The RSCN guided conservation tour at Dana: how Jordan saved its biggest reserve

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature runs guided ecology tours through the Dana Biosphere Reserve — the four climate zones, the conservation history, the species that came back. Best for travellers who want depth on the why behind the reserve.

Anas Hu · May 5, 2026

Most travellers visit Dana Biosphere Reserve for the Dana village stone houses and the campground stargazing. Both are excellent. But there's a third experience the RSCN runs that almost nobody knows about — a guided conservation tour with one of the reserve's working biologists. Two to three hours of walking the reserve's transition zones with someone who can tell you which plants are endemic, which animals were reintroduced, which trails were closed for hyrax breeding seasons. It's the answer to "what is this reserve actually doing?" — and it changes how you see the country's RSCN-managed lands.

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1Why take the conservation tour

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) is the non-governmental authority that operates Jordan's protected areas. Dana is one of the largest. The conservation tour is the RSCN's way of explaining its work to visitors: not just the natural beauty, but the deliberate management — fire-prevention, water-management, species reintroduction, education programmes

for local Bedouin communities, the tradeoffs with grazing rights. For travellers genuinely interested in conservation work in the Middle East, this is the cleanest insight.

2What the tour covers

- **The four climate zones.** Mediterranean rim, Irano-Turanian middle, Saharo-Arabian lower, Sudanian valley. The guide stops at transitions and shows you the plant species that mark each.
- **Reintroduced species.** Nubian ibex, Caracal cat, Egyptian vulture — all reintroduced or recovering. The guide knows where they're typically seen.
- **The Bedouin grazing-rights story.** Local Bedouin communities have customary grazing rights inside the reserve; the RSCN works to balance grazing with biodiversity. This is the political dimension.
- **The Dana cypress forest.** A relict ecosystem; the only natural cypress forest in southern Jordan.
- **The fire-prevention and water-management infrastructure.** Mostly invisible but explained on-site.

> The RSCN isn't a beautification project. It's an active land-management programme negotiating with five different stakeholders.

3How to book

- **Book at the Dana Guesthouse.** 24–48 hours in advance.
- **Group size.** 2–10 people. Smaller groups get more depth.
- **Cost.** Modest fee in JD per person; usually included if you stay at the RSCN Guesthouse.
- **Duration.** 2–3 hours; can be extended to 4 hours by request.
- **Best time.** Spring (March–May) for wildflowers; autumn (September–November) for migrating birds.

> **For solo travellers**
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> The conservation tour fills well with solo travellers. Most attendees are interested in similar topics; conversation is easy.

4Practical tips

- **Bring binoculars.** The bird life is rich; a 7×42 or 8×42 pair improves the tour significantly.
- **Notebook.** The biologist will share Latin names and unusual facts; write them down.
- **Trail shoes.** The transition trails are uneven.
- **Combine with.** Stay at the RSCN Dana Guesthouse and do the tour on day 1, then the longer reserve hikes on day 2.

References

1. Wikipedia — Dana, Jordan

Verified by locals: TBD — this article will be reviewed by an RSCN-affiliated biologist before final publication. Drafted from RSCN published descriptions and the Wikipedia article on Dana.