

## The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature is an independent national organization devoted to the conservation of Jordan's natural resources. RSCN was established in 1966 with His Majesty the late King Hussein as Honorary President. RSCN has the mission of protecting and managing the natural resources of Jordan, for it is responsible for protecting wildlife and wild places. Thus, it is one of the few national organizations in the Middle East with such a public service mandate.

## Wild Jordan

Wild Jordan is a registered trademark for The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature.

Wild Jordan's revenues contribute to the sustainability of RSCN's protected areas and supports the socio economic development of local communities.

## NATURE INSPIRED ... ETHICALLY DEVELOPED.

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## Azraq's Nature Inspired Crafts

Make sure to visit the six handicraft workshops, all of which are located in Azraq Lodge:

### Azraq Ostrich Egg Design Workshop

Uniquely designed, hand-painted and carved ostrich eggs, beautifully crafted by the women of Azraq, using a special dotting technique on infertile ostrich eggs.

### Azraq Silkscreen Printing Workshop

Silk screen printing is a stencil method of print making in which a design is imposed on a screen of silk, with blank areas coated with an impermeable substance, and ink is forced through the silk onto the printing surface.

### Azraq Tailor Workshop

For the hip, conscious adventurers of today we have just the right combination of products. Whether a camera bag or a water bottle holder, Azraq bags are both handmade and durable, and have our famous RSCN nature icons silk screen printed on them.

### Azraq Educational Toys Workshop

Who said learning can't be fun? We have a wide selection of toys which both adults and children can enjoy while simultaneously learning.

### Azraq Recycling Workshop

We offer a wide range of recycled corporate material for you so that you can show how much you care about the world we live in.

### Azraq Packaging Workshop

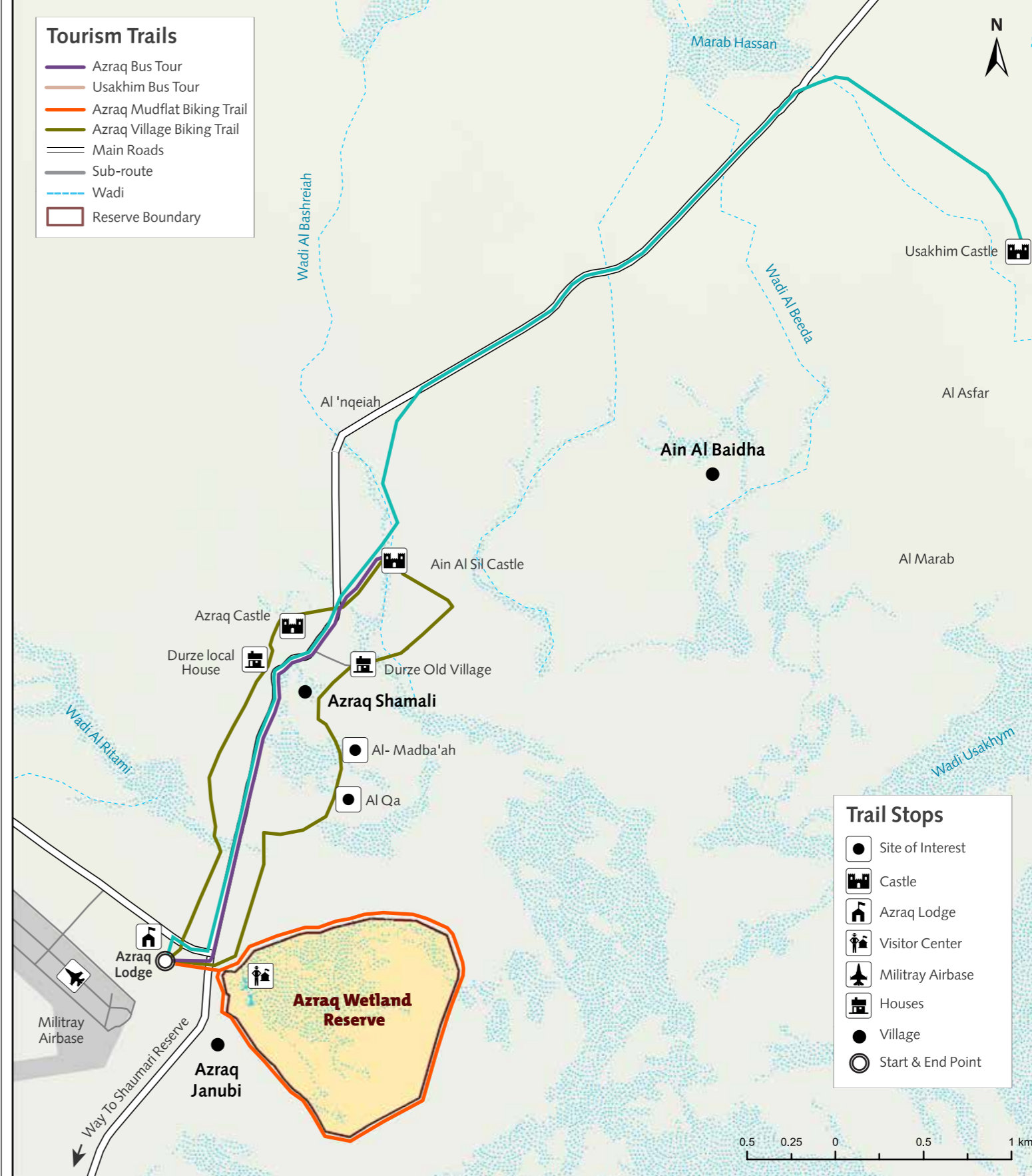
We make our handmade products stand out by using our own hand crafted creative packaging. With no restrictions on shape or size, we will create the best package to fit your gift.

## The Nature Shop

Browse through the Nature Shop and find truly original gifts and souvenirs. This shop displays nature inspired crafts produced by local communities at the reserves.



From Amman, the trip is 119km. Start at 7th Circle. Take the Desert Highway/Airport Road south. 20.8 km from 7th Circle, Take the ramp onto Amman Development Corridor and continue for 14 km. Take the exit toward Al-Azraq Hwy/Route 40/Route 40M. Continue straight onto Route 30/Route 35M/Route 40M (signs for Azraq Castle/Qasr Al Hallabat/Hammam As Sarah/Umm Al Jimal) 75 KM. Turn right onto Al-Badiyah Hwy/Route 30/Route 35M/Route 5 (signs for Sa'udia/Al Umari). Continue and follow the signs for Azraq Wetland Reserve/Azraq Lodge.



# Azraq Wetland Reserve

Oasis in the Desert



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## Staying in Azraq Lodge

## Azraq Wetland Reserve

Azraq has long been an important settlement in Jordan's remote Eastern Desert.

In fact, archaeologists say that it was one of the first sites of human settlement since Paleolithic age. Today, the area is home to the Bedouin, Arab Druze, and Chechens. During the Great Arab Revolt, the nearby Azraq Castle was an important headquarters for T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) and his Arab counterpart, Sharif Hussein bin Ali.

Unfortunately, over the past decades, the wetlands have suffered from an environmental disaster due to overuse of water from the Azraq Basin.

Water levels have steadily dropped, resulting in extreme depletion and erosion of massive areas of invaluable wetland. By 1993, the oasis' ecological value was virtually destroyed.

In 1978, The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) established the Azraq Wetland Reserve to conserve this unique oasis. In 1994, with international support, RSCN began a rescue effort to restore a significant portion of the wetland.

Today, many of Azraq's birds are returning and special boardwalks and bird hides have been constructed to enable visitors to safely observe and enjoy them.



Open year-round, the Azraq Lodge is a short distance from the Azraq Wetland Reserve. Originally a British military field hospital, the building was later transformed into the current lodge.

There are sixteen fully-equipped 1940's style rooms with views of the distant mud and sand flats of the Azraq Basin. Eating at the Lodge is a special experience as the kitchen is run by a local women that prepare tasty home-made recipes.

## Activities

### Marsh Trail

(year-round)

**Self-guided**  
**Grade:** Easy  
**Distance:** 1.5 km  
**Time:** 45 - 60 minutes  
**Working time:** 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



#### Trail Description

This easy walking trail gives you an excellent introduction to the Azraq Wetland Reserve. The boardwalk leads you through dry and wet areas to a viewing platform overlooking at the springs that once released millions of cubic meters of water into the marshland.

After leaving the platform, the trail takes you over an ancient black basalt wall, most likely constructed by an Umayyad Caliph.

The trail then leads to a bird hide made of local Mud and straw, where you can observe the migratory birds and perhaps catch a glimpse of the water buffalo.

Follow the trail back to the Visitor Center, passing yet another part of the ancient basalt wall.

### Azraq Bus Tour

(year-round, except during Ramadan)

**Guided only**  
**Grade:** Easy  
**Distance on foot:** 2 km  
**Distance by bus:** 7 km  
**Time:** 2-3 hours  
**Starting time:** 8:30 a.m.  
**Group size:** 3-7 people



#### Trail Description

This is an easy way to explore the desert castles around the Azraq Reserve. From the Azraq Lodge, our shuttle bus will take you to the nearby Azraq Castle, which was used as a military base by T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) during the Arab Revolt.

Next, travel to the Old Druze village and learn more about the first Druze settlement in the area. From here, the tour continues on foot, hiking two kilometers to Ain es-Sil, a farmhouse built by the Umayyad.

The bus will be waiting to take you to a local Druze home for tea and a light traditional meal before returning to the Lodge.

### Usakhim Bus Tour

(year-round, except during Ramadan)

**Guided only**  
**Grade:** Easy to Moderate  
**Distance by bus:** 40 km  
**Time:** 5-6 hours  
**Starting time:** 8:30 a.m.  
**Group size:** 3-7 people



#### Trail Description

From the Azraq Lodge, our shuttle bus will take you to a desert entrance to begin your hike to Wadi Usaykhim, built during the Roman era from basalt stones to protect Wadi Al-Sarhan. Continue hiking two kilometers to the top of the highest mountain, where the Usakhim fortress stands, marking the easternmost point of the ancient Roman Empire.

After that, the shuttle bus will wait to take you to a local home for tea and a light traditional meal before returning to the Lodge.

### Azraq Mudflat Biking Trail

(year-round, except during Ramadan)

**Guided only**  
**Grade:** Easy to Moderate  
**Distance:** 12 km  
**Time:** 2-3 hours  
**Group size:** 3-20 people



#### Trail Description

This tour takes visitors around Azraq Wetland Reserve, passing by huge Qa'a mudflat in the Eastern Desert.

### Azraq Village Biking Trail

(year-round, except during Ramadan)

**Guided only**  
**Grade:** Moderate to difficult  
**Distance:** 22 km  
**Time:** 4-5 hours  
**Group size:** 3-20 people



#### Trail Description

This tour gives visitors a glimpse into the history and culture of Azraq. Starting at the Azraq Lodge, the trail passes through the Wetlands, the mudflats of al Qa'a and al Madbaa'a, the Old Druze Village, Qasr al-Sha'er, the modern Azraq village, and Azraq Castle before ending at a local's house for tea and a light meal.

### Other Activities



At the Nature Cinema in Azraq Lodge, visitors can watch documentaries and movies about nature and history.

Azraq Lodge offers a unique experience for visitors by giving them a wonderful chance of seeing the Druze dabkeh (dancing) show and to listen to the original Druze music and even to learn how to dance dabkeh themselves.

This activity is available upon request and based on availability.

## Nearby Sites-Attraction Points

### Shaumari Wildlife Reserve

Shaumari Wildlife Reserve is a breeding center for endangered or locally extinct wildlife.

Today, following breeding programs with some of the world's leading wildlife parks and zoos, this small, 22-square-kilometre reserve is a thriving protected environment for some of the most rare species of animals in the Middle East.



### Azraq Castle



This black basalt fort has been in continuous use since Late Roman times. During the Great Arab Revolt, it served as the headquarters for T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) and Sharif Hussein Bin Ali, his Arab counterpart and the current King Abdullah's great, great-grandfather.

### Qasr al Kharrana, Qasr at Tuba, Qasr al Hallabat



(40-75 km) from Azraq. All of these castles have been restored and are in excellent condition. These three desert castles are excellent examples of Islamic architecture during the Umayyad period (661-750 AD).

### Qasr Amra



(24 km) west of Azraq and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. One of the best preserved monuments in Jordan, its interior walls and ceilings are covered with lively frescoes and two of the rooms are decorated with colorful mosaics.

