

We flew to Jordan on the morning Sama flight, which we found comfortable and pleasant. After landing at the airport we went through the various security checks and visa purchases. [A tip here is to have the correct Jordanian money available for the visa purchase]. After you have had your visa put into your passport you can go straight through to baggage reclaim and do not need to queue at Immigration.

There is a small duty free shop as you exit baggage reclaim that has a fair selection of products at good prices.

We hired a car from the airport and found driving an easy enough experience (after 2 years on the Saudi roads). A little tip here is to ensure that you never let your fuel tank drop below ¼ as on some of the longer journeys you can find petrol stations up to 80 km apart. Remember that Jordanians pay taxes inline with many European countries, meaning that items such as petrol as far more expensive than we are used to in Saudi Arabia (approx 6 Saudi Riyals per litre of fuel).

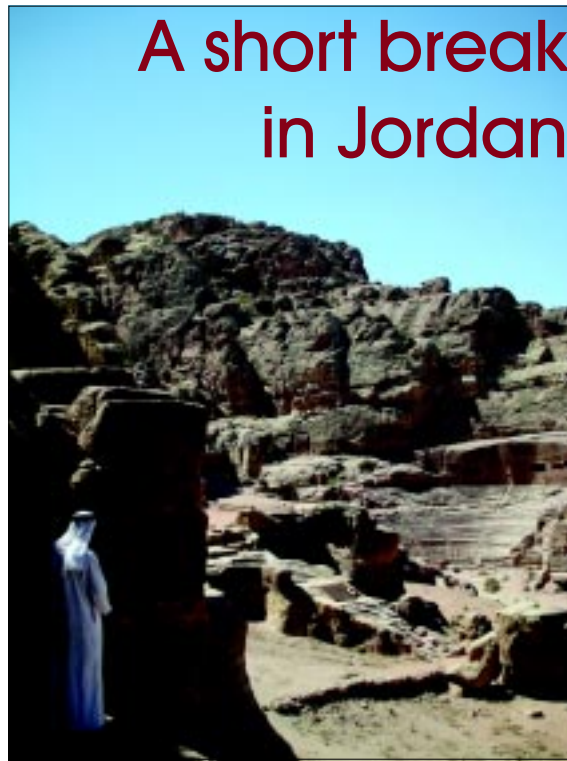
We drove from the airport down to the Dead Sea resort where we checked into the fantastic Movenpick hotel (again booked through Sama). The hotel has been designed to look authentically period dated from the outside (pic371), but is state of the art inside, with the world famous Zara Spa the jewel in the crown.



The hotel boasts 9 restaurants and bars serving a wide range of foods to suit all tastes. These include an Italian, Chinese and Grill. The service is of the highest order, with friendly attentive staff seemingly at your every beck and call.

With a large main pool situated near the majority of the accommodation and a smaller infinity pool overlooking the Dead Sea itself. The hotel provides plenty of poolside sun loungers for its guests, add to this the loungers on a manmade "sand shelf" along with the section of private beach and there really is space for everybody.

After spending a couple of relaxing days by the pool we set out for the 3 ½ hour drive to Petra. Despite the long drive, what we discovered at the end of our journey was well worthwhile. The beautiful ancient city of Petra is laid out over approximately 7 km's and is home to some amazing "ruins", I even heard somebody say that Petra made "Verulanium in St. Alban's, England,



look like a pile of bricks in contrast to the delights on offer here."

Petra is a city that has been added to by many different generations of people through the passages of time. Believed to have been started by the Nabateans, a tribal people from the Arabian Peninsula more than 2200 years ago the city was later added to by the Greeks, Egyptians, Mesopotamians and the Romans. After many different people had inhabited Petra the city was gradually abandoned and fell to ruins, before becoming lost to the West after the 14th century. The city was rediscovered by a Swiss traveler called J L Burckhardt in 1812.

You pay at the booth on the left of the shops, free maps of the site are available inside the main information building. You can even hire a multilingual guide for the day, but we chose to "go it alone" and discover things as we went along.



by Gary Richardson