

**Rosie Till**

## **Jordan, Petra to Wadi Rum March 2015**

I'm going to Jordan I told everyone - "Are you mad, it's not safe" was the general reply - oh how wrong they were!!!

**Saturday 21st March** - Great British Airways flight into Amman, slight panic getting visa... would my luggage still be on the carousel..... Phew grabbed it just as an airport steward came to get uncollected luggage! Found the driver, spoke to Hashem, who was going to be our guide and Flora, met 2 other members of the group and set off for Hotel Delilah in Madaba.



**Sunday 22nd March** - Met the rest of the group over breakfast, Eeek I wish I'd kept up my French after leaving school.... I was going to need it with 4 French ladies, 1 German and RWW's 2 English clients. 2 of the French ladies luggage was left in Istanbul... note to self always wear clothes comfortable to ride in, in case your luggage is lost! We arrived at the ancient city of Little Petra, a short 3 hours later, where we met Hashem and his team. After a quick tour and viewings of the Mosaics on the cell ceiling as well as the wonderful caves, we met our horses. A quick chat about the Arab horses and their tendencies to be a little excitable, then we set off. 1 hour later we arrived at a Bedouin tent for lunch, where we enjoyed a delicious traditional Jordanian dish of Lamb mince and vegetables, whilst sitting on cushions on the floor - the real Jordanian way, before a relaxing siesta! We had a test canter before we rode onto Djebel Haroun Mountain, the highest summit in the whole Petra region. We saw Bedouins living in the natural caves before reaching our first campsite.... Sitting round the camp fire we experienced our first taste of the Jordanian Shisha followed by a delicious soup, then chicken and meatballs cooked over the campfire. Tonight we had the choice of sleeping altogether in a naturally warmed cave or out in our tents, us Brits decided to brave the cold and slept in our tents.



**Monday 23rd March** - Awoken at 5am, a quick cuppa to wake myself up before tacking up and setting off towards Petra, 'rose red city' of the Nabateans! Arriving on the Roman Road passing by the Roman theatre; we were told to close our eyes and trust our horse..... Trusting Hashem we did as we were told and then opened our eyes to find we had reached the famous Khasneh treasury, a spectacular sight in the early morning sun. We followed the 'siq', the winding, narrow canyon made famous in "Indiana Jones; The Last Crusade", before exiting Petra at about 8 am. Breakfast in the hotel followed by a 3 hour tour of Petra on foot - it was incredible to see lots of tourists around Petra when only 2 hours before it had been a deserted city. Lunch in the recommended Basin Restaurant was followed by an afternoon bartering with the locals for my souvenirs. We all made full use of the shower facilities in the Edom hotel... we had 4 nights camping ahead of us.



**Tuesday 24th March** - After a leisurely breakfast and a short drive back to meet the horses, we rode along the edge of the plateau with beautiful views and incredible rock formations. Lots of photo opportunities before we arrived at the old village of Rajif, where I was surprised to see many horses sticking their heads out of what seem to be the back yards of the houses! A short ride onto an amazing spot for lunch in the shade of the rocks with miles and miles of Jordanian rocks and mountains ahead of us.... An idyllic place for lunch and a long siesta! Fun riding in the afternoon ... some going slightly faster than others (we weren't racing honestly!). Arriving into camp full of enthusiasm for a nights camping in a beautiful valley bottom, Hashem used my new Jordanian scarf to turn me into a Jordanian lady. Dinner

this evening was the traditional Jordanian dish Mansaf (goat cooked in fermented dried yoghurt and rice).



**Wednesday 25th March** - A delicious breakfast of scrambled eggs (you really don't go hungry in the desert) set me up for the day as we rode through curious little canyons, following the ancient spice routes that crossed the deserts between Egypt and Arabia, Palestine and Syria before we reached Bedouin villages, which had been built by the Jordanian Government, in their attempt to help support the Bedouins. Lunch in a traditional Bedouin tent before we set off towards the Desert Highway, the main road between Amman and Aqaba which continues onto Saudi Arabia. Crossing this dual carriageway was an experience in itself but Hashem's professional and calm manner got us all safely to the other side with no dramas! A yummy ice-cream on our horses to welcome us to The Wadi Rum was very much appreciated before we had a great gallop in 2 separate groups, we then reached our picturesque campsite secluded in the surrounds of beautiful rocks. I had to climb to the top of one of the rocks for the incredible view - as I watched the sun begin to set, I felt I was on top of the world. A delicious dinner and Jordanian dancing finished the evening off brilliantly!



**Thursday 26th March** - Woken by the heat of the sun shining through my tent... today was going to be hot. We set off in search of the natural rock arch 'Karaze' and the ancient transcripts of the Nabateans - advising people pass in peace, there are 3 water sources nearby and camels advising the direction to Petra. Climbing up onto the top of the rock arch to see the breath-taking view of the Wadi Rum is not a good idea for anyone scared of heights! Another exhilarating canter over Umbellifer plants brought us to more ancient transcripts and our lunch destination in a very secluded spot. Hashem and his team really were fantastic at choosing spots for lunch breaks and camping. After a good long break we were ready to go again galloping together through the desert trying to catch the sun before it set - an incredible experience!



**Friday 27th March** - We were now in the heart of the Wadi Rum reserve.... And so were other tourists, where as in the first part of Wadi Rum we felt as if we were the only ones in the desert. We rode through a sandstorm before crossing under the Amman to Aqaba train-line and reaching the beautiful red sand valley of Um Ishrin. The horses all enjoyed a lovely roll in the deep sand before yet another delicious lunch - extra buttons on jodhpurs may be required by the end of this trip! This afternoon we rode up the red sand dune and had incredible views of the Valley of Anafishia (the first valley that Lawrence of Arabia rode through) and watched people run down this huge sand dune (we had the chance to take part if we wished.... We all declined!!), before reaching our last camp set up in the Barrah

mountains. The camp was rather quiet as we all inhaled the peace and tranquillity of the desert - tonight was our last night in the desert.



**Saturday 28th March** - Our last camp breakfast set us up for the day as we passed the ruins of “Lawrence’s house”. We rode through the beautiful Barrah canyon, seeing several famous Thamudic engravings on the cliff faces, and we enjoyed several group canters before reaching our final lunch stop. A delicious lunch and a very special last ride including a race across the desert - we all had no wish to leave as we rode into the village of Disi, with a view of the race track. Unfortunately there were no camel races today - a sight we all would have loved to see. A sad farewell to Hashem and his team, we set off back to Madaba via the Dead Sea. We were all very much looking forward to a shower!



**Sunday 29th March** - Feeling clean and refreshed we headed to the Dead Sea. Wow - you really do float in the Dead Sea and we couldn’t miss the opportunity of a Dead Sea Mud Mask to complete our trip!



Throughout my time in Jordan I always felt completely and utterly safe. You really cannot rule out going to Jordan just because there are issues in other countries in the Middle East. Riding from Petra to Wadi Rum should be on everyone's bucket list!

