

A *CHEEPERS!* **AFRICA**

JORDAN

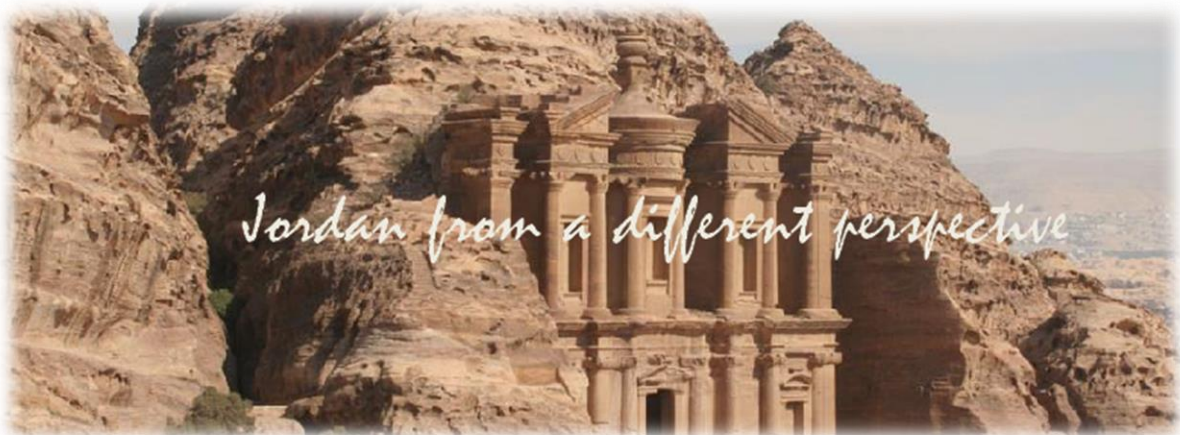
Not quite Africa, but close!
April 1 - 14, 2023
April 1 - 14, 2024

14 Days / 13 Nights
\$5200/\$5400
Single supplement
\$510/\$530

Minimum 4 pax, Maximum 8 pax
Small-group surcharge for groups smaller than 6

***Birding and Culture
in one fabulous tour!***

***Locations: Azraq, Ajloun,
Jerash, Wadi Mujib, Dead Sea,
Feifa, Dana, Petra, Wadi Rum,
Aqaba, Qatar***



Jordan is on the crossroads of three continents and has many habitats, from pine to oak forests, steppes with shrubs, and hot dry deserts. During this 14-day tour, you'll visit top birding locations to discover many of Jordan's 434 bird species and visit Jordan's famous UNESCO world heritage sites of Petra & Wadi Rum, Jerash and several desert castles.



Detailed Itinerary

Day 1

Arrival at Queen Alia International Airport in Amman. An airport representative will wait for you and help the group with the group visa. The driver and guide will then meet you and transfer you to Azraq.

Overnight in Azraq Lodge (D)

Day 2

In the morning we will visit Azraq Wetland Reserve. Azraq came about around 300 AC due to the proximity to the largest natural spring in Jordan. These were the 'blue pearls' in the desert. In spite of the decrease in the area of the wetlands, it still offers a splendid habitat for migrating, breeding and wintering birds. Here we can see birds like Temminck's Lark, Desert Lark, Hoopoe Lark, Desert Wheatear, Moustached Warbler, Purple Heron, Little Egret, Squacco Heron, Marsh Harrier, Little Bittern and with some luck even Egyptian Nightjar. In the afternoon we will go to the Black Basalt Desert. This area is characterized by large black basalt stones and has a barren appearance; however, it is home to the unique



Squacco Heron

black morph of the Mourning Wheatear and the dark race of the Desert Lark and Sand Partridge – both adapting to the desert colour here. If there is time, we'll visit Azraq castle before we go back to the lodge in Azraq.

Overnight in Azraq Lodge (BLD)

Day 3

To the South of Azraq is Shaumari Wildlife Reserve. The RSCN opened this reserve, the first in Jordan, to start a reintroduction program for some of Jordan's extirpated desert fauna like the Arabian Oryx. In the area around this reserve, we can see desert birds like Cyprus Wheatear, Pallid and Montagu's Harrier, Cream-colored Courser and Bimaculated Lark. The

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tall trees attract a large variety of migrants. On our way to Ajloun we will stop at the desert castle Qasr Amra, situated in Wadi al Butm, to look for migrants. The wadi is lined with Pistachio trees and other low shrubs. In winter, Imperial Eagle and Steppe Eagle frequent the area and Fieldfare, Corn Bunting, Menetries Warbler, White-throated Robin and Large flocks of Stock Doves are regular sights. We will transfer to Ajloun at the end of the day.

Overnight in Ajloun Cabins at the edge of Ajloun Forest Reserve (BLD)

Day 4

Rolling hills of evergreen Oak, Pine, Carob, wild Pistachio and wild Strawberry trees dominate Ajloun Forest, which is located in the Ajloun Highlands, north of Amman. The area has a mild climate, dense forest, and fertile soil and is home to over 40 bird species. We might see the Blue Tit, Sardinian Warbler, Great Tit, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Eurasian Jay, Long-legged Buzzard, Wren, Greenfinch, Linnet, Chukar, Chaffinch, Cretzschmar's Bunting, Tawny Owl and Syrian Woodpecker.

Among the more unusual animals to be found in the reserve are the Striped Hyena, Crested Porcupine and Stone Marten. In spring, the reserve is a carpet of wild flowers, including drifts of anemones and rock roses. Time permitting we'll visit Ajloun Castle.

Overnight in Ajloun Cabins (BLD)



Eurasian Jay

Day 5

In the morning we'll visit Jerash, one of the best preserved Roman cities outside Italy. Take your time to walk through the colonnaded streets or enjoy the chariot races in the Hippodrome. In the afternoon, we'll drive to Wadi Mujib, located in the Rift Valley on the east side of the Dead Sea.

Overnight in Mujib Chalets (BLD)

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Day 6

The Wadi Mujib area is the best place to look for Fan-tailed Ravens, White-crowned Wheatear, Blackstart, Striolated Bunting, Hooded Wheatear and perhaps some migrants. After lunch you can experience the sensation of floating on the salt water of the Dead Sea.

Overnight in Mujib Chalets (BLD)

Day 7

We leave early to go to Feifa Nature Reserve. The Feifa area is located along the southeast Dead Sea coast with a freshwater spring and oases full of subtropical vegetation. There we will look for Dead Sea Sparrow. This site has become one of the major strongholds of the



Sinai Rosefinch

species after a lot of its habitat has been destroyed along the Rift Valley. In the afternoon, we'll arrive in Dana Nature Reserve, one of the best areas to see the beautiful rose red Sinai Rosefinch. This bird was chosen as the national Bird of Jordan because its color is similar to the color of the rocks in Petra, the rose red city.

Overnight in Dana Tower Hotel (BLD)

Day 8

Today we'll spend the whole day in Dana, an excellent spot for Syrian Serin and Upcher's Warbler. Exploring the upper valley of the Dana Reserve should be a great opportunity to look for the passage migration of raptors, and the view from the hilltop is special as it provides a great view of Wadi Dana and Wadi Araba. In the evening we'll look for owls, particularly Pharoah Eagle Owl and Scops Owl.

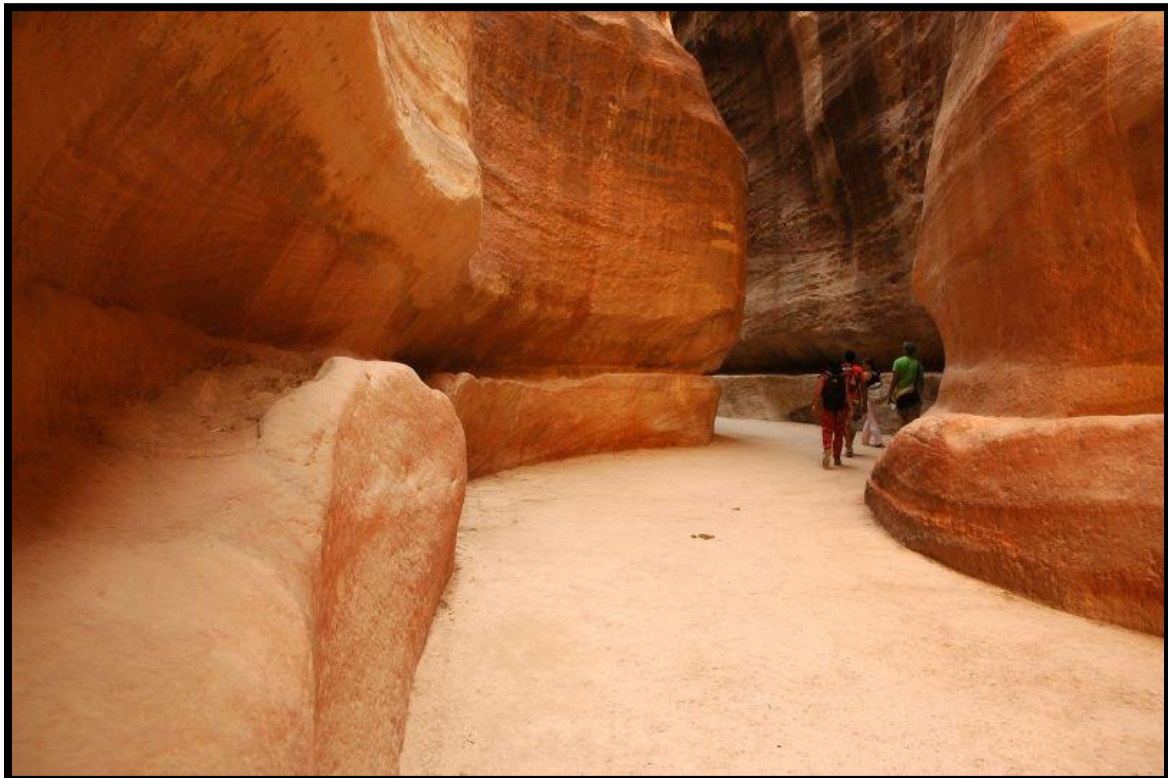
Overnight in Dana Tower Hotel (BLD)

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Day 9

We'll be heading for Petra today. On the way, we will make a lunch stop at Shobak Castle, also known as Montreal, a 12th century Crusader castle perched on the mountaintop overlooking the rugged landscape dotted with fruit trees. Shortly before we enter Wadi Musa, we'll visit Little Petra, for a taste of what's to come the following day. Long-legged Buzzards nest in this area and Desert Lark and Blue Rock Thrush can be seen.

Overnight in Quattro Hotel or B&B Petra Fig Tree Villa, depending on group size (BLD)



The narrow passage (Siq) that leads to Petra

Day 10

We'll use today to cross the extended area of Petra, the hidden Nabatean village, one of the seven wonders of the world. We'll enter through the famous Siq entrance with visits to the Treasury and the Monastery. Some special birds that can be seen here include Sooty Falcon, Sand Partridge, Mourning Wheatear, Scrub Warbler, Palestine Sunbird, House Bunting and Rock Sparrow. In addition, this region is situated within a strong raptor migration route, so we can expect to see good numbers of these passage migrants as they soar overhead.

Overnight in Quattro Hotel (4*) or B&B Petra Fig Tree Villa, depending on group size (BLD).

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Day 11

We have the morning to explore the rest of Petra, the old graves, the famous Treasury or the mosaics in the old church. Optional (and not included in the price) you can hike up with a guide from Little Petra to the back side of Petra, where you will be mesmerized by the view from the Monastery, Ad Deir. From there, you can descend the many rock steps down toward Petra, along the colonnaded street and the amphitheatre to the entrance of Petra. Alternatively, we'll try and sweep up any bird species we might have missed the previous day. In the afternoon, we'll leave Petra to go to the desert of the moon, Wadi Rum. On the way we probably visit a small Bedouin well to look for Red-rumped Wheatear. When we drive down the steep Ras al-Naqb, you'll be surprised by the wide stretched Wadi Rum Desert, red sand and stones, surrounded by high sandstone rock formations and towering cliffs. We change the minibus for jeeps and enter the protected area to go to the Bedouin camp (specially set-up for tourist groups), where we will sleep in traditional Bedouin tents.

Overnight at Bedouin Camp (BLD)



Day 12

After our Bedouin breakfast with tea from the fire, we'll explore the sandstone desert. About 120 bird species have been seen here. At the foot of the cliffs we can see White-crowned Wheatear and Mourning Wheatear. Above us we can see Long-legged Buzzard and, with a bit of luck, also Verreaux's Eagle. Other species to be seen are Scrub Warbler, Hume's Tawny Owl, Trumpeter Finch and Sinai Rosefinch. After our Bedouin lunch, we will be brought back to the bus and we'll drive down to Aqaba. In Aqaba, you have time to go for

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a stroll in the soek or dive into the Red Sea. Around dusk, we will spend our time around an open sky area (a hotel rooftop for example) to look for roosting raptors that come to spend the night in Aqaba Mountains.

Overnight in Captain's Hotel (BLD)

Day 13

We will visit the Aqaba Bird Observatory, a former sewage works. Here, passage birds can rest and replenish after making the long flight over the Sahara. Highlights are Little Green Bee-eater, Slender-billed Gull, Grey Heron, Caspian Tern, Painted Snipe, Cotton Teal and Spur-winged Lapwing. In the afternoon, we will drive to Qatar Nature Reserve to see Blackstart, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse and Arabian Warbler. The reserve is located in Wadi Araba and has the highest density of Acacia trees in the country. Migratory passerines are attracted and roost in the area or have a stop-over during their migration. We can also see some desert-breeding species such as Sand Partridge, Hoopoe and Arabian Babbler.

Overnight in Captain's Hotel (BLD)



European Hoopoe

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Day 14

On the last morning, time permitting, we'll make a visit to the shoreline on the south side of the harbor of Aqaba to look for White-eyed Gulls. After the lunch, we will head for Aqaba Airport for our flight back to Amman and onward to international connections.

(B)

End of Trip



Black-eared Wheatear

Price includes:

- ~ Private transfers with a minivan, 10-seater or 18-seater (depending on group size)
- ~ Licensed birdwatching guide from day 2 until day 14
- ~ Bottled water throughout the tour
- ~ All meals as indicated on itinerary (BLD)
- ~ Overnight accommodation in hotels/lodges for 12 nights and in a camp in Wadi Rum for 1 night
- ~ Half day 4x4 jeep tour in Wadi Rum
- ~ Entrance tickets for Azraq Nature Reserve, Shaumari, Qasr Amra, Ajloun Castle, Jerash, Mujib, Petra (2 days), Wadi Rum Protected area, Aqaba Bird Observatory
- ~ Group visa upon arrival by means of name list (full passport details must be received at least one week prior to arrival date)
- ~ Airport assistance upon arrival and departure



Price excludes:

- ~ International flights
- ~ Personal expenses such as drinks & snacks, laundry, phone calls, souvenirs, etc.
- ~ Travel insurance (HIGHLY recommended)
- ~ Gratuities

Terms and Conditions:

Deposit of \$800 with registration.

Balance is due 4 months prior to the start date of your tour.

Checks should be made payable to ***Cheepers! Birding on a Budget*** and mailed with the registration form to:

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget
Post Office Box 385
Spring Valley, OH 45370

Cancellation policy:

Cancellation should be made in writing (email or snail mail)

More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit

Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit

Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

If cancellation occurs after full payment is made, a refund will be given only if the vacant spot is filled.

Trip insurance is recommended.

You can compare prices offered by various trip insurance companies at these websites:

http://www.quotewright.com/?sub_id=6056

www.insuremytrip.com

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible if the need to make changes arises. Lodging is subject to change based on availability.



QUESTIONS? CONTACT US!

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