Owl, Hume's Tawny Owl or Eagle Owl (all present

in the reserve).

Day 06: Dana Nature Reserve – overnight and dinner at Dana

Camping lends it to early starts and we will be up with the sunbirds to make the most of this dramatic location. Local birds include Orphean Warbler, Rock Sparrow, Chukar, Cuckoo, Spectacled Warbler, Woodlark and Woodchat Shrike, and the variety of other flora and fauna is equally impressive

After breakfast we will head off to explore nearby oak and juniper woodland in the search of the Syrian Serin, which has one of the most restricted distributions of any Western Palearctic bird. We will also be on the look-out for raptors; as well as the locally breeding Griffon Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Lesser Kestrel and **Bonelli's Eagle**. The mountains here lie on the main migration route heading north. We will also be able to tour the Dana conservation village, where re-population of the ancient and fascinating hill village is being encouraged.



Lunch will be at the Dana Guesthouse, with its spectacular view over the wadi. The afternoon will be free to soak up the atmosphere and to explore around the campsite – perhaps sitting by the drinking pool to watch the **Yellow-vented Bulbuls** and possibly even Tristram's Serins coming down to drink. Rock Hyrax and Nubian Ibex are still rare in Jordan but the chance of seeing one on the extensive crags below are increasing.



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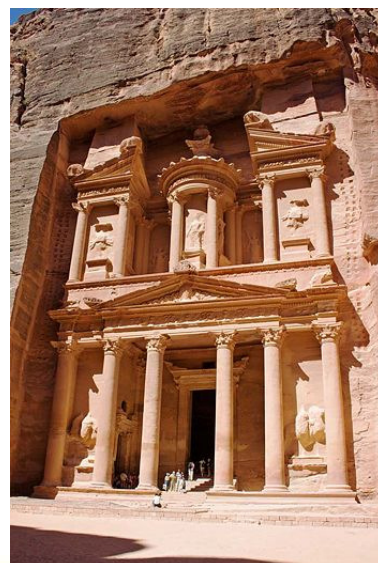
Day 07: The Land of the Nabateans – Petra – overnight Petra.

Following breakfast at the Dana Guesthouse we will make the short drive to Shobak Crusader Castle before heading to Little Petra. We will then walk into Petra via the back door of the Monastery.

Early risers can make their final explorations around the campsite and take those last photographs, then early drive to explore Shaubak Castle.

Our introduction to Petra will begin with a visit to Bayda (or Little Petra) where, back in history, visitors traditionally stayed before being allowed into Petra. We will also look at a nearby Stone Age village, one of the best preserved in the World after 8,000 years.

The whole day will be spent exploring the extensive site of Petra. One of the most spectacular archaeological sites in the Middle East, Petra dates back to the fifth and sixth centuries BC, when it was an important centre for the Nabataean Arabs. These cultured and artistic people occupied a crucial position in the old caravan routes between Africa, India and Europe, and grew wealthy on their monopoly of this trade. That prosperity fuelled the development of a large city and the construction of a wide array of palaces, temples and tombs, which were elaborately carved out of the multicoloured but mainly red sandstones. The patterns in the sandstones are worthy of a visit in their own right and are as photogenic as the tombs themselves – bring plenty of film!



Discovery circle will guide you through the architectural and spiritual wonders of this majestic place as you walk through this mystical city. A break for lunch is included at the Basin restaurant inside of Petra.

Day 08: Wadi Rum and Aqaba – overnight Aqaba.

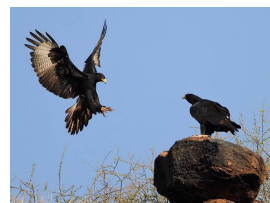
Following breakfast we will head to Wadi Rum, made famous by Lawrence of Arabia. En route, we will stop to admire the view from our high-level road which looks down on Petra and across to Aaron's Tomb against a backdrop of Wadi Araba and the Negev Desert. We will briefly look for **Isabelline Wheatear** before descending the Ras an Naqab escarpment with our first views of Wadi Rum.



The local Bedouins will take you on a tour of Wadi Rum in their 4x4 jeeps (6 pax per jeep) to the great mountain of Al Khazali.

Discover clues from antiquity carved on the mountains and the fallen boulder, vestiges of human activity over several thousand years. Everywhere there are traces left by ancient civilizations -

pictographs of Thamudic, Nabataean, Greek and Arabic texts, formal inscriptions and rock art depicting hunting scenes. Following lunch with the Bedouin we will finish our tour and continue to Aqaba.



Day 09: Aqaba – overnight Aqaba.

Aqaba's main attraction is its migrant birds. Aqaba lies on one of the world's major migration fly-ways – between Africa and Eurasia. Literally millions of birds use the geographic line of the Rift Valley to aid their migration – ranging from the largest of eagles to the smallest of warblers.





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This area of Jordan is considerably under-watched and we will no doubt be making discoveries as we explore the sites. There are areas of palm groves and coastal allotments for migrating passerines to rest in, and the Red Sea and its shoreline will also be visited. A highlight of our tour will be a visit to the local sewage works – not on most tourists' itinerary but one of the most productive bird watching sites in the whole region. The spectacle of hundreds of waders, herons and gulls of up to 75 different species will leave a lasting impression. Waders could include Marsh Sandpiper and Red-necked Phalarope, and the variety of herons may include Glossy Ibis and Purple Heron.



However, the area is known for its vagrants and almost anything can turn up! Finally, of course, there are Aqaba's two resident oriental species – the Ring-necked Parakeet and the Indian House Crow, which either escaped from captivity or arrived from the east on cargo ships.

While some might simply wish to lie on the beach, the enthusiasts can continue to search for birds, and whichever you choose, Aqaba will provide a relaxing finale for the tour.

The Red Sea is famous for its coral reefs and there will be opportunities to go snorkelling (equipment can be hired) or simply to observe the fish and other marine life from the comfort of a glass-bottomed boat.

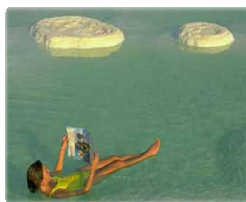
Day 10: Wadi Araba and the Dead Sea – Overnight Dead Sea

Breakfast at hotel, drive to the Dead Sea via Wadi Araba, stop at Lot's Cave, Mujib Gorge...

We will leave Aqaba to make the drive back through Wadi Araba and along the shore of the Dead Sea. Our first stop will be at Fidan, where we will walk a slow circuit across flat Wadi Araba desert. This is an important desert area with a variety of arid-adapted birds. We will look for Hoopoe Lark and Bar-tailed Desert Lark – listening for their calls and songs so we can hone in on them. There is also a chance of seeing a Spotted Sand grouse or a Cream-coloured Courser.



This area also holds a small number of the striking Spine-tailed Lizard (Dhabb in Arabic). Resembling a monitor lizard in size and shape, this formidable-looking animal is actually a vegetarian and readily retreats into its burrow when approached. Nearby acacia woodland holds little Green Bee-eater and **Arabian Warbler** and we may be lucky enough to find these specialities



Transfer to Dead Sea for lunch and overnight. Why not spoil yourself with the warm, soothing, super salty water which is ten times saltier than sea water, and rich in chloride salts of magnesium, sodium, potassium, bromine and several others. Also, its high salinity enables you to float comfortably on the surface of the water.

Day 11: Transfer to the Airport for you return flight home.

After breakfast at the hotel transfer to QAIA Airport in Amman for departure. Discovery Circle staff will assist you through departure formalities.