

**MADABA**  
WALKING TOUR

# MADABA WALKING TOUR



## WELCOME TO MADABA!

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This small and friendly city is famed for its Byzantine mosaics, and there is plenty to see in and around the center. From a fascinating Christian history to intricate mosaics, along with a traditional Jordanian culture, the city's core is easy and enjoyable to walk around and explore. Stay at one of the many family-run hotels and B&Bs, taste local dishes at any of the multiple restaurants, and enjoy the warm hospitality of the people of Madaba.

While Madaba has a long and rich ancient history, the modern city was established when a group of Christian families migrated here from Karak, in the south of Jordan, in the late 19th century. The land of Madaba was under Ottoman administration, and was abandoned and uncultivated at the time.

The families began building their homes on the foundations of existing structures. As they did, they began to discover a wealth of mosaics and continued to unearth more and more over the coming decades. Some family homes in Madaba today still house beautiful Byzantine mosaics, while many others have become archaeological sites, restaurants, or other attractions.

# MADABA WALKING TOUR



Start your walk at the Madaba Visitor Center where you can get a brief history of the city and its founders, and learn about what there is to see and do nearby. The Visitor Center was set up in a heritage building constructed in 1907 as a family home. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities restored the building and opened the Visitor Center in 2001. **The center includes Five heritage rooms, Public Services, Disabled Person's Services, Kings highway Portrait, The Beirut House, Madaba Tourism Directorate, Tourist Police office, Shops, Gardens, Out Door Theater.**



**Opening hours:**

**During Winter: from 8am to 6pm**

**During Summer: from 8am to 7pm**



**Free**

# MADABA WALKING TOUR



**Beit Al – Beiruty** is a heritage house in Madaba, built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, that lies within the Visitor Center complex. It has been converted into a space for local heritage and craft experiences, a Jordanian travel platform that promotes genuine and authentic tourism experiences offered by local communities. At **Beit Al – Beiruty** you can book a range of entertaining, interactive and educational experiences, including learning to make your own mosaic to trying on traditional clothes, weaving, or tasting traditional foods. Advance booking is required.



9am to 3pm, Saturday to Thursday



Prices vary by experience

# MADABA WALKING TOUR



On your left is the entrance to the Madaba Institute **for** Mosaic Art and Restoration. Originally opened as a school, this is now a regional institute that offers diplomas in mosaic art and restoration. The institute and its students have helped to restore numerous ancient mosaics in Madaba and beyond, and new intricate mosaics are also produced here, including a replica of the Byzantine map of the Holy Land for which Madaba is famed. Feel free to step inside and wander through the courtyard. The institute offers mosaic workshops for those interested in learning the basics of this fine art, and you can ask for more details at the reception.



Sunday to Thursday, 8am to 3pm



Free

# MADABA WALKING TOUR



The Archaeological Park was established in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to preserve a group of ancient structures located along what remains of a Roman road that stretched from east to west of the city in ancient times. The park encompasses several Byzantine churches, as well as the remains of part of the Roman road. There are two parts to the park. This one includes the Hippolytus Hall, Church of Prophet Elias, **Virgin Mary Church and The Crypt of Saint Elianus**.

The Hippolytus Hall was part of a 6<sup>th</sup> century Madaba house and its beautifully elaborate floor mosaic depicts the tragedy of Hippolytus. **The Church of Prophet Elias is the first church to be discovered in Madaba, built in the 6<sup>th</sup> century on top of a Roman temple. The Byzantine church** was largely destroyed before its discovery in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, although parts of the mosaic floors were found with two inscriptions.

The second part of the Archaeological Park can be entered from Tourism Street, and includes the Martyr's Church and Burnt Palace.



**Opening hours vary throughout the year.**



**Entrance fee is JD3 (or included in Jordan Pass) and allows entry to the Archaeological Park, Madaba Museum, Burnt Palace and Apostles Church.**



In the 1950's this street had only a few clinics and one pharmacy, along with a few residences and historic remains. In the 1990's the street began to develop as the city's tourism hub, with souvenir shops, cafes, craft workshops, and more opening up. While not the official name for this street, it became known locally as 'Tourism Street'. Enjoy browsing through the shops, where you will find a range of items, from hand-woven traditional Jordanian rugs and carpets to mosaics, jewellery, spices, and more, and meeting the friendly artisans and shop owners throughout. A couple of stops of note, which reflect Madaba's heritage and history, include:

#### **Maayah Carpets:**

This shop represents a rich family history of traditional weaving. The owner is one of the last of Madaba's traditional weavers, and his family loom is situated at the front of the shop. The weaving was done by men, and the loom had a place of prominence in the family home. You can see an original traditional loom in the shop that was used to weave the typical Madaba designs with geometric patterns.

#### **Jaw Zaman:**

This is the oldest building on this street, built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1912 it hosted the city's municipal council during the Ottoman era. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the building was renovated and converted into a restaurant and café serving local dishes.

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The Burnt Palace is a Byzantine building, which was so-named as part of its mosaics were discovered under a thick layer of ash and charcoal, indicating the building had been destroyed by a fire. It was found in the courtyard of a private home in 1905 and was identified as a secular building. It is possible that it was a residence used by the priest of the nearby Martyr's Church.

The **Martyr's Church** is located along what remains of the city's main Roman road. It is recognized for its impressive mosaic floor and architecture. The remains of exquisite columns and capitals can be seen, which were re-used from older Roman structures. A mosaic medallion in the center contains an inscription that reveals the church was originally called the Church of the Martyrs and the beautiful and well-preserved mosaic floor depicts hunting scenes.



Opening hours vary throughout the year.



JD3 (Park 1 & 2, Museum, Apostles Church), included in the Jordan Pass



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The star of Madaba's Byzantine attractions, this church houses what remains of the famed 6<sup>th</sup> century mosaic map of the Holy Land. A unique example of Byzantine cartography and art, this map is the earliest existing map of the Holy Land that has been found to date. It depicted the cities, towns and landscapes of the biblical areas on both the west and east banks of the Jordan River, though unfortunately less than a third of the original map remains today. There is an information center beside the church where you can learn more about the history of this important mosaic before visiting it.



Opening hours vary throughout the year.



JD1, not included in the Jordan Pass

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The name of this small plaza translates to 'Peace Square'. It was named in honour of Pope John Paul II's visit to Madaba in 2000.



# MADABA WALKING TOUR



The **Greater Madaba Municipality** manages municipal affairs for the **Madaba Governorate**. The governorate has a population of around **240,000**, and more than **100,000** of those live here in the city of Madaba. In front of the building is a large mosaic of the city name, which is a good spot for a photograph.

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The owners of this heritage house in Madaba, and nearby Carob Farms, renovated the building and transformed it into a cultural space and kitchen with a mission to offer clean food and original tastes through a farm-to-table experience. Carob House also seeks to revive and preserve local food culture and ingredients. The restaurant utilizes core ingredients from the farm and adopts seasonal foraging of indigenous plants and herbs. Carob House partners directly with nearby suppliers both to source the freshest local ingredients and to preserve traditional practices and small artisan food businesses. Partners include sheep herders, local dairy artisans, carob molasses producers, and more. Carob House then works with food artists and artisans to transform local ingredients into flavoursome dishes that tell a story of local heritage.

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This is a cultural hub with a bookshop, kitchen, and coffee bar. The bookshop started as a mobile bookstore in Amman in 2016, founded by a young Jordanian with a passion for spreading a culture of reading, and it evolved into this picturesque space in Madaba a couple of years later. Kawon is housed in a heritage building built in the 1930s, which was renovated by the owners of Kawon into this beautiful space where locals and visitors can stop to meet, mingle, replenish, and relax. The kitchen offers a selection of dishes, including vegan options, which are produced using seasonal ingredients and food products sourced from local production kitchens, as well as herbs and some vegetables grown in Kawon's organic garden. Kawon hosts performances by musicians, poets, and writers on a regular basis, as well as other events and workshops.



Daily from 9am to 10pm

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This heritage house is the location for a delightful local food experience run by Jordanian couple Feryal and Elias. 'Hikayet Sitti' means 'the story of my grandmother' in Arabic. The couple renovated it and host visitors here for home-cooked meals, and also offer local food and cooking experiences, and other activities within Madaba.



Open by reservation



This busy thoroughfare is dotted with local eateries and shops. It used to be a popular spot among Madaba families for an evening stroll. In the early 1900s, when Madaba was a much smaller place and the local culture was a lot more conservative, young people were segregated and only had the opportunity to meet through their families. Young men would dress up and walk along this street in hopes that they may catch the eye of one of the young ladies watching from a window above. The street became known locally as 'Share3 Al Ushaq' which translates to 'Lovers' Street'.

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Mrah Salameh offers a unique restaurant experience and a fascinating story. This restaurant was set up inside ancient caves discovered by George Haddadin, a geophysicist who inherited the house above it from his parents. One day George noticed a hole in the front yard of his family home, inside of which was an angular-shaped rock. He knew the sharp angle could only be manmade and began digging further, which led him to discover the existence of a cave. It took him seven years to fully excavate the area, which revealed an amazing historical treasure: a group of natural caves, some of which were formed more than 60 million years ago. The caves are a remarkable discovery with layers of history going back millions of years. There are signs of human occupation going back as far as the Stone Age, and there is evidence of Moabite, Nabataean, and Ghassanid occupation of the caves, as well as other civilizations. Glass floors and tables allow clear views of the intriguing remnants of human and geologic history.



11am to 11pm daily



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This structure was a traditional wheat mill built from stone. It was constructed around the early 1900s, towards the end of the Ottoman period in Jordan. The large wooden entrance door is 3 meters high, and the inside is divided into two main areas: the mill room and the motor room. The motor was originally powered by diesel, and later electricity. The mill served residents of the city and nearby villages, and it served as a gathering point during harvest season, as locals would bring their wheat to be milled and meet and socialize.

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This archaeological site has not been fully excavated yet but as you pass by you will notice the collection of ancient stone arches and building foundations. As with many sites around Madaba, it was discovered by accident by a local resident when he began digging the foundations for his house. The site contains remains of human settlement from the Bronze, Iron Roman, Nabataean, Byzantine, and Islamic periods. This includes a Byzantine villa and, more significantly, parts of an Iron Age fortification wall that is the largest of its kind found in Jordan to date. The wall is visible from above the arch on the top level.

# MADABA WALKING TOUR



This quaint little museum is set in a series of heritage houses linked by a courtyard space. There are of course more mosaics to see, including a lovely mosaic portrait inside a room of about 4 by 5 meters. The mosaic is a square image with shrubbery branching out from each corner, and in the center is a human image, two rams, two rabbits, two ducks, a lion and a bull. Another interesting element is a heritage museum showing the traditional Madaba lifestyle, with antique household and cooking items and pottery from various ages. Jewelry and costumes typically worn by Madabites are also displayed here. Entrance fee is included with the Archaeological Park ticket.



**Opening hours vary throughout the year.**



**JD3 (Park 1 & 2, Museum, Apostles Church), included in the Jordan Pass**

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This 19<sup>th</sup> century Catholic church dedicated to John the Baptist is a must-visit. It sits atop a series of subterranean rooms and caves, which are still being excavated. You can step underground to see these rooms, a couple of which have been converted into a little museum that tells the history of the area and traditional life, and an ancient well. The church bell tower offers a wonderful view over the city of Madaba and is worth a climb.



**Opening hours:**

**During Winter: from 8am to 6pm**

**During Summer: from 8am to 7pm**



**JD1, not included in the Jordan Pass**

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'Saraya' is a Turkish word that refers to an Ottoman administrative building, and this building dates back to the time when Jordan was under Ottoman rule. It was built in 1896, according to the inscription above the main entrance. After the Arab Revolt, the building was used as the Madaba police station, up until 2008, with an administration floor and jail cells in the basement. It has since been renovated and will be used for tourism purposes.

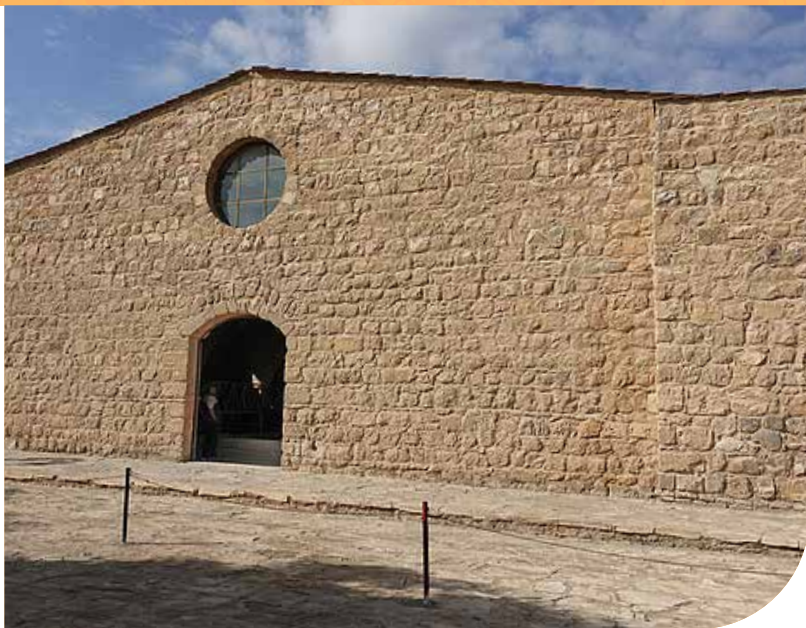
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The land on which the mosque was built was owned by a Christian family who donated it to the Muslim community in the 1940s. In 1998, King Hussein bin Talal of Jordan visited Madaba and requested that the mosque rebuilt by Royal Endowment in historical and Islamic architectural style. The new mosque was built in Ottoman architectural style, similar to the Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul (Blue Mosque), and was completed in 2007. The mosque complex includes staff facilities, as well as the mosque itself, which has a capacity for 1,500 worshippers.

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This Byzantine church includes a beautifully preserved 6th century floor mosaic that depicts Thalassa, Greek goddess of the sea. The mosaicists' name, Salmanos, is inscribed in the mosaic along with the name of the church and the date of its construction in **578 AD**. It is believed that the church was dedicated to the 12 apostles. The church has two chapels, both of which are also decorated with intricate mosaic floors showing stags, sheep, gazelles, and other animals, as well as trees, flowers, fruits, and birds.



Opening hours vary throughout the year.



JD3 (Park 1 & 2, Museum, Apostles Church), included in the Jordan Pass



# MADABA

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■ Main route    ■ Extended route

**Start**

- 1 Madaba Visitor Center
- 2 Beit Al - Beiruty at Visitor Center
- 3 Madaba Institute for Mosaic Arts and Restoration
- 4 Archaeological Park 1
- 5 Tourism Street
- 6 Burnt Palace and Martyr's Church
- 7 Church of St. George
- 8 Sahat Al Salam (Peace Square)
- 9 Greater Madaba Municipality
- 10 Carob House
- 11 Kawon bookshop
- 12 Hikayet Sitti
- 13 Mrah Salameh
- 14 Babour Al Ksar
- 15 King Abdullah Street
- 16 Tall Madaba
- 17 Madaba Museum
- 18 Church of the Beheading of John the Baptist
- 19 Dar Al Saraya
- 20 Madaba Mosque
- 21 Apostles Church

**End**

- Museum/Heritage Building
- Church
- Mosque
- Hotel
- Information Center
- Restaurant/Cafe
- Toilet
- Parking
- Shopping Center
- Main route
- Extended route



**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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