

Global Recruitment

Guide to Jordan

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Introduction to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

An ancient land, home to many over thousands of years, the Kingdom was first established after the first World War, and subsequently attained independence in 1948. Known then as Transjordan, this constitutional monarchy took on a stronger identity in the face of hardship and conflict in the Middle East. After many struggles both internal, and external (mainly with Israel), stability took hold and Jordan began the journey to a secure economic and political presence in the region. This was seen by an effort to improve the quality of life of its citizens, with investments in education and stronger trade relations. Among these is the US and, to a degree, Israel.

Although constantly growing and stable, the kingdom occupies a precarious position amongst many conflicts. However, Jordan has distinguished itself through its philanthropic efforts both regionally and worldwide which has put it in a positive light in the eyes of Arabs and westerners alike. The government has further distinguished itself by being ranked as the 8th highest contributor of peacekeepers world-wide; an impressive achievement considering the size of the country.

The Legal Market

Amman is the heart of business in Jordan and they have established a foundation for a digital city in which emerging markets are growing. Aside from efforts to increase tourism, tech start-ups are abundant as many years of investing in local talent has begun to pay off. Now gaining international acclaim, even western companies are looking to do business with the many resourceful and innovative people operating here. Middle Eastern firms have great interest in getting their lawyers on the ground since the chances to capitalize on this surge are ever increasing. While you might expect other economic powerhouses like the UAE to dwarf Jordan, this is not the case as the nation has played its cards right and carved out a competitive market. Some have even started calling Jordan the 'silicon valley' of the Middle East. How the nation moves forward in the new few years will be pivotal to long-term stability, but for now the future looks bright.

Immigration

Entry requirements:

A visit visa lasts from 10 to 14 days (possibly more if booked through a tour agency) and has specific requirements. First, the number of tourists must be at least 5 people. Next you will need the following: a letter from the tourism office and a statement including names and information of the visitors. As such we do not recommend going to Jordan to find work as you'll need to do that before hand.

Employer Sponsorship:

The majority of expats will secure their position within a company and will get sponsored by their employer. Considering there are many administrative issues to be addressed it is best to streamline the process through your sponsor.

Non-Exempt Nations:

Certain nationalities will not be able to enter as easily and will have to apply for entry well in advance. Refer to the Jordanian Embassy for more information.

Culture & Law

Limitations on alcohol:

Widely available at supermarkets, vendors, hotels, clubs, and bars. The only restriction is during Ramadan when purchase and consumption is limited to larger hotels. However, even though this is a liberal attitude towards drink, please do not abuse this privilege by doing so publically or acting disorderly.

Religion:

Jordan is unique in this region in that, although mostly Sunni Muslim, all faiths live openly and harmoniously. There are not many other religions and a notable minority would be Christianity. The state religion is Islam, and there are considerations regarding morality laws. Sharia is available to some Muslim communities, as well as Christian councils administering their own type of moral mediation. Proselytizing to Muslims is discouraged and can generate criticism from one's community. Any staunch rules do not really affect westerners, nor does there exist a culture of supressing other faiths. Regardless, familiarise yourself with Islamic customs and traditions so you do not mistakenly offend someone.

Ramadan: During this period most shops and restaurants will be closed until sundown when Muslims break their fast. Most bars, clubs, restaurants etc will be closed during. Although expats have options, the majority will be abstaining from business (during certain times) or non-religious celebration. Please familiarise yourself with the local customs and practices as this is a holy period for prayer and reflection. Ramadan lasts about one month and concludes with Eid.

Regular Dress:

You'll find Jordan to be fairly liberal when it comes to clothing choices, however, this should be taken in light of their perceptions of modesty. While you won't have to wear a niqab or excessively loose fitting clothing, there is an expectation to dress more conservatively than you would in this environment. Typically, covering up beyond the knees, to your neck, and avoiding showing off too much skin will do you well. Bathing suits on public beaches are also conservative, if you go to a private resort you will likely be able to wear what you wish. Jordanians don't expect too much of a commitment from foreigners, but if you are working there long term it is better to conform sooner than later.

Local customs and courtesies:

Drugs: Illicit drugs carry heavy penalties; please do not traffic, consume, or sell them.

Etiquette: Remember, this is a Muslim country and you must be sensitive to the culture.

Interactions between men and women are stringent and you should not attempt any touching of the opposite sex unless a handshake is offered. Jordanians are friendly and will greet one another with enthusiasm, even with strangers. If invited to a citizen's home do bring a small gift and take care to avoid offending your host. Turning down an offer for tea or a drink is seen as customary, but your reluctance must turn to acceptance. There are particular rules as to how one should go about this, for instance, if after a meeting you are invited to have a drink, accepting after the second rejection is seen as the norm. You should always address people from right to left, and always give proper attention, respect, and eye contact to those senior to you. There are many underlying habits and customs such as this and you will do well the more you research. Conversation can get quite personal, i.e. are you married? Religion may be discussed as well, avoid saying anything that would touch on spiritual sensitivities. Do not use any foul gestures or words with anyone. Jordanians take great pride in their country so always bear in mind that you are a guest, likewise you must be active and thoughtful in your choice of words. Lastly, be aware of your body language, always use your right hand as the left is seen as unclean, do not point your feet towards another, and do not show the soles of your shoes as this is a sign of disrespect.

Business: Jordanians are quite direct with language, so don't expect them to beat around the bush. They will be inquisitive of your life and ask many questions before any business begins. You are encouraged to give compliments (genuine!) as these aid in building a relationship. When meeting men for the first time, a warm handshake is used, those with greater familiarity will kiss you on the cheek (how many times varies). When interacting with women, allow them to determine their comfort level with you, if they do not extend a hand do not expect a handshake. Be punctual, even if your host is not. Also be prepared of the possibility of having tea or coffee before anything is discussed.

Lifestyle

Shopping:

There are many shopping centres in Jordan offering a variety of quality and high end outlets. Here are some examples:

Taj Lifestyle Centre

- Louis Vuitton
- MAC
- American Eagle
- Aldo
- La Vie en Rose
- H & M
- Hugo Boss
- Lacoste
- Marks and Spencer
- Victoria's Secret (seriously, they have a Victoria's Secret!)

City Mall

- Guess
- Timberland
- The Body Shop
- Nokia
- Carrefour
- Levis
- La Senza
- Birkenstock
- Geox
- Nine West

Travel:

Air traffic between GCC and Arab League nations is extensive as the oil and real estate boom has created a relaxed cross border culture. Many people travel within the area to enjoy the wonderful historical landmarks and fare offered by the bustling cities.

Accommodation costs can vary depending on where you go, but generally is a greater expense. Hostels in this part of the world are virtually unheard of. Further, if you are looking to enjoy a short period in the UAE, Bahrain etc. you will soon find yourself spending relatively more than you would for other destinations. Ultimately, how much you wish to spend is up to you.

Among your options are: the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and Egypt. You'll find that Egypt is relatively cheaper to the other Gulf States, but do be wary of the political climate before visiting.

Once you've arrived, local travel can vary in price depending on where you are. However, considering the large oil subsidies in places like the UAE, a taxi ride is not at an unreasonable cost. Although you might save on flights, one should not underestimate the higher cost of enjoying the GCC region- arguably well worth it.

Leisure & Local Attractions:

Sport & Leisure:

Petra: Originally the capital of the Nabataeans, Petra served as a hub in the middle of an important trade route. Carved into rock, the magnificent craftsmanship has stood the test of time as it is estimated that it was completed as early as the 5th century BCE. Well worth the visit, UNESCO designated Petra as a World Heritage site in 1985.

Qasr Amra: Erected around 705 CE, this building in the desert is an exemplary display of early Islamic architecture. Originally part of a large castle fortress, this is all that remains within the foundations. However, this structure serves as a time capsule of the culture and art of the time, with incredible frescos lined along the inner walls.

Roman Theatre: Remnants of the Roman empire and beautifully constructed in Greek fashion. Built into the hillside, this theatre had a capacity of 6000, and was further designed to improve acoustics. Still intact, a visit is a glimpse into the history of the region.

Local leisure activities include:

- Go Karting
- Hot Air Ballooning
- Diving
- Horse Riding
- Sky Diving
- Tennis
- Shooting Range
- Micro & Ultra-Light Flying

Quality of life & Costs

Luckily Amman is very affordable, there are a few things however that will be an expense. Here is a price comparison with London:

Alcohol: It is normal for this to be more expensive in predominantly Muslim countries. For some local brands it is roughly the same price as London, for others like wine or imported beer you will have to pay more.

Cars: New vehicles are noticeably more expensive, as much as 30% more.

Internet: You will pay anywhere from 30-40% more for a 6 Mbps connection.

Healthcare:

Jordan has excellent quality healthcare on par with the west. This is both in the public and private spheres. Non-hospitalized care in an emergency is free however, most expats opt for private options to enjoy greater privacy and comfort. All staff speak English and many have western qualifications therefore you are unlikely to be displeased with the service you receive. In respect to cost of private insurance, this can vary, but in general you can negotiate medical into your contract.

Property and Residence:

Car – It is not difficult to buy a car in Jordan, your main consideration is cost and this can be a matter of buying used or new. This will be a matter of research and figuring out what is right for you. Are you staying long-term, does resale value matter, do you want luxury, what fuel mileage would you like? There are so many questions to ask when purchasing and it can get expensive, so do your homework!

Home – It is possible to buy property in Jordan, but there are a few considerations. First, any expat wishing to buy a house must be from a country that has a reciprocal agreement with Jordan. Second, you will not be able to sell your property until a 5 year period has elapsed. Costs are moderate to high, akin to many western countries. There are lawyers, real-estate agents etc. to hire. Some try to avoid agents to save money, but it may be best to ensure that the paperwork and dealings are done properly, especially if this is your first time in the country! Renting is also an option and is roughly 80% cheaper than London. However, this should be factored in with wages and other costs of living. Since most of our clients in this region pay quite well it is unlikely that this will be problematic and we can even negotiate housing allowances into your contract.

Education:

Jordan is ranked first in the Arab world for education. Large investments and a strong focus on academic development has cultivated an environment of a higher learning economy. Private education composes about a third of all offerings in the country and is heavily taxed to remove the burden on the government. This makes tuition expensive for locals, but affordable for expats. This can vary depending on the school and in general we will negotiate some if not all of the costs into your contract. International offerings include American, British, Canadian, and International Baccalaureate programs.

Taxes:

Income tax exists in Jordan and varies between 7-14% in conjunction with your salary bracket. However, the following taxes do not apply: capital gains, wealth or inheritance tax, further those who wish to retire in Jordan will not have their pensions from other countries taxed either. Jordan does have double tax treaties with certain nations which removes the worry of being taxed at home as well.

Otherwise your concern should be how your earnings are transferred to non-Jordanian accounts. Depending on your home country, you may be subject to taxation on assets brought back. For example, although returning to the UK with income is not typically taxed, depending on the vehicle you use to move your assets, you may be subject to capital gains tax in the UK. Prudence, insofar as referring to a financial specialist, is highly recommended.

Americans: For US expats and their spouses the laws for taxation in the US have recently changed and affect your income while working abroad. It is far too detailed to discuss here, but we insist that you check with a tax specialist before making any decisions.

Safety:

Crime in Jordan is not particularly high, although you should be wary of theft. Consequently, you should avoid unfamiliar areas and travelling alone (especially for women). Terrorism has been a recent issue with close proximity to contentious areas and conflicts. Overall Jordan maintains tight run security to protect its citizens, but you should still be aware that a risk does exist and must be weighed alongside other factors.

Utilities:

While the country has water shortage issues, the government has not only subsidized the price of water, but has further taken steps for a more sustainable future. Expats should be wary of drinking tap water, although designated safe, it may not be to the standard westerners are used to. You should consume bottled or boiled water until you either buy larger quantities of bottled water or get used to it. Despite this access to clean water is widespread in the Kingdom, however, this is a tariff system and if you use water excessively you will pay more for it.

Energy outputs vary in how they are provided. As an expat you are likely to require an adapter for the electronics and appliances you bring with you. Service is reasonably good, but can be strained by the summer months when everyone is using AC units.

Gas is available for cooking in the form of propane cylinders, should you require it.

Public Transport:

There is no rail system in Jordan, therefore the public service revolves around buses alone. These are in two categories, those going from city to city (require pre-booking), or those doing local rounds. Local buses tend to be intermittent and do not go everywhere. Most people either have their own vehicle or use taxis.

Taxis come in two forms, the first is a regular taxi that will take you anywhere. Use yellow cabs as they have metered fares. The second is shared taxis, these travel on designated routes and will only stop along them and as such this is a nice option to save money.

Climate:

Jordan has what can be called a 'Mediterranean' climate in which the long summer heat is dry, and the winter is both humid and cold. Summer averages about 32 degrees Celsius, while the winter sits at about 13 degrees Celsius. Snow has been known to fall, as such be aware that Jordan is a place where there are sometimes significant shifts in temperature.

Pets:

Good news! Bringing your pet with you is not a problem, regulations are quite relaxed in this respect. However, it is advisable to micro-chip, have adequate vaccinations, and to consider the climate. While you might be able to adjust to the environment, it is not so clear your dog or cat may be able to do the same. Remember, this is the Middle East and it gets hot! If you've weighed your options and wish to go ahead anyways, then you will find good veterinarians and facilities in Jordan.

The Little Things:

With so much to consider it is easy to forget the little things. These are far too many to list so do be thorough in your research! This guide is a great starting point and if you do choose to work with Douglas Scott, we'll make sure that you've got all your bases covered. Otherwise, we wish you luck on this new and exciting journey!



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