

### Things to Think About

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- Research the different people who have lived, worked, and fought in Jordan or traveled through it, such as the Bedouins, Byzantines, Crusaders, Egyptians, and Romans. What are some of the similarities and differences among them?
- Trace the history of Petra, from its earliest days as the capital of the Nabataean kingdom, to its key role in the Roman Empire, to its eventual decline. Why was it finally abandoned?
- How much do we know about the Nabataeans? What clues can be found in the city of Petra?
- Who was Lawrence of Arabia? Research his extraordinary life.
- Research the life of the late King Hussein. How did he rise to the challenges he faced?
- What are some of the ways Jordan is a gateway between the East and the West?
- Since it is so salty, the Dead Sea's water is not drinkable. What benefits do Jordanians get from the Dead Sea?
- What is a typical day like for the Bedouins of the desert? What are some of their customs, and how has life changed for them through the years?

### Internet Resources

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[kinghussein.gov.jo/jordan.html](http://kinghussein.gov.jo/jordan.html) -- The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan site, with information on both ancient and modern history, government, economy, geography, foreign affairs, and more.

[menic.utexas.edu/menic/countries/jordan.html](http://menic.utexas.edu/menic/countries/jordan.html) -- The Middle East Network Information Center, with information on arts and culture, history and archaeology, business and economy, government and politics, and news on Jordan and other Middle Eastern countries.

[www.w2go.com/amman\\_body.htm](http://www.w2go.com/amman_body.htm) -- Information on different historic sites in Jordan.

### Other Resources

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#### FOR STUDENTS:

**Smith, Coleman.** *Jordan*. Benchmark Books, 1997.

**Steffoff, Rebecca.** *Finding the Lost Cities*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

**Whitehead, Susan.** *Jordan*. Chelsea House, 1999.

#### FOR ADULTS:

**Glueck, Nelson.** *Deities and Dolphins: The Story of the Nabataeans*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965.

**Kreiger, Barbara.** *The Dead Sea: Myth, History, and Politics*. Brandeis University Press, 1997.

**Salibi, Kamal.** *The Modern History of Jordan*. St. Martin's Press, 1999.

## GEOGRAPHICAL ODYSSEYS JORDAN: KINGDOM OF THE DESERT

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## GEOGRAPHICAL ODYSSEYS

# JORDAN

KINGDOM OF THE DESERT

Come explore the desert sands of Jordan, where legendary caravans and kings searched for riches and glory. This is a land where both biblical and political histories have been written, where Muhammad led armies to the glory of Islam and Christian Crusaders built castles to defend their faith. And it is a land where wandering Bedouins still travel the desert and camels are still a means of transportation.





After studying the map and reading about Jordan and its place in the world, read the sections on vocabulary and important people, places, and dates to provide a focus while viewing the program. After viewing the program, review the sections listed above and consider the Things to Think About. Research topics further using the Internet and other resources provided.

#### Context in the World

Jordan lies on the north of the Arabian Peninsula, serving as a gateway between the East and the West. The country is largely desert, and water is scarce and valuable. Jordan has been ruled over by numerous civilizations, including the Nabataeans, Ancient Egyptians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Europeans and Ottoman Turks. Now a constitutional monarchy, it achieved independence in 1946 and has since been ruled by the Hashemite kings. King Hussein, the country's ruler since 1952, died in 1999 and was succeeded by his son Abdullah. Hussein did much to modernize Jordan and was a voice of moderation in the region, signing a formal peace treaty with Israel in 1994, ending years of hatred and war. When he took the throne, Abdullah--and Jordan as a whole--faced problems of a mounting debt burden, industries that still need development, and tensions surrounding the Palestinian desire for statehood.

#### Vocabulary

**Bedouins** -- Nomadic people of the desert, who were excellent guides and herdsmen.

**Byzantine Empire** -- The empire that after the collapse of the Roman Empire ruled Jordan until the 7th century.

**caliphs** -- Heads of the Muslim community.

**caravan** -- A group of travelers in the desert, often with camels.

**caravansaries** -- Inns to accommodate caravans.

**Crusaders** -- Christians who mounted expeditions to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims.

**frescoes** -- Paintings done on moist lime plaster.

**Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan** -- The modern name of Jordan, drawn from the family name of the king.

**Islam** -- The religion based on the revelations of the prophet Muhammad.

**mosaics** -- Designs or pictures created from small pieces of tile, stone, or glass.

**mosques** -- Muslim places of worship.

**Muslims** -- Followers of the Islamic religion.

**Nabataeans** -- An ancient nomadic people of the Jordanian desert who established a kingdom about the 4th century BC and were ancestors of the Bedouins.

**nymphaeum** -- A Greek or Roman sanctuary consecrated to water nymphs.

**Ptolomey** -- A dynasty of ancient Egypt in the 3rd century BC.

**wadi** -- The bed or valley of a river that is usually dry except after it rains.

#### Important People

**Abdullah** -- The current king of Jordan.

**Faysal** -- The Arab prince who, with Lawrence of Arabia, led a group of Arab guerrillas in revolt against the Turks in World War I.

**Lawrence of Arabia** -- The British soldier T. E. Lawrence, who led a group of Arab guerrillas in revolt against the Turks in World War I.

**Muhammad** -- The prophet and founder of Islam, who lived c.570-632 AD.

**Philadelphus** -- Egyptian king of the Ptolomey dynasty in the 3rd century BC.

#### Important Places

**al-Amrah** -- An Arab fortress in the desert, decorated with frescoes.

**al-Azraq** -- An oasis in the eastern desert that is the site of a Roman castle.

**al-Kharanah** -- A Muslim fortress near Amman.

**Amman** -- The capital of Jordan, called Philadelphia in ancient times.

**Aqaba** -- Jordan's only port, on the Red Sea.

**Ash-Shawbak** -- A castle built by the Crusaders.

**Dead Sea** -- A large, highly saline lake that lies between Jordan and Israel and is the lowest place on earth, 1,312 feet below sea level.

**Jebel Ashrafiyeh** -- One of the seven hills on which Amman is built and the site of a beautiful mosque.

**Jerash** -- A city expanded by the Romans, after they conquered it c.64 BC, now largely reconstructed by archaeologists.

**Jordan River** -- A river that flows south through Jordan.

**King's Highway** -- Once an ancient route, now a modern road, that begins in Aqaba.

**Madaba** -- A Byzantine town south of Amman on the King's Highway.

**Mecca** -- The birthplace of Muhammad, to which Muslims try to make a pilgrimage once in their lives.

**Mount Nebo** -- A mountain in Jordan near the Dead Sea.

**Petra** -- The capital of the Nabataean kingdom, later a leading city of the Roman Empire.

**Philadelphia** -- The name by which Amman was known in ancient times.

**Red Sea** -- A sea whose northern tip is the Gulf of Aqaba, which separates Jordan from Egypt.

**Saba (or Sheba)** -- An ancient kingdom that is now Yemen.

**Wadi al-Mawjib** -- A deep canyon running from the Dead Sea.

**Wadi Araba** -- A valley that runs south from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba along the line between Jordan and Israel.

**Wadi Rum** -- A beautiful desert region in southern Jordan.

#### Important Dates

**6th century BC** -- The Nabataeans migrate to Jordan

**4th century BC** -- The kingdom of the Nabataeans is fully established in Jordan

**3rd century BC** -- Philadelphia is conquered by the Egyptian Philadelphus

**c. 64 BC** -- Romans invade Jordan and expand Jerash

**106 AD** -- The Romans attack and conquer Petra

**636 AD** -- The Muslims defeat the Byzantines

**7th century** -- Islam is established in Jordan

**1115 AD** -- The Crusaders build Ash-Shawbak

**1917 AD** -- Lawrence of Arabia and Prince Faysal

lead a guerrilla force against the Ottoman Turks

**1946 AD** -- Jordan (then called Transjordan) gains independence