CHAPTER 3

TOURISM IN JORDAN

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Tourism Product of Jordan
3.3 Importance of Tourism to Jordan
3.4 Important Tourist places of Jordan
3.5 Conclusion
TOURISM IN JORDAN

Introduction

The rich collection of natural and cultural heritage sights that Jordan offers to the world can be attributed to its location and landscape. Jordan is a land of junction and contrast, a land of paradox, and of an eternal element of surprise.

Jordan is changing its tourist image, long known as the gateway to the Holy Land, tourism officials in Amman say they are busy broadening Jordan’s appeal and now promote the country as a tourist destination in itself. Jordanian Ministry of Tourism are now building up tourism around Petra in coordination with Aqaba and Wadi Rum. This gives Jordan a resort area, the romance of the Arabian desert and the archeological gem of Petra. Of course, there is also the Jerash Festival in the summer which could be of great interest to the foreign visitor.

There is a lot to offer the special interest of domestic tourism as well as international tourism to Jordan, and these attraction range from religious trips to archeological visits, bird-watching, scuba-diving wind-surfing and water-skiing at Aqaba and so much more.

Jordan is also becoming an ideal center for regional conferences. “any company in, say, Brussels, Amsterdam, or such like, which acts as regional headquarters for Europe, Middle East and Africa, should consider Jordan as a conference destination, after all, Jordan is the crossroads of the Middle East and is within easy reach of all major European cities as well as the African continent.”

Jordan is very active at overseas trade fairs and will continue its high profile participation in the future, also we are developing spa facilities here in Jordan. The first is being built at Zarka Ma’in, an area of hot springs in the mountain overlooking the Dead Sea.

Jordan also encouraging unique or unusual programmes that can tap new markets. These include scuba diving in the Gulf of Aqaba, considered by experts to be among the most spectacular in the world, and desert safaris by camel, all in all Jordan has a very strong potential for attracting more tourists within and
Tourism in Jordan

outside of the country, and following are the most attractive tourist places in Jordan.

Jordanian Tourism Product

Through history, archaeologist, explorers and travellers visited Jordan for the purpose of exploration due to its exotic archaeology and history. Some of these explorers even discovered new archaeological sites that the local communities were not familiar with. All of the explorers enhanced Jordan’s archaeological and cultural importance through their documented comments and diaries. One of the most important explorers for Jordan is John Ludwig Burckhardt who discovered Petra in 1812, where is now a part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site List because of its outstanding universal value.4

Since middle of last Century and up till now Jordan’s tourism product remained archaeology and history. Many sites were visited; some of which are Petra, Amra Desert castle, Karak, Madaba, Jerash, Ajloun and Um Qais.

The Jordanian government under the umbrella of MOTA, through the Department of Antiquities (DOA), decided in 1982 to excavate, conserve and develop archaeological sites throughout Jordan. Foreign expeditions were called for this purpose, because of their knowledge in the field and their financial aid. Further, excavation, conservation and development of archaeological sites were done for the purpose of tourism and protection of sites. Excavation, conservation and development also contribute to sustaining and retaining the cultural significance of an archaeological site. It is also adds an educational value of presenting it to the public. When an archaeological site is in a bad condition, because of the lack of upkeep-or other factors- then it becomes meaningless to visitors. Excavation, conservation and development of it, makes the site meaningful and makes a story out of it. Visitors are not primarily looking for scientific and historical facts but instead they want to enjoy their time, satisfy their demands and needs, feel safe, an informally be educated through perception.

Up till now, many archaeological sites are still being excavated, conserved and developed because these activities are done on a season basis (8-10
weeks/annum) and are based on the amount of financial aid knowledge, hence they are time consuming.

During the 1980’s Jordan witnessed a reasonable amount of tourist arrival, but not enough. This is due to the political instability in the region because of the Palestine/Israeli disputes and the negative destination image. The Jordanian government decided to diversify Jordan’s tourism product to benefit socio-economically, to meet the demand of the general public and to increase its market share especially in competitive region such as Egypt, Israel and Lebanon.

Today the Jordanian tourism product is divided into eight main sections; cultural tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, medical tourism, desert tourism, recreational tourism, MICE tourism, and visiting friends and relatives (VFR). Most of the sites in Jordan is having more than one tourist product. For example, Petra can be visited for it’s archaeological and historical product or for it natural landscape or even for adventure tourism. This leads to difficulties in the classification of tourist destinations because of their diversified function and causes challenges for the Jordan Tourism Board.

**Cultural Tourism** is based on tourists visiting cultural sites and is elaborated below:

- Archaeological sites, such as Petra, Madaba, Jerash.
- Religious sites, both Islamic such as the Tomb of Aaron and the Cave of the Seven Sleepers and Christian sites such as the Baptism site and Madaba.
- Vernacular sites, some of which are Taybet Zamman and Um Qais village.
- Archaeological and Historical Museums, some of which are Amman Citadel Museum, and Museum of archaeology and anthropology at Yarmouk University.
- Commemoration sites, which are Mo’ta Battle, Al-Karama Battle and the Battle of Fahl.
- Heritage and Traditional sites, some of which are Salt city and Fuhais city.
- Old houses, some of which are still in use up till today such as Darat Al fonoun.
Tourism in Jordan

Eco-Tourism is based on visitors visiting the natural environment. There are six official nature reserves in Jordan. Further, there are several other sites where they can be classified and visited for the purpose of nature, archaeology, thermal or other products such as Wadi Rum, Dead Sea, Aqabaq and Petra.

Adventure Tourism is based on visitors participating in adventurous activities such as climbing, trekking, all kinds of water sports, camping, hand gliding, parachuting, and bird watching. It can also be classified as eco-tourism. Some of the important sites that provide adventure tourism are Aqaba and Wadi Rum.

Medical Tourism is based on visitors seeking medication, such as hospitals providing natural therapies and also hospitals with latest medical treatment. Jordan is also having therapeutic sites such as the Dead Sea thermal hot springs such as Ma'in, A'ffra.

Desert Tourism is based on visitors experiencing desert life as the Bedouins live. Some of these sites are Wadi Rum, Wadi Araba and Dishe area.

Recreational Tourism is based on visitors visiting places with their family for the purpose of family outings, events, festivals and other attractions. In Jordan the Gulf Market is based on this tourist product where they come for Arts and Crafts.

MICE Tourism is based on business and professional people attending meetings, incentive travel, conferences and exhibitions. In Jordan this kind of product is reasonably new but so far it has been a great success. Further, many MICE events have been held in Jordan, three of the most important are the IUCN- The World Conservation Congress held in October 2000, the Global Summit on Peace Through Tourism held in November 2000 and the Arab League Summit held in March 2001.

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) this kind of tourism in Jordan can be both domestically or internationally. The domestic VFR is either when locals working in cities go for the weekend, or when locals want to visit the countryside for the
weekend. On the other hand, the international VFR is when Jordanians working abroad (especially in the Gulf States), visit their families and friends in their holidays.
Tourism in Jordan

Holy Sites in Jordan

Map of Jordan's Holy Sites (Fig. 3.1)
Importance of Tourism to Jordan

After the First World War, Jordan became a tourist destination on the world map. Early tourism into the country took the form of individual trips to the holy and historic sites, in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, with some frequent journeys to Petra by small groups of tourists after the establishment of the Emirates in 1921. However, the political and military consequences of the Arab Israeli conflict had negative effects on tourism within the region in general.

Jordan has recognize the importance of tourism for the past two decades. Receipts from tourism sector reached about JD 564 million in 1997, which means that contribution of tourism to Jordanian GDP is 10.2 percent and this is below the 1989 figure of 13.3 percent. In comparison, the agriculture sector adds only 6 to 7 percent to the GDP of Jordan. Considering the expenditures of Jordanian abroad, which amounted to JD 288 million in the same year, the balance of tourism remains positive, and tourism is also second source of foreign currency earning (37 percent) after industrial exports.

The number of direct employees in tourism sector in 1997 was about 15,565 of which 47.5 percent were employed in hotels, the annual growth rate of the employment in tourism sector in the period 1987-1997 was 8.5 per cent if we consider the indirect employment, tourism is playing a good and promising role in absorbing the rapidly increasing labour forces.

Tourism is vital economic sector in Jordan and contributes to a badly needed economic diversification. Further more, tourism with its dividend, its contribution to GDP, foreign currency, employment and even to better understanding in the region, should enjoy a high priority in the planning policies of the country. Tourism is a global sector in term of competition. Jordan has to compete with Egypt, Israel, Syria and Lebanon. All these countries posses attractive tourist sites and have a good experience in the sector.

After political changes in the region, Syria is beginning to liberalize its economy, Lebanon is regaining its role in attracting international tourists, Israel is benefiting from the peace treaties and Egypt has an unexhaustible potential.

Jordan has Petra, environmental diversities within a short distance, and its traditions of hospitality.
Map of Jordan-Historical Sites (Fig. 3.2)
Jordan utilizes the minimum of its potential and alternative tourism strategies are required, these strategies should take the issues of environment, social-economic spatial equalities and culture into consideration.

Finally citizens awareness in Jordan is totally absent, Jordanians do not know yet how to benefit from tourism and that at the same time how to serve tourism in their country which means in other words, that domestic tourism in Jordan is completely absent, despite the fact that is the basic starting point in tourism process.

**Important Tourist Sites in Jordan**

**Amman**

Amman is built on seven hills, or jebels, each of which more or less defines a neighborhood. Most Jebels once had a traffic circle, and although most of these have now been replaced by traffic lights, Amman’s geography is often described in reference to the eight circles which from the spine of the city. First circle is located near downtown, and the series extends westward through eighth circle.

![Modern Amman I](Fig. 3.3)

![Modern Amman II](Fig. 3.4)

![Old Amman](Fig. 3.5)

The seven hills of Amman are an enchanting mixture of ancient and modern. Honking horns give way to beautiful call to prayer, which echoes from the stately minarets, which grace the city. Gleaming white houses, kabab stalls and café are interspersed with bustling markets-known in Arabic as souqs- selling handicrafts and other products which reflects Jordan’s ancient past.

Sunset is perhaps the best time to enjoy Amman, as the white buildings of the city seem to glow in the fading warmth of the day. The greatest charm of
Tourism in Jordan

Amman, however, is found in the hospitality of its residents. Visitors are greeted. "Welcome in Jordan" is a phrase visitor will not soon forget.

History

Amman has served as the modern and ancient capital of Jordan. It is the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, with a 1994 excavation uncovering homes and towers believed to have been built during the Stone Age, circa 7000 BCE. There are many Biblical references to the city, which by about 1200 BCE had become the Ammonite capital of Rabbath-Ammon. The Ammonites, who were said to be the descendants of Lot, fought numerous wars with Saul, David and others. David’s successor Solomon erected a shrine in Jerusalem to the Ammonite god Molech. From then on, the only Biblical references to Rabbath are prophecies of its destruction by the Babylonians, who later took over but did not destroy the town.

Amman-Historical site (Fig. 3.6)

The history of Amman between the end of its Biblical references (around 585 BCE) and the time of the ptolemies is unclear. We do know that the city was renamed Philadelphia after the Ptolemaic ruler Philadelphus in the third century BCE. After coming under Seleucid and Nabatean rule, Philadelphia was taken by the Roman vassal king Herod in 30 BCE. The city became part of the Decapolis League, a loose alliance of ten Roman-ruled cities including Jerash, Gadara, (present - day Umm Qais), Pella (Irbid) and others. Under Roman rule, Philadelphia was replanned and reconstructed in typically grand Roman style with a colonnade street, baths, an amphitheater and impressive public buildings.

During the Byzantine period, Philadelphia was the seat of a Christian bishop, and several expansive Churches were built. The city declined during the late Byzantine years, and was overrun by the Persian Sassanians in 614 CE. Their
rule was short-lived, however, collapsing before the Arabian armies of Islam around the year 635. The name of the city then returned to its Semitic origin of Ammon, or ‘Amman’ like most other cities that fell to the Arabs, Amman was not sacked and burned. It remained an important stop on the caravan routes for many years, but eventually trade patterns shifted and dried up the lifeblood of Amman. The city declined to little more than a provincial village for many centuries.

Amman’s ‘modern’ history began in the late 19th century, when the Ottomans resettled a colony of Circassians emigrants there in 1878. Many of their descendants still reside in Amman, during the time and the early decades of 20th century, the neighboring city of Salt was more important as regional administrative and political center. However, after the Great Arab Revolt secured the state of Transjordan, Emir Abdullah bin al-Hussein moved his capital to Amman in 1921.

Since then, the city has grown by leaps and bounds into a modern, thriving metropolis of well over a million people. Amman’s growth has been driven largely by political events in the region, and especially by the Arab Israeli conflict. After the wars of 1948 and 1967, successive waves of Palestinian refugees ended up in Amman. Moreover, the city’s population was further expanded by another wave of immigrants arriving from Iraq and Kuwait during the 1990-91 Gulf Crisis.

Sights of Interest

Most of Amman’s noteworthy historical sites are clustered in the downtown area, which sits at the bottom of four of Amman’s seven hills, or Jebels. The ancient Citadel, which towers above the city from atop Jebel Qala’a, is a good place to begin a tour of the city. The citadel is the site of ancient Rabbath-Ammon, and excavations here have revealed numerous Roman, Byzantine, and early Islamic remains. The most impressive building of the Citadel, known simply as al-Qasr (‘the palace’), dates back to the Umayyad period. Its exact function is unclear, but it includes a monumental gateway, an audience hall and four vaulted chambers. A colonnade street also runs through the complex. To the north and northeast are the ruins of Umayyad palace grounds.
Tourism in Jordan

Five minutes walk east from downtown, the Roman Theatre is the most obvious and impressive relic of ancient Philadelphia, the theatre, which was built during the reign of Antonious Pius (138-161 CE), is cut into the northern side of a hill that once served as a necropolis or graveyard. It is very similar in design to the amphitheater at Jerash, and can accommodate 6000 spectators. The theater is still used periodically for sporting and cultural events.

To the northeast stands a small theater, or Odeon, which is still being restored. Built at about the same time as the Roman Theater, this intimate 500-seat theater is used now as it was in Roman times, for musical concerts. Archeologists think that the building was originally covered with a wooden or temporary tent roof to shield performers and audience from the elements.

Amman-King Abdullah Mosque (Fig. 3.7)

The King Hussein Mosque bustles with pedestrians, juice stands and vendors. The area around the King Hussein Mosque, also known as al-Hussein Mosque, is the heart of modern downtown Amman. The Ottoman-style mosque was built in 1924 on the site of an ancient mosque, probably also the site of the cathedral of Philadelphia. Between the al-Hussein Mosque and the Citadel is Amman's famous Gold Souq, which features row after row of glittering gold treasures.

Salt

The town of Salt was of great importance during the time of Turkish rule in Jordan. It was the chief administrative center for the surrounding area and, in the 1920s, it seemed the likely choice for the capital of the newly-independent state of TransJordan. However, Salt was bypassed in favor of the more centrally located village of Amman, the result is that Amman has been transformed into a thriving modern city, while Salt has retained its small town charm.
Tourism in Jordan

Due to its history as an Ottoman center of government, Salt is filled with wonderful Ottoman architecture in the classical style. Immediately recognizable are the Ottoman houses with their long-arched windows. An array of tall Ottoman minarets towers over the village, along with church steeples, as Salt is known for its large Christian community. A morning or evening spent strolling through the picturesque streets of this hill village is time well spent.  

Wadi Seer

Around 24 km. Southwest of Amman, the high desert plateau suddenly gives way to the lush, tree-covered valley of Wadi Seer. About 10 km. past the village of Wadi Seer, which was settled largely by fair-skinned, red-headed Circassians, the road leads to the ruins of Qaser al-Abd (castle of the slave) and the ancient caves of 'Iraq al-Amir (caves of the prince). Local legend has it that Qaser al-Abd was built by a love smitten slave named Tobiah. While his master was away on a journey, Tobiah built a palace and carved lions, panthers and eagles on its walls in order to win the love of the master's daughter. Unfortunately, the master returned before Tobiah could finish the work, and the slave's efforts went unrequited. Little is known for sure about the actual history of this castle, but it is widely believed to have been built in the second century BCE by Hyracanus, head of the powerful Tobiad family and governor of Ammon. The name 'castle of the slave' may thus refer to Hyracanus himself, who, as governor, was a 'slave of the people.' The first-century historian Josephus recorded the wealth of the Tobiad family and the exploits of Hyracanus, who built a strong fortress of white stone which was decorated with carvings of 'animals of a prodigious magnitude.' Perhaps the most interesting part is the north entrance, with one of the original carved animals, a giant stone lion, peering down over all who pass underneath. The entire building was once covered with such figures.
North and West of Amman

Jerash

Jerash, located 48 km. north of Amman among the biblical Hills of Gilead, is one of the largest and most well-preserved sites of Roman architecture in the world outside Italy. To this day, its colonnaded streets, baths, theaters, plazas and arches remain in exceptional condition. Within the remaining city walls, archeologists have found the ruins of settlements dating back to the Neolithic Age, indicating human occupation at this location for more than 6500 years. This is not surprising, as the area is ideally suited for human habitation. Jerash is fed year-round with water, while its altitude of 500 meters gives it a temperate climate and excellent visibility over the surrounding of low-lying areas.

It was not until the days of Alexander the Great that Jerash truly began to prosper. After falling under the rule of the Seleucid King Antioch in the second century BCE. It was during the period of Roman rule that Jerash, then known as Gerasa, enjoyed its golden age. The Romans assimilated garish into province of Syria, and later named it as one of the great cities of the Decapolis league. The Decapolis was a prosperous confederation of ten Roman cities formed during the first century BCE, and linked by powerful commercial, political, and cultural interests. Pliny mentioned the confederation in his natural history, listing the cities as Damascus, Philadelphia (Amman), Gerasa (Jerash), scythopolis (beisan), Gadara (Umm Qais), Hippos, Dion, Pella, Canatha and Raphana.

Over the next century and half, trade flourished with the Nabateans and Jerash prospered. The city also benefited from the rich surrounding farmlands and from iron or mining in Ajloun area. This period saw the implementations of a typically Roman city plan featuring a colonnaded main street intersected by two side streets.
In 106 CE, the emperor Trajan annexed the wealthy Nabatean kingdom and formed the province of Arabia. The Romans secured lines of communication and trade with via nova tiana (Trajan new Road), which was built between 112-114 CE and stretched all the way from Syria to Aqaba. With more trading riches pouring in, Jerash enjoyed another burst of construction activity. Granite was brought from as far as Aswan (Egypt), and old temples were razed and rebuilt according to the latest architectural fashion.

The city received yet another boost in stature with the visit of Emperor Hadrian in 129 CE. To honor its guest, the citizens raised a monumental Triumphal Arch at the southern end of the city. Jerash’s prosperity reached its peak in the beginning of the third century, when the rank of Roman colony was bestowed upon it. During this ‘golden age’ Jerash may have had a population of 20,000 people. The ancient city preserved today was the administrative, civic, commercial and cultural center of this community, while the bulk of the city’s citizens lived on the east side of Wadi Jerash.
As the third century progressed, shipping began to supplant overland caravans as the main routes for commerce. Jerash thus fell into decline as its previously lucrative trade routes became less traveled and less valuable. This trend was speeded by frequent uprising against the Roman—such as the destruction of Palmyra in 273 CE—that made the overland routes more dangerous.

In the year 330 CE, Emperor Constantine converted and proclaimed Christianity the state religion of the empire’s eastern, or Byzantine, half. By the middle of the fifth century, Christianity had become the major religion of the region and numerous churches were built constructed in Jerash. In fact, most of
these were built of stones taken from pagan temples. No more churches were built after the year 611.\textsuperscript{13}

Jerash hit further by the Persian invasion of 614, which also sacked Damascus and Jerusalem, and by the Muslim conquest of 636. The city was rocked again in the year 747 CE by series of earthquakes, and its population shrunk to about 4000. Although the site was occupied in the early Islamic period until around 800 CE, Jerash was nothing more than a small rural village.

The crusaders described Jerash as uninhabited, and it remained abandoned until its rediscovery in 1806, when Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, a German traveler, came across and recognized a small part of the ruins. The ancient city was buried in sand, which commenced in 1925, and continue to this day.\textsuperscript{14}

**Ajloun**

The road to Ajloun, located 25 km. west of Jerash and 73 km. from Amman, winds through fertile green hillsides lined with olive groves. The main attraction in Ajloun is the stronghold of Qala’at al-Rabadh, a fine example of medieval Arab/Islamic military architecture. The castle was built between 1184-85 CE by the nephew of Salah Eddin al-Ayyubi (known in the west as Saladin), the great Muslim commander who waged a successful campaign to recover lands lost to the invading Crusaders. Ajloun’s strategic position commanding the Jordan valley, as well as the three small valleys leading to it, made it an important link in the defensive chain against the Crusaders, who spent decades unsuccessfully trying to capture the castle and nearby village, the fortress is built upon the apex of the hill above Ajloun, and offers a breathtaking view of the surrounding countryside. On a clear day you can see the Dead Sea, the Jordan valley, the West Bank, and Lake of Tiberia (the Sea of Galilee).\textsuperscript{15}
The original fortress had four corner towers, with arrow slits and a 16-meter-wide moat. It was enlarged in 1214-15 CE by the Mamluk officer Aibak Ibn Abdullah, who added a new tower in the southeast corner and constructed the main one. In 1229, the castle fell to the Emirate of Kerak. In 1260, it was largely destroyed by the Mongol invaders, but was reconquered and rebuilt almost immediately by the Mamluk sultan Baybars. The southwest tower was constructed at that time. During Mamluk times, Qala’at al-Rabadh was one in a network of beacons and pigeon posts that allowed messages to be transmitted from Baghdad to Cairo in only twelve hours.

Irbid

Forty minutes north of Ajloun (88 km. from Amman), the bustling city of Irbid is an excellent staging point for excursions to Umm Qais, Pella and other sites in north Jordan. Irbid’s importance as a trading center with Haifa ended in 1948, but in recent years it has gained importance as the industrial center and administrative capital of the north. The city has a good selection of restaurants, a number of banks and hotels, and the campus of Yarmouk University.

Artifacts and graves in the area show that Irbid has been inhabited since Bronze Age. Scholars have debated whether Irbid is the Biblical site of Beth Arbel, mentioned as the burial place of Moses’ mother and four of his sons. Under the Roman rule, the city was renamed Arabila. While most of this heritage is hidden beneath the new city of Irbid, there are two excellent museums located within the Yarmouk University. The museum of Jordanian Heritage is considered the finest archeological museum in the country, while the Natural History Museum is also worth a visit.

Umm Qais

The modern town of Umm Qais is the site of the ancient Greco-Roman town of Gadara, one of the cities of the Decapolis and, according to the Bible, the place where Jesus cast out the devil from two men into a herd of pigs (Matthew 8:28-34). Rising 518 meters above the sea level with views of Lake...
Taberias (the Sea of Galilee) and the Golan heights, there is no better vantage point in northern Jordan than Umm Qais.

Gadara was renowned for its cosmopolitan atmosphere, attracting an array of writers, artists, philosophers, and poets. It also served as a resort for Romans vacationing in the nearby al-Hemma hot springs. Like Pella, its sister Decapolis city, Gadara was blessed with fertile soil, abundant water, and a location astride a number of key trading routes connecting Asia and Europe.

The city was probably founded by the Greeks during the fourth century BCE. Gadara was over run by the Seleucid ruler Antionchus 111 in 218 BCE, and the Jews under the Hyrcanus captured it from them around 100 BCE. When the Romans under Pompey conquered the East and formed the Decapolis, the fortunes of Gadra, taken in 63 BCE, improved rapidly and building was undertaken on large scale. During the early part of Roman rule, the Nabateans (with their capital at Petra) controlled the trade routes as far north as Damascus. Aiming to put an end to this competition, Mark Antony sent King Herod the Great to weaken the Nabateans, who finally gave up their northern interests in 31 BCE, in appreciation for his efforts, Rome rewarded Herod with Gadara. The city remained under Herod’s rule until his death, and then reverted to semi-autonomy as part of the Roman province of Syria. ¹⁷

Today, a considerable portion of the original amphitheater has survived. The seats face west, and are brought to life at sunset. Covered passageways stand in the back, and until recently, a six-foot headless white marble goddess sat at the foot of one of the amphitheater’s internal staircases. The statue—thought to be of Tyche, the patron goddess of Gadara—can now be seen in Umm Qais’ archeological museum. The museum, which also houses a Byzantine mosaic frieze and a marble sarcophagus. Next to the theater is a colonnaded street that
Tourism in Jordan

was once probably the town’s commercial center. Also near the black Basalt Theater are the columns of the great basilica of Gadara. Further west’s along the colonnaded street are a mausoleum and public baths. After a few hundred meters you can barely make out the remains of what once was a hippodrome.

Al-Hemma

Ten kilometers to the north, the road from Umm Qais winds down toward the Yarmouk River and Golan where it ends at the baths of al-Hemma. There, Roman holiday makers sought rejuvenation and vitality from these health-giving hot springs. These are open to modern-day travelers as well. The main hot spring, whose mineral-rich waters are warm at 57°C, pours into an indoor pool.

Umm al-Jimal

This strange black city is located about 20 km. east of the provincial capital of Mafrak, 87 km. from Amman, and only 10 km. from the Syrian border. Umm al-Jimal is now known as the Black Oasis because of the black basalt rock from which many of its houses, churches, barracks and forts were built. The precise history of Umm al-Jimal is still unclear, but historians believe that it was built originally by the Nabateans around 2000 years ago. Under the Nabateans, the city played host to a great number of trading caravans. Indeed, the name of Umm al-Jimal means ‘Mother of Gamels’ in Arabic. The large vacant area in the town center was reserved for travelling caravans stopping in Umm al-Jimal. When the Romans took the city in the first century CE, they incorporated it into the line of defense for Rome’s Arab possessions. the city lay only six km. east of the Via Nova Triana, which connected Rome’s northern and southern Arabian holdings. Umm al-Jimal may have had as many as 10,000 inhabitants during its heyday.18

During the third century CE, it seems as though local residents faced some major threat, as they restored to using tomb stones and other available basalt to construct wall fortifications. This wall was then refortified during the fourth Century CE. Most of the buildings of Um al-Jimal were practical and residential in nature, with little evidence of the systematic layout that can be seen, for instance, at Jerash. After surviving a number of catastrophic events including the
Tourism in Jordan

Persian invasion, plagues, and minor earthquakes, the city was destroyed by a massive earthquake in 747 CE.

The Jordan Valley

The Jordan valley is low-lying strip, which cleaves down the western border of the country. It is part of the Great Rift Valley, which extends down southwards into East Africa. The Jordan Valley is divided into several distinct geographic sub-regions. Its northern part is known as the Ghor, and it includes the Jordan River. Several degrees warmer than the rest of the country, its year-around agricultural climate, fertile soils and water supply have made the Ghor the food bowl of Jordan. The Jordan River rises from several sources, mainly the Anti-Lebanon Mountains in Syria, and flows down into Lake Taberias (the Sea of Galilee) 212 meters below Sea level. It then drains into the Dead Sea which, at 400 meters below Sea level, is the lowest point on earth. South of the Dead Sea, the Jordan Valley turns into the hot, dry Wadi Araba.19

The Dead Sea

The Dead Sea is 75 km. long and from 6-16 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 the 2000 years ago. Also famous for their restorative powers are the thermal springs of nearby Zarqa Ma’in, which hosts a therapeutic health spa.20
The Dead Sea is also famous geographically as 'the lowest point on earth' lying some 400 meters below the Sea level. In addition to the historical significance of the 'Salt Sea,' as it was referred to in the Bible, the Dead Sea is today an important and rich source of minerals essential for agricultural and industrial development, as well as for the treatment of various medical conditions such as psoriasis. Visitors to the Dead Sea come away with an unforgettable swimming experience, as the high density of the water makes sinking virtually impossible. Indeed, swimming is also difficult, as one is lifted too high in the water to be able to stroke properly. More appropriate is the often-photographed pose showing a visitor reclining in the water, leisurely reading a perfectly dry newspaper. While marine enthusiasts will find a paradise in the Dead Sea is a great place to catch up on your reading.

The main resort area is located on the northern shores of the Dead Sea at Sweimeh, about 45 km. Southwest of Amman. In Sweimeh, the Government Rest House provides showers and changing facilities, a restaurant, and a choice stretch of beach. The only accommodations currently available are at the Dead Sea Spa Hotel, a few kilometers past Sweimeh. There, you can enjoy a variety of mineral treatment at the German medical center: as well as the waters of the Dead Sea, other therapies include black mud, highly exogenous air treatment, filtered sunrays, massage and gymnastics. Private bungalows are also available. Plans are in the works for additional resort hotels along the Dead Sea.
The Desert Castles

Qasr al-Hallabat

Qasr al-Hallabat is located just off the main road about 30 km. east into the desert from Zarqa. It was originally a Roman fort built during the reign of Caracalla (198-217CE) to defend against raiding desert tribes. There is evidence that, before Caracalla, Trajan had established a post there on the remains of a Nabatean settlement. During the seventh century CE, the site became a monastery, and the Umayyads then fortified it and decorated it with ornate frescoes and decorative carvings. Two kilometers past Qasr al-Hallabat, heading east, are ruins of the main bathing complex known as Hammam al-Sarah. The baths were once adorned with marble and lavish mosaics. Today, you can still see the channels that were used for hot water and steam.

Qasr al-Azraq

About 13 km. north of the Azraq Junction. On the highway to Iraq, you will find the large black fortress of Qasr al-Azraq. The present form of the castle dates back to the beginning of the 13th century CE. Crafted from local black basalt rocks, the castle exploited Azraq’s important strategic position and water sources.

The castle is almost square, with 80-meter long walls encircling a central courtyard. In the middle of the courtyard is a small mosque that may be from Umayyad times, along with the main well. At each corner of the outer wall, there is an oblong tower. The primary entrance is a single massive hinged slab of
granite, which leads to a vestibule where one can see carved into the pavement the remains of a Romans board game. Above the entrance area is the chamber used by Lawrence during his stay in Qasr al-Azraq.

**Qasr Amra**

Heading back towards Amman on Highway 40, Qasr 'Amra is about 28 km. from Azraq. This is the best preserved of the desert castles, and probably the most charming. It was built during the reign of the caliph Walid I (705-715 CE) as a luxurious bathhouse. The building may have been part of a larger complex that served to host traveling caravans, which was in existence before the Umayyads arrived on the scene.23

The building consists of three long halls with vaulted ceilings. Its plain exterior belies the beauty within, where the ceilings and walls are covered with colorful frescoes. Directly opposite the main doorway is a fresco of the caliph sitting on the throne. On the south wall other frescoes depict six other rulers of the day. Of these, four have been identified.

The audience chamber, which was used for feasting, meetings and cultural events, lead through an ante chamber into the baths. The caldarium, or steam room, is capped with a domed ceiling where a fresco lays out a map of the heavens, with the consultations of the hemisphere and the signs of the zodiac. The two bathrooms have fine mosaic floors.

**Qasr al-Mushatta**

Just South of Amman, Qasr al-Mushatta offers an excellent example of characteristic Umayyad architecture. The castle is an incomplete square palace with elaborate decoration and vaulted ceiling. The immense brick walls of the
complex stretch 144 meters in each direction, and at least 23 round towers were nested along these walls. The palace mosque is sited in the traditional position, inside and to the right of the main entrance. Throughout, there is a powerful symmetry and axiality in the planning, and this palace presents the most complete fusion of the two traditions in Umayyad architecture. Historians believe that Qasr al-Mushatta, the largest and most lavish of all the Umayyad castles, was begun by the caliph Walid II—who was assassinated by forced laborers angry over the lack of water in the area. The palace was constructed between 743-744 CE, but was never fully completed.

South of Amman

*Madaba*

The easy-going town of Madaba, located 30 km. Southeast of Amman, is most famous for its exquisite 6th-century mosaics. Its history dates back at least 3500 years, however. Madaba, which was in the Bible as the Moabite town of Madaba, was where king David’s forces vanquished an Ammonite and Aramean coalition. His victory was short-lived, however, as in the mid-ninth century BCE the Moabite king Mesha freed the city. His victories were recorded on the famous Mesha stele, an inscribed stone set up in about 850 BCE.

Madaba’s most famous mosaic is located in the church of St. George in the Middle of the town. The Mosaic Map of Palestine represents the Holy land and its surrounding regions. Clearly visible on the map are al-Quds (Jerusalem) (and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), the Dead Sea, the Jordan River, Nablus, al-Khalil (Hebron), Jericho, Egypt and the Nile River, Turkey and Lebanon. The mosaic was made around 560 CE, originally composed of over 2.3 million pieces, and
measured a staggering 25 by 5 meters. It is thought that 11,500 man-hours would have been required to lay the entire mosaic.

**Mount Nebo**

Less than 10 km. west of Medaba is Mount Nebo, known as Pisgah in the Bible. It is where the prophet Moses lived out his remaining days and, according to tradition, was buried. Mt. 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. There are actually two peaks on Mt. Nebo, Siyagha and al-Mkhayyat. During the sixth century CE, a Byzantine monastery was constructed at Siyagha. It was built on the foundations of an even earlier chapel, which was erected by monks from Egypt during the third or fourth century CE to commemorate the final days of Moses’ life. Khirbet al-Mukhayyat was mentioned in the Bible as well as on the Mesha stele. Here, during the middle of the sixth century, villagers constructed their church dedicated to the saints Lot and Procopius. The floor was, of course, decorated with yet another rich carpet of mosaics which can be seen today.

**Kerak**

Variously known throughout history as Qir Heres, Qir Moab, and Hareseth, Kerak has been a prized possession of a number of civilizations. It lies on the ancient caravan routes that used to connect Egypt to Syria, and its commanding position almost 1000 meters above the Dead Sea Valley made it a strategic asset of great importance. The city was the ancient capital of Moab, and was also used by the Greeks and Romans. During Roman times it was known as Characmoba. But it was not until the arrival of the crusaders in the 12th century that Kerak reached its full splendor. It is recorded that the crusader king Baldwin I of Jerusalem had the castle built in 1132. With its location midway between Shobak and Jerusalem, Kerak formed part of a great line of crusader castles stretching from Aqaba to Turkey. Kerak became the capital of the crusader district of oulterejordain, and, with the taxes levied on passing caravans and food grown in the district. It helped Jerusalem prosper.
Tourism in Jordan

The Mamluk Sultan Baybars refortified the castle in the late 13th century, and it was also later used by the Ottomans. The fort itself has been partially restored, and is a maze of vaulted passages and rooms. To the west across the moat is the tower from which de Chatillon cast his prisoners to their deaths. The tower in the northwest corner was added by the Mamluks in the 13th century.

The multi-storied building at the southern end was the dungeon. To the right of the castle entrance, a stone staircase descends to the museum.

Petra

Undoubtedly the most famous attraction in Jordan is the Nabatean city of Petra, nestled away in the mountains south of the Dead Sea. Petra, which means 'stone' in Greek, is perhaps the most spectacular ancient city remaining in the modern world, and certainly a must-see for visitors to Jordan and the Middle East. The city was the capital of the Nabateans-Arab who dominated the lands of Jordan during pre-Roman times- and they carved this wonderland of temples, tombs and elaborate building out of solid rock. The Victorian traveler and poet Dean Burgon gave Petra a description which holds to this day—'Match me such 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. For seven centuries, Petra fell into the mists of legend, its existence a guard secret known only to the local Bedouins and Arab tradesmen. Finally, in 1812, a young Swiss explorer and convert to Islam named Johan Ludwig Burckhardt heard locals speaking of a 'lost city' hidden in the mountains of Wadi Musa. In order to find the site without arousing local suspicions, Burckhardt disguised himself as a pilgrim seeking to make a sacrifice at the tomb of Aaron, a mission which would provide him a glimpse of the legendary city. He managed to bluff his way through successfully, and the secret of Petra was revealed to the modern western world.

Petra is located just outside the town of Wadi Musa in southern Jordan. It is 260 km. from Amman via the Desert Highway and 280 via the king's highway.
History of Petra

Archeologists believe that Petra has been inhabited from prehistoric times. Just north of the city at Beidha, the remains of a 9000-year-old city have been discovered, putting it in the same league as Jericho as one of the earliest known settlement in the Middle East. Between that time and the Iron Age (circa 1200 BC), when it was the home of the Edomites, virtually nothing is known. The Bible tells of how king David subdued the Edomites, probably around 1000 BCE. The Edomites
were enslaved, but eventually won their freedom. A series of great battles were
then fought between the Judeans and the people of Edom. In one of these, the
king Amaziah, who ruled from 796 to 781 BCE, threw 10,000 prisoners to their
deaths over the precipice of Sela. The area’s principle water source, Ain Musa
Tourism in Jordan

(spring of Moses), is one of the many places where Moses struck a rock with his staff to extract water.

Sometime during the Sixth century BCE, a nomadic tribe known as the Nabateans migrated from Western Arabia and settled in the area. It appears as though the Nabatean migration was gradual and there were few hostilities between them and the Edomites. As the Nabateans forsook their nomadic lifestyle and settled in Petra, they grew rich by levying taxes on travelers to ensure safe passage through their lands. The easily defensible valley of Petra allowed the Nabateans to grow strong.  

From its origins as Fortress City, Petra became a wealthy commercial crossroads between the Arabian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Greeks and Romans cultures. Control of this crucial trade route between the upland areas of Jordan, The Red Sea, Damascus and Southern Arabia was the lifeblood of the Nabatean Empire and brought Petra its fortune. The riches the Nabateans accrued allowed them to carve monumental temples, tombs and administrative centers out of their valley stronghold.

The growing economic and political power of the Nabateans began to worry the Romans, and in 63 BCE Pompey dispatched a force to cripple Petra. Nabatean king Aretas III either defeated the Roman legions or paid a tribute to keep peace with them. Later the Nabateans made mistake by siding with Parthians in their war with the Romans. After the Parthians' defeat, Petra had to pay tribute to Rome. When they fell behind in paying this tribute, they were invaded twice by the Roman vassal king Herod the Great.

It seems clear that by the time of the Muslim conquest in the seventh century CE, Petra had slipped into obscurity. The city was damaged again by the earthquake of 747, and housed a small crusader community during the 12th or 13th century. It then passed into obscurity and was forgotten in the West until Johanna Ludwig Burckhardt ‘rediscovered’ it for the outside world in 1812. And sights of interest include the Obelisk tomb, Khaznah (Arabic for ‘the treasury’), Amphitheater, Royal Tombs, Temple of the Winged Lions, Byzantine Church, Qasr al-Bint Faroun (in Arabic, ‘palace of the Pharaoh’s Daughter’) and al-Deir (‘The Monastery’).
Tourism in Jordan

Aqaba

With its balmy winter climate and idyllic setting, Aqaba is Jordan’s year-round aquatic playground. In winter, while Amman shivers around 5°C, the temperature hovers steadily at about 25°C in Aqaba. The thriving underwater marine life and the crystal clear waters of the Gulf of Aqaba make diving conditions there among the acknowledge best in the world. Snorkeling, water skiing, windsurfing, fishing and other water sports are also popular.

Aqaba is also famous worldwide for its combination of stimulated industrial growth with strong environmental consciousness, Jordan has successfully established a number of environmental programs and guidelines which work with, rather than hamper, the regional economy. The Gulf of Aqaba Environment Action Plan agreed on by the multilateral working group on the environment establishes a regulatory framework and contingency plans designed to prevent deterioration of the coast, coral reefs and marine ecosystem. The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, the Royal Scientific Society, the marine science station and the Jordanian Society for control of Environmental pollution are several of the organizations which are currently addressing the environmental situation in the Gulf of Aqaba and Aqaba became more important regionally now, because it has became a free zone region.

Aqaba-Water sport (Fig. 3.24)
Aqaba-Modern Hotel (Fig. 3.25)
Aqaba-Aquatic playground (Fig. 3.26)
Tourism in Jordan

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Preliminary STATISTICS DEPARTMENT MOTA/JORDAN

From the above table we can see the importance of the tourist destination according to its arrivals, and of course Petra has been taking the first place, next to Petra Jerash, Madaba and so forth.²⁹
Tourism in Jordan

Conclusion

This clear from our discussion in this chapter that Jordan has become a tourist destination on the world map, and changing it's tourist image. Jordan's tourism which are immense at the traditional cross roads of ancient trades routes, most of the great historical civilizations have left their mark.

Jordan is having every type of tourism product, either its culture tourism or medical or eco or adventure tourism, every site in Jordan is having more than one tourist product. The country is endowed with unique geographical, geological and environmental assets and unspoiled scenic sites. The enchanting scenery of Wadi Rum; the Madaba mosaic crafted during the Byzantine era in therapeutic benefits of the Dead Sea; and the Coral reefs of Aqaba are but a few examples of the diverse experiences awaiting tourists.

Jordan is also spiritually significant to a number of the world's religions. It is part of the Holly land of both the old and nee Testaments, and has a number of historical and religious sites associated with the early years of Islam and the history of the Islamic Empire.

Jordan has recognized the importance of tourism, and giving special emphasis for tourism. Tourism has become a vital economic sector in Jordan in contributes significantly to the GDP, foreign exchange and employment.

At the same time, Jordan is committed to environmentally sound development which will protect the sensitive ecological, historical recreational areas and religious sites.
Tourism in Jordan

References

11. Ibid. p. 149.
20. For more information on Dead Sea Health and beauty products, see http://www.zara-deadsea.com.


22. Ibid pp.34-38.


27. Ibid p.10.

28. For more information see the website at http://www.free.zones.gov.jo.

29. The Cyber-tourist can see video clips of various Jordanian cities at http://www.access2arabia.com/turab.