



### **A Week in Jordan by Lucy McGurnaghan**

As an avid traveller and having previously visited Israel, I was keen to explore more of the Middle East so when a good friend recommended 'A Week in Jordan' organised by Exodus earlier this year, I didn't delay in enquiring what the trip offered, and before long had secured my place on what was to be a truly fabulous holiday packed with unforgettable memories.

The week started in Madaba visiting historic ruins before heading north to Jerash, one of the most preserved Roman cities in this region. We then made our way to the salty waters of the Dead Sea for the first of many highlights on our journey through this charming country. Bobbing in the lowest - and possibly the hottest - place on earth smothered in mud from head to toe made me feel a million miles away from the daily grind of life back home!

We then travelled down the miraged King's Highway to Petra, the beautiful rose-red city for which Jordan is most well known. We had two full days to explore this magnificent site and I don't think anyone will ever forget their first glimpse of the Treasury after the 1.5 km walk down the Siq, rightfully giving the city the accolade of one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Whether it was the achievement of trekking for two hours in 30+ degree heat to see both the Monastery and the High Place of Sacrifice that offered spectacular views of the Jordanian countryside (pictured), witnessing a Brazilian TV drama being filmed against this stunning backdrop or simply enjoying a unique-yet-welcomed Turkish bath, we all have memories of Petra to last a lifetime.

But the best, in my opinion, was still to come as we travelled further inland the next day to the desert village of Wadi Rum to get a taste of authentic Bedouin life. We spent the morning riding the brick red sand dunes in a 4x4, the afternoon re-living our childhood memories of running down them (pictured) and the evening camping under them, gazing at more stars than I can ever remember seeing.

Our next stop was a brief trip to Aqaba where we snorkelled around the coral reefs of the Red Sea before returning north to do some last minute shopping in the souqs of Amman.

It's fair to say that we packed a lot into the week, yet still had sufficient 'down' time to relax and unwind after busy days. The presence of a local guide, whose knowledge and passion for his country was second to none, offered us a much greater insight into Jordan, its people and culture than I would have learned from just my guide book.

I made some great friends in my group, who I still see and reminisce about our fabulous time there. It was my first trip with Exodus and I highly recommend them to anyone who is looking for fantastic and truly memorable holidays that will quite simply leave you yearning for more.