

SECTION H: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Tourism in Jordan

Jordan is a popular tourist destination (over 3m visitors in 2007) because it possesses several renowned sites that are attractive to tourists from all over the world. Arguably the five most famous places are shown in Figure H2. To this group you could add a 'B-List' of lesser-known but equally important sites (Figure H3). Let us not forget that the capital city, Amman, one of the ten cities of the Roman *Decapolis* and former home of the biblical Ammonites has its own attractions and facilities for tourists. The list is growing annually.

TASK H1: Planning a visit to Jordan

- 1: Plot the locations listed in Fig.H2 and H3 onto the base map of Jordan (Fig.H1)
- 2: Assume that you are a tourist arriving at Queen Alia International Airport, Amman, planning to stay 6 nights in Jordan. Plan the outline of an itinerary that will give you a flavour of Jordan.
- 3: Present your proposal and briefly explain the pattern of visits.
- 4: Does our study area feature in your proposal? Give reasons for your answer.

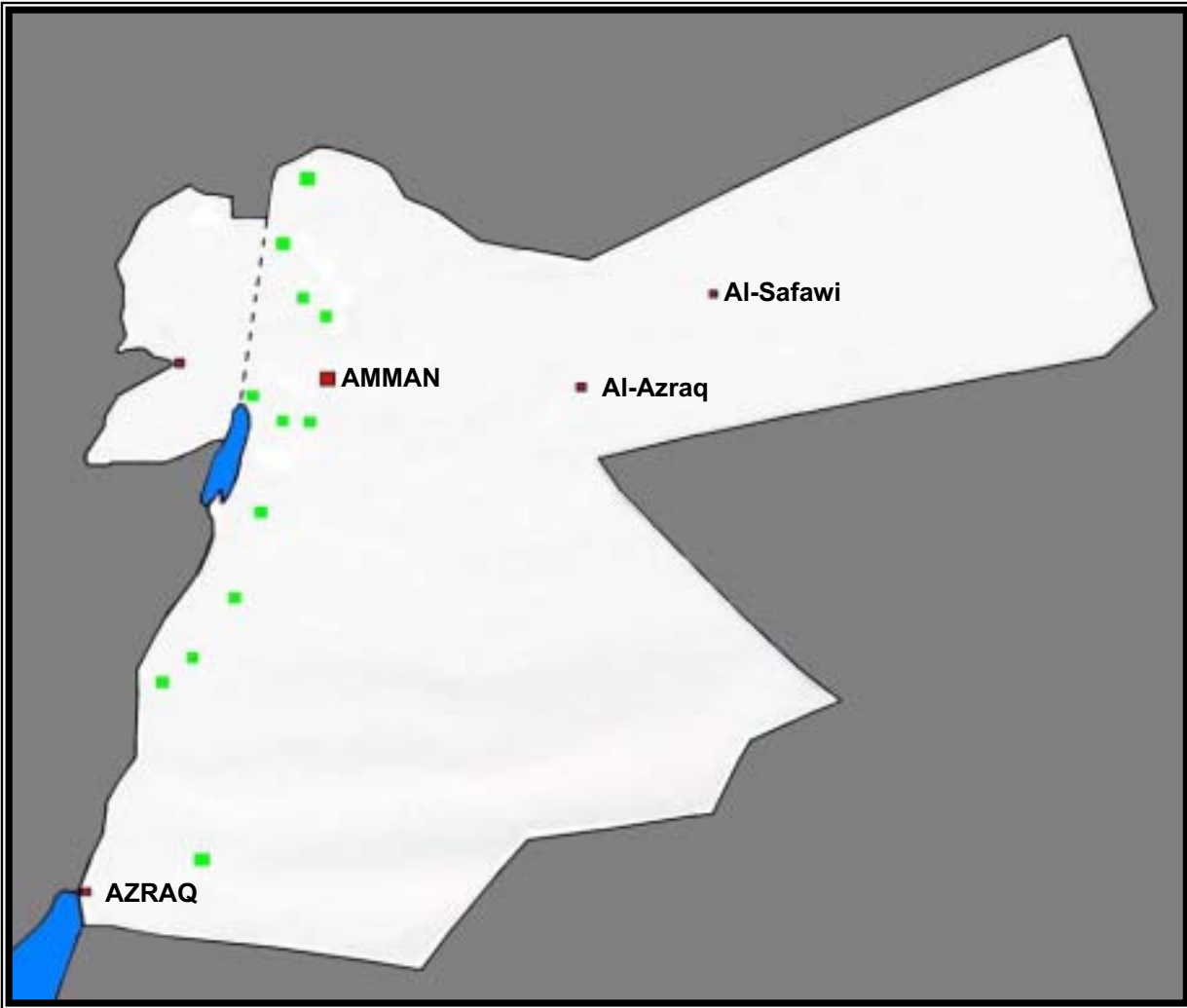



Fig. H1: The principal Jordanian Tourism Sites
(green squares)

Figure H2: Jordan's A-List of Tourism Sites

<p>1 PETRA</p> <p>The 'Rose red city half as old as time' lay hidden in the folds of the western mountain chain until rediscovered by Johann Ludwig Burckhardt in 1812. Established in the 4th C BC this remarkable city was inhabited by a trading people, the Nabateans, who lived in stone houses but buried their dead in amazing tombs carved from solid rock. The most famous building is probably the 'Treasury' made even more famous by its appearance in 'Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade'. Petra is a World Heritage Site (1985) and in 2008 it was declared one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.</p>	
<p>2 WADI RUM</p> <p>Wadi Rum has been variously described as the 'Valley of the Moon' or Wadi Ramm from the Arabic meaning 'high'. It is remarkable for its immense sandstone jebels (mountains) standing on a plinth of granite. The whole system is heavily faulted to divide the region into distinct zones occupied by the Bedouin people of the Howeitat tribe. The area was made famous through T.E. Lawrence's 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom' describing his experiences of the Arab Revolt (1917-18) and the final assault on Aqaba to oust the Turks. Bedouin from the village of Rum provide jeep trips and desert camping and travel services although most visits are day visits.</p>	
<p>3 DEAD SEA</p> <p>The Dead Sea occupies part of the geological rift system that includes the East African Rift Valley and the Red Sea. It lies 378m below sea level and because of the aridity and high evaporation it is one of the saltiest lakes in the world (33.7%). The tourist attraction lies in the warmth and the buoyancy effect that it has for 'swimmers'. There are numerous hotels and spas (Dead Sea mud is therapeutic) and a large public beach. Close by is Christ's baptism site, Bethany, and the entrance to the canyon of Wadi Mujib which can be explored by intrepid visitors (under guidance).</p>	
<p>4 JERASH</p> <p>In biblical times Jerash was the city of Antioch until conquered by Pompey in 63 BC. It became Gerasa, one of the ten cities of the Decapolis - a loose association of trading cities under Greco-Roman rule. It remains one of the few almost complete Roman cities with its forum, colonnaded street, temples and wonderful theatre. Restoration work is continuous and facilities for the visitor expanding. In recent years a group of former soldiers have demonstrated how the Romans organised their Legions, fought battles, held gladiator fights and raced around the arena in chariots.</p>	

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Fig.H2: Jordan's A-List of Tourism Sites (continued):





<p>5 RED SEA</p> <p>As with the Dead Sea, the Red Sea also occupies a section of the northerly extension of the East African Rift Valley, which branches into two sections. The Gulf of Aqaba heads north with Egypt on one side and Saudi Arabia on the other. From a touristic point of view the Red Sea is a venue for sub-aqua enthusiasts exploring the coral reef, which lies only a short distance from the shore. Although under threat from pollution and damage by ships anchors it remains one of the finest reefs in the world. The focus is the city of Aqaba, which offers tourist accommodation.</p>	
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Figure H3: Jordan's B-List of Tourism Sites

<p>1 Um Qais & Pella</p> <p>Um Qais was the Roman city of Gadara and the scene for the miracle of the Gadarene swine. Like Pella it was one of the ten cities of the Decapolis and commands a strategic position overlooking the Jordan valley and Lake Tiberias. Home to scholars and playwrights its theatre must have been impressive in its day. The town was occupied by successive waves of people including Alexander the Great right up to and including the Ottomans. Pella shows evidence of Neolithic occupation and was probably more extensive than appears today. It was destroyed by an earthquake in 749AD but remains an idyllic site above the Jordan valley.</p>	
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<p>2 Ajloun</p> <p>The town of Ajloun boasts one of the finest castles of the Crusader period. It was actually built by Muslims (1184-89) to protect the local iron mines and the north-south trade routes. Its importance waned when Salahuddin beat the Crusaders in 1189. It remained occupied and in its last days was an administrative centre responsible to Damascus. To the visitor it is a dramatic construction commanding the surrounding countryside, which is also attractive for its woodlands, nature reserve, walking trails and camping lodges.</p>	
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<p>3 Bethany</p> <p>For many years the location for Christ's baptismal site was much discussed but excavations seem to have revealed not only the remains of several churches but also a structure with steps leading down to the River Jordan which may well have been where John the Baptist worked. Excavations have also taken place on nearby Elijah's Hill where Elijah is said to have ascended to heaven. Here a church and a system of cisterns has been found. Not far away, across the river lies Jericho and the whole area has a feeling of peace and tranquillity. Access is controlled and there are facilities for visitors set back away from the site.</p>	
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Fig.H3: Jordan's B-List of Tourism Sites (continued)

4 Madaba and Mount Nebo

Mt. Nebo is said to be the burial place of Moses. Until 1932 the church lay in ruins until Franciscan monks began its restoration. They discovered fine mosaics depicting Middle Eastern life in the 4th C AD. The view from here across the Dead Sea towards Jerusalem and Jericho is so peaceful putting the Middle East question into perspective. East of Nebo is Madaba, which is the centre for mosaic art. On the floor of the Greek Orthodox church there is a mosaic map of the Middle East accurately depicting the locations of towns and cities as well as the Dead Sea and River Jordan. There is a visitor centre here as well as restaurant opportunities.



5 Kerak and Shobak

These two impressive Crusader castles were built in the 12thC as part of a chain of castles protecting their routes. At Kerak the town is still an integral part of the fortress, clinging to the flanks of the spur on which it stands. Shobak is more isolated but no less impressive. Its catacombs contain Islamic tablets, Christian carvings and football size rocks used in catapults. Kerak was more important than Shobak and occupies a much older settlement site. The castle has huge rooms and catacombs going 13 floors into the rock below. It looks impregnable but eventually fell to the Muslims in 1189.



6 Dana

Dana Nature Reserve, run by the RSCN extends from 1200m - 300m passing through three climatic zones. It is important for birds migrating between Africa and E. Europe. Geologically the weird, weathered sandstone structures might be described as 'hoodoos'. Dana village is an old, organic settlement 'growing' out of the rock. Springs irrigate the hanging gardens, which provided a range of fruits and vegetables. When the cement works on the plateau was built many people drifted to live closer to the work opportunity and the irrigation channels fell into disrepair. The RSCN is encouraging people back through job opportunities as rangers and to provide for visitors at the guest house and visitor centre. Produce from the fields and artefacts created by the women's cooperative are marketed through the RSCN.

