

From Only \$179/day with AIR*

Holland America Line
SAVOR THE JOURNEY

19 Days + 1 NT Hotel - PANAMA CANAL

Apr 18, 2018 | Ft. Lauderdale to Vancouver

SAVE UP TO \$4,122**

OCEANVIEW FROM

\$3,599 CAD

w/ AIR* | Transfers, up to \$475 Shipboard Credit, Travel Insurance*, Taxes & Fees Incl.



www.cruise-connections.com
1-866-630-WAVE



TRAVEL

NAUTICAL NIRVANA

San Diego Bay has history and action **G8**



HAUNTED HISTORIES

Visiting those dark places **G5**

VANCOUVER SUN SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2017

SECTION G

BEYOND PETRA

Adventure awaits in Jordan, writes *Suzanne Morphet*.

The cool water that was ankle deep half a kilometre back now pushes against the bottom of my life-jacket. The canyon we're hiking up has narrowed, the current has grown stronger and the boulders bigger. Up ahead, the thunder of waterfalls reverberates off the high sandstone walls.

We're deep inside the spectacular slot canyon of Wadi Mujib, one of Jordan's nine protected nature reserves.

Shafts of sunlight reach down to illuminate layers of rock compressed over the millennia. We stop repeatedly to gaze up as the walls converge overhead in a swirl of sensuous shapes and colours.

Adventure tourism is taking off in Jordan spurred in part by the newly completed Jordan Trail, a 650-km hiking route that stretches from the Roman ruins near Um Qais in the country's north to the blue waters of the Red Sea in the south.

"People think once they've seen Petra, they've seen everything," sighs Carmen Scholten, the owner of In2Jordan, a tour operator that offers customized itineraries that can include — but go well beyond — the ancient Nabataean city that is Jordan's greatest attraction.

We begin near Madaba, known as the city of mosaics, for its centuries-old stone art. It's an odd choice perhaps, for an adventure-seeking group, but driving to the top of Mount Nebo orients us to Jordan's Biblical landscape. We see Israel in the hazy distance, beyond the Dead Sea lies shimmering in the heat. We learn that Jesus was baptized on this side of the Jordan River, and that Moses climbed this very mountain after wandering in the desert for 40 years.

Steeped in history, we hit the road. By evening, we're in Wadi Rum, a desert valley in southern Jordan that T.E. Lawrence (the inspiration for Lawrence of Arabia) described as "vast, echoing and God-like."

The UNESCO World Heritage Site is studded with mountains that morph from beige to burnt orange to rosy red. Rock walls bear inscriptions and petroglyphs from 12,000 years of human occupation.

Riding a camel over sand dunes at sunset feels a bit like a modern Middle Eastern tourist cliché, but these dromedaries and their Bedouin owners are for real. When one cantankerous animal lies on its back, kicks his feet in the air and bellows his discontent, it's like watching a toddler throw a tantrum.

"They are comfortable, but you really have to relax into them," advises our English-speaking guide, Gail. With a lurch and a heave, my 'ship of the desert' rises under me, back legs first. When he's fully standing, I realize it's no wonder camels often seem disdainful of people. From this great height, they can only look down on us.

The next day, we explore a tiny patch of Wadi Rum on foot.

At 8 a.m., the heat already feels intense. We stop to rest at a Bedouin camp where a smiling young man in a white ankle-length thob and headdress offers us sweet tea flavoured with cardamom, sage and cinnamon.

Later, we follow a herd of goats deeper into the desert, where the goats graze on shrubs and thorny bushes. When we turn off into a wide-open valley, I feel the wonderful emptiness that Lawrence described so poetically. There's no one else in sight and no sound but the echo of a bark from a doggoat-herding in the distance.

Back on the road, I'm looking forward to cooling off in the intensely blue water of the Red Sea at Aqaba, Jordan's only port city. Wedged between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and within sight of Egypt, Jordan's 25-km stretch of beachfront is known for its spectacular fringing reef.

The coral is as colourful as a flower garden in spring and so close to the surface that in places we can't swim over it, only around it.

Heading north again, we veer off the main highway and follow an old trade route known as the King's Highway. It takes us up steep inclines with big views over the Great Rift Valley. We're en route to Petra, one of the new Seven Wonders of the World.

SEE JORDAN ON **G2**



Travelling on them may seem like a tourist cliché and they can have a difficult temperament, but camels are still the best way to cross the Wadi Rum. *SUZANNE MORPHET*



Family Travel Insurance for Less

Accidents happen. Remember to pack BC's #1 Travel Insurance and get FREE coverage for your kids*. BCAA Members save 10%.

bcaa.com



MEMBERSHIP IS REWARDING

*Dependent children are free on family policy with two paying adults. Adults must be aged 59 or younger. Free offer not applicable to one parent/one child families, who can save by purchasing individual policies rather than a family policy. Policy terms and conditions apply. Insurance is sold through BCAA Insurance Agency. Insurance is administered by North American Air Travel Insurance Agents Ltd., d.b.a. TuGo, a licensed insurance broker in British Columbia, 11th Floor - 6081 No. 3 Road, Richmond, BC Canada V6Y 2B2. Insurance is underwritten by Industrial Alliance Insurance and Financial Services Inc., Industrial Alliance Pacific General Insurance Corporation and certain Lloyd's Underwriters, severally and not jointly.