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Archaeology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

January 5-21, 2027

(17 days | 16 guests)

with archaeologist Barbara A. Porter

"Saudi Arabia was an incredible adventure!

In addition to seeing remarkable archaeological sites and museums, small opportunities to experience nature and animals were offered. AIA connections afforded access to otherwise closed sites. This was an epic trip that was educational and inspirational!"

- Andrea, California

Archaeological Institute of America Tours

Archaeology-focused tours for the curious to the connoisseur

"One of the best experiences of my life.
Each day of the trip had at least one highlight. It was a mind expanding, stereotype shattering trip, filled with incredible people, food and sites. A truly unforgettable experience filled with surprises."

- Burke, California

Archaeological Institute of America Lecturer & Host

Barbara A. Porter is an independent scholar who lives in Washington D.C. She resided in Jordan from 2006 to 2020 when she was the Director of the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR, now called the American Center of Research). In this position, she was integrally involved with the heritage of Jordan and particularly Petra, the ancient capital of the Nabataeans. Barbara's interest in the archaeology of the Middle East started when she lived in Lebanon with her family from 1965 to 1970. She received her A.B. from Bryn Mawr College and her graduate degrees (M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.) from Columbia University. From 1978 to 1983, she was on the curatorial staff of the Egyptian Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and from 1983 to 1986 she was an assistant curator in Ancient Near Eastern art there. In the ten years before she moved to Jordan, Barbara led tours from Algeria to Iran for a number of organizations, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian. In her years as ACOR Director, she was involved in films on Petra and responsible for the publication of several major monographs on the site. Since leaving Jordan in 2020 she has led several tours to Saudi Arabia, including this one for the AIA in 2024 and 2025, and many of her photos are included here.

Join archaeologist Barbara A. Porter and a small group of fellow travelers for this in-depth travel experience in Saudi Arabia. This will be Dr. Porter's sixth tour of the country, and you will also be accompanied by local guides and a tour manager.

This tour opportunity allows us to see, experience, and learn about Saudi Arabia's long history and rich culture, and how both were influenced by its dramatic geography; and to become familiar with some of the archaeological research and sites that are being uncovered and shared with the world. Following historic trade and pilgrimage routes, we will cross vast deserts, see irrigated lands teeming with agriculture, and enjoy scenic views with striking mountains and landscapes along the way.

Highlights:

- **Visit four of the country's seven cultural UNESCO World Heritage Sites**, including the spectacular petroglyphs at Jubbah; the stunning, carved stone, Nabataean tombs at Hegra (Madain Saleh); Al Balad, the historic center of the city of Jeddah; and the Al Turaif District of Diriyah, whose restored citadel and palaces are now an open-air museum
- **Marvel at the 6,000-year-old Rajajil Standing Stones**; the Sakaka Rock Carvings, which were just discovered in 2018; and the necropolis of Mughair Shuwayb at Madyan, which was built into the hillside by the ancient Nabataeans
- Wander the alleys and streets of **Ushaiger Heritage Village**, with Ushaiger itself being one of the oldest settlements in the region and often considered Saudi Arabia's most beautiful village
- Stroll through **Al Ula's Old Town**, whose town walls encircle some 900 mudbrick homes, 400 shops, a restored Friday Mosque, and the 10th-century Musa bin Nusayr Castle
- Experience the holy city of **Medina**, a major Islamic pilgrimage site; and marvel at the capital city of **Riyadh**, which transformed from a mud-walled town to a metropolis of 7+ million people in the span of a century
- Explore bustling markets such as the **Unayzah Market**; **Buraydah's camel market**, perhaps the largest camel market in the world; and **Riyadh's Dira Souq**, where we learn about traditional Saudi clothing

(Cover): Dumat al Jandal Mosque, Sakaka; right (from top) Hegra, Ushaiger ©Barbara A. Porter Photos

ITINERARY

(B)=Breakfast, (L)=Lunch, (D)=Dinner

Tuesday, January 5, 2027: Depart home

Wednesday, January 6: Arrive Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Upon arrival in Riyadh at King Khalid International Airport (RUH), clear Saudi customs and immigration. You will be transferred to our hotel, and have the balance of the day at leisure. *Two nights at the 4-star Rosh Rayhaan by Rotana hotel.*

Thursday, January 7: Riyadh city tour: National Museum, Diriyah, Welcome lunch, Masmak Fortress, Dira Souq
After breakfast at our hotel, gather for an introductory meeting and then set out with our local guide to explore the city. Riyadh, meaning "The Gardens" in Arabic, is Saudi Arabia's capital and primary business hub. Over the past century, the city has transformed from a mud-walled town of 20,000 inhabitants into one of the Middle East's great metropolises, with a population now numbering more than 7.6 million. Much of the traditional architecture once found in Riyadh has been lost to development, but traces still remain, especially around Masmak Fortress and Diriyah, a historic town just outside the city limits that we visit this morning. Our first visit is to the National Museum of Saudi Arabia, featuring eight halls focusing on topics such as pre-Islamic Arabia, the Prophet Muhammad, the Hajj pilgrimage, and the history of the modern Saudi state. Next, explore Diriyah on Riyadh's northwestern outskirts. Its central Al Turaif District, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was the original seat of power of the Al Saud dynasty. The citadel and surrounding palaces, built in the Najdi architectural style characteristic of the central Arabian Peninsula, have undergone an extensive restoration, transforming them into an open-air museum.

After a welcome lunch at a nearby restaurant, we drive to Masmak Fortress, built in 1865 to serve as a military garrison for the army of the House of Rasheed, the main rivals of the Al Sauds. It was captured by King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud in 1902, marking the birth of the Third Saudi Kingdom, which continues to rule today. We will stop at a local souq or two, where we will be introduced to traditional Saudi clothing, including how the pieces are made and the occasions for which each piece is suitable. At some point today, we will catch a glimpse of the exterior of the 99-story Kingdom Centre, Riyadh's most iconic skyscraper. Dinner this evening will be at a local restaurant. (B,L,D)

Friday, January 8: Ushaiger | Unayzah Market | Buraydah
This morning we set out on a scenic drive to Buraydah, stopping along the way in Ushaiger. Located about 2.5 hours west of Riyadh, Ushaiger is one of the oldest settlements in a desert region dotted with oases, and it is frequently cited as Saudi Arabia's most beautiful village. The slow-paced, small-town way of life here has remained much the same for centuries, making Ushaiger a window into the past—and a striking contrast to Riyadh. Preserved and protected away from the more modern side of town, the Ushaiger Heritage Village is the star attraction here. Wander the alleys and streets of the well-preserved village, marveling at the traditional architecture.

After lunch at a local restaurant we continue on to Unayzah, an agricultural area that produces wheat and barley of various strains, as well as grapes, grapefruits, lemons, leeks, mandarins, oranges, pomegranates, and dates. Experience firsthand its friendly, welcoming population as you wander the alleys of the Unayzah Market, featuring handicrafts, handspun wool textiles, spices, tea, and sweets. We continue on to Buraydah, which was historically an oasis town famous for its fruit. Today, agriculture is still important to the city, with wheat and citrus both major crops. Buraydah is also a center of trade for two quintessential Arabian commodities: dates and camels. Check-in to our hotel and then gather for dinner. *Overnight at the 4-star Radisson Blu Hotel Buraydah.* (B,L,D)

Saturday, January 9: Buraydah: Camel market | Fayd | Hail
Enjoy an early morning visit to Buraydah's camel market, perhaps the largest on Earth, featuring thousands of camels as well as goats and sheep. Stroll through, admiring the animals, marketgoers, and traditions. Next we head northwest across the desert to

Diriyah

Masmak Fortress, Riyadh

Ushaiger

Buraydah camel market

Elephant Rock (Jebel al Fil)

Hail, stopping along the way at Fayd. A major archaeological site located at the halfway point between Baghdad and Mecca, Fayd was for over 500 years perhaps the most important oasis on the major pilgrimage route in the Muslim world. It has a massive citadel, cisterns where pilgrims replenished their water supplies, a mosque, and many houses and shops. The Fayd visitors' center provides background on the site and area.

Also on our drive we will see the Shammar Mountains, comprising two imposing ranges in the deserts between Buraydah and Hail, which make for a spectacular sight due to their extreme ruggedness and the contrast they provide to the flat deserts around them. Arrive in Hail, an agricultural city with a population of approximately 600,000. The wheat produced on surrounding irrigated lands is important to the kingdom and a significant source of revenue for the city. In times past, Hail was a major rest stop and trading center for pilgrims on the way to Mecca. Check-in to our hotel, and then gather for dinner. *Overnight at the 5-star Millennium Hail Hotel.* (B,L,D)

Sunday, January 10: Jubbah | Sakaka

This morning we drive overland to Sakaka, stopping along the way in Jubbah to view its spectacular prehistoric petroglyphs, which are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Large sandstone outcroppings are covered with carved images depicting more than 4,000 human and animal figures, dating as far back as 6000 B.C. They are astonishing both for their skillful execution—including the use of perspective—and for the scenes they portray. One notable phenomenon they reveal is the range of wildlife that flourished in the wetter climate of the time. The area was the site of a lake that attracted lion, ibex, gazelle, camel, wolf, and auroch (wild ancestor of domesticated cattle) of ancient times. After lunch, we drive through Al Nufud Al Kabir, also known as Al Nefud, one of the Arabian Peninsula's most picturesque deserts. Its great crescents of red sand occupy a giant oval depression 180 miles long and 140 miles wide. Arrive in Sakaka, just north of Al Nefud and just south of the Iraqi and Jordanian borders. Olives and dates are grown around the town, but the main highlights here are the archaeological sites surrounding it, many of which we will visit over the next two days. Check-in to our hotel, and then gather for dinner. *Two nights at the 3-star Al Nusl hotel.* (B,L,D)

Monday, January 11: Sakaka's environs: Rajajil Standing Stones, Sakaka Rock Carvings, Majidia Horse Farm | Sakaka

Spend the day exploring the archaeological sites around Sakaka, beginning with the Rajajil Standing Stones, where 6,000 years ago a group of people inhabiting the Arabian Peninsula erected a series of approximately 50 heavy stone columns. The groups of stones are arranged in a roughly circular pattern and, while their original purpose and appearance have been lost to time, it is likely they were used in religious ceremonies of some sort. After lunch at a local restaurant we continue on to the Sakaka Rock Carvings, ancient carvings in sandstone rocks that were discovered in 2018 by researchers. Our last visit of the day is to the Majidia Horse Farm to learn more about Saudi equestrianism and the role of horses in local culture. Though famous for its camels, Saudi Arabia also has a long history of horsemanship and horses are a hugely important animal here. Return to our hotel in Sakaka and gather for dinner. (B,L,D)

"Dr. Barbara Porter was superb.
An essential part of this tour, as she is so passionate about her work and this area in particular. She was the main reason I signed up and I am delighted that I did."
- Nadia, Jordan

Jubbah petroglyphs

Musa bin Nusayr Castle, Al Ula

"It was a revelation to see the many interesting sites at Sakaka.
I had no idea the Camel Site, the 'castle' and the standing stones existed. The trip to the horse farm was a nice bonus."

- Teresa, Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, January 12: Sakaka's environs: Za'abal Castle, Dumat al Jandal | Tabuk
Explore more of the history around Sakaka before we head overland to Tabuk. Za'abal Castle is scenically perched atop a rocky hill just outside of Sakaka. Most of the castle dates to around 400 years ago, but the site has been used since at least Nabataean times, millennia ago. Date palms and old neighborhoods ring the castle. Dumat al Jandal is a series of ruins surrounding an oasis in the desert not far from Sakaka. There is evidence of settlements here stretching back as far as 1000 B.C. A few of the main sights here include the 7th-century Umar Mosque, the imposing Marid Castle, and the historical neighborhood known as the Al Dar'i Quarter. The latter is a relatively well-preserved example of an Arabian town's residential areas in the 15th century. After lunch at a local restaurant we continue on to the city of Tabuk, not far from the Jordanian border in the far northwest of Saudi Arabia. Its northerly location gives the city some of Saudi Arabia's coolest winters, and it occasionally even snows in the nearby mountains. The city played an important role in the early Islamic era, and later on it served as an important stop on the Ottoman Hejaz Railway. Check-in to our hotel, and then gather for dinner. *Three nights at the 4-star Swiss in Tabuk hotel.* (B,L,D)

Wednesday, January 13: Tabuk: Tabuk Station of Hejaz Railway, Tabuk Castle
This morning we explore Tabuk. Our first visit is to Tabuk Station, which brings to life the adventurous spirit of the Hejaz Railway, which linked Damascus with Medina, transforming arduous pilgrimages that once took 45 days into manageable journeys of just a few days. This small museum is a tribute to the ingenuity that bridged vast deserts and united distant cities. The 16th-century Tabuk Castle is also one of the main highlights of the city. It has been preserved and is now a museum open to the public. Nearby are some local souks that are worth exploring and provide an opportunity for women to purchase garments appropriate for the upcoming visit to Medina. After lunch at a local restaurant, we return to our hotel to enjoy an afternoon lecture. (B,L,D)

Thursday, January 14: Hisma | Madyan & Mughair Shuwayb | Tabuk
Today we head toward the Neom region, which is being developed into a very modern city, stopping off at Hisma to admire its beautiful, monumental landscapes that are composed of sandstone and granite massifs. The area has been inhabited by humans for millennia, a fact attested to by the many prehistoric and early Islamic-period petroglyphs that can be found on the rock walls. We will enjoy a picnic lunch during our travels today. Continue along the western shore of Tabuk Province to Madyan, an ancient region with a main city of the same name where, according to the Quran and the Bible, Moses lived in exile for 10 years. Madyan is also noteworthy for at one point being occupied by the ancient Nabataeans, who built a necropolis, known as Mughair Shuwayb, into a hillside. It is a marvel, with sophisticated architectural elements set in a novel location in the town called al Bad'a within the Neom region project. Return to our hotel in Tabuk and gather later for dinner. (B,L,D)

Friday, January 15: Tayma | Al Ula
Set out this morning toward Al Ula, the jewel of Saudi Arabia, stopping at Tayma (pending re-opening) along the way. The ancient oasis city of Tayma is located on the edge of Al Nufud Al Kabir Desert. Once an important stop on the trade route from the western Arabian coast to the Nile Valley, Tayma has been inhabited since the Bronze Age and has produced significant archaeological finds, including Egyptian hieroglyphs and pre-Islamic palaces. New visitors' centers

Well, Tayma

Za'abal Castle, Sakaka

Maraya cultural center, Al Ula

Dar al Medina Museum, Medina

"After taking some generic trips I loved having experts leading the trip and group members that were knowledgeable and interested.

I had high expectations and they were surpassed."

- Douglas, Wisconsin

provide information and the chance to learn about the site's past. After lunch we continue on to the town of Al Ula, with a present-day population of some 5,500, which has been inhabited for the last 7,000 years as evidenced by carvings found in and around the area. In 2017 the Royal Commission for Al Ula (RCU) was established by the Saudi government with the goals of investigating, preserving, and developing the many archaeological sites in the area. In the years since, the infrastructure in Al Ula has developed rapidly, allowing travelers to more easily see sites that were until recently practically inaccessible. *Please note that for sites that are under the control of the RCU (e.g., Tayma, Dadan, Jebel Ikmah, Al Ula Old Town, Hegra), visiting time slots are shared and limited, so our AIA group might be in larger touring vehicles with other, non-AIA travelers for site visits. This is because territory access is restricted to RCU-operated vehicles.* Check-in to our hotel in Al Ula and then gather for dinner. *Three nights at the 4-star Shaden Resort.* (B,L,D)

Saturday, January 16: Maraya | Dadan | Jebel Ikmah Inscriptions | Al Ula Old Town | Elephant Rock | Al Ula

Spend a full day exploring the area around Al Ula. Start with one of the best photo opportunities of the trip as we visit the Maraya cultural center, which is used as a concert hall but its spectacular mirrored, exterior walls, which celebrate the surrounding desertscape, make it truly compelling. "Maraya" holds a special significance: in Arabic, it means "mirror" or "reflection" - a fitting name for what may be the largest mirror-clad building in the world. We continue on to the ancient city of Dadan, built nearly 3,000 years ago. Its most notable features are the Lion Tombs, hewn from rock high above the desert floor, a remarkable feat even with modern equipment. Carved lions give the tombs their modern names. We visit the nearby gorge at Jebel Ikmah, whose steep walls have been used by locals for thousands of years to write inscriptions in various languages, including Dadanitic, Aramaic, and Thamudic. Some are carved from the stone and others are etched as petroglyphs. The inscriptions have not all been translated, but it is clear that some are as simple as names, akin to ancient graffiti, while others are notes left for travelers and even prayers.

We will also explore Al Ula's Old Town, which thrived as a stop on the pilgrimage route from Damascus to Mecca from the 12th century well into the 20th. Remnants of some 900 mudbrick homes and 400 shops stand within the town's walls, along with a restored Friday mosque where it is believed the Prophet Muhammad once prayed. Towering above it all is Musa bin Nusayr Castle, Al Ula's oldest surviving building, dating from the 10th century. Our final stop of the day will be to view Elephant Rock (Jebel al Fil, in Arabic), an immense, naturally formed, elephant-shaped rock in the desert near Al Ula. Dinner is at our hotel this evening. (B,L,D)

Sunday, January 17: Hegra | Harrat Al Uwayrid | Al Ula

Spend another day taking in the sites around Al Ula. From the 2nd century B.C. until Roman conquest in A.D. 106, Hegra (also known as Madain Saleh) was the southernmost city of the Nabataean Kingdom and a thriving center of trade. Like Jordan's famous Nabataean capital of Petra to the north, it was and remains a site of stunning, carved-stone tombs. The more than 100 rock-cut tombs here are fewer in number than what was found in Petra, but by and large they are in better condition and, unlike at Petra, many have inscriptions, providing rare clues about Nabataean people. Hegra was the first location in Saudi Arabia to be designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but it has only recently become readily accessible to international travelers. Visit a local farm and enjoy lunch. For the final stop of the day, we head up to volcanic Harrat Al Uwayrid, the region's highest point, which provides a spectacular view of the Al Ula and Dedan oases and the surrounding landscape. The black rocks at the top and the views out over the oases are at their most spectacular as the sun is setting. Return to our hotel and gather this evening for dinner. (B,L,D)

Monday, January 18: Medina: Dar al Medina Museum, Mount Uhud

Set out this morning on a drive to Medina that will take about four hours. The holy city of Medina is a major Islamic pilgrimage site, visited alongside Mecca

on the hajj pilgrimage that all Muslims aspire to make. The heart of the city is open only to Muslims, but the power of the place is tangible everywhere. Female visitors are encouraged to dress appropriately and be well covered. Pilgrims flock to the city, filling scores of high-rise hotels that dominate the downtown skyline. Enjoy lunch at a restaurant overlooking Masjid Al Nabawi (Prophet's Mosque), which is accessible to visitors from the exterior only and from a distance. Only Muslims may enter the mosque, but it can be viewed from vantage points across the city. The Mosque houses the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad and can hold as many as a million occupants. Its ten towering minarets are conspicuous throughout Medina—particularly at night, when the mosque is aglow in light. Visit the Dar al Medina Museum, which documents the archaeology, culture, and heritage of the city that stretches back thousands of years. Stop at Mount Uhud, on the outskirts of the city, which provides an overview of the region and was the site of the Battle of Uhud, a critical event in Islamic history. This evening enjoy an independent dinner. *Overnight at the 3-star Mysk Al Balad hotel.* (B,L)

Tuesday, January 19: High-Speed Rail to Jeddah | Jeddah: Walking tour of Al Balad, Gabel Street Souq
Transfer to the railway station this morning for a two-hour trip to Jeddah via Saudi Arabia's high-speed train. Upon arrival in Jeddah, we transfer to our hotel and enjoy a lunch of traditional Saudi favorites before visiting the Jeddah Balad. This historic center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and at its core is the newly renovated Beit Nassif (pending re-opening), a museum and cultural center about the Kingdom's history. Walk past hidden galleries and classic bazaars, appreciating how much of the architecture preserves the old Hejazi (western Saudi Arabian) style, striking a contrast with the glitzier areas of the new town. Explore the Gabel Street Souq, a traditional market in the bustling heart of the old town. Vendors sell all sorts of local and regional produce, including spices, dates, handicrafts, honey, gold, and more, and then return to our hotel. Delight in a dinner of local cuisine with a Saudi family in their home. *Two nights at the 5-star Millennium Al Masar Hotel.* (B,L,D)

Wednesday, January 20: Jeddah: Corniche, Tayebat Museum, Central Fish Market, Farewell lunch, PM at leisure OR Optional visit to the House of Islamic Arts
Spend our final day in Saudi Arabia exploring Jeddah, the Middle East's second-largest and second busiest trading seaport. We begin the day with a drive to the Corniche, a long stretch of coast developed as a recreational area, with walkways, parks, swimming bays, playgrounds, sculpture parks, and cafés, where we will take a short stroll. We will stop in at the Tayebat Museum, which stands proudly in central Jeddah as a testament to traditional Hejazi architecture and culture and features an open-air courtyard surrounded by historic buildings. After the museum, we visit the bustling Central Fish Market that has been a fixture here for centuries. Enjoy a farewell lunch at a local restaurant, after which you may either choose to return to the hotel to get organized for your departure, or join an optional excursion to the new House of Islamic Arts housed in a mall complex in northwest Jeddah, which includes an excellent selection of Islamic pieces in one exhibit, while other exhibits focus on the hajj routes and milestones, Mecca and Medina through the ages, and Islamic science. Enjoy an independent dinner. (B,L)

Thursday, January 21: Fly home
You will be transferred to Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED) for your flights homeward. (B)

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL | Member

AIA Tours is a proud member of Sustainable Travel International, a globally recognized organization dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism practices. This partnership highlights our commitment to responsible travel. Join us in our efforts by using our easy carbon footprint calculator to estimate your travel emissions and purchase carbon offsets. Go to www.archaeological.org/tour/sustainable-travel/.

© Barbara A. Porter

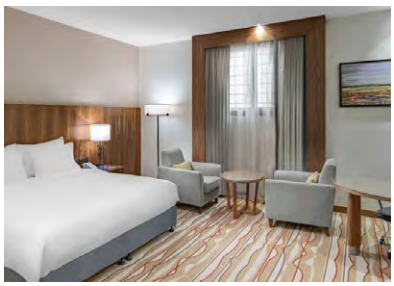
Old Town handicrafts, Al Ula

THE AIA & AIA TOURS

The Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) is the oldest and largest archaeological organization in North America. The AIA seeks to educate people of all ages about the significance of archaeological discovery. For more than a century the AIA has been dedicated to the encouragement and support of archaeological research and publication, and to the protection of the world's archaeological resources and cultural heritage. By traveling on an AIA Tour you directly support the AIA while personally gaining the benefit of the AIA's network of scholars and worldwide contacts.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Riyadh: *Two nights at the 4-star* *Rosh Rayhaan by Rotana*



Buraydah: *One night at the 4-star* *Radisson Blu Hotel Buraydah*

Hail: *One night at the 5-star* *Millennium Hail Hotel*

Sakaka: *Two nights at the 3-star* *Al Nusl Hotel*

Tabuk: *Three nights at the 4-star* *Swiss in Tabuk*

Al Ula: *Three nights at the 4-star* *Shaden Resort*

Medina: *One night at the 3-star* *Mysk Al Balad* *hotel*

Jeddah: *Two nights at the 5-star* *Millennium Al Masar Hotel*

WHAT TO EXPECT

ACTIVE: Must be able to walk three or more miles per day on mostly uneven terrain, and up and down inclines and steps.

This program is strenuous, and you must be in good physical health to participate due to the daily walking involved, steps at many of the sites, length of some bus rides, and overall infrastructure shortcomings. All participants are expected to be physically active and not be an impediment to others on excursions. Participants who are not able to walk or stand unassisted for extended periods are kindly advised not to join this tour. All participants will be required to follow safety/sanitization protocols set forth by Sponsors/Operator, local staff, and host country laws. Any participant showing signs of illness will be asked to wear a mask when in close proximity to others. If the tour manager decides that a participant cannot visit a site safely or in a timely manner, their judgment will be final. Where possible, an alternate activity may be suggested; additional costs may apply. If you have any questions about your ability to participate, we suggest that you visit your personal physician with this brochure in hand, and discuss whether or not the program is appropriate for you.

Flexibility, a sense of humor, a hearty spirit, enjoyment of group travel, and a willingness to accept cultural differences are essential components to the full appreciation of this trip. Local standards of amenities and customer service may not be equal to Western standards, and an extra supply of understanding will come in handy. Accommodations are chosen for their comfort and locations, but in some locations options are very limited. The majority of hotel development pre-dates Saudi Arabia's tourism opening in 2019, and hotels may be located next to very busy roads, making exploration on foot of the neighborhood's limited offerings challenging. Uber and taxis are available. Itinerary changes should be expected, as we explore rarely visited corners of this huge country, and sites may be closed by the Saudi authorities without notice. Your tour manager will keep you updated regarding any changes, in advance whenever possible, and will handle modifications with aplomb and grace, so we ask that all participants receive them in the same manner. During excursions, the availability of Western-style toilets is unreliable in Saudi Arabia. Many public toilets at museums, restaurants, etc. are squat toilets and handrails, in general, may be inadequate. Please be aware that possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is illegal in Saudi Arabia for residents and tourists alike. Modest attire is required on tour, and further information about this will be provided to participants in pre-trip documents.

In January, the weather is pleasant and we are likely to see a wide range of temperatures during our travels. Average daytime temperatures will range from the mid-50s F to the low 80s F depending on our location. Most evening temperatures will be in the 50s F, however in some areas they may dip to the low 40s F. There is a slight possibility of rain, albeit unlikely at the time of our visit, and a chance of snow and/or lower temperatures around Tabuk. *Complete pre-departure details will be sent to participants.*

Fayd
© Barbara A. Porter

Rajajil Standing Stones
© Barbara A. Porter

Jeddah
© Barbara A. Porter

Tour Prices per person (15 nights)

	Early Booking Savings of $500 per person until August 1, 2026	After August 1, 2026 call for availability
Double Occupancy (12-16 participants)	$13,945	$14,445
Double Occupancy (10-11 participants)	$14,545	$15,045
Single Supplement *(limited availability)*	$2,645	

A single room supplement will be charged when requested or required.
With fewer than 10 participants, a small group surcharge may be added.

Prices Include:

- **AIA lecturer/host Barbara A. Porter**, plus a professional tour manager and local guides
- **Fifteen nights' accommodations** in 4- and 5-star hotels and best-available 3-star hotels as indicated in the itinerary
- **Breakfast daily, 14 lunches, and 12 dinners**, as noted in the itinerary (with water, tea, and coffee), including welcome and farewell lunches
- **Individual and/or group airport transfers** on program arrival and departure dates
- **Transportation** by private motorcoach, 4x4 vehicles, and high-speed train as per itinerary, with bottled water
- **All sightseeing and entrance fees** as per itinerary
- **Gratuities** to drivers, local guides, waiters for included meals, and tour manager
- **Baggage handling** at hotels and airports where available
- Complete **pre-departure materials** including a suggested reading/media guide, luggage tags, and name badge

Flights & Transfers

Airfare from/to home is not included in the tour price. Airport transfers on arrival in Riyadh at King Khalid International Airport (RUH) and for departure from Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED) are included. Please contact MIR Corp. at 206-696-7052 or by email at dmitry@mircorp.com for assistance with making your flight arrangements. If you choose to arrange your flights independently, please check with AIA Tours before booking non-refundable airline tickets. Your flight itinerary must be provided to our office prior to departure. *We do not accept liability for cancellation penalties related to domestic or international airline tickets.*

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Prices Do Not Include: Airfare from/to home; all airport fees and departure taxes; passport and visa fees; cost of personal, trip cancellation, and baggage insurance; mandatory health insurance; emergency evacuation costs; transportation of excess baggage; meals or beverages other than indicated; personal tips; all items of a personal nature such as medical expenses, laundry, taxi, room service, telephone/fax/Wi-Fi charges; optional excursions or deviations from scheduled tour; other items not expressly listed as included.

Payments: A deposit of $1,000 per person is required to reserve your space on the tour and is payable by Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or check made payable to "Eos AIA-SaudiArabia1/27." Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure (October 7, 2026) and must be by check, ACH transfer, or wire transfer only; credit cards are not accepted for final payment. By submitting your deposit, you are bound by the terms and conditions delineated throughout this brochure or elsewhere published.

Participant Cancellation Fees: All requests by participants for cancellations must be received in writing by AIA Tours. The following cancellation terms will apply based on when the cancellation is received:

- On or before July 9, 2026: Deposit is refunded less a cancellation fee of $500 per person
- July 10 - October 6, 2026: Forfeit the full deposit of $1,000 per person
- October 7-21, 2026: Cancellation fee equal to 50% of the tour cost
- On or after October 22, 2026: No refund

For this and other reasons, participants are strongly encouraged to purchase trip cancellation insurance. Information will be provided with confirmation of receipt of your deposit.

Note: Prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect at the time of publication and are subject to change prior to departure. Substantial changes in tariffs, exchange rates, and the price of fuel, services, and labor may increase the cost of arrangements significantly, and we reserve the right to alter our prices.

Prices, itinerary, accommodations, and leader are subject to change. Prices quoted are based on group participation and no refunds will be made for any part of the program in which you choose not to participate nor to participants who do not complete the tour for whatever reason.

Due to space limitations, this is abbreviated information. Complete terms and conditions will be sent upon confirmation or upon request, and can be viewed online at www.aiatours.org.

For questions, and to reserve your space, please contact AIA Tours at:
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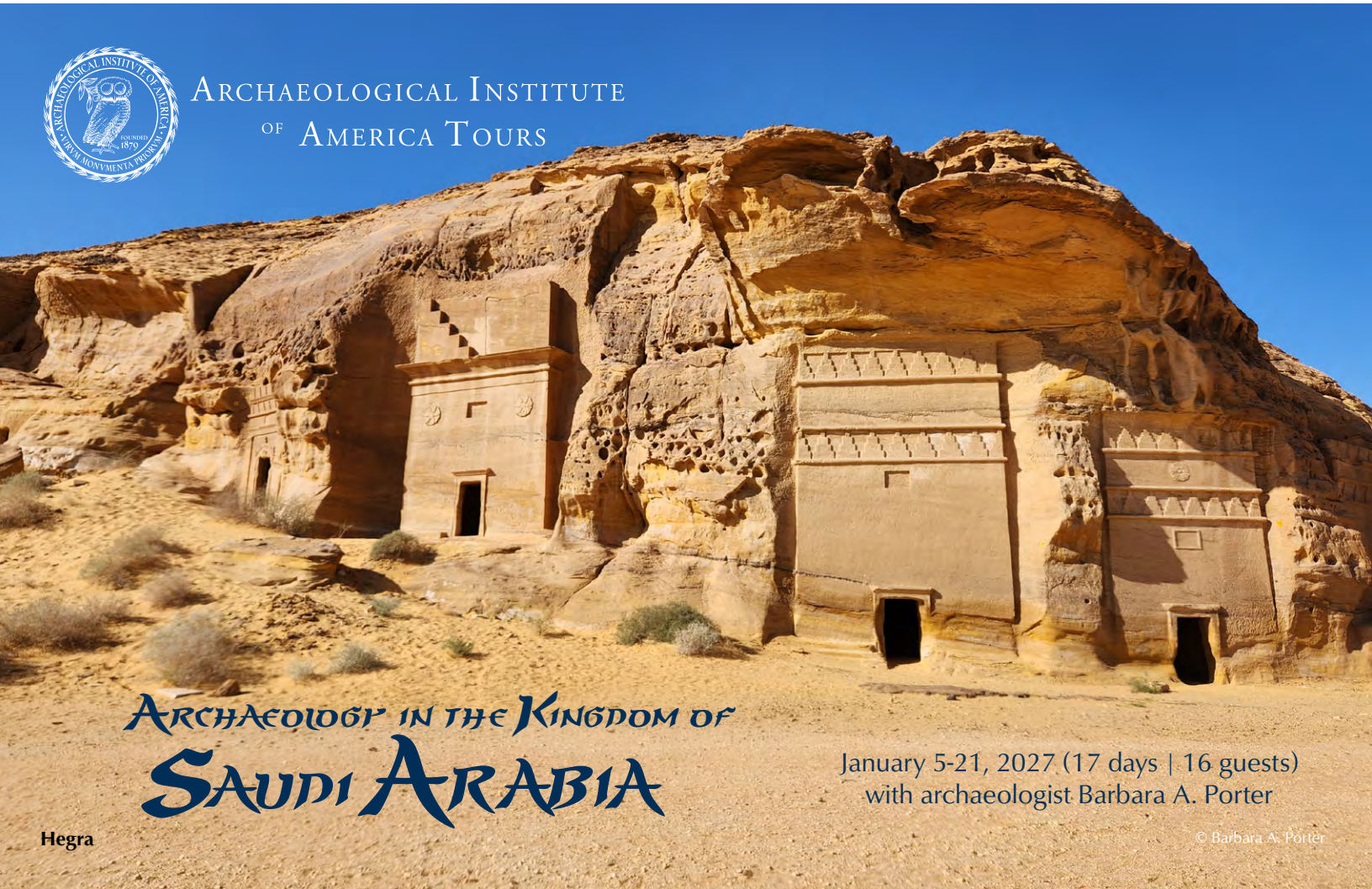

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To fill out an online reservation form, click here. Or, print and mail or fax this form to the address below.

RESERVATION FORM

Archaeological Institute of America Tours

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE KINGDOM OF

SAUDI ARABIA

January 5-21, 2027 (17 days | 16 guests)
with archaeologist Barbara A. Porter

To hold your reservation for seven days while this form and your deposit are in the mail, please contact us at 800-748-6262 or aia@studytours.org.

Name 1 _____
(as it appears on passport)

Name 2 _____
(as it appears on passport)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (home) _____ Phone (cell) _____

Email(s) _____ | _____

❑ **I/We have read the 'What to Expect' section and am/are physically able to participate fully on the program.**

Are you traveling with any other parties on this program? Yes, _____

How did you hear about this tour? ❑ eNewsletter ❑ mailing ❑ website ❑ friends/family ❑ other _____

ACCOMMODATIONS:

(Accommodation preferences are not guaranteed.)

❑ Double (one bed) ❑ Twin (two beds) ❑ Single

❑ I will be sharing with: _____

❑ Share - please assign a roommate (not guaranteed)

❑ Please share my contact information with potential roommate(s).

RESERVATIONS & PAYMENT:

A deposit of $1,000 per person is required to confirm a reservation. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure.
Please note that credit cards are not accepted for final payment. All prices and payments are in U.S. dollars.

DEPOSIT TYPE (please check one):

❑ Check payable to: Eos AIA-SaudiArabia1/27 ❑ Visa ❑ Master Card ❑ American Express ❑ Already paid by phone

CC# _____

Exp. Date _____ 3- or 4-Digit Code _____

Name on Card _____

Please complete this reservation form, choose/enclose your method of deposit, and sign the release statement below.
Submit via email, mail, or fax to:

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Fax: 603-756-2922 • Email: aia@studytours.org

By signing this form, you are acknowledging that you have read and agree to all Terms & Conditions delineated throughout.

Signature (participant #1) _____ Date _____

Signature (participant #2) _____ Date _____

TERMS AND CONDITIONS, RELEASE OF LIABILITY, ASSUMPTION OF RISK, AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION AGREEMENT

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LUGGAGE: Luggage allowance policies are set by the airlines and may change without prior notice. PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY: All programs require physical independence and mobility. Any physical or mental condition that may require special medical attention or physical assistance must be reported in writing when you make your reservation. Participants must be able to embark or disembark transportation vehicles, stand for extended periods, climb stairs, and step over raised thresholds all without assistance. All participants will be required to follow safety/sanitization protocols set forth by Sponsors/Operator, local staff, and host country laws, and any participant who refuses to follow protocols may be asked to leave the program with no refunds provided. REFUNDS: Prices quoted are based on group participation. No refunds will be made for any part of the program in which a participant chooses not to participate. Refunds cannot be made to participants who do not complete the tour for any reason, nor to participants whose entry into any country or aboard any transportation vehicle, including airplanes and cruise ships, is delayed or denied. TOUR CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS: Sponsors/Operator reserve the right to cancel this tour prior to departure, in which case payment will be refunded without further obligation on our part unless trip cancellation, itinerary changes, and/or delays are mandated by causes beyond our control, in which case the participant shall have the option of accepting in lieu of the original tour such rescheduled tour or other substituted tour(s) as may be offered by Sponsors/Operator, or else receiving a refund of as much of such advance tour expenditures as Sponsors/Operator are able to recover on the participant's behalf from carriers, third-party tour vendors, etc. Sponsors/Operator, however, shall not have any obligation or liability to the participant beyond the foregoing. TRIP INSURANCE: Sponsors/Operator strongly recommend that participants purchase trip cancellation insurance. In the event that you must cancel your participation, trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement. Trip cancellation insurance is available through Sponsors/Operator and others and covers certain expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident and damaged or lost luggage. Sponsors/Operator will send participants an application upon receipt of their reservation. PRICES: Prices quoted are based on fares in effect at the time of publication and are subject to changes at any time. On all programs, even after full payment, Sponsors/Operator reserve the right to increase the tour price in the event of cost increases due to changes in supplier costs, tax increases, currency fluctuations, or fuel and energy surcharges, and all such increases are to be paid to Sponsors/Operator upon notice to the participant. FORUM AND METHODOLOGY FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION: Any dispute or claim which refers or relates to this contract, any literature related to the trip, or the trip itself shall be litigated solely and exclusively in and for courts in Keene, New Hampshire, subject to substantive and procedural New Hampshire law, and for this limited purpose, the parties agree to exclusive venue and personal jurisdiction therein. At the participant's option, however, in lieu of litigation, Sponsors/Operator will agree to binding arbitration in Keene, New Hampshire, subject to substantive, but not procedural, New Hampshire law, pursuant to the then existing commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. In any such arbitration, the arbitrator, and not any federal, state, or local court or agency, shall have exclusive authority to resolve any dispute relating to the interpretation, applicability, enforceability, conscionability, or formation of this contract, including but not limited to any claim that all or any part of this contract is void or voidable. U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT & CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL: Both the Centers for Disease Control and U.S. State Department publish and update important country-specific information for travelers. We strongly recommend that you review them. They can presently be found at: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices and https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html. ASSUMPTION OF RISK: Participants agree to fully accept all known and unknown risks, including the potential risk of exposure to respiratory illnesses or other illnesses, viruses, diseases, or conditions. Participants understand and agree to hold Sponsors/Operator, their officers, vendors and suppliers harmless and not liable for any real or perceived symptoms of any disease, virus, illness, or condition, nor for exacerbating any existing symptoms of any illness, virus, disease or condition, quarantine requirements, disability, and other short-term and long-term health effects, including death. MISCELLANEOUS: Participants should not purchase airline tickets prior to receiving their final payment invoice so as to avoid airline cancellation penalties if a tour is canceled or otherwise modified subsequent to the participant's purchase of those tickets. Baggage and personal effects are at all times the sole responsibility of the participant. If weather, flight schedules, or other uncontrollable factors, such as those related to customs and immigration, require you to spend (an) additional night(s), you will be responsible for your own hotel, transfer, and meal costs. Sponsors/Operator reserve the right to decline to accept or retain any participant at any time. The right is reserved to decline to accept as a participant, or remove from a trip, without refund, any person it judges to be incapable of meeting the rigors and requirements of participating in the activities, or who is abusive to other trip participants, leaders, or third parties, or who is determined to detract from the enjoyment of the trip by others. Specific room assignments are within the sole discretion of the hotel. APPEARING IN PHOTOS: Photos from AIA Tours' trips may be posted on photo-sharing web sites or on social networking sites. Your likeness may appear in some photos or videos, posted either by other travelers or tour lecturers/guides, and the circulation of the materials could be worldwide. Trip photos may also be selected to appear in future AIA Tours promotions; no compensation is available for appearing in a trip photo used for promotional purposes. ACCEPTANCE OF CONTRACT: By forwarding of deposit, the participant certifies that he/she agrees with these terms and conditions, and accepts the terms contained in these Terms and Conditions, Release of Liability, Assumption of Risk and Dispute Resolution Agreement. The participant affirms that he/she has not received or relied upon any oral representation of Sponsors/Operator as a basis for executing this Release.