

## **THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT JORDAN TO HELP YOU PREPARE**

(This information was compiled by AUSA from various sources)

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### ❖ **Location and Geography**



**Amman** is the capital and most populous city of Jordan, and the country's economic, political and cultural centre. Situated in north-central Jordan, Amman is the administrative centre of the Amman Governorate. The city has a population of 4,007,526 and a land area of 1,680 square kilometres (648.7 sq mi). Today, Amman is considered to be among the most liberal and westernized Arab cities. It is a major tourist destination in the region, particularly among Arab and European tourists.

## ❖ **Official Language and Religion**

Arabic is Jordan's official language. Everyone in the country, including the minority communities, speak Arabic in their day to day dealings. It is, however, worth noting that English is also widely used especially by the learned people and besides, most radio programs, television shows, and services are broadcasted in English. Other languages spoken in the country are German and French. These languages will be discussed briefly below.

### **Modern Standard Arabic**

This is the country's official language and it used in the majority of the written documents and the media. This is also the standard language used in the Horn of Africa, North Africa and the Middle East and it is among the six formal languages of the United Nations. Daily conversation in the country is conducted in a number of local dialects which will be discussed below.

### **Jordanian Arabic language**

This is a form of the mutually comprehensible varieties of Levantine Arabic that is spoken by the people of Jordan. The different forms of Jordanian Arabic are found in the Afro-Asiatic language group with origins from the Middle East. These dialects have lexical influences from French, Turkish and English languages. These varieties are spoken by over 6 million people in the country.

### **Other languages spoken in Jordan**

Besides English, students also have the option of learning French. Currently, there is a small society of French speakers called Francophone and it is quite notable in the country. The language is also spoken by people who are interested in the cultural and commercial features of France.

Other languages can also be heard in the country. Some of these include German which is mostly spoken by people with certain interests in Germany's features such as their culture. There are a number of minority languages spoken in Jordan. These include Armenian and a few Caucasian dialects such as Chechen and Circassian. A few schools offer education via these languages alongside English and Arabic. The older people in the country can also speak Russian because majority of them studies in the USSR. Tagalog language is also spoken in the country but by foreign workers from the Philippines only.

It is worth noting that the different ethnic groups that have held on to their local tongue speak the language amongst themselves, and they are also very fluent in Arabic which enables them to communicate with other groups.

## ❖ National Flag



The flag of Jordan, officially adopted on 18 April 1928, is based on the flag of the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The flag consists of horizontal black, white, and green bands that are connected by a red chevron. The colors stand for the Pan-Arab Colors, representing the Abbasid (black band), Umayyad (white band), and Fatimid (green band) caliphates. The red chevron is for the Hashemite dynasty, and the Arab Revolt.

The seven-pointed star stands for the seven verses of the first *surah* in the Qur'an, and also stands for the unity of the Arab peoples. Some people believe it also refers to the seven hills on which Amman, the capital, was built.

## ❖ Climate

Amman's position on the mountains near the Mediterranean places it under the cold semi-arid climate (Köppen climate classification: BSk) The city has warm to hot and usually dry summers, whereas the winters are quite wet and range from mild to cool.<sup>[7]</sup> Spring is brief, mild and lasts a little less than a month, from April to May, with rain during the morning and the afternoons. High temperatures are around 15 °C (59 °F) to 20 °C (68 °F) and lows are less than 10 °C (50 °F) and several times even going near 0 °C (32 °F) causing several freezes.

Amman has moderate summers starting from mid-June to mid-September. Summer's high temperatures range from 25 °C (77 °F) to 30 °C (86 °F), usually with low to moderate humidity and frequent cool breezes. Most summers are rain-free with cloudless skies during the noon period and a brief shower or fog during the night-time.

Winter usually starts in late November or early December and continues to late April. Temperatures are usually near or below 10 °C (50 °F), with snow usually falling a few times each year. Due to its high altitude above sea level, winter in

Amman is one of the coldest in any major city in the MENA and the Mediterranean Basin; winters are usually foggy with at least 120 days of heavy fog per year. Snowy winter storms occur several times around the city. Due to the difference in elevation, snow may accumulate in the northern and western parts of Amman (an average altitude of 1,000 m (3,300 ft) above sea level) while at the same time it could be raining at the city center (elevation of 776 m (2,546 ft)). It can snow anywhere between November and until the end of March- more frequently in vast parts of the city which occupy higher elevations (900 to 1,100 metres (3,000 to 3,600 ft)).

#### ❖ **Cuisine**

Jordanian cuisine is a traditional style of food preparation originating from Jordan that has developed from centuries of social and political change with roots starting in Paleolithic period (c. 90,000 BC).

There is wide variety in Jordanian cuisine ranging from baking, sautéing and grilling to stuffing of vegetables (grape leaves, eggplants, etc.), meat, and poultry. Also common in Jordanian cuisine is roasting, and/or preparing foods with special sauces. As one of the largest producers of olives in the world, olive oil is the main cooking oil in Jordan. Herbs, garlic, spices, onion, tomato sauce and lemon are typical flavors found in Jordan. Jordanian food can vary from extremely hot and spicy to mild.

The most common and popular appetizer is hummus, which is a puree of chick peas blended with tahini, lemon, and garlic. Ful Medames is another well-known appetizer. A workers meal, today it has made its way to the tables of the upper class. A successful mezze must of course have koubba maqliya, labaneh, baba ghanoush, tabbouleh, olives and pickles.

The most distinctive Jordanian dish is mansaf, the national dish of Jordan, a symbol in Jordanian culture for generosity. Although simple fresh fruit is often served towards the end of a Jordanian meal, there is also dessert, such as baklava, hareeseh, knafeh, halva and qatayef a dish made especially for Ramadan. In Jordanian cuisine, drinking coffee and tea flavored with na'na or meramiyyeh is almost a ritual.

## ❖ **Tourism/Lifestyle**

Amman is considered one of the most westernized and liberal cities in the Arab World. Amman has become one of the most popular destinations for Western expats and college students who seek to live, study, or work in the Middle or the Arab World in general. The city's culinary scene has expanded from its shwarma stands and falafel joints to embrace many popular American restaurants and fast-food outlets like McDonald's and T.G.I. Friday's, Asian fusion restaurants, French bistros such as La Maison Verte and Italian trattorias. The city has become famous for its fine dining scene among Western expats and Persian Gulf tourists. Alcohol is widely available in restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and even supermarkets.

There are numerous nightclubs and bars across the city especially in West Amman. As of 2011, there were 77 registered nightclubs in Jordan (excluding bars and pubs), overwhelmingly located in the capital city. Abdoun Circle (not one of the eight) is a major center of the city's night life where the chicest clubs maintain a strict "couples only" policy, meaning no unescorted men. Sweifieh is considered to be the unofficial red-light district of Amman as it holds most of the city's nightclubs, bars, strip-clubs, massage parlors, and other adult entertainment venues. Jabal Amman and Jabal al-Weibdeh are home to many pubs and bars as well making the area popular among bar hoppers.

## ❖ **Currency**

The dinar is the currency of Jordan. The dinar is divided into 10 dirham, 100 qirsh (also called piastres) or 1000 fulus.

The Jordanian dinar continued to be used in the West Bank along with Israeli currency after Israel took control of it in 1967. During Israel's hyperinflation in the 1970s and 1980s, the Jordanian currency provided stability.

From 1927 to 1950, the Palestine Currency Board issued Palestine pound as the official currency in both Palestine and the Trans-Jordan Emirate. After Jordan became an independent kingdom on 25 May 1946, the idea of issuing a national currency arose and led to the passing of the Provisional Act No. 35 of 1949. Under

this Act, the Jordan Currency Board was formed, which became the sole authority entitled to issue Jordanian currency in the kingdom. The London-based entity consisted of a president and four members. As of 1 July 1950, the Jordanian dinar became the kingdom's official currency, and use of the Palestinian pound ceased in the kingdom on 30 September 1950. Although issued by the Jordan Currency Board, the notes bear the name of The Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan.

## ❖ **Tipping**

Tipping in Jordan is part of the culture and in most cases leaving a tip is good etiquette, unless of course the service is terrible. Many industries, such as restaurants, pay lower wages to the employees with the expectation that they will receive tips. Therefore, it's important that you give generously when you get amazing service. A tip of 10% is standard in almost all circumstances. If you find a charge has already been added to your bill (which is common), consider giving the worker a small tip anyway, since they will likely not receive that percentage.

## ❖ **Key Words/Phrases**

| <b>English</b>     | <b>Arabic</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Hello              | Marhaba       |
| Good Bye           | Ma'a salaameh |
| What is your name? | Shoo ismak?   |
| Thank You          | Shukran       |

| <b>English</b>   | <b>Arabic</b>  |
|------------------|----------------|
| You're welcome   | Afwan          |
| Please           | Lao samaht     |
| Excuse Me        | An iznek       |
| What time is it? | Edesh el sa'aa |