

Madaba

Madaba (Arabic: مادبا) is the capital city of Madaba Governorate in central Jordan, with a population of about 60,000. It is best known for its Byzantine and Umayyad mosaics, especially a large Byzantine-era mosaic map of the Holy Land. Madaba is located 30 kilometres (19 miles) south-west of the capital Amman.

1 History

Madaba dates from the Middle Bronze Age.

The town of Madaba was once a Moabite border city, mentioned in the Bible in Numbers 21:30 and Joshua 13:9.

During its rule by the Roman and Byzantine empires from the 2nd to the 7th centuries, the city formed part of the Provincia Arabia set up by the Roman Emperor Trajan to replace the Nabataean kingdom of Petra.

The first evidence for a Christian community in the city, with its own bishop, is found in the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, where Constantine, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bostra (the provincial capital) signed on behalf of Gaiano, "Bishop of the Medabeni."

During the rule of the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate, it was part of the southern district of Jund Filastin within the Bilad al-Sham province.



Greek Orthodox Basilica of Saint George, Madaba

The resettlement of the city ruins by 90 Arab Christian families from Kerak, in the south, led by two Italian priests from the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1880, saw the start of archaeological research. This in turn substantially supplemented the scant documentation available.

The Catholic Church's list of titular sees uses the spelling "Medaba", traditional in reference to the ancient bishopric centred on this city, while at the same time referring to the modern city as 'Madaba'.^[2]

In his memoirs, the German Count von Rantzau reports about his friend Sultan Gin-Achmed, Royal Prince of Madaba^[3] both studying at Helmstedt University, Germany in 1729 and meeting again in Paris ten years later.^[4]

In 1955, Madaba became a scene of an unprecedented Anti-Christian riot, which targeted Jordanian Christians.

2 Archaeological finds in Madaba city

The first mosaics were discovered during the building of new houses using bricks from older buildings. The new inhabitants of Madaba, made conscious of the importance of the mosaics by their priests, made sure that they took care of and preserved all the mosaics that came to light.

The northern part of the city turned out to be the area containing the greatest concentration of mosaics. During the Byzantine-Umayyad period, this northern area, crossed by a colonnaded Roman road, saw the building of the Church of the Map, the Hippolytus Mansion, the Church of the Virgin Mary, the Church of Prophet Elijah with its crypt, the Church of the Holy Martyrs (Al-Khadir), the Burnt Palace, the Church of the Sunna' family, and the church of the salaita family.



A 6th-century mosaic map of Jerusalem in the Madaba Map

The Map of Madaba mosaic was discovered in 1896 and the findings were published a year later. This discovery

Southwest of Madaba is Hammamat Ma'in, the thermal mineral springs that for centuries have attracted people to come and immerse themselves in the sites' warm therapeutic waters.

4 Bani Hamida

A weaving project was started by twelve women of the tribe in 1985 and since then Bani Hamida has become famed for producing woven items in traditionally bright colors. Traditional ground looms, assembled using stones and sticks, are used for the weaving, and the products can be found at numerous outlets in Jordan and abroad. Visitors can stop by the weaving rooms, located in the village of Mukawir, to see how rugs are made. The women also make decorative candles.



Shops in Madaba downtown

5 New developments

Madaba has been chosen to house new universities (American University of Madaba) and a new settlement operation not far from the historic city will house over 600 villas. Kuwaiti corporations are now funding the construction of new office buildings to be built in Madaba.

6 Tourist attractions

Madaba's main attraction is its Byzantine mosaics, drawing many visitors, especially since the creation of an archaeological park. They cover the floors of houses and churches dating from the site's earliest period of habitation.

The nearby site of Umm ar-Rasas, south-east of Madaba on the edge of the semi-arid steppe, started as a Roman military camp and grew to become a town from the 5th century. It also has very large and well-preserved mosaics.

At the southern entrance to Madaba, near the King's Highway, is the Church of the Apostles. The ruins of this Byzantine church date to 578 CE, and are currently being restored. It includes a mosaic known as the "Personification of the Sea", depicting a woman emerging from the sea, surrounded by mythical aquatic creatures and a hodgepodge of rams, bulls, parrots and exotic vegetation. The mosaic was signed by a mosaicist named Salamanios.

7 International relations



Madaba Municipal building

Main article: List of twin towns and sister cities in Jordan

7.1 Twin towns - Sister cities

Madaba is twinned with:

-  Bethlehem, Palestinian Authority ^[8]
-  Denton, Texas

8 References

- [1] Archived June 5, 2009, at the Wayback Machine.
- [2] *Annuario Pontificio 2013* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013, ISBN 978-88-209-9070-1), p. 926
- [3] Rantzow, George Louis Albert. *Mémoires du comte de Rantzow*. Oxford University Press. pp. 28–29.
- [4] Rantzow, George Louis Albert. *Mémoires du comte de Rantzow*. Oxford University Press. pp. 279–283.
- [5] Archived May 27, 2008, at the Wayback Machine.
- [6] Dale Gavlak (1 September 2010). "3,000-year-old Iron Age temple unearthed in Jordan". MSNBC. Retrieved 2010-09-04.
- [7] "Periodic Newsletter/ Siyaha - Jordan Tourism Development Project". Siyaha.org. Retrieved 2015-09-27.