

SportDiver PRESENTS A GUIDE TO
THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE PADI DIVING SOCIETY

Aqaba

5 MUST-DIVE
SITES

**CEDAR
PRIDE**

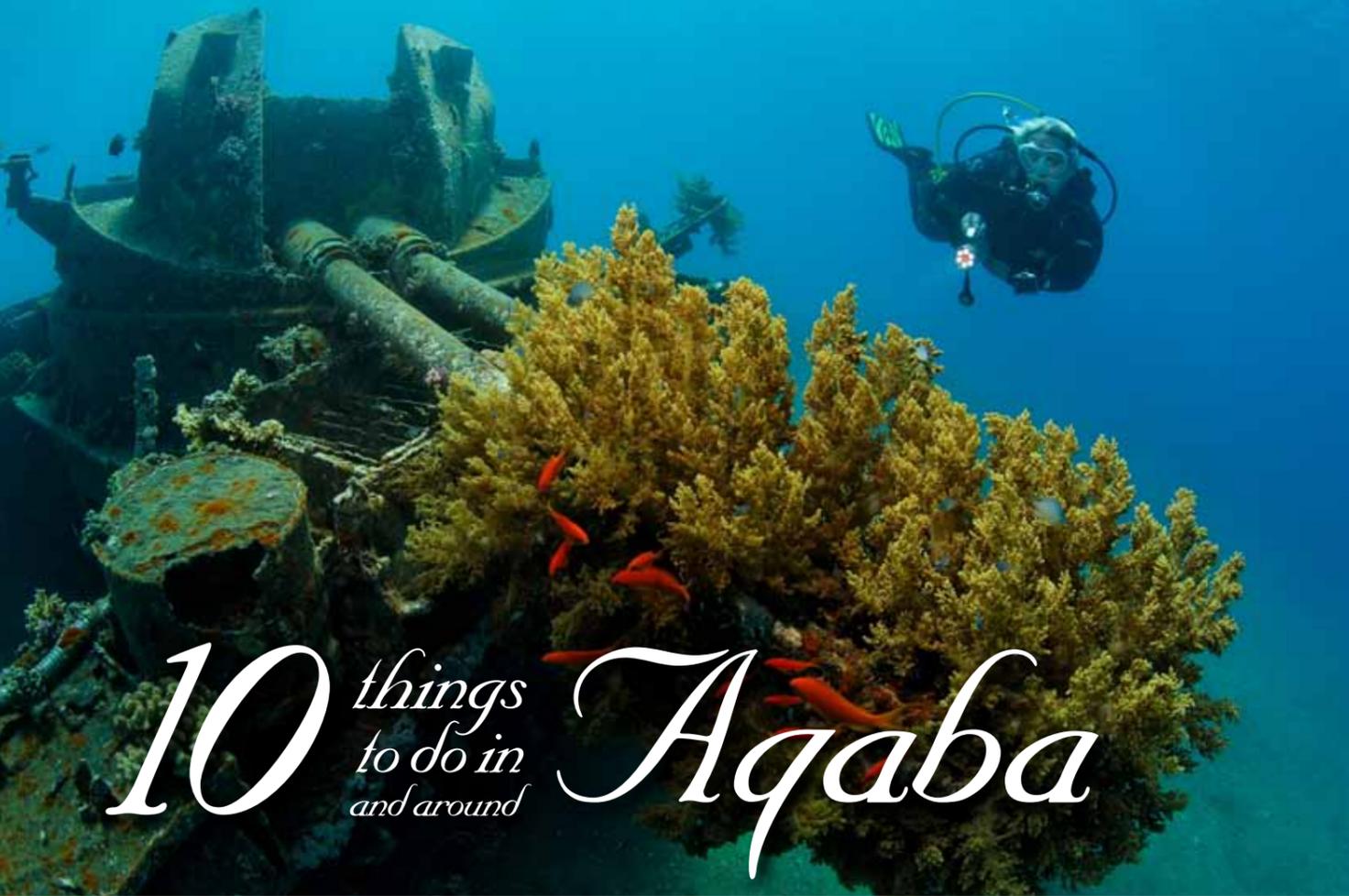
THE PRIDE OF
THE RED SEA

THE INSIDE
TRACK

HINTS AND ADVICE
TO TRAVEL LIKE A
LOCAL

TOP 10 THINGS

TO DO IN AND AROUND AQABA



10 things to do in and around Aqaba

1 GO NATIVE AND INTERACT WITH THE LOCALS

While you are in Aqaba, it would be remiss to not interact with the very people which make this town - and the entire country of Jordan - such a delight to visit. Why not head into the down town area and explore the market, then revitalise yourself with a temporary pause in one of the many restaurants, where you can tempt yourself with sayyedeveh and other Arabic sweets.

2 AQABA BIRD OBSERVATORY

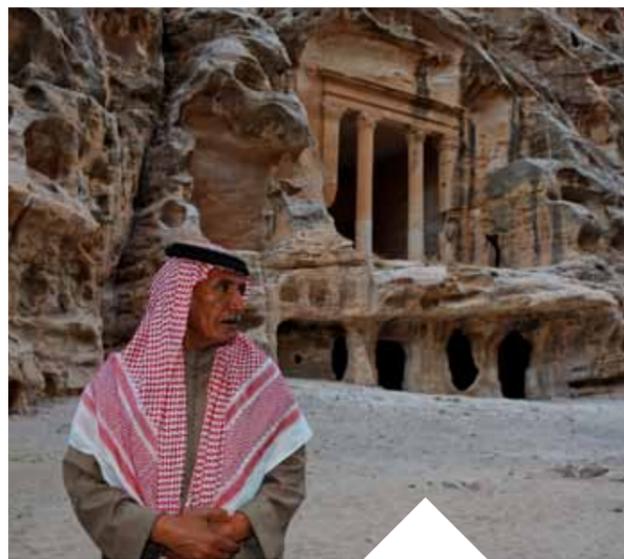
This pilot project aims to observe and monitor the migratory birds between Eurasia and Africa through the most-important route between these continents during the spring and autumn migration seasons. You can see over 80 different species during the optimum season.

3 TAKE THE NEXT STEP ON THE DIVING LADDER

The sheltered waters off Aqaba are the perfect natural training site for those wanting to embark on their diving passion, take a further step up the certification ladder, or maybe sample a night dive. With a wealth of experienced dive centres on hand, there is no better place to expand your diving knowledge.

4 WADI RUM PROTECTED AREA

Wadi Rum is a labyrinth made from monolithic rock-scapes rising in the midst of the Hisma Desert. It is a dream for climbers and hikers. Whether you'd like to experience the warm hospitality of the Bedouins as a family, or have a romantic serene evening under the stars, this is a great alternative to a typical night out.



5 ROSE-RED CITY OF PETRA

When the legendary rock-cut city of ancient Petra moves into sight at the end of a deep gorge, you will barely believe your eyes. It is an educational trip steeped into 2,000-year-old history and must be on your bucket list.

6 SHOBAK CASTLE

This old castle, perched on a small hill some 26km away from Petra, was constructed in 1115 CE, and the ruins will hold you spellbound. Be sure to walk the 375 steps down one of the deepest wells ever cut by Crusader forces.



7 AL MUJIB NATURE RESERVE

Wadi Mujib is referred to as the 'Grand Canyon of Jordan'. Given the beauty of the gorges, it is advisable to hire a guide. If you wish to take it easy, ask to experience the hot springs.

8 CHILL AND RELAX IN THE DEAD SEA

Everybody has heard about the Dead Sea. If you get the chance, then take a dip, but don't worry! Due to the high salt concentration, you will not sink. Come and appreciate the health benefits of the mineral-rich water and clean air. Very good for the skin is a salt rub, followed by a mudpack.

9 MADABA, MOUNT NEBO AND BAPTISM SITE

Madaba is known for the famous Palestine Mosaic Map from the 6th Century - the oldest map of the Holy land. Nearby Mount Nebo is a memorial to Moses and the presumed site of his burial place. Close by, you can visit the Baptism Site - where Jesus was baptised - which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

10 WADI FEYNAN

This remote eco-lodge is your temporary home as you spend a day with the Bedouin shepherds, before enjoying the evening sunset and listening to the ancient stories of your hosts. You can even go for a desert hike.

FROM THE EDITOR

You probably have a confused look on your face right now. Is Jordan a diving and a cultural holiday destination? Right now, you are probably wondering if this ambitious statement is meant seriously. Their common land borders on Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. It has refugees, it has religion, it has desert. What can possibly be so good about travelling to a country we know so little about? As keen divers and adventurers, we asked the same question; and, with a lot of prejudice and misconception, we got on the way. That was three years ago. After our return, gathering information about Jordan, all doubts have disappeared and ever since a special friendship with the people, culture and hospitality has developed. A diving and cultural family holiday in the Hashemite Kingdom is not only a perfect choice for a family vacation, but it also has lots to offer to singles and groups - clear water, varied diving areas, colourful reefs, and warm weather conditions all year around make Aqaba the perfect place only a few hours from our doorstep. It has everything a European expects from a holiday. Jordan and its desert are also known for their cultural and landscaping icons, making it a 'fascinating travel destination in the Middle East', according to a dive enthusiast. After entering a competition to find the camel 'Schamlal' organised by Aqaba Tourism at the Birmingham Dive Show, he was surprised to be the lucky winner of an all-inclusive trip to Jordan. After a memorable experience crowned by a pristine underwater world, cultural as well as a spectacular natural landscape, he agreed. Here, the events of the Old and New Testament wins transparency, the Greco-Roman Antiquity comes alive, the early Islamic period comes into focus, and in the desert the harsh, yet rich, life of the Bedouin is visible for a short time. This destination belongs on your 'bucket-list'. It is the perfect tour for those seeking something actually unique! Read on, and let this journey inspire you to take on your own challenge and dive adventure.

Text: Rose Kefrig | Photos: Udo Kefrig | Oceanpics.de

Aqaba on land

WADI FEYNAN - 158 KM FROM AQABA

You can stay at the beautiful Ecolodge in Wadi Feynan and help support the local Bedouin community. The experience the Ecolodge crafts for its visitors is unique and special. The setting is very remote, very quiet, and has a raw and honest beauty with a wide-open stretch of land serving as home to many diverse plants and animals. Spend a day with the shepherd, enjoy the evening sunset, soak up the tranquillity and sit at night, stargazing, surrounded by candlelight, listening to the ancient stories of the Bedouins. It is a magical place where you will find inner peace, clarity and make amazing friends. If you feel that this is too laid back, let the guide organise a hike through the desert which will leave you spellbound.



WADI RUM - VALLEY OF THE MOON - 66 KM FROM AQABA

Wind, weather and time has created an awe-inspiring location which is largely unaffected by humans. Wadi Rum, or also referred to as the 'Valley of the Moon', has evidence of past cultures and plenty of rock-carved drawings and ancient Thamudic inscriptions still visible today. Split through by a network of canyons and ravines, it is spanned by naturally formed rock bridges and is watered by hidden springs. Most tourists will only see sand, camels, and herds of goats, but did you know that this harsh desert environment is home to around 130 different animals and birds and hosts over 360 different species of plants? Don't be one of those boring tourists! Get out and about, as this desert is very much alive! Let your tour guide know that you are interested and he will take you to places where you are likely to see them. This is true Bedouin country and their lifestyle and tents are as evident as the herds of camels and goats. If you wish to be more traditional, then spend some time with the Bedouins. Learn about their culture, stay in a tent made from goat hair, and enjoy the hospitality from the nomads who still live in their own, unique universe. Children are very welcome and the Bedouin find generosity to be a greater proof of worth than wealth and possessions. Listen to what they have to say and the choices are endless; you can also explore Wadi Rum with a balloon ride, modern pick-up trucks or on the back of a camel. And, who would have thought? You can even renew your wedding vows and celebrate in true Bedouin-style. We did!



PETRA - THE ROSE RED CITY - 120 KM FROM AQABA

Sitting right on the edge of the Arabian Desert and around 120km from Aqaba is probably one of the country's most-famous tourist attractions, which is visited by tourists from all over the world. Petra! Our tip is to spend two or three days in Wadi Musa. Take your time; choose one of the many hotels offering good accommodation for tourists. Our choice was the Petra Guest House, perfectly located next to the entrance of Petra. Offering first-class accommodation, it provides a good base to explore like a local! Discover everything about the Rose Red City by following the advice of a guide. They speak perfect English and are more than happy to explain why the Nabataeans buried their dead in intricate tombs that were cut out of the mountain sides, and that the city also had temples, a theatre and, following the Roman annexation and later the Byzantine influence, a colonnaded street and churches. They can tell you everything you want to know about the masters of water technology and how the Nabataeans provided their city with water chambers and a sophisticated tunnel construction. Discover Petra by night - it is awe-inspiring! The once-so-glittering capital of the Nabatean Empire of King Aretas IV (9 B.C. to 40 A.D.) is more than a wonder and continues to unearth archaeological artefacts to this day. Let's not forget 'Little Petra'. It is well worth a visit. It retains an enthralling atmosphere and if you manage to hike up the steep steps carved into the rock, once at the top, it will leave you spellbound with a breathtaking view over the countryside. Here, we get to meet the team from eDive360.com, a German company, whose intention it is to gather information and pictures about all the historical and cultural places, as well as all the dive sites, to produce a 360-degree video in the finest detail. They tell us of their experience and how Jordan, the land of tradition, and modern culture, despite the relatively small coastline, offers an abundance of dive centres and fantastic dive sites. They are keen to spread the word how welcoming the people are, and what riches are found above and below this amazing country.



Aqaba on land



MOUNT NEBO - 335KM FROM AQABA

Leaving behind Madaba with an empty wallet, we continue to travel 10km to the west toward Mount Nebo: the memorial of Moses and the presumed site of his death and burial place. It has been a centre for pilgrimages since earliest Christian times. The sanctuary was undergoing various stages of architectural development during our visit, and a parallel series of improvements and changes were taking place in the adjacent monastery. This restoration work is preserved for future generations visiting this holy site. Here, all religions meet and since 4 September 1976, the annual feast of Moses is celebrated and the Christian community join with the Franciscan Fathers in this solemnity. The Italian artist, Giovanni Fantoni, is credited with designing the metal decorations inside the sanctuary as well as the Serpentine Cross (The Brazen Serpent Monument) on the exterior. These are symbolic of the bronze serpent taken by Moses into the desert, and the cross upon which Jesus was crucified. If you gaze about 1km east of Mount Nebo, you can see the spring of Moses, mentioned by Egeria, Peter the Iberian, and Theodosius. During spring, this area is dotted by Eucalyptus trees, which grow close to two churches, built in the 6th century, with enchanting mosaics: the churches of Deacon Thomas and Kayanos, which were adorned with another mosaic pavement in the seventh Century. You'll be inspired by the Biblical feel from start to finish as you experience this divine tour, which ends at another UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is none other than the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ. The Baptism Site has been authenticated by all major Christian Church leaders as one of the three holiest sites of Christianity, along with Bethlehem and Jerusalem. It is the place where Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, who lived here for 20 years. The historical Baptism Site is a Pilgrimage Station and nature reserve rich in fauna and flora. You will be awestruck by the serenity and leave feeling calm. Our journey through culture and heritage has come to an end. Yes, it is finally time to wash off the desert sand and head back toward Aqaba. In other words... diving!

MADABA - THE CITY OF MOSAIC 325 KM FROM AQABA

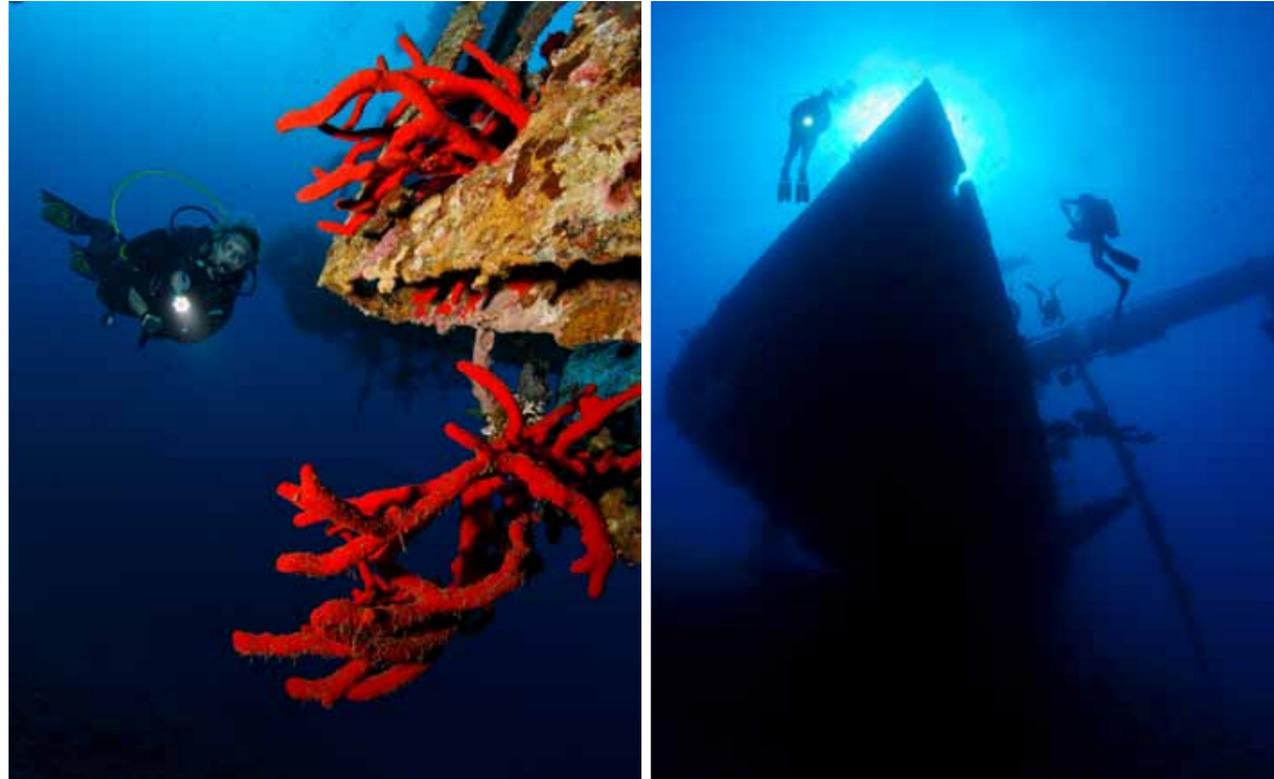
Our next stop was Madaba, a cultural, relaxed, tolerant, and easy-going little town well known for its Byzantine mosaics and Saint George's Church, with its famous mosaic map, known to be the oldest geographic floor mosaic in art history. It is of major use for the localisation and verification of Biblical sites. If you wish to buy carpets or mosaics, now is the time to do so and you can be sure of good quality. We managed to find a beautiful handcrafted Bedouin carpet! The people of Madaba will invite you to drink tea with them. Take them up on the offer and learn about their culture. They are proud of the tolerance between both Christians and Muslims in the city. There are many good local shops and restaurants. We tried the Haret Jdoudna in the heart of Madaba, offering everything from amazing traditional food, to entertainment, to local crafts, mosaics, and souvenirs. The restaurant is a 19th century house, with historical-like rooms and floors. Its menu is absolutely exquisite, offering local mezza dishes, oven-baked delicacies, and home-made meals. The restaurant also hosts special events with oriental music and entertainment for a lovely night out, or for a relaxing winter afternoon by the fireplace, where you can unwind to old tunes and a hot cup of mint tea. Yes, winter! The city is also the perfect location for exploring the holy sites nearby, and also Jordan as a whole, with many of the great sites of the country within easy reach.



SHOBAK - 160KM FROM AQABA

Some 26km away from Petra is the old Crusader castle of Montreal, or Shobak Castle. The castle is perched on top of a small hill northeast of the town of Shobak. The stronghold, known as Mont Realis (Montreal), was constructed in 1115 CE by Baldwin I. At its height, Shobak was home to about 6,000 Christians. It suffered numerous assaults by Salah Eddin (Saladin) before it finally fell to him in 1189. Shobak Castle was then restored by the Mamluks in the 14th century. Inside the fortress are two very old churches, the first of which is to the left of the entrance and up some stairs. There are ruins of baths, cisterns, rainwater pipes, and old millstones for pressing olives, a few archways, and other works which have stood the test of time and earthquakes. The guide can point out a shaft from which a set of stairs cut deep into the rock leads down to a spring below the castle. The shaft has 375 steps and is one of the deepest wells ever cut by Crusader forces. And yes, we walked down them. Here, we get to meet a lady from London. She is staying at the quiet and comfortable Montreal Hotel, which is set below the castle, offering sweeping views over the countryside. She is an artist and tells us of her desire to paint the Jordan countryside and how she is inspired by its rich historical sites. You are now probably wondering why I should be telling you all this and why the heck I don't write about the diving. Well, Jordan is not just rich in culture, you get to make friends too, and we want to share every moment - just read about a few more destinations we explored and I promise, it will be all about diving!

Aqaba diving



Steady! Very slowly, I edge forward, careful not to disturb sediment and a shoal of thousands of little fish inside the belly of one of the most-photographed wrecks in the Red Sea - the Cedar Pride. Her 30th anniversary was commemorated on 16 November 2015 with a beautiful service held by all the dive centres, Aqaba Special Economic Zone, Turkish Airlines and us! A marble slate with an inscription honouring the artificial wreck is to be found just off her bow. It was an honour for us to have worded the inscription. Sunlight is managing to cut through the blue of the water, illuminating the sleek, silvery glistening bodies of glassfish.

It feels like being inside a bottle of vintage champagne! On the outside is the .eDive360.com Team, taking pictures of the beautiful crow's nest, which is colonised with soft coral. A sudden clicking noise is heard and out of nowhere, dolphins appear. They play for a few minutes before disappearing. What a show to watch them in their natural habitat. Even

whaleshark, manta and moonfish have been observed in this part of the water. With well over 30 dive sites, including the tech sites, dotted along the protected marine park coast, the meaning of diversity is fully explained. Beautiful coral gardens at only 15m, sandy bottoms, wrecks, and technical diving to drop-offs... take your pick! The Japanese Garden holds what it promises. Seahorses are hard to find and one of the favourites to spot by divers. Here you just put them on your list of things to see and you can spend your whole dive time observing these tiny photogenic creatures on a huge bed of sea grass. From small critters - nudibranch, ghost pipefish, boxfish, anthia species and loved-up moray eels - keep your eyes peeled and you never know what swims along. If you wish to spend your time in tranquil settings without the hustle and bustle of a big hotel, all the local dive centres offer good accommodation with a fantastic personal touch and emphasis on safe diving. If you are physically challenged, don't worry, your diving

needs are catered for by professional staff. The Jordanians love children and most offer free childminding, leaving you to explore the deep blue. If you're looking for best places for beginner divers and children wishing to learn how to scuba dive, look no further. All equipment and instructors of the dive centres are highly qualified and regularly checked by the local authority and their participating partners. Most offer PADI, BSAC, CMAS, DIWA and SSI courses. The PADI programmes include the Bubblemaker and other popular courses, from beginner to professional. If you wish to stay in luxury, or even in the heart of Aqaba Town, there is a great choice of hotels to choose from. Yet again, you may just wish to be picked up from your hotel everyday and spend the day on a boat. There is a perfect combination for everyone and no matter whom you choose, they will all go the extra mile to make your stay enjoyable. We found the perfect combination with the Deep Blue Dive Centre and their boat!



DON'T LET YOUR DIVES GO TO 'WASTE'

Scuba divers have cleared the ocean from rubbish for decades. We have been invited to clear debris off the beaches and from the sea. With rubbish bags dangling from our waist, we set to work and return 60 minutes later with full nets. Due to currents and despite all the cleaning efforts made, the usual problem of daily lives is visible along the coastline and the marine environment. This is a problem that the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) is trying to tackle at the hot-spots by daily clean-ups, raising awareness and the continued support of the Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan (JREDS), which was founded in 1993 by a group of concerned responsible people, aspiring to protect Aqaba's marine life and dedicated to preserving and protecting the marine ecosystem. JREDS works



incredibly hard to prevent the destruction of the Gulf of Aqaba by promoting sustainable management of natural marine resources, raising public awareness, encouraging community participation, and conducting environmental monitoring. It is admirable, as over the last decade, JREDS has developed and expanded its three programme areas, under which 16 projects and initiatives are currently operating. Since 2012, the Al Derreh Bay Project is being carried out by ASEZA and UNDP to relocate coral and raise them in sheltered environments. Some of the underwater treasures include



around 127 species of hard coral and 300 kinds of soft coral, as well as thousands of plants and animals that have co-existed in the gulf for hundreds of years.

Top 5 dive sites



1. CEDAR PRIDE (DEPTH: 9M-30M)

One of the most-famous dive sites in Aqaba is the Cedar Pride. She lies between a depth of 9m-30m and is a must in your logbook. The Lebanese freighter was sunk in 1985 and counts as one of the best wreck dives in the Red Sea. The mast, topped by the crow's nest, is without doubt the highlight and a perfect draw for photographers and divers. The site is populated by large grouper, scorpionfish and millions of glassfish.

2. POWER STATION (DEPTH: 2M-40M)

The only accessible steep slope for divers in Aqaba offers fantastic stone and hard corals in every colour or form. The dive site is north of the Marine Park Aqaba, near the harbour. It is not unusual to see turtles, moray eels or octopus. The shallow part between 2m and 18m offers a unique coral scenery and upon closer inspection every critter possible.

3. JAPANESE GARDEN & GORGON I (DEPTH: 0M-40M)

These two sites can be combined into a wonderful drift dive. Japanese Garden is a magnificent reef bed smothered in colourful soft and hard corals and vibrant sponges. It starts in the shallows and then slopes off into the depths. Go with the flow and you will find yourself on Gorgon I, a site named after the wonderful, large gorgonian fan coral at a depth of 16m, although black coral is also found in the deeper portions of the

dive. You don't have to head below 20m, though, as this is an excellent shallow drift dive. It is not uncommon to come across coral-munching turtles and parrotfish roaming the reef, and even majestic eagle rays.

4. KIWI REEF (DEPTH: 10M-30M)

As you might expect with a name like Kiwi Reef, this site was named after a diver from New Zealand discovered it. A dense seagrass bed covers a steep slope, which leads to a number of pinnacles sitting in around 30m. You can spend many a dive winding your way through this labyrinth of coral, which is home to moray eels, lionfish, burr fish, emperor angelfish and many other reef dwellers.

5. SEVEN SISTERS/TANK (DEPTH: 0M-18M)

Apart from the Cedar Pride, another dive location is the American M42 Duster tracked anti-aircraft gun, which was turned into an artificial reef during 1999. At only 5m, this unusual site - isn't everyday you see what is essentially a tank on the seabed! - is suitable for beginners and snorkelers. But this is not all the unique dive site has to offer. Seven large coral blocks which are found in a depth of 10m nearby are aptly named the Seven Sisters. An abundance of biodiversity is at home on these blocks, in particular stone coral, like brain and salad-leaf coral, but also colourful sponges are a true eye-catcher.



MARINE SCIENCE STATION

'Ice ages have come and gone. Coral reefs have persisted'. This is the sign you will see when you enter the laboratory. We have the honour to watch scientists as they work on coral stem cell preservation, in-vitro fertilisation and take a look at a cryo-sperm bank for corals. Please, do not leave Aqaba until you have insisted to see the Marine Science Station (MSS), which was founded in the mid-1970s. The main objectives of establishing the MSS was to create a marine research facility for scientists and post-graduate students of the two Jordanian Universities that existed at that time; the University of Jordan and Yarmouk University, and to provide a haven for international scientists interested in studying the tropical-subtropical marine ecosystem. The Gulf of Aqaba, with its unique characteristics, provides an ideal oceanic model for such studies. At the station there is a public aquarium that attracts thousands of school students, tourists, official visiting groups, and Jordanian citizens. MSS beaches and coral reefs have been declared as the first Marine Nature Reserve in the Gulf of Aqaba, with access restricted except for scientists. However, as the team from Sport Diver, we are honoured and allowed to participate in a scientific dive. Professor Tareq Al Salman, who is in charge of the station, was to show us around and dive with us.



The Marine Science Station consists of four main departments. The Physical Oceanography Department studies mainly the physical oceanography in the Gulf of Aqaba and describes the dynamics and thermodynamics of its waters and their interaction with the atmosphere, and assesses its effects on the spreading of various tracers and pollutants.

The Chemical Oceanography aims mainly to study chemical characteristics of the Gulf of Aqaba in connection with physical and biological oceanography. Pollution of the sediment and water is the most-important issue that is being investigated in this department.

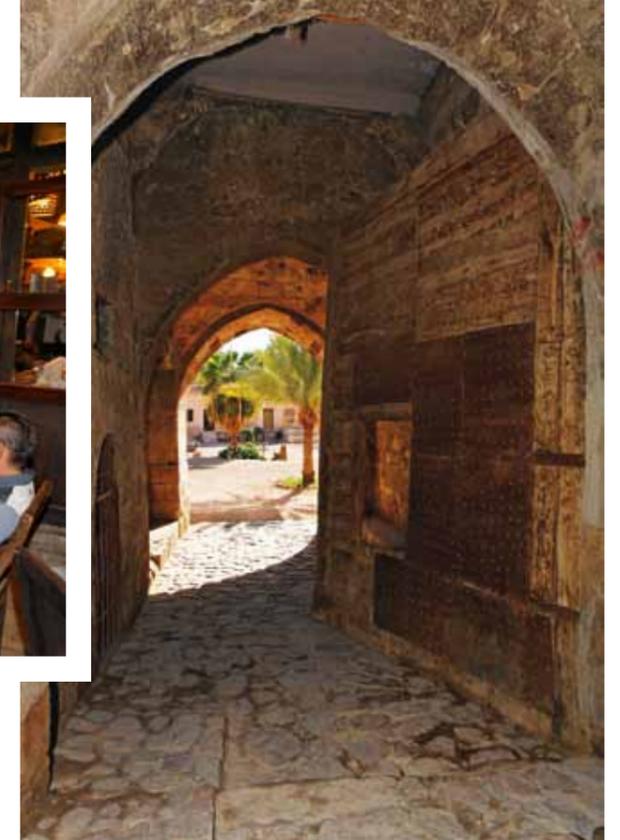
The Marine Biology department consists of several areas. The coral eco-physiology research activities are concerned with the study of coral calcification and its interaction with photosynthesis and respiration; planktonic research studies the dynamics and ecology of phyto and zooplankton as main parameters in the food chain in the ocean; and fish and aquaculture studies different types of fishes and their movement and relationship with other organisms - an environmental friendly aquaculture practice is one of the prime interests in their work. In marine geology, they deal with using massive hermatypic coral skeletons, as high-quality recorders of the environmental and climatic changes. It is simply amazing to see how dedicated these scientists work to preserve our ocean. One thing is for sure. The ocean - it lives!



A town full of surprises

Nevertheless, there is also action above water. A quad tour through the desert is a fun evening, or a sunset tour onboard some of Aqaba's finest cruises with entertainment is a favourite for the whole family. Aqaba Town is amazing. Clean, friendly, and cosmopolitan! We were taken aback by the friendliness of the locals. It is amazing to see the real estate booming and how quickly the apartments are selling to foreigners wanting to retire to the perfect location. Not far from the town is a huge new golf course undergoing construction with apartments, a huge marina, manmade beach and local shops. The town itself is best explored on a double decker bus tour before you walk around. This way you get to see everything, as Aqaba has everything! Our tour starts from the centre and takes us along to the South Beach, past the famous fastfood Scottish restaurant,

local shops, the mosque, coffee shops and stalls. A unique aromatic smell of spices and coffee hangs in the air, oriental, musky, sweet, and tantalising. Undoubtedly delicious are the kebabs and freshly cooked dishes offered by scrupulously clean restaurants. We head down to the harbour where the Aqaba Flagpole is located. It is the sixth tallest free-standing flagpole in the world at a height of 430ft high. It carries the flag of the Arab Revolt, commemorating the Battle of Aqaba that took place in 1917. Finally, the tour takes you back to the city centre where you depart and are left wondering which restaurant, roof-top or open-air coffee shop you should to visit to enjoy the rest of your evening. The choice is yours! Diving, fun, adventure, education! Any more doubts where your ideal holiday location should be?



AQABA/JORDAN

Four states border the 100,000 sq km make up Jordan. During the last thousands of years, the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Persians, Jews, Romans, Greeks, Muslims, Crusaders and the English have all left traces at the end of their colonialism. Across the country, the tourist interested in culture will stumble across relicts from different periods of timeline.

WHERE TO EAT AND MEET

Guidebooks might tell you where to eat, however, the locals can tell you what to eat and why. Enjoy the charm of Aqaba and a wondrous mix of culture. The Souks are a perfect amalgam of colour, energy, and vibrancy.

DIVING

Aqaba offers a large spectrum of different watersport activities for the whole family, with over 23 dive sites to choose from. The good visibility and calm waters make this a paradise for photographers, families and beginners. Challenging dive sites are available for technical diving. Water temperatures range from 20°C in winter to 27°C in summer. During winter, a 7mm suit with hood is recommended, during summer, a shortie or a 3mm suit will suffice.

HOTEL AND ACCOMMODATION

Aqaba has a wide choice of accommodation available for every budget. From the five-star resort, the apartment or down to the very mundane camping site, the choice is yours. If you prefer life in the city, exclusive hotels are on offer. A few kilometres outside of the city are the quieter, more low-key hotels and the larger, all-inclusive resorts, each with their own charming ambience. Close by are the local dive centres with comfortable, family friendly

and childcare accommodation. A regular shuttle-bus service is on constant offer, and taxis are very reasonable.

THE DIVE CENTRES

For divers, Aqaba is a paradise. There are over 15 dive centres available. The local dive schools are mainly under the guideline of PADI, or are accredited by BSAC, CMAS, SSI, or IAC. It is a perfect place to continue your diver training to all levels. Divers who have started their certifications at home can finish their courses in Aqaba. Dive spots are reached by boat, or from the beach.

HYPERBARIC CHAMBER

A large, state-of-the-art multi-place hyperbaric chamber is situated at the Prince Hashem bin Abdullah II Hospital in Aqaba. Doctor Fawzi Mohammed Khawaldeh does not only treat divers with decompression illness, but other medically related problems.

FURTHER INFORMATION

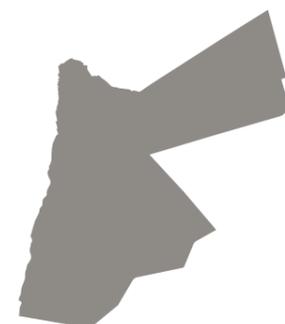
The Marketing & Tourism Directorate: www.aqaba.jo
The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority: www.aqabazone.com
Jordan Tourism Board: www.visitjordan.com



BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Time flies when you're having fun, however, it's not only time that flies. Thousands of feathery repeat visitors are attracted to the area each year. Did you know that the Aqaba Birds Observatory (ABO) sees the birds on their annual migration route? By now your head must be full of all the things you can do in Aqaba/Jordan. On your last day of not-diving, try to put this visit on your bucket list! The Aqaba Bird Observatory (ABO) is a pilot project observing and monitoring the migratory birds between Eurasia and Africa through the most-important route between these continents during the Spring and Autumn migration seasons. It forms a bottleneck between Asia and Africa, making it the final spot before access to the Sinai Desert and the first rest spot when they access Asia. You can observe over 80 different species during the optimum season. It is not a very big area to cover and the 0.5km, consisting of forests and water ponds with deep and shallow levels, offers a natural habitat to attract different species of birds for the enjoyment of the bird-watching tourists. ABO is managed by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), and provides a vital station for bird-watching and eco-friendly activities, while preserving the natural habitat of local and migrating birds. The observatory also assists in monitoring and research by developing a database for bird migration and raising awareness regarding bird migration through Aqaba.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AQABA, JORDAN



HOW TO GET THERE

There are flights from all major UK airports with Turkish Airlines to Amman or direct to Aqaba. The possibility also exists to travel via ferry or speedboat from Taba and Nuweiba in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula to Aqaba.

WHEN TO VISIT

It is a year-round travel destination, but ideal times are February to May and September to December.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

British citizens need a valid passport with six months left to expiry. A visa will be issued at the Queen Alia International and King Hussein International Airport. Children must have a valid passport with photograph.

CURRENCY

Dinar (roughly £1 = 1 JD).

WHERE TO EAT AND MEET

A wealth of good restaurants and cafes in the city offer fresh local cuisine, but when you are out in the desert, be sure to eat with the Bedouin for a true taste of Jordan.

VERDICT

Aqaba is the ideal place for a complete holiday. With its laidback atmosphere, culture, rich history, duty-free shopping and diving, the city of Aqaba is a must on the holiday list. It is a perfect base from which to dive and visit Petra, Wadi Rum, the Dead Sea, the Bird Sanctuary, nature reserves and much more.



Dive centres



AHLAN AQABA SCUBA DIVING CENTER

info@diveinaqaba.com | www.diveinaqaba.com

ALMARSА DIVЕ RESORT

dive@almarsa-aqaba.com | www.almarsa-aqaba.com

AQABA ADVENTURE DIVERS

info@aqaba-diving.com | www.aqaba-diving.com

AQABA ANCHOR DIVING CENTER

aqabasanchor@outlook.com | www.aqabasanchor.com

AQABA BEACH ACADEMY FOR DIVING

eid_sea@yahoo.com | www.aqabaseadiving.com

AQABA BEDOUIN DIVE CENTER

aqababedouindiver@gmail.com | www.aqaba-hotels.com

AQABA INTERNATIONAL DIVE CENTER

diveaqaba@yahoo.com | www.aqabadivingcenter.com

AQABA SHARKS BAY DIVERS

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BARRACUDA DIVING CLUB

barracuda.aqaba@gmail.com | www.barracudamarineservice.com

BEDOUIN GARDEN VILLAGE

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DEEP BLUE DIVE CENTER

operation@deepbluedivecenter.com | www.deepbluedivecenter.com

DIVE AQABA

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EXTRA DIVERS AQABA

aqaba@extradivers.org | www.extradivers-worldwide.com

MR FROGMAN DIVE CENTER & DIVE SHOP

mansour@jordanfrogman.com | www.mrfrogman.com

NEMO DIVE CENTER (BEDOUIN MOON VILLAGE)

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RED SEA DIVE CENTER

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SEA STAR WATER SPORTS CENTER

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SINBAD DIVE CLUB

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Hotel accommodation

DOUBLE TREE BY HILTON AQABA ★★★★★

doubletreeaqaba.reservations@hilton.com | www.doubletree.com

INTERCONTINENTAL AQABA RESORT ★★★★★

res.aqaba@ihg.com | www.intercontinental.com/res.aqaba@ihg.com

KEMPINSKI HOTEL AQABA ★★★★★

sales.aqaba@kempinski.com | www.kempinski.com/aqaba

MOEVENPICK RESORT & RESIDENCES AQABA ★★★★★

resort.aqaba.reservation@moevenpick.com
www.moevenpick-hotels.com/aqaba

MOEVENPICK RESORT & SPA TALA BAY AQABA ★★★★★

resort.talabay.reservation@moevenpick.com
www.moevenpick-hotels.com

ORYX HOTEL ★★★★★

reservation@oryx-hotel.com | www.oryx-hotel.com

RADISSON BLU TALA BAY RESORT ★★★★★

info.talabay.aqaba@radissonblu.com
www.radissonblu.com/resort-aqaba

AQABA GULF HOTEL ★★★★★

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DAYS INN HOTEL & SUITS AQABA ★★★★★

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MARINA PLAZA HOTEL ★★★★★

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AQUAMARINA III ★★★★★

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