

What We Love About Jordan

It is summer now, and it is hot! Not only referring to the outside temperature; but our own tempers when we have to deal with increased traffic volume and the driving habits of tourists. Don't even mention waiting in lines, comatose salespeople, impatient bored children...it's enough to make people wish they were somewhere else.

It's a time many Amman residents forget the wonderful, positive qualities of their country and culture. "Why does it have to be this way?", many ask themselves. It might be a good time to give these tired road-weary Urduniyyeen another perspective of "Who loves ya, baby", and ask a cross-section of the resident foreigner population, including hard-to-please pre-teens, "what do you love about Jordan?". These are people who live with you, some who speak your language, know some of your cultural values, and even know to eat mansaf by hand!

I love Jordan because it is safe, and we get to experience something new and funny everyday!

Abby
12 years old
Egyptian/American

I love the delicious Arabic food, especially chicken shwarma.

Saria
11 years old
Kurdish/Finnish

It is the olive trees that I love in Jordan. We never get to see an olive in India, hence it's so wonderful to look out of my window in Amman & view the rows of olives. The olive tree is a symbol of peace and security – much like Jordan is to us. In the bible, the dove returns to Noah's ark with an olive branch in its beak when God had made peace with man and stopped the floods. These trees are tolerant to adverse conditions and are good producers of food & oil even in rocky hills. Much like the people of Jordan. I wish & pray that the country of Jordan will prosper like the rich evergreen olive and will remain a symbol of peace and security to the rest of the world.

Roopa Abraham
Businesswoman
India

I love Jordan because the people are kind.

Su Yon
10 years old
South Korea

I like to explore the ancient ruins of past civilizations and I like the nice people; personally, I love most everything about Jordan.

Zach
12 years old
Belgian/American

I love the holy places in Jordan, Mt. Nebo, the Baptism site, living where men of God walked; it makes me think about the wonders of God.

Hannah

16 years old

Sierra Leone

I like the beautiful nature, especially camping in Wadi Dana, and the kind people.

Anna Lena

9 years old

Germany

I love the family centered culture that is found in Jordan. The slower pace of life, with so much more time to enjoy family and friends, is a wonderful aspect of Arab culture. I love the Jordanian sense of humor, and how much they love to laugh. I am pleased to have the privilege of raising my family in this atmosphere.

Rick Schupp

Pastor

America

We love Jordan for providing a safe haven for our family fleeing the strife in our native Congo. It took us nearly a year to reach Jordan's borders, and when we did, we felt safe again. We are thankful for the refuge provided by the UN and Jordan's willingness to care for displaced people.

Flory and Theresa Kabulo (and five children)

The Democratic Republic of Congo

I like Petra best because of the great colors and beautiful rocks; but also the beach in Aqaba and places to camp.

Samuel

11 years old

New Zealand

David

13 years old

Holland

I love the King and Queen! And the people too, of course

Sarah

11 years old

America

I have lived in Jordan for twenty years, and have seen so many changes. We love Jordan because it is home for me and my daughter and her family, and we have the

opportunity to work to provide for our extended family in Sri Lanka. This is a blessing we are most thankful for. I have fallen in love with Jordan and it's people; even when I am 'home' I am missing my home in Jordan

Felicia, Chatrika and

Domestic helpers

Sri Lankan

We were born and raised in Jordan. We go to Jordanian schools and use Arabic as our main play language with our Jordanian friends. It is so fun to visit back and forth and play together.

Laura and Hannah

10 and 8 years old

Irish/Australian

The Jordanian people are open, the not only open their homes, but also their hearts. They are truly welcoming and interested in your life, but also instinctively know where the limits of privacy are, not overly intrusive as it can be in my country. They are a people who spring to action in times of trouble, I love how the whole clan bands together to help, even if you don't know them individually. They know what the needs are, and work tirelessly as a unit until the job is done.

Thalia Halaseh

Housewife

Greek

I am new to the region, and I have been amazed by the helpfulness of the Jordanian people. When you ask for help, Jordanians make every effort, going way out of their way to be of assistance. It would never be this way in Caracas, where people can seem cold and uncaring. Even though Amman is a big city, it really has a small town feel. One thing I see in common with my home culture is the closeness of families, the interdependence of generations; children live with their families until they are married.

Veronica Pena

Housewife

Venezuelan

I have the privilege of being married to a Jordanian, and reap the benefits of Jordanian culture every day! One classic example of the renowned Jordanian generosity was shown on our wedding day. His Majesty King Abdullah happened to be dining at the same hotel my parents were staying. I gathered courage, greeted him, and invited him to our wedding. To my amazement, just before the wedding, two gifts were delivered to the hotel from the royal court. I surprised my bride by presenting them to her at our reception. What a fairy tale experience! It is a story that will be remembered down through the generations of our family.

Mark Connelly
Teacher
American

It is the strong family ties that impress me about Jordanians. Families are interconnected, interdependent, supportive and always together! One of the things I appreciate most is the deep respect and honor shown to mothers. A Jordanian mother is like the nucleus of the family; in both sad and happy times even the adult children gravitate to her and receive her guidance for the direction to go for the best interest of all.

Miorita Khasawneh
Owner of Iris Salon
Romanian

I moved to Jordan from the Gulf, and have been surprised by the 'realness' of the people, Jordanians are very down to earth. It is surprising to see how Jordan maintains a zone of peace in the middle of many conflicts. Jordan reminds me so much of Africa that I have had very little culture shock, for the culture is honor based, much like ours. Yet, the country has an amazing way of blending traditional Arab distinctives with modern technologies and is progressing forward as a convergence of two worlds.

Zena Bile
Somalian/Canadian

Some have said God seems to have a special blessing in store for those who cross the Jordan River, in either direction. For many foreigners whose time has come to leave, they leave behind a piece of their hearts. Two friends who have moved back to Sweden and Germany both said "Life was always so exciting in Jordan. We are bored!". To live in this region with a people of such rich history and conflicted present day is a treasure not many are able to experience, and we celebrate the gift it is to live among you!

Mrs. Rowaida Atallaha,
Wife of the Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan,
His Excellency Mr. Atallaha Khairi

Madame Rowaida welcomes you to her home with both elegant ease and down-to-earth friendliness. Although the wife of a diplomat with a substantial role in Middle Eastern politics, she is much like most other wives and mothers, keeping her home in order with a very hands on manner, still making her own muajinaat and imsukhan and enjoying her precocious granddaughter. They have three daughters, one lives in Paris, one in Ramallah, and the third is attending University in Jordan.

Not one for small talk, Madame Rowaida launches straight into discussion of her passion, the plight of Palestinian people. It is a common topic in Jordan, but her dialogue is peppered with uncommonly spoken of concepts of reconciliation, forgiveness and hope.

What makes her words even more surprising is that her own family shared the plight of many fellow Palestinian residents of Jordan. When her father was imprisoned by Israelis in 1948 and her mother in Lid prepared her home and two small daughters to leave for a 'short time', she left enough water for their chickens for what she thought the duration would be. They were never to return to their home, but moved to tents in Amman, surviving on the meager income her mother made from cross-stitched handicrafts.

Her father was released from prison two years later, but it took him four months to find his wife and daughters. Rowaida was born soon thereafter, and describes her childhood as difficult. Despite the hardships, her parents determined to make sure their girls know the value of education, and the UN schools provided the place to do it. "Jordan greatly helped our future" says Rowaida, "A small, developing country without many resources reached out to us and gave us homes, schools and passports".

It was not to be the last time Jordan provided Rowaida refuge. She went on to study law at Cairo University and University of Beirut, and met her husband while working there. They resided in Beirut through the war, finally fleeing in boats to Syria and arriving in Jordan as refugees yet again. Rowaida remembers: "Jordan has a big heart, and welcomed us, knowing the difficulty of our situation, allowing our girls to attend school with no papers".

Because of the Oslo Accord, in 1998 Rowaida saw her homeland for the first time. Her initial reaction was one of disappointment, "Palestine; meant to be a place of worship, was a place of blood. My father had told me of the 'watan' as if it was like paradise, the hills, the olive trees, the sea...in my mind I thought you never had to sweep the tile it was so clean!". But another idea changed for her as well. "I had thought the Jewish people could not be human for what they had done to us, and I discovered they were

very much human, and that humans make mistakes. And that we can forgive mistakes and build relationship together for the common good of our children”.

“I am so thankful for the role of the Royal Family, who all, in their uncomplicated and gracious way, have provided leadership and generous support to our cause. Jordan is like the ‘mother’s heart’ of the Middle East, welcoming and receiving those in need. We are the same, you have carried our pain in your hearts as if it was your own, and it is beautiful to see in the people of your land. You give us courage to believe in a future hope of peace where there is no more hunger or bloodshed. I love you!”

Madame Surraya Kamal
Wife of his Excellency Mr. ***** Kamal
Pakistani Ambassador to Jordan

Madame Surraya brightens a room as much by her friendliness as her flowing yellow shuwwar khamis, the traditional women's dress of Pakistan. She has been out all day working on planning two cultural charity events with Asian Ambassadorial Ladies in Amman (AALIA) and Pakistani Women's Cultural Club, yet answers with grace and enthusiasm as if it was her first appointment of the day.

Mrs. Kamal's demeanor reflects a lifelong career in international diplomacy. She and her husband are on their seventh posting, his having served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Kuwait, Japan, Russia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and now jointly serving Jordan and Palestine.

"We have so enjoyed our three years in Jordan. Before we came, we had no idea the treasures that awaited us! Many in the West are aware of such sights as Petra and the Dead Sea, but it is not so in Pakistan. There is always something new to explore, we are literally out every weekend on an adventure of discovery, especially when guests arrive we enjoy showing off Jordan's beauty. It will take several more years to see it all!"

"My husband, in his free time, enjoys studying religions, and it has been especially meaningful to see the burial sites of the close companions of the prophets; to actually follow the trade routes they followed. And not just Islamic interests, we had a most delightful visit with a Franciscan priest at Mt. Nebo who explained the rich spiritual significance of the area for Christians. There is a freedom for faith here, Jordan is a wonderful example of inter-faith coexistence".

Madame Surraya goes on to say that Jordan's greatest treasure is her people, that she has been made to feel at home by the good hearted, well-mannered and respectful people of our country. "I have special Jordanian women friends who are like sisters, their hearts were so open" she says as she sweeps her hand toward the window "You see? Here and there, even our neighbors on our street are our friends".

Like many Jordanians who live bi-culturally, she well knows the joys and sorrows of watching her children grow up outside their parent's homeland and seeing friends come and go. Their two oldest children graduated from high school in Canada, their daughter is finishing high school here. "We feel Jordan is a very safe place for our daughters. It is much like Pakistan culturally, yet a unique combination of the best of both Western and Eastern cultures", she says. "I hope that Jordan will be able to retain her lovely traditions, allowing the culture to shape the future and not the future shaping the culture."

"Jordan is a very important country in the region, and we are thankful for our strong diplomatic ties. Actually every person is responsible to be a diplomat, to display the best of our cultures, to participate in building bridges of understanding. People in Jordan are working hard for peace for the region. Once I told my husband "Please dear, you work so hard, take a rest". His reply to me is something I will never forget: "Humans only rest when their eyes are closed. When our eyes are open, we must work, for there is much work to do".