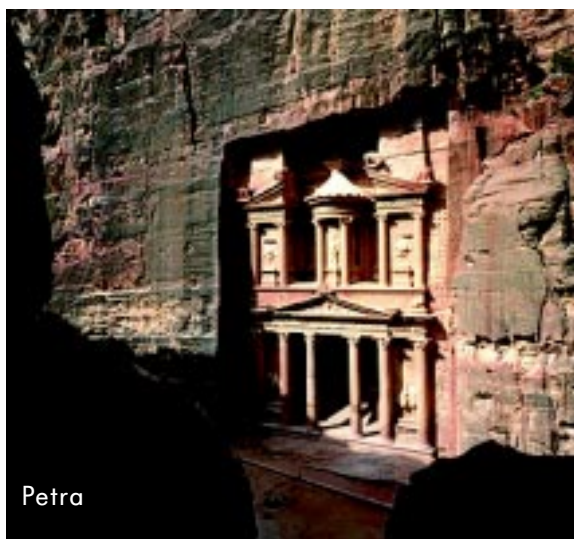


Readers of the last edition will know that Jim and Margaret Milne have finally gone 'Exit Only'. Deciding that they wanted something more memorable than the front end of the bmi flight and home inside the day but a rather longer and potentially more arduous journey overland. All reports along the way came with best wishes to all they've left behind.

April 7th

Our escape from Saudi was completely painless and our arrival in Jordan was like the return of the lost sheep! We have been greeted and welcomed all along the way by very friendly and helpful people. The Saudi number plates have meant stops by the local police but when they find out who we are they become very interested in the mad British – or Scottish Bedu as Jim calls us. Lots of Bedu here and proud of it.

Our first stop was at Petra where we stayed at the Petra Place hotel. Room on 5th floor and the lift is out of action for the next few hours. Remember Sana'a. The problem was fixed several times over the next few days.



Petra was what we had expected and much, much more. Decided one visit would not be enough so did a two day ticket. Having been to Madein Sala'h in Saudi and seen a few TV programmes we had a fair idea of what to expect but nothing can prepare you for the size and grandeur of the sight. If there had only been the siq we would have come away amazed and delighted. After walking down and up on both days and up to the top of the jebel to view the Sacrificial Temple my legs almost refused to work for the next two days.

After three nights we moved up to Madaba, stopping at Karak to see the castle there. We have booked four nights at the Madaba Inn Hotel, right in the middle of town. Yesterday we did the town and viewed all the

mosaics except for the one in Saint George's Church, it being Easter weekend and lots of church services. Perhaps we'll manage that sometime tomorrow. It is a map of all the major biblical sights from Lebanon to Egypt and down to the Med. and was constructed in AD 560. We had a trip to Mt. Nebo where Moses is said to have seen the Promised Land and where he died but his burial place is unknown. There is a very attractive garden surrounding the Moses Memorial Church with more mosaics and a huge bronze memorial symbolizing the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross and the serpent that "Moses lifted up". We then drove down to Mukawir and climbed to the hilltop perch of Machaerus, the castle of Herod the Great, with views over the Dead Sea. Unfortunately it was too misty and there was only a haze to be seen. But we met some people working in Amman and shared biscuits and dates with them and chatted to a Jordanian family. Everyone thinks we are slightly mad! The policeman we spoke to today wanted to come with us, but you could see that he still thought "mad Brits"! Machaerus is also where John the Baptist lost his head but the exact cave is not known so we had a look in several on the way down!

Today was the Dead Sea Day. From about 800m down to -400m. It takes some thought to visualize it. Another hazy day so not a lot to see over the water. Stopped at a resort where we paid our 10JD, had some coffee and then meandered down the road along the sea to where Wadi Mujib reaches it. This is a very wide, deep wadi that stretches across Jordan from the Desert Highway to the Dead Sea and is known as "the Grand Canyon of Jordan". The Kings Highway that we drove north on crosses it over a dam which was completed last year. It is very spectacular. Later Jim did the Dead Sea float but I only got my ankles wet. It was very cold! Another day here then moving north for two nights before traveling up to Syria.

15th April

Here we are on day 15 of our journey and writing this in Aleppo in northern Syria. Arrived here yesterday and staying at an hotel that has been formed from two old houses, so the streets are very narrow and the car is parked about 500m away up several narrow alleyways. Today we did Aleppo but being Tuesday all museums and citadels are closed, but it has a fantastic souk with the most wonderful arched ceilings, intriguing courtyards behind half-open doors and the usual layout of middle eastern souks with the usual people trying to persuade you to buy! Not as fantastic as Sana'a but up there with the best. We spent some time in the Great Mosque where I was given a delightful grey cloak with a hood. I was very tempted to say NO but resisted that temptation and allowed the chappie to help me put it on! My abaya went into a bin a few days ago as I decided it was taking up valuable space which could accommodate whatever I choose to buy on route!

THE WAY HOME

