

From Malpensa to Jordan, exploring its ancient culture

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Are you still not among the Italian travellers who have discovered **Jordan**? You can always make up for this, thanks to the increased number of routes, also with low cost airlines, to this land, and the increase in tourists. In the last year, the number of Italians who chose Jordan as their holiday destination increased by 90.4%. This figure, which made 2019 the best year ever for tourism in Jordan, places Italy in second place among Western countries, in terms of the number of arrivals, after the Americans.

Of course, this influx has also been favoured by the low cost airlines. Indeed, the news of the start of **EasyJet** flights to **Jordan** is from last October: for the time being, there are two flights a week. With this move, EasyJet is hoping to attract all travellers who want to go to **Aqaba-Petra**.

The other airlines that fly to **Amman** from Malpensa are **Turkish Airlines, Egypt Air, Alitalia, Aegean Airlines, Royal Jordanian, Blue Air, MEA, Austrian and Lufthansa**. Ryan Air also flies to Amman, but from Orio al Serio.

Petra (which has a non-civil airport) receives flights operated by **EasyJet, Austrian, Lufthansa, Alitalia, Turkish Airlines, Air France, Air Dolomiti, Royal Air Maroc, Emirates, Royal Jordanian, Etihad, KLM, British Airways, Qatar Airways, Egypt Air, Saudia, and Aegean Airlines**.

All of these flights make a stopover, except EasyJet, which has a direct flight to Aqaba in the winter. **EasyJet, Turkish Airlines, Royal Jordanian, Alitalia and Lufthansa** operate to Aqaba.

But what is there to do once you arrive in Jordan, and what should you visit?

Here are the top 8 things you should not miss, according to **Lonely Planet**:

1. Floating on the **Dead Sea**: with its high salt content (33%), anyone trying to dive to the seabed remains on the surface.
2. A bath in the hot springs of Ma'in: **Ma'in** is a small oasis at the end of a road that winds through the mountains; it was the favourite place of **King Herod**.
3. **Snorkelling** along the Jordanian **Red Sea** coast, swimming with moray eels, clownfish and colourful, tropical fish, among the coral reefs.
4. **Petra** and the ancient aqueducts: you can still see evidence of the ingenuity of the Nabataeans, flood protection dams, terraces, canals, settling basins, aqueducts, rainwater collection systems, springs and cisterns.
5. **Madaba** and its natural swimming pools at **Wadi Al Hidan**: this black basalt gorge is now very popular among day-trippers and canyoning enthusiasts; it has also become part of the Jordan Trail, a recently opened hiking trail that crosses the entire country.
6. In the footsteps of Joshua, the tribe of Israel and Jesus, along the **Jordan river**; a visit to this river (which symbolically connects Judaism and Christianity) will also provide tourists with an opportunity to reflect and meditate.
7. Birdwatching at the **Azraq Wetland Reserve**: just outside Amman, you can spot the desert chaffinch, Cetti's warbler and the greater hoopoe-lark in the small reserve in the eastern desert.
8. **Wadi Rum** and Lawrence's Spring: at Wadi Rum, on seeing the few water springs nestled between the high cliffs, you feel like you are on Mars. The writer T. E. Lawrence (hence the name of the spring) described this wooded area as a "paradise just five feet square".

And here is the **Touring Club**'s selection:

1. **Amman**, the white city: the capital, which houses both the modern quarters and the citadel, an acropolis from Roman times, is an excellent destination for lovers of archaeological finds.
2. **Al-karak**: this citadel, which was built by the crusaders in the 12th century, has a strategic position that allows it to "dominate" the whole valley from above.
3. **Qusayr Amra**: this monument, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is from the Omayyad era, dating back to the 7th century, and contains frescoes of animals.
4. George's Church in **Madaba**: in the Orthodox church, you can admire the **Map of the Holy Land, a mosaic from 560 A.D.** of the Middle East area, from Egypt to Palestine.
5. **Mount Nebo and the Sanctuary of St. Francis**: the famous mountain where Moses contemplated the Promised Land is a place of pilgrimage for the faithful. The sanctuary was built by the Franciscans in place of a Byzantine monastery.
6. **Wadi Rum**: the gateway to the desert is very impressive, for the colours of its rocks.
7. **Al-Aqabah**: the town is located on the Red Sea and is a growing seaside resort.
8. **Jerash**: a small town 30 km from Amman, whose first settlement dates back to the time of Alexander the Great. It became important with the advent of the Romans and is home to many archaeological sites from Roman times.
9. The **Dead Sea**: this large lake, whose shores are 400 m below sea level, is **the lowest point on the Earth's surface**. The high salt content has given its waters important therapeutic and healing properties.

Petra: the city built deep inside a desert gorge, which was abandoned in the 8th century, was rediscovered in 1812, and today always enchants tourists.

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