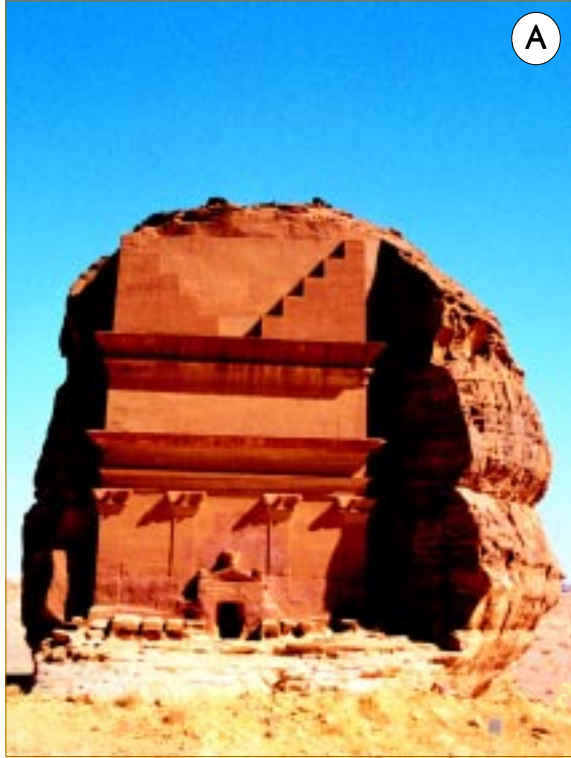


RGBB Member Daniel Nel has been desert bashing around the Kingdom for the last four years. One of his most memorable trips was to the famous Madain Saleh site in the Hejaz. Daniel's current contract is soon to finish, but he's hopeful of finding a new employer who will allow him the time to continue his off road exploration of KSA. Take a look at his scrapbook if you have the chance, a library of fascinating photographs too many to fit these pages. The following is an extract from his notebook:



The city of Madain Saleh was constructed during the period 75BC to 200AD by the Nabatean civilization; the same people were also responsible for the better-known Rose City of Petra in Jordan. Petra was the capital of the Nabatean people who established themselves by policing the spice routes and providing reliable watering places for the spice traders travelling through the Arabian Peninsula to the spice markets of the Roman Empire in the area around the present day Palestine. For the protection and the use of the water the Nabatean extracted a toll of 25% from the traders. As the wealth and the influence of the Nabatean grew they established outposts to protect their interests, the most remote of these outposts was the establishment of the city of Madain Saleh in the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia. The Nabatean were vulnerable as their trading power was based on land transport. This later proved to be their downfall as the trade slowly shifted to using the sea routes of Red Sea-Egypt and Arab Gulf-Palmyra into the Roman markets. This led to a rapid decline of the Nabatean after 106AD and by about 200AD all references to the Nabatean had disappeared from the Roman texts.

The name Madain Saleh "The Cities of Saleh" comes from the Islamic or immediately pre Islamic period, when the connection was made to the prophet Saleh. According to Islamic tradition it was here that Saleh preached to the people of Thamud who were of the locality, they rejected his message. This is mentioned in the Q'ran. The city and it's connections to Petra remained hidden in the mists of time until 1876, when Charles Doughty, an intrepid traveller arrived at the city on the back of a camel as part of a pilgrimage caravan on the way to Makkah. He made no secret of his intentions to remain at the location and was the first European in modern times to provide a detailed description of Madain Saleh. Since his visit, there had been other visits and explorations made by various organizations, probably the one of most importance was by two French Roman Catholic priests, Father Jaussen and Savignac, who in 1907 carried out a scientific survey of the site and numbered each of the tombs with descriptions. To date no other major excavations or investigations have taken place at the site and it is thus remarkably well preserved.



by Daniel Nel



The tombs at Madain Saleh are carved out of solid red sandstone outcroppings that rise at random above the sandy plain. There are over a hundred tombs, all very similar and almost identical to the simpler styles of the tombs at Petra. The tombs are scattered over an area roughly rectangular of about 3 km long and about 2 km wide. The sculptured tomb facades are found in the cliff faces and round a large oval hill



- Guide to pictures
- A Abo lowha Tomb
- B Hreba Tombs
- C Surrounding Area
- D Inscription
- E Detail around door