

# AVS

## Horse Tour Jordan

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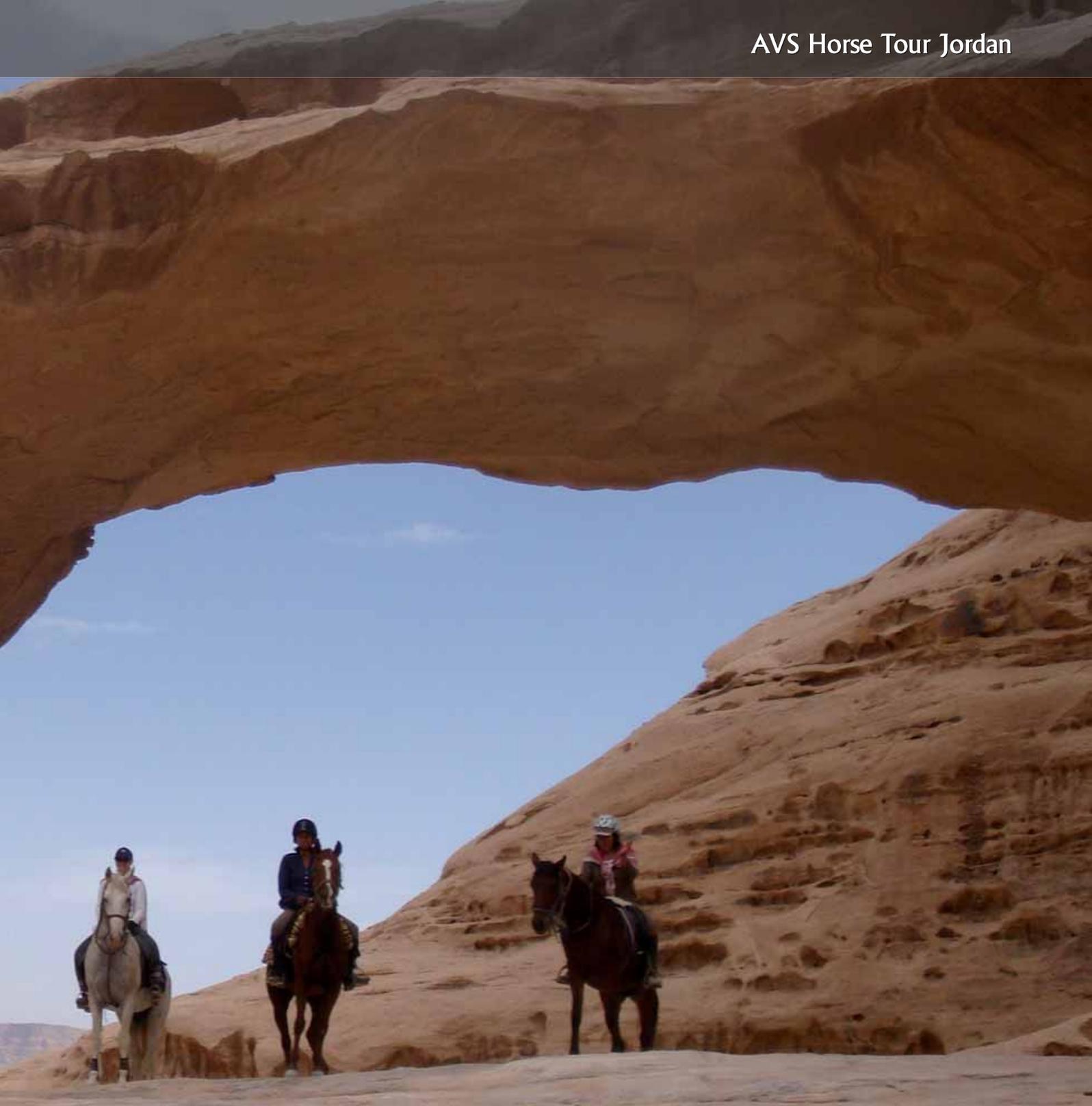
*Pieter (Stoop) watched by chance in September 2008 to a broadcast of Boundless love with a Dutch lady who fell in love with a Jordanian. This show followed the Dutch lady of her departure for Jordan, her wedding, until one year later, and showed how she and her husband established a travel agency for tailor made tour to Jordan and trail riding with their own horses.*

*Since Pieter wanted to know more about it and after some searching on the internet he came into contact with Jessica*

*Falahat of Jezra Travel. An idea was born, a call was made to fellow travelers via the newsletter and fortunately there were enough responses for the trip to go ahead.*

*Thursday, October 22, 2009, more than one year later, the time came. With 16 older and younger ladies we got on the plane to Jordan.*

*After a flight of about five hours our plane landed at Queen Alia airport in Amman, where we were handled in a friendly*



*way through passport control and assisted us with the requested visa. Within fifteen minutes we were standing outside in the arrivals hall. Jessica was waiting there for us. Jessica, originally from the cozy south of The Netherlands, married the Joranian; Rami, speaks full of enthusiasm about her Jordan on the way to our hotel .*

*Jordan covers over 90,000 Km2 and is about 2 times larger than the Netherlands. The country consists 90% out of desert and is populated by about 6 million people. These are mainly*

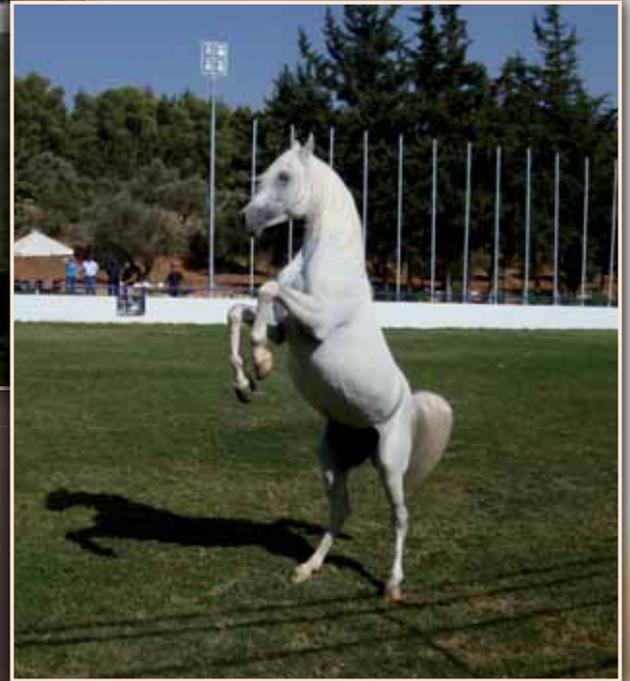
*Arabs (many of them are of Palestinian origin) and some hundreds of thousands of Bedouins.*

*We noticed right away that the English language is spoken by many people, even the road signs and advertising are in both Arabic and English.*

*As our flight landed in Amman at 22.15 pm, everyone went straight to their comfortable beds upon arrival at the hotel. Because one of the highlights of our program is planned for*



Royal Stable visit



*tomorrow morning; as an exception we are allowed to visit the Royal Stables of HRH Princess Alia in Amman.*

*After a delicious breakfast, our bus ride took us within 25 minutes to the outskirts of Amman. And shortly after, we walked the last part towards The Royal Stables, where we are welcomed by the stud manager, Major Faisal. He takes us to the green grassy lawn, one of the few in Jordan, where some chairs under umbrellas await us. The stud manager tells us that immediately after the Arab revolution in 1916 which ended the domination by the Turks the establishment of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan followed. Emir Abdullah was the first leader of this kingdom and laid the foundation of the Royal Stables in 1918. Currently HRH Princess Alia, the eldest daughter of King Hussein is the head of the stud.*

*After this explanation, they showed a number of horses, all groomed to perfection especially for us. First, a small group of fillies of this year and all descendants of Monarcos DD, where all beautiful to see. These foals are followed by the yearling fillies and then two and three year old mares.*

*The highlight was absolutely the presentation of the stallions; Shamekh al Shaqab, Monarcos DD, Hlayyil Ramadan followed last by Haleem who plays freely in the ring with his*

*trainer. We can see that all the horses are very happy here, they belong here in this natural environment.*

*The presentation of these beautiful horses was followed by a small tour through the stables and they also showed us the wonderful tack room. All Royal saddles and trophies are here on display. Unfortunately, time just flies and we have say goodbye to these wonderful horses and their friendly and dedicated staff, the bus is waiting.*

*Via a detour to the citadel, we are shown a beautiful view of Amman before we driver brings us to a local restaurant that serves us all kinds of mezze salads and mixed grilled dishes. After the lunch we drive in about three hours to Little Petra, which gives us an idea of the visit we will make to Petra the next day. Around six pm the sun sets, within a quarter of an hour it's dark. For dinner, Jessica takes us to a local restaurant where some of us attempt the Jordanian Mansaf a typical dish made with sheep, goat yoghurt and rice.*

*Day three consists mainly of the visit to Petra. The Greek name Petra was the capital of the Nabataeans. The city is reachable via 1,5 km a gorge in the hills and all the tombs and facades are carved out of the red rose stones. The blooming period of the city pays its existence due to the trade route for incense and silk*



from Yemen, 1600 km further south, to Persia, Syria and the Greek and Roman empires. Petra was a strategic area for the various trade routes. Tax revenues of the traders made the rulers of Petra wealthy, which can be seen on buildings and monuments. The city is only accessible via a 1.5 km long and 200 m deep gorge, the Siq, which at the narrowest place is only 2 m wide, when you come out of the siq you stand before one of the highlights of Petra: the Treasury, a funerary temple of about 40 meters high carved into the rocks. Petra is on the Unesco World Heritage list and has been declared one of the seven world wonders.

Some early birds were already up at 6.00 in the morning and at the gate to see the beautiful sunrise. Jessica and Rami arrange a guide for the people who wanted to sleep a little longer and who took us to Petra and told us about the fascinating city and its history. The sports enthusiasts among us tried to ascend to the "Ad Deir (the monastery). Almost 800 steps must be taken but the view is well worth it. Not only the monastery but also the views of the area are beautiful.

On the way there was an opportunity to look at Brooke Hospital next to the entrance of the city of Petra. It was for us a tourists rather difficult to find the right shops for the Middle Eastern halters, clothing, scarves and other accessories that we hoped to

find here against a cheaper price than in The Netherlands, so Rami arranged three taxis and drove us to the local hardware store where an old man in a small shed next to piles of all sorts of hardware, lamps, etc had some authentic halters. After this we headed out to a store in the attic where they turned out to have a pile of halters and breast collars, it was as if Christmas had come early for us. After these purchases, we had dinner at a local restaurant and everyone was happy again to plunge back to bed.

Day four was the day that we all were looking forward to! After breakfast we were driven in fifteen minutes to the stables of Jessica and Rami in Wadi Musa. There were all the horses saddled and ready, it took a while before everyone had been assigned a horse but after more than a half hour the trip started and our horses climbed the first hill. The first day we rode through mountainous terrain, the trails are very hard and littered with stones. Already after only two hours, we have deep respect for these tough little horses who skillfully find their way over this difficult terrain. I'm sure my Arabian princess in the Netherlands, after a half day in the mountains would suffer from sore feet and legs and had thrown in the towel.

After a ride of about 3.5 hours, mostly walking, we stopped at the lunch location where 3 jeeps were awaiting us and the



*horses for food, water and shade. As we now know, we tied the horses to a rope or a chain that is pinned in the ground, something we Dutch people had got a little bit to used to, but these horses do not know better and are resting and eating quietly and peacefully. This week only one horse escaped but remained with the group in the area and was within three minutes back on the chain.*

*Directly the horses are provided with water and a feedingbag with alpha alpha and barley. There is a team of six people taking care of the logistics. It is a challenging task when you consider that the food and water for the horses, our luggage, tents and food and drinks, and sleeping mats are lugged on the jeeps every day and are ready on every spot that we arrive. Places are already found for the horses and the water and food is always ready for them.*

*Also for us, the riders, they already created a place in the shade with a nice sitting area so we can rest conveniently. The "chef" made us a delicious authentic meal of tomatoes, onion and chicken. As served with every meal, the khobz bread (like pita bread).*

*After a break of one hour, we continue this adventure by horse. It seems now to be steeper and the view gets better and better. Just before dark we arrived at the place where we will stay overnight. It is now dark when we set up tents for the first time. After a delicious dinner from the chef and a delicious baklava we dive into our sleeping bags at 21.30 hours. It takes some getting used to, brushing teeth and washing with a bucket of water, the toilet is behind a bush somewhere. Nicole and Michelle see a desert fox, the horses neigh and muddle about,*

*but it is otherwise a nice and quiet night in the desert. So quiet that the slightest sound suddenly seems very loud.*

*Day five begins with taking care of the horses. At seven everyone is awake next to their tent and is welcomed by a delicious breakfast. We still ride in mountainous areas and occasionally meet local Bedouins on their donkeys with their herd of sheep and camel, or sometimes they are just sitting on a rock. One or two times we pass a family tent where a curious look comes through the openings to these "strange procession" with foreign view. The surroundings become flatter; the desert landscape appears before our eyes. Indescribable!*

*After a delicious lunch under one of the few trees that are found in the desert we ride again. By the end of the afternoon, near the village Humayma we cross the highway. Like everything else in Jordan is a bit different, we have to be taken literally and get off our horses. When the traffic is slow we cross the highway (Thank god there are speed bumps) We have arrived in the northern part of Wadi Rum. We set up the camp and after dinner everyone crawls into their tent and enjoys the silence and the starry sky!*

*The sixth day we ride through the Wadi Rum, it is beautiful, rock formations, sand dunes and sand colors are the ingredients for a great view. We understand now that the movie of Laurence of Arabia was filmed here. After every turn one photo is taken after another, every rock is something else to see. After lunch Rami points out several inscriptions which Nabataeans more than one thousand years ago have encrypted in the stony wall, we ride under and through rock bridges and along a fortress that was used for a French movie.*



*Our camp is made up in a beautiful gorge where we see the sun goes down slowly behind the mountains.*

*The next morning there is the possibility for the early birds to make a sunrise ride. We get up in the dark and get on the horse at six in the morning. Around quarter past six we are at a point where we can see a huge area and within fifteen minutes the sun appears behind the mountains. What an amazing color show. Every minute gives different sunlight on the sand and mountains, which continuously change colors. Via a small detour we return to camp for breakfast.*

*After that we all ride towards Disi, a green village that provides water for irrigation. After the last lunch the wind picks up and the sand flies around and into all of us, we ride one last time. When arriving to Disi the horses are loaded into the trucks for their trip home to their stables in Wadi Musa, Petra. Again we have respect for these horses being loaded into these trucks and are calmly transported, stallions, mares and geldings all together, where as we in The Netherlands use very fancy and expensive equipment for transporting our horses. They just walk up a sand dune and up they go with their heads in the open rooftop wind in their manes and they seem to enjoy it!*

*With big hugs and great thanks we say goodbye to the great team that took such good care of us in the desert, as we continue to Aqaba.*

*Within one hour we are in Aqaba in a nice fancy hotel and where we can see Eilat border at a distance of less than 20 km. Everyone is happy with the chic hotel where after four days without sanitary facilities we finally can take a nice shower in*

*our bathrooms. The evening is spent visiting the many shops in Aqaba and smoking Argileh.*

*For day eight days we modified the program. First we would explore Aqaba in the morning and in the course of day return to Amman, now Jessica has arranged for us that we travel to the Dead Sea. The journey from Aqaba to the Dead Sea takes about three and a half hours. We have lunch in one of the hotels at the Dead Sea and use the beach from this hotel at the Dead Sea experience the unique floating feeling on the salty and soft water. And off course we all try the natural healing mud of the Dead Sea and we all look black, this is perfect for a group picture and they prove to be hilarious. While rinsing the mud which is not easy, we come to the end of the day with a velvety skin clean and the bus towards Amman. In the hotel after dinner, we meet Anna Lagendaal a Dutch veterinarian who works in Amman. We all still talk about the amazing experience we had in Jordan, but all good things come to an end, since we have to get up the next day at 4 am. Jessica accompanies ourselves to the airport for the flight back to the Netherlands, where we say goodbye to a wonderful country with its hospitable people.*

*For the adventurous among us who have a little doubt that such a trip is something for them, I only have one advise, Yallah, Yallah!*

*Pieter and Jessica, thank you very much!*

*The date for the next AVS still has to be set, but Jezra Travel organizes 8 and 10 days tours whole year round, for more information visit their website: [www.jezratravel.com](http://www.jezratravel.com) or contact Pieter via the AVS.*

**questions & bookings / domande e prenotazioni:**  
[www.kalidania.it](http://www.kalidania.it)