

Jordan (Hashemite Kingdom of) (al-Mamlakah al-Urdunniyah al-Hashemiyah)

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Location and area

Jordan is a kingdom in the Middle East, bordered on the north by Syria, on the east by Iraq and Saudi Arabia, on the south by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf of Aqaba, and on the west by Israel and the West Bank. The area of Jordan is 89,556 km².

Topography

Jordan consist of an arid plateau that thrusts abruptly upward from the eastern shores of the River Jordan and the Dead Sea, reaching a height of about 600 to 900 m, then sloping gently downward towards the Syrian Desert in the extreme east of the country. The Jordan Valley is in the deep depression of the Rift Valley, which is about 210 m (700 ft) below sea level in the area of Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee) and 395 m (1,296 ft) below sea level at the Dead Sea, the world's lowest point. Deep gorges and mountainous outcroppings with elevations of approximately 1,500 m and above characterize the Arabian Plateau in the southern portion of the country.

Climate

The climate of Jordan is predominantly Mediterranean, marked by sharp seasonal variations in both temperature and precipitation. Temperatures below freezing are not unknown in January, the coldest month, but the average winter temperature is above 7° C. The areas below sea level are warm in winter and very hot in summer. In the Jordan Valley summer temperatures may reach 49° C in August, the hottest month, compared with the average summer temperature in Amman of 26°. Precipitation is confined largely to the winter season and ranges from about 660 mm in the northwestern corner to less than 125 mm in the extreme east.

Water

The water resources situation is precarious. All water bodies are looked upon as a source of exploitation for urban, agricultural and industrial uses, and many are affected by increasing salinity, pollution and eutrophication due to intensive agricultural practices (Spiers 1999).

Land use

Only about 3 % of the land is arable, and only a small percentage of the cultivated area is irrigated (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

Peat thickness: 4-8m; darunter bis 15 m Mudde (Katz 1971)

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) no histosols exist in Jordan and 68 km² of gley soils.