

Ancient History of Jordan | Escorted Small Group Tour

Reading List

Petra: A Brief History

by David Tschanz

Petra: A Brief History is an easy to read, popular history of Petra, “the rose red city, half as old as time” and the mysterious Nabataeans who carved into from the living rock.

The author, with a dramatic flair, explains how geography and geology made the eventual site of Petra the most attractive real estate in the Middle East. He then tells the story of how the Nabataeans, coming from Arabia, moved into the region and established their capital there in the fifth century BCE. Within a few decades, Petra was the headquarters of vast commercial empire that controlled the East-West trade in incense, myrrh, spices, and silk, from borderland between Syria and Arabia, and the Euphrates to the Red Sea. Incredibly wealthy they were best known to their contemporaries for their hydraulic engineering, pottery and monumental buildings. Looking to guard their fortunes they foiled Antony and Cleopatra’s escape, opposed the Herods and built a southern capital, Madain Salih, in Saudi Arabia. How they came to be, what they achieved and what happened to them, is a tale worth reading.

Petra: A Brief History is not another guidebook. It is a journey to understanding the whys, wherefores and hows of these fabled people based on present day scholarship.

This new title is published during the 200th anniversary “rediscovery” of Petra by the Swiss traveler Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. It is unique because it provides popular account of the two major Nabataean sites: Petra in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as well as its important sister city of Madain Salih in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Both are UNESCO World Heritage sites the author, who has spent 23 years in the Middle East, knows intimately.

Petra: The History of the Rose City, One of the New Seven Wonders of the World

by Charles River Editors

When the European armies of the Third Crusade were defeated at the Battle of Hattin in 1187 CE, the region of what is today southern Jordan was overrun by Saladin’s armies, and over the following five centuries knowledge of Petra’s existence was lost to the people of Europe. The ancient city and centre of civilisation hidden in the desert became a myth, drawn largely upon Biblical accounts of the

people and places in the Holy Land. However, during the Enlightenment of the early 18th century, interesting new theories emerged, and there grew a desire to rediscover the rose-red city.

It was within this context that the Swiss-born explorer and orientalist Johann Ludwig Burckhardt became the known as the first European to “discover” Petra. Disguised as an Arab, he convinced a local guide to navigate him through the innumerable dangers of the Wadi Araba desert in pursuit of the rumoured tomb of Aaron and a timeless city hidden in the hills. On Saturday, August 22nd, 1812, he ascended the high hills of southern Jordan and was led down a deep ravine, which twisted and turned through until a splendid sight was revealed before him: a secret valley filled with ruins and the dark holes of rock-cut tombs.

"Petra: The History of the Rose City, One of the New Seven Wonders of the World" looks at the history of Petra from prehistoric times to the end of the Crusades, as well as the city's “rediscovery” in the 19th century and how it has entered the world's imagination since then. Along with pictures depicting important people, places, and events, you will learn about Petra like never before.

The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East

by Michael Provence

The modern Middle East emerged out of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, when Britain and France partitioned the Ottoman Arab lands into several new colonial states. The following period was a charged and transformative time of unrest. Insurgent leaders, trained in Ottoman military tactics and with everything to lose from the fall of the Empire, challenged the mandatory powers in a number of armed revolts. This is a study of this crucial period in Middle Eastern history, tracing the period through popular political movements and the experience of colonial rule. In doing so, Provence emphasises the continuity between the late Ottoman and Colonial era, explaining how national identities emerged, and how the seeds were sown for many of the conflicts which have defined the Middle East in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This is a valuable read for students of Middle Eastern history and politics.

Our Last Best Chance: A Story of War and Peace

by King Abdullah II of Jordan

At a time of unprecedented upheaval in the Middle East, King Abdullah II of Jordan is almost unique in enjoying widespread popular support. He is the ultimate modern-day monarch, as comfortable at a business conference as he is at a meeting of the Arab League. In this prescient memoir-cum-manifesto, he makes an urgent plea to push for a solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis. He writes with disarming frankness about his own upbringing and warns of the brewing resentment in the region. A

call to arms by the most dynamic young ruler in the Arab world, *Our Last Best Chance* helps explain the volatile underpinnings of the new Arab awakening.

The Middle East

by Bernard Lewis

In a sweeping and vivid survey, renowned historian Bernard Lewis charts the history of the Middle East over the last 2,000 years, from the birth of Christianity through the modern era, focusing on the successive transformations that have shaped it. Drawing on material from a multitude of sources, including the work of archaeologists and scholars, Lewis chronologically traces the political, economical, social, and cultural development of the Middle East, from Hellenization in antiquity to the impact of westernization on Islamic culture. Meticulously researched, this enlightening narrative explores the patterns of history that have repeated themselves in the Middle East.

Pillars of Salt

by Fadia Faqir

Pillars of Salt is the story of two women confined in a mental hospital in Jordan during and after the British Mandate. Maha, a peasant woman from the Jordan Valley, and Um Saad from Amman find themselves sharing a room. After initial tensions they become friends and share their life stories. Maha's version of history, which is told from the inside, is framed by the narrative of the storyteller who reports as an outsider. Maha's husband Harb was the love of her life but her devotion to him does not survive the repression and violence of her husband bringing home a young new wife, Yusra.
