# As-Salt: the Ottoman-era city UNESCO inscribed for being decent to its neighbours

Inscribed in 2021 as Al-Salt, The Place of Tolerance and Urban Hospitality — yellow limestone houses with arched windows and frescoed ceilings, a 19th-century merchant city that worked because Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived on the same street.

Anas Hu · May 5, 2026

In the 19th century, As-Salt was the largest town in Trans-Jordan — bigger than Amman, which was a village across the next ridge. Caravans from Damascus and Jerusalem stopped here. Christian, Muslim, and Jewish merchants lived on the same street, in stone houses built from the same honey-coloured limestone. Then Trans-Jordan was declared in the 1920s and Amman became the capital — and As-Salt's downtown stopped growing. Which is why the Ottoman-era streetscape survives almost intact, and why UNESCO inscribed the city in 2021.

It is a 90-minute drive west of Amman, and the most compact heritage walk in the country.

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## 1Why visit As-Salt

As-Salt sits at about 790–1,100 metres above sea level in west-central Jordan, on the old highway between Amman and Jerusalem. The city is famous for its distinctive Ottoman-era buildings constructed from local honey-colored stone,

featuring domed roofs, interior courtyards and characteristic tall, arched windows.[1]

## 2The 2021 UNESCO inscription

UNESCO added As-Salt to the World Heritage List in 2021 under the name "Al-Salt – The Place of Tolerance and Urban Hospitality." The inscription is unusual in Jordan in two respects: it's relatively recent (2021, vs. Petra in 1985, Wadi Rum in 2011), and it's not primarily about archaeology. The inscription text emphasises the social and architectural fabric — the way the Ottoman-era city's mixed Christian-Muslim community lived together. The houses, schools, and churches survive precisely because the city's economic decline preserved its 19th-century footprint.

## 3What to see

- **The honey-stone old town.** Walk the steep streets of central Salt — many are pedestrian-only. The arched windows and exterior staircases are distinctive.
- **Abu Jaber House (Salt Historical Museum).** The flagship merchant house — see the next section.
- **The 19th-century Ottoman schools.** Several survive, some still functioning. The Salt Folklore Museum is in one of them.
- **The 13th-century Ayyubid fortress ruins.** Above the city — partial ruins, mostly walls.
- **Roman tombs.** Outside the city in the surrounding hills.
- **Hammam Street.** The Ottoman-era market street with the renovated bathhouse and the small souk.

## 4Abu Jaber House

Built between 1892 and 1906, the Abu Jaber Mansion features frescoed ceilings, painted by Italian artists, and is regarded as the finest example of a 19th-century merchant house in the region.[1] It is now the Salt Historical Museum. Allow 60 minutes for a full visit including the rooftop view.

> UNESCO inscribed As-Salt for being decent to its neighbours — Christians, Muslims, and Jews on the same street.

## 5Getting there

As-Salt is on the old highway between Amman and Jerusalem, about 30 km west of central Amman — roughly 45 minutes by car. Options:

- **Self-drive.** 45 minutes from Amman. Park outside the old town and walk in.
- **Day trip from Amman.** Easy half-day. Combine with the King Hussein Bridge / Allenby Bridge crossing if you're heading to the West Bank.
- **Public bus.** From Amman's Mahatta or Raghadan stations.

> **For solo travellers**
>
> The old town is walkable in 2–3 hours including the Abu Jaber House. Sit in the Hammam Street courtyards for a Turkish coffee.

## 6Practical tips

- **Tickets.** Abu Jaber House charges a modest fee in JD; the rest of the old town is free to walk.
- **How long.** Half a day for a thorough walk + the museum.
- **Footwear.** Trail shoes or sturdy trainers — the streets are steep and the old paving stones are slippery in rain.
- **Combine with.** Amman (45 minutes east), the Dead Sea (45 minutes south), or the Jordan Valley.
- **Photography.** Most public spaces welcome cameras; ask before photographing inside private homes.

## References


1. Wikipedia — As-Salt


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