

# Jordan's Wadi Rum

## Echoes Of The Arab Revolt

By Ian Stalker

Wendy Botham's firm has been sending clients through Jordan's Wadi Rum region on four-wheel-drive expeditions for well over a 1,001 Arabian nights, enabling them to see a somewhat lunar-like landscape that Jordan's most famous desert dweller labelled "vast, echoing and God-like."



Botham, a transplanted American who lives near Jordan's famed archeological site of Petra, runs Petra Moon Tourism Services, which includes among its offerings explorations of Wadi Rum, which T. E. Lawrence – better known as Lawrence of Arabia – used as a base while leading the Arab Revolt.

Petra Moon Tourism Services gives its Wadi Rum-bound clients a clear choice – travelling in a comfortable four-wheel-drive Nissan Patrol or, for those seeking a more traditional experience that may be long on time but shorter on comfort, a camel, a form of travel that the storied Desert Patrol used to keep an eye on the area of sand and mountains that top 1,500 metres with unusually shaped rock formations.

Most clients opt for riding in the vehicles on guided tours, with tourism authorities cautioning against heading out alone, as getting lost in the desert could become a "dramatically serious matter" in an environment where temperatures can be

scorching during summer and below freezing in winter.

Travellers won't find paved roads inside the region but there are tracks created by tourism firms offering tours and Bedouins who live on the land of their ancestors. "Once you get past the village of Wadi Rum, it's all sand," says Botham, with an off-road experience immediately available in a part of the world that has seen few roads but was crisscrossed by camel-borne traders for thousands of years.

A non-four-wheel-drive vehicle could "sink up to its hubcaps" in the sandy terrain, Botham warns. "Most of the time, you go where the wind blows," says local tour guide Ibrahim Abdel-Haq.

Wadi Rum's most famous landmark is the mountain Lawrence named The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, and visitors can also spot ancient rock inscriptions and art.

Those touring the region can camp there,

overnighting under a starry sky. "There are no artificial lights, no noise, nothing to get between you and the stars," Botham says. "It's breath-taking."

"All you see is stars, zillions of shooting stars coming from all directions," says Abdel-Haq, adding that Izuzu Troopers, Toyota Land Cruisers, Nissan Patrols and Land Rovers are among the vehicles used by companies showcasing Wadi Rum.

And, Botham points out, such modern, rugged, reliable vehicles enable visitors to quickly view large expanses of storied desert scenery in a much more comfortable fashion than the likes of Lawrence, ancient traders and others who relied on camels ever experienced. "We find many people who ask for camel treks end up walking back at the end of the day," she laughs.

Further information is available at [www.petramoon.com](http://www.petramoon.com) or [info@petramoon.com](mailto:info@petramoon.com). ■