



AMMAN BACCALAUREATE SCHOOL

Presents...

**A GUIDE
TO LIVING
IN JORDAN**

Updated December 2011 /GSA

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Kingdom

Jordan achieved full independence from Great Britain in 1946, before which it was the Emirate of Transjordan established in 1921. Since independence it has been known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The country has been ruled by four monarchs to date: HM King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein (1921-1951); HM King Talal Bin Abdullah (1951-1952); HM King Hussein Bin Talal (1952-1999); and HM King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein (1999-present).

Location

Situated near the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Jordan shares borders with Syria to the north, Iraq to the east, Palestine and Israel to the west and Saudi Arabia to the east and south.

The land of Jordan and its people have been molded by centuries of passing civilizations. Jordan has always been the crossroads between east and west, and its centrality has given it strategic and economic importance, making it a vital trading and communication link between countries, peoples and continents.

Area and Layout

Jordan is a small country of 92,300 square kilometers. Aqaba, Jordan's main port lies on the short Gulf of Aqaba coastline and is about 350 km south of Amman. The Syrian border is about 90 km north of the city and the border into Palestine/Israel lies about an hour's drive west.

Population

Jordan's population is estimated to be around 6.4 million. Jordan's stability in a turbulent region has attracted large numbers of refugees and temporary residents from neighboring countries including Palestine and Iraq. In recent years it has also seen tens of thousands of Jordanian expatriates returning from abroad.

Jordan's strong rural-based lifestyle, grounded in the nation's villages and deserts, has taken a slight shift in recent years. The trend has been to urbanize. About seventy percent of Jordanians now reside in towns. However, the Jordanian cultural identity is firmly rooted in rural and desert communities. Amman's population is estimated at 2 million.

Climate

Jordan experiences all four seasons and has a good climate with generally fine weather throughout the year.

It can snow in winter, is hot in summer and cool and fresh in spring with the occasional chilly nights and in autumn there is a cold breeze during the afternoon and evening. Please come prepared for the winter season by bringing appropriate clothing; it could last between November and end of March.

Amman averages 6 (December) – 13 (July) hours of sunlight and temperatures between 4°C and 40°C depending on the season though it can fall below zero in winter.

Language

Arabic is the national language of Jordan, although English is widely spoken, particularly in the major cities. French is also spoken but to a lesser extent. A variety of language courses are available in Amman.

There are two English newspapers; The *Jordan Times*, published daily, and *The Star*, published weekly and an increasing variety of magazines. Local radios broadcast in both English and Arabic and a wide range of satellite TV channels are available through different service providers (Showtime and Orbit).

Religion

The majority of the population (95%) is Sunni Muslim and Islam is the official religion. The rest of Jordan's

population are Arab Christians and Armenians of different denominations whose freedom of worship, opinion and association are guaranteed by the Constitution.

There are a number of active 'English language' Christian church groups always ready to welcome newcomers:

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh

Tel. 5920740

Assemblies of God Church

Tel. 4632785

St. Joseph Church

Tel. 4624590

Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 4637440

De La Salle Church

Tel. 5661757

Terra Sancta Church

Tel. 4622366

Armenian Orthodox Church

Tel. 4775261

St. Ephraim Church

Tel. 4771751

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation

Tel. 5158457

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman

Tel. 5811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish

Tel. 4614190

Ramadan

This is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, commemorating the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Mohammed. Ramadan is observed throughout the Islamic World.

During the Muslim holy month of fasting, food is not eaten by the devout from sunrise to sunset. They also do not smoke or allow any liquid to pass their lips. It is therefore unwise to eat, smoke or even drink water in public during the hours of fasting. Many restaurants do not serve food before the evening meal of 'breakfast.' Most places will not serve beer or liquor even in the evening during the month of Ramadan, as well as on a few of the other religious holidays.

Opening hours of shops and other facilities are reduced during Ramadan, with restaurants and cafes often working shorter hours, or closing during the day. Alcohol is not sold in shops during the holy month; however hotels and some restaurants will continue a regular service of food and drink, including alcohol, to foreigners.

It is important to note that the Muslim religious practice is to pray five times a day after a cleansing process of the entire body. When a Muslim has performed the

cleansing process and is ready for prayer, he/she will not shake the hand of someone from the opposite sex as it will render them impure for prayer. Expats should be aware before extending their arms out to shake hands with a Muslim of the opposite sex.

Jordan at a Glance

Jordan's political system is a democratic constitutional monarchy. As a result of four decades of investment in the social and economic infrastructure, modern Jordan is now well endowed in many respects.

In healthcare, Jordan has scored high in terms of quantity and quality. It became a regional center for the full range of health services. Large numbers of people from the region visit the country for specialized medical treatment.

Jordan's national power grid runs on 220 volts/50 cycles AC. Plugs can vary depending on the building; however, adapters are available in Jordan and can be purchased at a fairly cheap price.

Jordan's currency is the Jordanian Dinar or JD which is pegged to the US \$. It is subdivided into 1000 fils. Jordanians between themselves use the subdivisions of the *piaster*. One JD consists of 100 *piasters*. Coins and

paper denominations are both used. The denominations are:

Coins: 5 fils, 10 fils, 25 fils, 100 fils, 250 fils, 500 fils,
Notes: JD 1.00, JD 5.00, JD 10.00, JD 20.00, JD 50.00

Be careful, especially when you first use taxis! Most foreigners are not used to three decimal places and it is quite common for people to pay ten times the fare shown on the meter – most taxi drivers are grateful for the extravagant ‘tip’! Also, by law, the meter must be reset and on when you begin your journey. When exiting the car, only the right door is used.

A woman should never sit in the front seat of a taxi, especially if riding by herself. Expat women should be particularly cautious of drivers talking and looking curiously at them. Remaining formal with taxi drivers is best.

Social Customs

Jordan is a predominantly Muslim country. Whether you are in Amman or in a village, you will hear the call of prayer five times a day from the high minaret of the mosque. This is the most familiar sound of the country.

All Islamic religious holidays are set according to the lunar calendar and are thirteen days shorter than the Gregorian calendar.

Most family entertaining is still done in the privacy of the home and being invited to visit is still the epitome of Jordanian hospitality. You will always be given coffee or tea in an Arab home, no matter how short your visit is. Women here are famous for their cooking - beautifully prepared, deliciously spiced and tastefully served. However since so many fine restaurants have opened in Amman, eating out and taking guests out, have become part of city living.

Being a predominantly Islamic society, Jordan is conservative by some western standards. Jordanians dress conservatively and expect foreigners to respect their traditions. Ladies who go around in public scantily dressed could receive adverse comment and possibly unwanted and unexpected attention in certain parts of Amman. Sleeveless blouses and shorts are unacceptable in some parts of the city.

As in most developing countries, the young people are moving away from the traditional dress of their fathers and mothers. Now jeans and slacks, mini and midi and floor length dresses, and the other stylish fashions of Europe can be bought in Amman and worn both at home and outside.

You will find that most Jordanian homes do not have house pets - neither cats nor dogs. If you have a dog as a pet, it is best to keep it away from visitors until you know how they feel about it.

Life in Jordan

Most expatriates find Jordan a very pleasant country to live in. The Jordanians are very friendly people and, while it is a predominantly Muslim society there are few restrictions on one's lifestyle.

Up until recently security has not been a problem. The bombings of November 2005 have made the country more security conscious and, as in many countries unfortunately, the presence of the army and police is more visible. Personal security is not considered a problem and although, like all cities today, Amman has some crime. Jordan is, by Western standards, a very safe country.

Getting around Jordan by public transport is comparatively easy. Within Amman there is a very good and relatively inexpensive, metered, cruising taxi system. There is a Taxi Service called "Taxi Al Mumayez" that you can order by phone. As you get to know the city there are also very cheap, local buses and 'service' taxis, applying fixed routes.

All major points outside Amman can be reached by local bus or service taxi and the major tourist attractions, e.g. Aqaba, Petra, can also be reached by air-conditioned 'tourist bus' (Amman – Aqaba, 350 km costs about JD 30, including a snack). It is also possible to go to Aqaba

by air. Cars may be hired on a foreign driving license and there is a wide range of companies offering their services.

It is comparatively easy to get to neighboring countries apart from Saudi Arabia, by road or air. You will need a visa to visit Syria, and an application can be submitted at the local Syrian Embassy. The duration for processing the visa depends on the nationality of the visitor.

Cars are expensive, petrol is reasonably cheap. An 'adequate' second-hand car will cost JD 7,000-10,000. Furthermore, an expatriate is required to buy a car of no less than 4 years older than the date of registering the car in your name. Also you cannot purchase one, or get a Jordanian driving license (test required) until you have your residence permit and this takes time. The school does not give car loans and arranging loans through the bank can be difficult for expatriates. Importing a car is not possible. Non-Jordanians are not permitted to own a motor cycle.

To obtain a driving license, a test in driving theory, a practical test, and an eye test are necessary. A fee is charged for issuing the Jordanian driving license (approximately JD 150).

Almost everything is available in Jordan. Basic food is comparatively inexpensive and of good quality. All imported items carry a heavy import duty and are more expensive than one may be used to in Europe or the

USA. This applies particularly to electrical items and clothing. Local fresh fruits and vegetables are seasonal but most are also imported to ensure year-round supply. Small fresh produce shops are very common and the cost is typically less expensive.

There are many local shopping areas, the size and standard of which varies with the neighborhood. There is an increasing number of large and very well stocked supermarkets as well as many smaller local supermarkets. Bargaining is possible in some downtown shops, but not those that sell food. A wide variety and quality of clothing is available.

Bookshops have limited stocks and books and magazines can be expensive. Up-to-date UK, USA and other newspapers are available but again they are comparatively expensive.

While there may not be the range of recreational activities that one may be accustomed to in Europe or the USA, there are still plenty of opportunities to enjoy yourself and make new friends. The HASH, a fun-run organization found around the world operates on Monday evenings throughout the year. The Friends of Archeology arrange outings, usually twice a month on a Friday to historical sites. The British Council and other similar organizations run cultural centers and many nationalities have 'ladies groups' which meet once or twice a month. Various hotels have 'sports clubs'

(seasonal and expensive) for tennis and swimming. There is a squash club, a very basic golf course, riding and, at Aqaba, diving.

The Jordanian countryside is beautiful, with quite a lot of bird life, and is full of sites of historical interest. In summer, picnics/barbecues are popular. There are also a wide variety of restaurants. Most entertaining is however done on an 'at home' basis.

Visa and Immigration Requirements

Any non-Arab visitor to Jordan needs a visa. This is easily obtained, in most cases on entry into the country, or at diplomatic missions abroad. Citizens of most countries can get their visa on arrival at Amman airport (JD 20 refunded by school). The school then begins to process your papers to obtain first your work permit and then you and your family's residence permit(s). This is a protracted process during which bureaucracy moves slowly. It can take two or three months. During this time there are some things you cannot do. You cannot travel outside of Jordan and as mentioned before you cannot take the driving test or register a car. It can be quite frustrating. To process your visa application the school needs three original or attested copies of all your transcripts, degrees, diplomas, testimonials, copy of birth certificate and several passport-size photographs, about 8 per person (everything in Jordan requires a photo). You

can of course get photos taken here but it is good idea to bring some with you.

Health Requirements

Inoculations are not required to enter Jordan unless you are traveling from an infected location, e.g. any country where yellow fever occurs. You may be asked to show your inoculation certificates at the point of entry into Jordan.

International Flights

Jordan is served by various airlines, with direct flights to major European, regional and some Asian destinations.

Visiting Palestine

There are two direct crossing points by road between Jordan and the Israeli occupied West Bank: the King Hussein Bridge (also known as the Allenby Bridge) and Sheikh Hussein Bridge. It is now possible for private vehicles to cross the bridge but pedestrians are still prohibited from walking over it. There are public transports that can traverse the bridge.

When returning to Jordan, there is an exit tax imposed by Israel on any foreigner exiting the country.

There are also daily flights to and from Tel Aviv.

Customs

On arrival, you may be requested by customs officials to open your luggage for inspection. So far as duty allowances are concerned, you are permitted to bring 200 cigarettes or twenty-five grams of tobacco and a one-litre bottle of spirits into Jordan. Modest gifts brought into the country are exempt from customs duty.

Customs clearance of your personal effects is arranged through the school's agent, at your expense. Your freight cannot be cleared until after you have arrived in the country so please dispatch it to arrive no earlier than you do. Jordanian customs have tightened up on what they allow one to bring into the country 'duty free'. We have no control over what duty is charged on, or the rate of duty. Electrical items, such as TVs, radios and musical instruments are particularly likely to be charged duty but other items may also be subject to duty. Videos, music cassettes and CDs may be held for checking. It all depends on the individual customs officer handling your case.

Transportation from Amman Airport

Taxis are available from Queen Alia International Airport to take you into Amman, a journey of about thirty-five kilometers. Currently the trip costs about JD 20. There is also a service taxi from the airport, which currently costs JD 17.5.

Driving

Jordan is a small country that can be crossed by car in approximately four hours. Most of the sites a visitor would want to see are within a few hours' drive of Amman.

Jordanians drive on the right-hand side of the road. Most road signs are in Arabic, some in English. Take great care driving around town, especially Amman, as roundabouts are common and potentially hazardous as local driving habits is different to what you are accustomed to, particularly in the city and on major highways.

Banks

A number of international and regional banks have offices in Amman, in addition to Jordan's own banks. Foreigners are permitted to open accounts at Jordanian banks in either Jordanian Dinars or in foreign currencies. Currency exchange offices operate under the guidelines and regulations of the Central Bank of Jordan. The

Central Bank sets minimum and maximum interest rates for financial institutions to follow. Banks are open to the public between 08:30 and 15:00 from Sunday to Thursday. However, banks located in some malls (City Mall and Mecca Mall) operate longer hours till night.

Credit Cards

Although credit and charge cards are not as widely used as in the USA or Europe, they are accepted at most large hotels, car hire companies, tourist shops, restaurants and major supermarkets. Major cards accepted are: Access, Master charge, Visa, Euro card, American Express and Diners Club. Most have representatives in Amman should your card be lost or stolen.

Time

Jordan is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. Daylight saving time (summer time) occurs during April and October.

Business Hours

Government-run and most other offices are open from 08:00 to 15:00 hours every day except Friday when nearly all of them are closed all day. Government-run offices close also on Saturdays. During the month of Ramadan working hours are usually reduced to between

09:00 and 14:00 hours. Shop opening hours depend on the location and the type of shop. Most of the shops open their doors between 09:00 and 10:00 and close before 20:30. Muslims close early or do not open at all on Fridays, and Christians follow similar rules on Sundays.

Tipping

Hotels and restaurants are required to add sales and services taxes to their bills and additional tipping is optional. In smaller establishments it is polite to leave a gratuity of some kind in line with the quality of service you have received.

Communications

Jordan has a modern communications system and mobile telephones are widely used. Internet access is readily available through a number of ISP providers.

Postal and courier services are reliable.

Weights and Measures

Jordan operates almost entirely on the metric system but the local unit for land is the 'dunum'. One dunum is approximately equal to 1,000 square meters.

Public Holidays

Friday and Saturday comprise the weekend although some Christians tend to take Sunday off instead of Saturday. The following days are observed as national holidays. However, the school week is from Sunday to Thursday and working hours are set as such.

1 January	New Year Day
1 May	Labor Day
25 May	Independence Day

The following religious holidays are determined by the Islamic lunar calendar and move forward in the western calendar by about ten days each year:

Al Isra' wal Mi'raj (the Prophet's Journey)

Eid al-Fitr (the Feast of Ramadan)

Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice)

Al-Hijri New Year (Muslim New Year)

Al-Mawlid Al Nabawi (the Prophet's Birthday)

Additional Christian holidays taken by the school are:

Christmas Day

Palm Sunday

Easter Sunday

Easter Monday

Useful Arabic

Just a few words in Arabic will make your stay more enjoyable and, at the same time, bring gleaming smiles to the faces of all Jordanians with whom you speak.

Vocabulary and phrases

Hello	<i>Mar-haba</i>
Good morning	<i>Sabah el-khair</i>
(In reply)	<i>Sabah el-noor</i>
Welcome	<i>Ahlan wa sahlan</i>
(In reply)	<i>Ahlan bekum</i>
Greetings	<i>Assalam 'alaikoom</i>
(In reply)	<i>Wa 'alaikoom assalam</i>
Good-bye	<i>Ma'assalama</i>
(when departing)	<i>Fi aman allah</i>
How are you?	<i>Kaifa halak?</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Hal tatakalum al Engleaziah?</i>
I do not speak Arabic	<i>Ana la atakallum al Arabiah</i>
Please	<i>Min fadlak (to a man), Min fadlik (to a woman)</i>
Excuse me	<i>Aatherni, affwon</i>
If God wills	<i>Insha-allah</i>
Thank you	<i>Shuk-ran</i>
No, thank you	<i>Laa, shuk-ran</i>
Yes	<i>Na'am</i>
No	<i>La</i>
Take me to ...	<i>Khothni ala ...</i>
Wait here	<i>Intadhir hona</i>
I'm sorry	<i>Muta'assef</i>

Who is it?	<i>Meen?</i>
What is it?	<i>Sho ha-da?, Esh ha-da?</i>
What is your name?	<i>Ma ismika?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Ismi ...</i>
Where?	<i>Wein?</i>
Why?	<i>Laysh?</i>
What?	<i>Matha?</i>
How much is it? (money)	<i>Bekome?</i>
How many?	<i>Kam?</i>
How much does it weigh?	<i>Shoo wazno?</i>
I don't know	<i>Ma ba'arif</i>
Slowly	<i>Shway shway</i>
Stop	<i>Waqqif</i>
To the right	<i>'al-ya-meen</i>
To the left	<i>'ash-shmal</i>
Straight ahead	<i>Dug-ri</i>
Once	<i>Marra</i>
Twice	<i>Marratain</i>
I want	<i>Bid-dee</i>
I don't want	<i>Ma bid-dee</i>
What do you want?	<i>Shoo bid-dak? (to a man), Shoo bid-dik? (to a woman)</i>
What is that?	<i>Shou hathaak?</i>
How many kilometres?	<i>Kam kilometre?</i>
Where is the road to...?	<i>Wein et-tareeq ila ...?</i>
Is there air-conditioning?	<i>Fee tabreed?</i>
I want to eat	<i>Bid-dee akul</i>
I want to drink	<i>Bi-dee ash-rab</i>
Water	<i>Mai</i>
Tea	<i>Sh'ay</i>

Coffee
Milk
Sugar
Market

Qah-wa
Haleeb
Sukkar
Souq

Days of the week:

Sunday
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday

al-ahad
al-et'nayne
at-t'latah
al-arba'a
al-khamees
aj-juma'a
as-sebt

Numbers

zero
one
two
three
four
five
six
seven
eight
nine
ten
twenty
hundred

Sifr
Wahad
Tenayne
Talatah
Arba'a
Khamseh
Siteh
Saba'a
Tamanyeh
Tissa'
Asharah
Ishrene
Mia

