Beidha: the 9,000-year-old village 3 km north of Petra

Three kilometres north of the Petra gate is one of the earliest villages with permanent stone architecture in the Levant — older than the pyramids by four thousand years.

Anas Hu · May 5, 2026

Three kilometres north of the Petra Visitor Centre, on a low ridge above the road to Little Petra, lies what is probably the most-walked-past archaeological site in Jordan: a Pre-Pottery Neolithic B village dating to roughly 7,200 BCE. It is older than Stonehenge by four thousand years, older than the pyramids by four and a half. There is no ticket booth, no gate, no signage to speak of. You walk up a path past Bedouin goats and find yourself standing among foundations that someone laid down nine thousand years ago.

Beidha is one of the easiest, most underrated extras of a Petra trip — and one of the few sites in the country where you can be completely alone with deep antiquity.

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1Why visit Beidha

Beidha is a Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB) village, dated by radiocarbon to 7,200 to 6,500 BCE, with evidence of an earlier Natufian settlement in the 11th millennium BCE.[1] It is among the earliest villages anywhere with permanent stone masonry — the technological leap from seasonal hunter-gatherer camps to settled life.

It was excavated by Diana Kirkbride starting in 1957, with Brian Byrd continuing the work; excavations ran through 1983. The site is included in

Petra's UNESCO World Heritage inscription (1985), and a 2010 protection project added some interpretive boards.[1]

2What you actually see

The site is small and accessible on a 30–45 minute walk:

- **Round-house foundations.** The earliest phase. Subterranean floors with stone walls rising perhaps a metre. You can stand inside what was once a single-family unit roughly 3–4 metres across.
- **Rectangular structures.** The later phase. Above-ground walls, multi-room layouts, evidence of specialised workshops.
- **The defensive perimeter wall.** One of the earliest examples in the Levant — masonry built to keep something out.
- **Charred grain remains (in situ).** Some of the earliest evidence of cereal cultivation in the region; Beidha's inhabitants were among the first farmers.



Stone foundations at Beidha. Photo by Bashar Tabbah via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0).

3The round-to-rectangular transition

The single most important thing Beidha documents is an architectural transition that happens around the world wherever Neolithic communities settle: from round houses with subterranean floors to rectangular, overground buildings and specialized workshops. The transition occurred at Beidha following a destruction event around 6,650 BCE.[1]

Why this matters: the rectangular plan permits subdivision into rooms, multi-storey building, and shared walls between adjacent units. It is the floor-plan that becomes the village, then the town, then the city. You are looking at the moment the human household becomes spatially complex.

> Round houses become rectangles. The rectangle becomes the village. The village becomes the city.

4Getting there

Beidha is 3 kilometres north of Petra, immediately past the Little Petra parking area. From Wadi Musa town:

- **Combine with Little Petra.** Easiest approach. Take a taxi or rental to Little Petra, walk through the canyon, then continue 300 m on the footpath to Beidha. Allow 90 minutes total for both.
- **Direct.** Free parking at the small lot above Beidha; the path to the site is unsigned but obvious — head uphill from the lot.
- **Back-trail from Petra.** Hikers can include Beidha as a stop on the Al-Beidha back-route from main Petra (3–4 hours). Hire a PDTRA-licensed guide for that route.

> **For solo travellers**
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> Beidha is the quietest archaeological site in the Petra region. Bring a paperback and a flask of mint tea. There are no facilities; plan to spend 30–45 minutes and head back down to Little Petra for water and shade.

5Practical tips

- **Free entry.** No ticket, no gate. The site has public access per UNESCO/PDTRA guidelines.
- **How long.** 30–45 minutes for a thorough walk.
- **Footwear.** Trail shoes — the path is uneven and the foundations are step-overs.
- **Water.** Bring 1 litre per person. No facilities on-site.
- **Combine with.** Little Petra (300 m walk away) for a 90-minute combined visit.
- **Photography.** Best light: late afternoon. Drone use within the UNESCO Petra property requires a PDTRA permit.

References

1. Wikipedia — Beidha (archaeological site)

Verified by locals: TBD — this article will be reviewed by a Department of Antiquities or ACOR-affiliated archaeologist before final publication. Drafted from Wikipedia.