

Letter to HRH King Abdullah II of Jordan



Your Highness,

I am on my last day of a 12 day holiday in your country where I have not been before – my education has been lacking. It is good to see the devotion that the people have for the Hashemite monarchy – if only your UK counterparts were so lucky ! Many years ago, I had the honour of meeting your father who was staying in the Chilterns with friends of my family, the Streets. This must have been several years before you were even thought of.

Furthermore, I was friends with a lovely couple, Jamie and Liz Cork in the early eighties in London. One of them, I cannot recall which, was your father's Godchild and as a wedding present he gave them a Mercedes 250SL – how marvellous.

Apologies for the sycophancy but I have been to probably 120 countries around the world and your's ranks very high in my estimation. People have been charming to me, even your traffic police keep saying, " Welcome to Jordan " when I pull up at their checkpoints. Obviously amongst archaeological extravagancies, Petra reigns supreme but some of the lesser known and thus less trampled sites have been superb . Umm Qais (Gadara) was in its way more special than Jerash and the mosaics at Umm ar-Rasas dare one say it finer than those in Madaba – at both places I was virtually the only tourist.

I have made so many new friends and will embarrass them in writing their names, well just a few of them anyway ...

Billal at his souvenir shop at the circled entrance at Petra.

The gap-toothed Bedouin boy with his excellent English, trying to sell me his bracelets on the way back from the Siq.

All the staff at the Petra Moon Hotel.

Waleed, the bell-boy at the Days Inn in Aqaba.

Mohammed, night duty manager there – a fan of this notepaper !

Fares, the perfumier in Aqaba.

And perhaps last but by no means least at his Al-Anoud jewellery shop in Madaba, Anwar Al-Rayyan, Special Forces Commander in the Jordanian Army 1967 and 1973.

+ others too numerous to mention.

I leave on the EasyJet back to Gatwick this evening as you tussle with John Kerry and Mahmoud Abbas in efforts to find an accommodating peace in Palestine where my parents both worked during WW2 occupying a flat in the American Colony in Jerusalem. May power come to your elbow, Sir.

Just a few pedantic little gripes about matters trivial. Signposting is atrocious ! Many times I have followed signs to Aqaba say before they then disappear making it very hard for a non-local to find the right road. Also dismaying and annoying is the defacing of road signs, often to important sites, by fly-posting maniacs who cover entire signs obscuring any chance of seeing whether one needs to go left, right or straight on. Infuriating.

Littering is endemic – no one seems to care for their environment. Boxes, bags, cigarette ends, paper is thrown willy-nilly from cars and pedestrians alike. Such a shame for a beautiful country to look so messy and rubbish-strewn. Any chance of instilling a little civic pride among your citizens ?

Lastly one worries about the tragically high death rate on the

roads – your people drive appallingly, with cavalier selfish attitudes – no indication, no seatbelts (why ?), children roaming about the front and back of vehicles, everyone using their mobile phones while driving, parking skills absent, overtaking & undertaking efforts lamentable ... the list goes on.

However, many thanks again for all your people's hospitality over the past few days. I shall return soon I hope,

Insh'Allah,

Yours sincerely,

Jamie Summers

