



Environmental and Safety Guidelines

## Climbing and Trekking in Wadi Rum Protected Area

- Climbing map.
- Safety and emergency procedures.
- Good practice recommendations.
- Protected zones.
- Contact numbers.
- Rules and regulations.

# WADI RUM

DESERT OF MOUNTAINS

### Local ethics and good practice recommendations

#### History of climbing in Wadi Rum

Modern rock climbing has developed in Wadi Rum since 1984 but some of the traditional Bedouin climbs date back thousands of years. The history and traditions of all climbs in Wadi rum (especially the Bedouin climbs) should always be respected. The development of rock climbing and trekking in Wadi Rum and descriptions of routes are recorded in various guide books. (See details at the end of this leaflet.)

#### Style of climbing

The accepted practice in Wadi Rum is to use leader placed (i.e natural) protection rather than fixed protection such as bolts and pitons. Natural protection is much less intrusive in the landscape and fixed protection should be kept to an absolute minimum to preserve the wilderness experience of this internationally important Protected Area.

#### Re-developing existing climbs

In general there should be no new fixed protection placed on existing rock climbs in Wadi Rum (i.e no retro-bolting) particularly in designated wilderness areas and on Bedouin climbs. Climbs should retain their original character without the addition of extra safety equipment. Anyone considering re-equipping existing climbs should consult the Protected Area Authority together with first-ascentionists and local climbers (including regular overseas visitors and Bedouin) to determine whether this would be acceptable.

#### New climbs

The development of new routes is the life-blood of climbing. To preserve the mountain environment, first ascents should only be done in a ground up style using natural protection with no pre-fixing from above. Vegetation should not be destroyed to create a climb.

#### Fixed protection (bolts, etc)

Every effort should be made not to place fixed protection (i.e drilled placements, bolts, pitons and in-situ threads) in Wadi Rum. In emergency, this should be limited to an absolute minimum and should not intrude on adjacent routes. Furthermore, fixed protection should not be placed within view of the ground as it detracts from the wilderness experience of others, being unsightly and anomalous in the desert landscape. Any fixed gear that has to be placed should ideally be dark colour, not polished metal, and should harmonize with the rocks. Fixed equipment is always necessary for abseil descents (though not all descents require abseils).



### Introduction

The wadi Rum Protected Area was created in 1998. It covers 720 square kilometers of outstanding desert landscape and offers world class opportunities for climbing and trekking. The purpose of these guide lines is to promote good practice among the climbers and trekkers visiting Wadi Rum, in the interests of safety and protection of the natural environment. All visitors engaged in these activities should take careful note of them to ensure that Wadi Rum remains a special place for climbers, trekkers, local people and wildlife.

### Local Bedouin Communities

Several Bedouin tribes live in and around the Protected Area and some of them now earn most of their living from tourism. Climbing, trekking and other adventure sports, in particular, contribute significantly to the local economy and all such enthusiasts visiting Wadi Rum should, wherever possible, use local facilities and services.

### Wildlife in Wadi Rum

The desert and mountains of Wadi Rum are home to many species of flora and fauna, some of which are rare and endangered. Endeavor not to disturb them. It would be useful if sightings of rare animals such as the Nubian ibex and Verroux's eagle were reported to the Protected Area office in the Visitor Centre, as a contribution to ongoing scientific research.

### Safety considerations and emergency procedures

#### Recording your itinerary / destination

It is essential that climbers and trekkers leave details of their itinerary with the protected area office and register their visit. It is also advisable to leave details firmly attached to your tent, in a visible place. The Rum desert and mountains are uniquely complex, the rock is friable and it is very easy to lose the way. Allow plenty of time for your planned routes and ALWAYS check back in at the office on your return.



### Personal responsibility

*Trekking and scrambling through rocky canyons in Wadi Rum can be very hazardous and climbing in Rum is particularly serious and committing. Climbers and trekkers should have sufficient experience to rescue themselves from all but the most complex situations. All climbers and trekkers are responsible for their own safety whilst in Wadi Rum. DO NOT attempt Bedouin routes or other climbs without adequate equipment, experience and good route finding ability. If in doubt, always hire an approved Bedouin climbing guide. Always carry plenty of water.*

#### Hiring of guides

In the interests of safety, climbers and trekkers may directly hire local guides of their choice with specific knowledge of climbing and/or trekking. Should none be available, a guide may then be chosen for this purpose by the visitor from the daily rota of desert safari guides.

#### Rescue services

There is currently no official Rescue Team in the area and the local rescue equipment is inadequate, though action is being planned to remedy this situation. Bedouin climbers are always ready to volunteer their help in the event of an accident and a few have received limited rescue training in the UK. Visiting climbers are encouraged to assist with rescues whenever necessary.

#### Emergency procedures

In the event of serious accident or emergency you should contact the local Bedouin Guides and the Tourist Police at the Visitor Centre who will alert local volunteers, the Police Post, Civil Defense Ambulance Service and if necessary, the Royal Jordanian Helicopter squadron.



In Wadi Rum, well placed bolts are often the best method for this purpose, both environmentally and for safety. Due to the nature of the rock, pitons tend to become loose and have to be replaced, scarring the rock. Due to strong sunlight and repeated use, slings rapidly deteriorate. Bolts placed for abseils should ideally be in couples, in good rock and fitted with chains and an abseil link, or large steel screw carabiner.

#### Use of power drills

The use of power drills is not permitted in the Protected Area as the noise detracts from the wilderness experience and can disturb livestock, wildlife and local people. Special concessions may be granted for the fixing of abseil equipment, at the discretion of the Protected Area Authority.

#### Marking treks, scrambles and climbs

Routes (whether walks or climbs) should not be marked with paint, graffiti, inscriptions or by any other means. Correctly placed existing cairns (small piles of stones) should be left in situ. Old ones should not be enlarged. The original cairns were placed by Bedouin and are still used by them. New cairns should not be built as they lead to confusion.

#### Descending from rock climbs

Due to the friable nature of the sandstone in Wadi Rum, climbers should take extreme care when abseiling from pitons, slings round 'rock threads' and other equipment – whether placed personally or by previous climbers. Descents from some of the most popular climbs are equipped with abseil chains for safety reasons. In the unlikely event that you find bolts and chains to be damaged please report this to a responsible person at the Protected Area Office. Many descents rely on slings and threads and it is the individual responsibility of all climbers to satisfy themselves that any such equipment (and the surrounding rock) is safe before using it. Please remove and replace any old sling and bring them back to the camp for disposal.

### Help us to protect Wadi Rum

Wadi Rum is facing many environmental problems. As one of the most popular tourist sites in the Kingdom, the growing pressure from visitors, and especially from off-road vehicles, has damaged the fragile desert ecology. There is also a problem of littering and the loss of wildlife through over-hunting. A major conservation programme is underway to tackle these problems, including zoning schemes, organized vehicle routes, better tourist information and the creation of a team of conservation rangers to patrol the area.



*We do, however, need the help of all visitors to make our efforts to protect Wadi Rum successful. Please do all you can to respect the site and its people:*



Drive your vehicle only on the designated tracks (or encourage your driver to do so).



Minimize use of fixed climbing gear and chalk and avoid damaging trees and shrubs.



Protect all nature: no hunting or collecting of plants, animal, rocks, artifacts or firewood.



Take your litter away keep the area clean. Burn toilet paper or use water. Bury human waste.



Camp and climb only in the official sites. Use gas stoves or charcoal for fires.



Minimize noise level; refrain from playing loud music.



Respect the lifestyle of local people; wear appropriate dress and ask before taking pictures.

### For more information

See the climbing and trekking guides to the area, which detail all known routes and provide other relevant information:

- Treks & Climbs in Wadi Rum. Tony Howad. Published by Cicerone Press, UK.
- Walks & Scrambles in Wadi Rum. Di Taylor & Tony Howard. Published by Jordan Distribution Agency.
- Jordan – Walks, Treks, Caves, Climbs & Canyons. Di Taylor & Tony Howard. Published by Cicerone Press, UK.

Additional Information on the Wadi Rum Protected Area can be obtained from the Visitor Centre or from the Aqaba Special Economic zone Authority:  
P.O. Box 2565 Aqaba 77110  
Tel: 009623 2090600 Fax: 009623 2032586  
Or visit our website: [www.wadirum.jo](http://www.wadirum.jo)

Information on the other Protected Areas in Jordan can be obtained from the Royal Society for the Conversation of Nature.

Tel: 009626 5337931 / 2 Fax: 009626 53347411  
Email: [tourism@rscn.org.jo](mailto:tourism@rscn.org.jo)  
Ecotourism unit direct line, tel: 009626 5337610

### For Emergency, Please Call:

- Police: 191
- Civil Defense: 199

This leaflet was prepared with assistance from Tony Howard & Di Taylor of n.o.m.a.d.s. (New Opportunities for Mountaineering Adventure & Desert Sports) in consultation with the British Mountaineering Council (BMC). The guidelines conform with the principles set out in the document 'Access and Conservation Strategies for Climbing Areas' produced by the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).



