

Route to Madain Saleh




By:
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Madain Saleh (Al-Hijr)



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Madain Saleh

Madain Saleh (Al-Hijr) had occupied a strategic location in the ancient world on the Incense Trade Road. Connecting south and east of the Arabian Peninsula to the Levant, Egypt and Iraq where the old road is divided at Al-Hijr into two sections; first, heading north towards "Petra" (Capital of the Nabataean), Geza, Sinai and then to all parts of Egypt. The second section heads eastward towards Tayma, to Adumatu and then to Iraq.



FOREWORD

Madain Saleh has a breath taking natural environment. It consists of vast plain surrounded by beautiful mountains. The plains of the valley with its yellow sand mixed with the red mountains turns into a beautiful painting. When the sun shines into the mountain and the sand of the valley blew with the breeze of fresh air and the color of the clear sky gives a feeling of living in a unique place on earth. It also consist of a valley with natural plants and desert large trees growing as well as different types of wildlife and pristine environment. Madain Saleh is such a beautiful place to visit.

These words are not enough to express how beautiful this special place is. The tombs facades carved in huge rocks shows ingenuity of the Nabataean sculptors. They choose several rocks scattered in the valley to carve the tombs, chiselled with care with the art of sculpture and design. These tombs were distributed into groups, each group containing a number of tombs. The tomb of Al-Fareed is unique among these groups because it is a single rock standing appears from the distance between sand dunes.

The sculptors used to begin their works in tombs façade from top to bottom where it shows in some



incomplete tombs as shown in Qasr Al-Bint (Girl's Palace). At that time, the sculptors may use iron chisels as well as woods digging into a hole inside rock and then irrigated with water in order to expand a crack. Traces of chisels carved inside and outside the tombs are clearly visible. The Nabataean inscriptions have plenty of names of their gods (deities), some god names are Dushara, Allatt, Shia Alqam and Al-Uzza.

The diversity of sculpture and the beauty of decorations in tomb facades refer to the owner and their financial status. It appears clearly in the variation of sculpture in tomb's top pediment where the graves are decorated with statues such as eagles, owls, snakes, vases and human faces.

The inscription of the tombs was written in Armenian indicating information of the tomb's owners, king's name, sculptor's name, owner's will and testaments and the name of the god deities they worships.

Inside, the tombs are simple, entrance is through a sculptured door leads to the burial room where there are traces of locks indicating that it had wooden doors to close and open when needed. There are variations of the graves into the burial room, some are dug into the wall and some sunk on the floor. There are multiple large and small size graves that all covered with stone panels presenting traces of shelves in the walls and of material substance like gypsum to seal the tomb.

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HISTORY

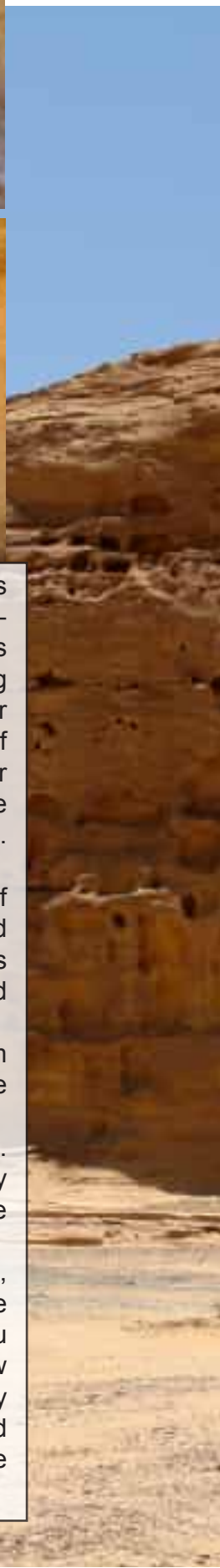

Madain Saleh (Al-Hijr) dates back to the Nabataeans Civilization considered as one of the very important archaeological site in Saudi Arabia that is called "The Capital of the Monuments" as it contains a huge amount of diverse and multifaceted monuments. Inscriptions engraved on rocks, facades of graves and mountains to the existence of civilizations that had prevailed and fallen in the area where architecture and sculpture flourished. Every grave facet represents a cemetery for one family. The levels of these graves vary depending on the level of social and financial status of its owners. Because of the proper climate and natural conditions in adaptation to the availability of fresh water in the area, people settled there. The Kingdom of Nabataeans with its capital "Petra" in Jordan expanded to dominate Madain Saleh, which reach during that period, the peak of civilization. They innovated in carving stones, drilling wells in the rocks, digging rainwater tanks and carving places of worship in the rocks. Studies shows that Madain Saleh governed by the Nabataeans, then by the Romanians who dominated the north Arabian Peninsula in 106 AD and changed the trade route between the south and north of Arabian Peninsula which made Madain Saleh lose its strategic importance in terms of trade and taxation transit convoys collected from them with water and it became a mere station for pilgrims, providing built castles on the Road including Madain Saleh Castle in Al-Hijr, which is still there. Then, the Ottoman State extended the Hejaz Railway to transport pilgrims from Levant, Turkey and Palestine to Makkah and built a main station in Madain Saleh including houses, workshops for the maintenance of locomotives, offices and dormitories for staff and water tank. After that, Al-Hijr ruled by Al-Sharaf for a short period. Then, together with Al-Ula were subject to the Saudi regime in 1925 under the rule of King Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud. The name "Madain Saleh" is somewhat new and has nothing to do with the Prophet Saleh, the name "Madain Saleh" was given to Al-Hijr area almost 1400 years ago. Ibn Nasser Addin Mohammed Ibn Abdullah quoted Abu Qassim Mohammed Saleh Alborzali that Madain Saleh that located near Al-Ula on the Shami Pilgrimage Road is an Islamic town and Saleh to which it attributed is one of Beni Abbas Ibn Abdul Motalib. So many people later thought that the name belonged to the Prophet Saleh, who was sent to the people of Thamud. Sheikh Hammad Aljasser had an article published in Arab Magazine under the title of "Al-Hijr is not Madain Saleh". In addition, some old maps determine the location of the city of Saleh to other of Al-Ula, near Moghira or Al-Mabiat Village with reference to the location of Al-Ula and Al-Hijr on the same map.





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THAMUD



The Thamud were an early Arabian people. Their name is mentioned in Assyrian annals (Thamud) in a Greek temple inscription from the northwest of Hejaz in 169 AD in a mid-century Byzantine source and in Old North Arabian graffiti around Tayma as well as (arguably) an Eblaite tablet; from these sources, it seems that Thamud were a tribe living somewhere between Makkah and Tayma. They mentioned in the Qur'an as rejecting their Prophet Saleh and destroyed by God as a result. After the destruction of Ad, the tribe of Thamud succeeded them in power and glory. They also fell to idol worshipping. As their material wealth increased, so as their evil ways while their virtue decreased. Like the people of Ad, they erected huge buildings on the plains and hewed beautiful homes out of the hills. Tyranny and oppression became prevalent as evil men ruled the land.

One of the oldest historical source that indicated to Thamud are the historical records of the King of Babylon, Sergio Alakdi II who lived in 715 BC, which indicate that he defeated people of Thamud in one of his military campaigns on the north Arabian Peninsula. Greeks mentioned them the people of Thamud as mentioned by Aristotle and Ptolemy. The period elapsed after the destruction of Thamud estimated 2,800 – 3,000 years.

Although Thamud tribe emerged in Yemen in south Arabian Peninsula, a great part of them fled to the north Arabian Peninsula where they settled in Al-Hijr and Al-Ula until Petra to the south of Jordan.

Some researchers indicate the existence of the effects of Thamud in south Arabian Peninsula. There is still a province in Yemen, Hadramawt that still called "Thamud" bordering the Empty Quarter desert, which indicates that there is a strong relationship between the people Thamud and the people of Ad.

In addition to the writings and inscriptions discovered in the south of Arabian Peninsula, which indicates that Thamud had existed there. Qur'an linked between them and the people of Ad where God the Almighty, says in Surat Al-Araf: "And remember when He made you successors after Ad and settled you in the land-- you make mansions on its plains and hew out houses in the mountains-- remember therefore God's benefits and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief." Successors here mean that there were in the same place and the expression "settled you in the land" indicates that God enabled and spread them in the

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vast land. As mentioned in Surat Al-Fajr: “Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with Ad, the people of Aram, possessors of lofty buildings. Like of which were not created in other cities. And (with) Thamud who hewed out the rocks in the valley.”

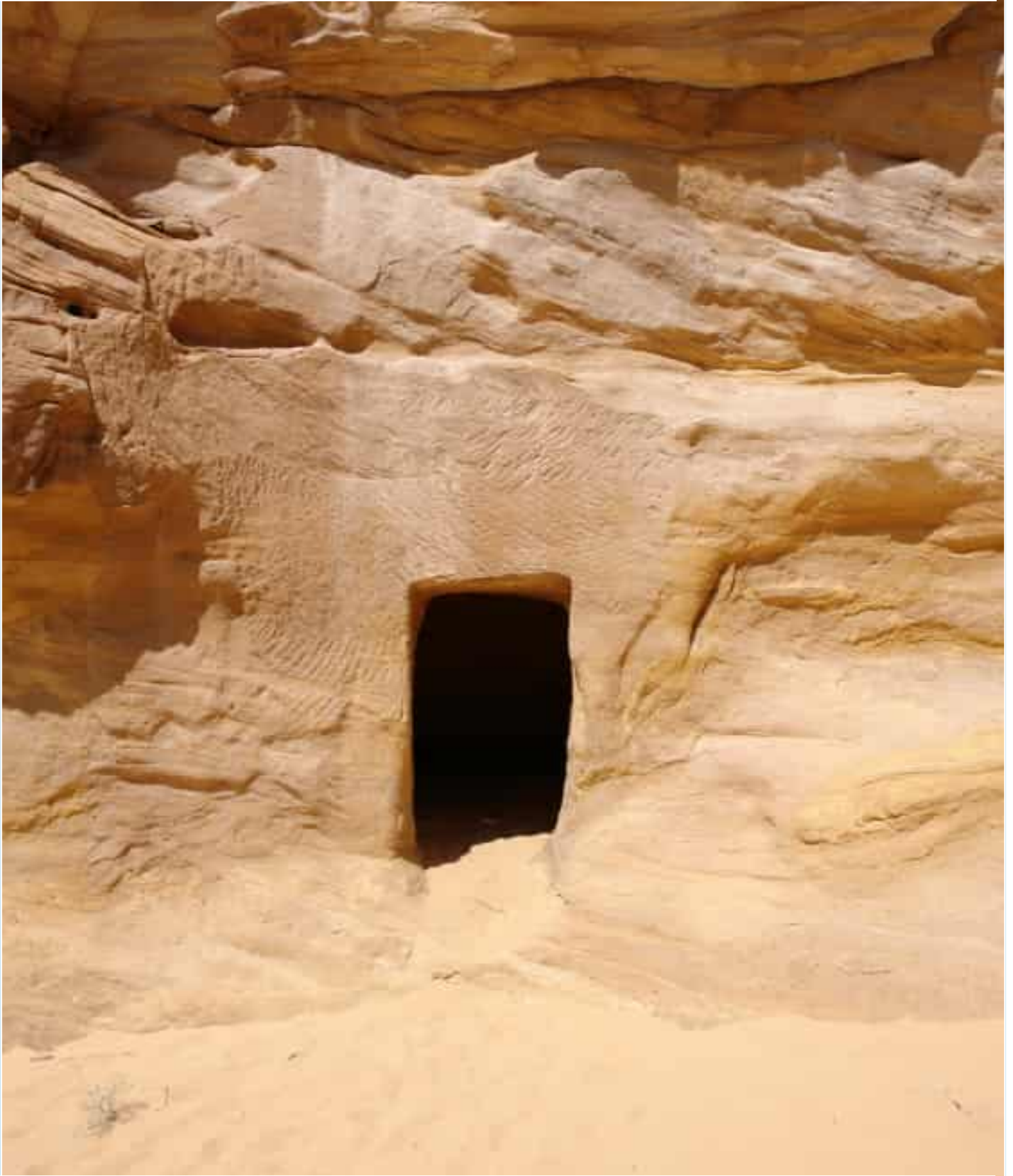
Always in the Qur’an, the mentioning of the people of Noah, Ad and Thamud, is repeated sequentially and successively, which indicates that there is a close link between these nations and they may be serialized i.e. each nation inherited the other or perhaps there was an overlap between their times.

Ad was an ancient Arabian nation mentioned in the Qur’an as being the place where the Prophet Hud was sent to by God to guide its people back to the righteous path of believing in God. The citizens did not heed his warnings and God destroyed the town in a great storm. An Arab tribe preceded Thamud. It has a Surat in the Qur’an called “Hud”.

History books say that Ad, Thamud, Tasam and Goddis are one of the oldest Arab races and they are known as perished Arabs. After the destruction of the people of the Prophet Noah, ‘Ad, the people of Hud emerged and its influence expanded to large areas outside the Arab lands. After their destruction in the Arabian Peninsula, Thamud settled to the North Arabian Peninsula while Goddis settled to the east of the Arabian Peninsula and known today as Najd and Al-Yamamah or modern name Riyadh.

For more information on the expansion of Thamud and to Ad people, refer to different historical books published for the Perished Arabs, Interpretations of the Holy Qur’an and explanations of Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad that included history about Thamud. Thamud story mentioned the Holy Qur’an 26 times and many of these verses linked between Noah, Ad and Thamud in sequence. Surat Hud Verses 6668- shows how Thamud, the people of Saleh ended where God the Almighty says: “So when Our decree came to pass, We delivered Saleh and those who believed with him by mercy from Us and We saved them from the disgrace of that day; surely your Lord is the Strong, the Mighty. And the rumbling overtook those who were unjust, so they became motionless bodies in their abodes, as though they had never dwelt in them; now surely did Thamud disbelieve in their Lord; now surely, away with Thamud”.

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STORY OF PROPHET SALEH



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Prophet Saleh (Peace be Upon Him) is a Messenger of God. God sent Him to Al-Hijr people "Thamud" who were related to and successors of Ad in south Arabian Peninsula. The people of Hijr (Thamud) fell in worshipping idols and disbelieved in God who created and granted them livelihoods. They boasted of their strength as if they are the most powerful who created earth. God sent them so God sent unto them His Prophet Saleh, a man from among them. He called his people to worship God alone and not to associate partners with Him. While some of them believed him, the majority of them disbelieved and harmed him by both words and deeds. They asked Him to give them a sign to believe that he was sent by God. Therefore, He took a vow from them on this and then prayed to God the Almighty to grant their request. God ordered the distant rock to split asunder bringing forth a great ten month pregnant she camel. When their eyes set on it, they were amazed. They saw a great thing, a wonderful sight, a dazzling power and clear evidence (the story will be presented in separate section) and ordered them not to harm or kill her, but those who called him a liar killed the she camel. God directed His messenger to go out with those who believed him (they were very few) from Al-Hijr because He would torture them all. Therefore, God sent them lightning from the sky and all of them destructed except for Saleh and those who believed him. Al-Araf Surat Verses 7679- says, "So they slew the she-camel and revolted against their Lord's commandment and they said: Oh, Saleh! Bring us what you threatened us with if you are one of the messengers. Then the earthquake overtook them so they became motionless bodies in their abode. Then he turned away from them and said, "Oh my people I did certainly deliver to you the message of my Lord and I gave you good advice, but you do not love those who give good advice."



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Saleh migrated to Palestine where he died. There is still a tomb, called the Tomb of Prophet Saleh. Some other narrations say that he died in Makkah while he was performing pilgrimage. He belonged to the Arab Tribe of Thamud. His name was Saleh Ibn Obeid, Ibn Maseh, Ibn Obeid, Ibn Hader, Ibn Thamud, Ibn Ather, Ibn Eram and Ibn Noah. Qur'an does not indicate to the period he stayed with his people, but it indicates in many verses that his people are the successors of Ad. God, the Almighty, says in Surat Al-Araf Verse 74, "And remembers when He made you successors after Ad and settled you in the land-- you make mansions on its plains and hew out houses in the mountains-- remember therefore God's benefits and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief".





PROPHET SALEH'S SHE-CAMEL



Prophet Saleh's She-Camel, a miracle sign which emerged from under the mountain at the hands of the Prophet Saleh to his people Thamud from the same stone and rock where they built their houses and castles. They were very solid rocks that can only split by strongly bodied men. So that the miracle came out from their own profession as they deeply knew how solid the rocks were. They asked for this miracle to emerge from under the dumb rocks because they knew that He could do that only if he was truly a messenger of God. When the people insisted on that he must bring a big she-camel, not like the camels they had, so that they can all drink from its milk. They insisted that the she-camel must be pregnant and in its last month before giving birth. When he saw their insistence on this and for his desire to worship God alone and renounce worshiping all other idols, he prayed to Allah the Almighty to grant their request. Allah ordered the distant rock to split asunder, bringing forth a great ten month pregnant she-camel in a memorable day. God, the Almighty says in Surat Hud Verse 64, "And, Oh my people! This will be as God's she-camel for you, a sign; therefore leaving her to pasture on God's earth and do not touch her with evil, for then a near chastisement will overtake you." In Surat Al-Qamar Verse 27: "For we will send the she-camel by way of trial for them. So watch them, Oh Saleh and possess you in patience! «At first, the people of Thamud were greatly

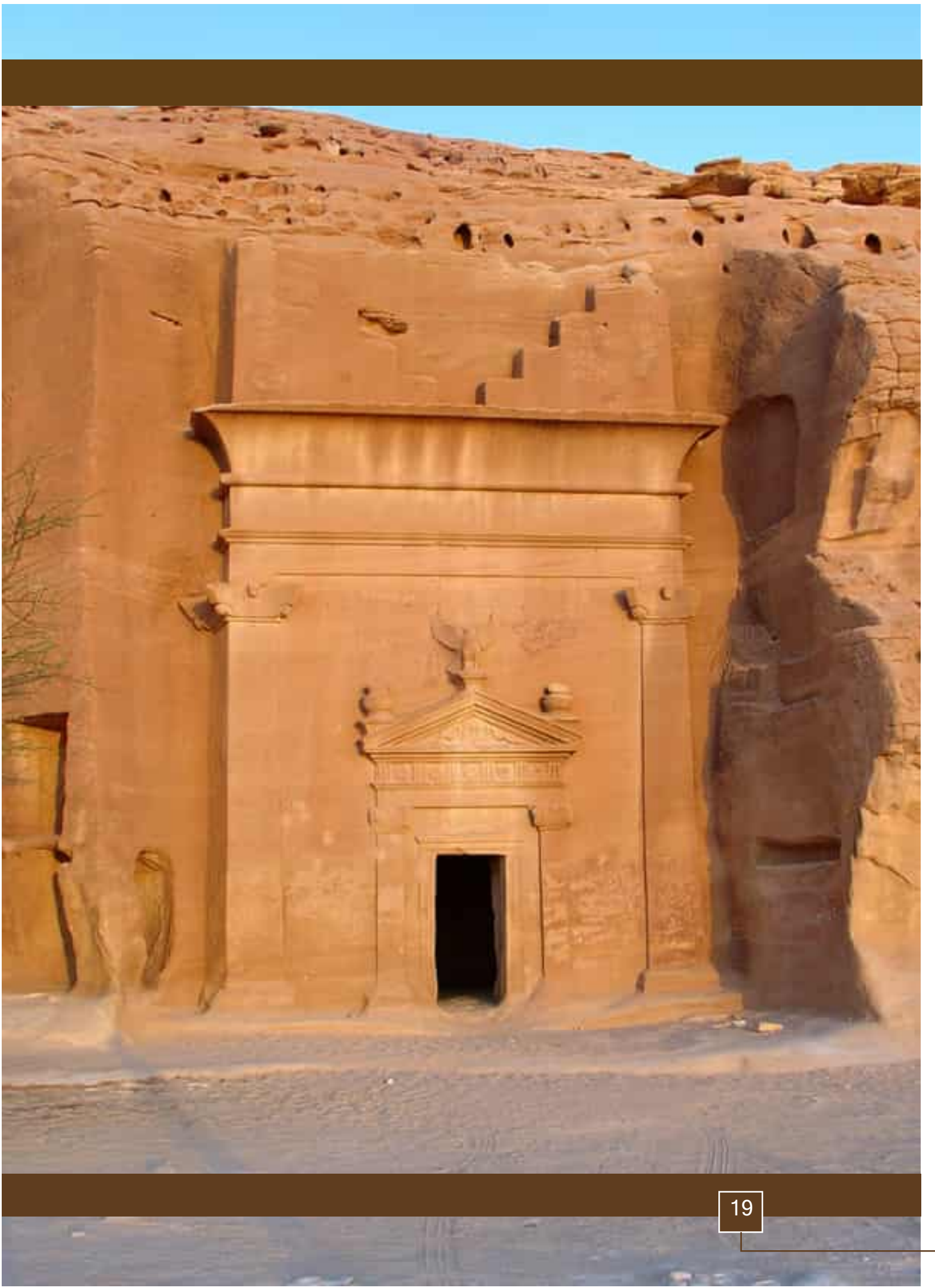
surprised when the she-camel issued from the mountain rocks. It was a blessed camel and its milk sufficient for thousands of men, women and children. When their eyes set on it, they were amazed. They saw a great thing, a wonderful sight, a dazzling power and clear evidence! A number of Saleh's people believed, while the majority continued in their obstinacy and disbelief. Their hatred of Saleh turned towards the blessed she-camel and became centered on it. A conspiracy started to hatch against the camel by the disbeliever and they secretly plotted against it. Saleh feared that they might kill the camel, so he warned them: «Oh my people! This she-camel of God is a sign to you, leave her to feed on God's earth and touch her not with evil lest a near torment will seize you.» (11:64 Qur'an) For a while, Saleh's people let the camel graze and drink freely, but in their hearts, they hated it. However, the miraculous appearance of the unique camel caused many to become Saleh's followers and they clung to their belief in God. The disbeliever now began complaining that this huge she-camel with its unusual qualities drank most of the water and frightened their cattle. They laid a plot to kill the camel and sought the help of their women folk to tempt the men to carry out their commands. Saduq bint of Mahya, who was from a rich and noble family, offered she to a young man named Masrai ibn Mahraj on condition that he will hamstring the camel. Aniza, an old woman offered one of her daughters to a young man, Gdar bin Saluf, in return for killing the camel. Naturally, these young men were tempted and set about finding seven others to assist them. They watched the camel closely, observing all its movements. As the she-camel came to drink at the well, Masrai shot it in the leg with an arrow. It tried to escape but hampered by arrow. Gdar followed the camel and struck it with a sword in the other leg. As it fell to the ground, he pierced it with his sword. The killers were given a hero's welcome, cheered with songs and poetry composed in their praise. In their arrogance, they mocked Saleh, but He warned them: «Enjoy life for three more days than the punishment will descend upon you.» Saleh was hoping that they would see the folly of their ways and change their attitude before the three days went out. «Why three days?» they asked. «Let the punishment come as quickly as possible.» He pleaded with them: «My people, why do you hasten to evil rather than good? Why do not you ask pardon of God so that you may receive mercy?» They replied, «We see your presence and that of your followers as bringing evil on us.» Almighty God related their story: And indeed, we sent to Thamud their brother Saleh, saying «Worship God Alone and none else.» Then look! They became two parties (believers and disbeliever) quarrelling with each other. He said, «Oh my people! Why do you seek to hasten the evil (torment) before the good (God's Mercy)? Why seek you not the Forgiveness of God that you may receive mercy?» They said, we augur 'till omen from you and those with you. He said, «Your ill omen is with God; nay, but you are a people who are being tested.» And there were nine men in the city (from the sons of their chiefs) that made mischief in the land and would not reform. They said, «Swear to another by God that we shall make a secret night attack on Him and His household and afterwards we will surely say to His near relatives: «We witnessed not the destruction of his household and verily! We are telling the truth.» So they plotted a plot and we planned a plan, while they perceived not. Then see how the end of their plot was! Verily, we destroyed them and their nation, all together. These are their houses in utter ruin, for they did wrong. Verily, in this is indeed an Ayah (a lesson or a sign) for people who know. We saved those who believed and used to fear and obey Allah. (Qur'an 27:45 - 53) They also plotted to kill Saleh and his household as Almighty God stated: «So they plot a plot and we planned a plan, while they perceived not.» (Qur'an 27:50) God saved Saleh and his followers from their wicked plans. Heavy hearted, they left the evil doers and moved to another place. Three days after Saleh's warning, thunderbolts filled the air

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followed by severe earthquakes that destroyed the entire tribe and its homeland. The land violently shaken, destroying all living creatures in it. There was one terrific cry that had hardly ended when the disbeliever of Saleh's people struck dead, all, at the same time. Neither their strong buildings nor their rock-hewn homes could protect them. God the Exalted, said to Thamud people, we sent their brother Saleh. He said, «Oh my people! Worship God, you have no other God but Him (none has the right to be worshipped but God). Indeed there has come to you a clear sign (the miracle of the coming out of a huge she-camel from the midst of a rock) from your Lord. This she-camel of God is a sign unto you so you leave her to graze in God's earth and touch her not with harm, lest a painful torment should seize you. Remember when He made you successors after Ad people and gave you habitations in the land, you build for yourselves palaces in plains and carve out homes in the mountains. So remember the graces bestowed upon you from God and do not go about making mischief on the earth.» The leaders of those who were arrogant among His people said to those who counted weak to such of them as believed: «Know you that Saleh is one sent from his Lord.» They said, «We indeed believe in that with which He has been sent.» Those who were arrogant said, «Verily, we disbelieve in that which you believe in.» So they killed the she-camel and insolently defied the Commandment of their Lord and said: «Oh Saleh! Bring about your threats if you are indeed one of the Messengers of God.» So the earthquakes seized them and they lay dead, prostrate in their homes. Then He (Saleh) turned from them and said, «Oh my people! I have indeed conveyed to you the Message of my Lord and have given you good advice but you like not good advisers.» (Qur'an 7:73- 79) All destroyed before they realized what was happening. As for the people who believed in the message of Saleh, they saved because they had left the place. Ibn Omar narrated that while the Prophet Muhammad was passing by Thamud's houses on his way to Tabouk; he stopped together with the people there. The people fetched water from the wells from which the people of Thamud used to drink. They prepared their dough for baking and filled their water skins from it (water from the wells). The Prophet Muhammad ordered them to empty the water skins and give the prepared dough to the camels. Then He went away with them until they stopped at the well from which the she camel of Saleh used to drink. He warned them against entering upon the people who had punished, saying «I fear that you may be affected by what afflicted them; so do no enter upon them.»



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There are various views of scientists on the origins of the Nabataeans. Some views that they came from the south of the Arabian Peninsula, they came from the north or northeast of Najd, they came from the north of the Gulf region, they come from Hejaz area, north-west of the Arabian Peninsula and some others opine that they are from Edom. However, the Assyrian Annals and Torah indicated that they lived in areas to the south of the territories of Bani Qedar and the Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily described them as Bedouin shepherds who did not know agriculture i.e. they were unstable, they did not drink wine and their lands were mostly rough and rocky. Accordingly, we can say that they were Arab Bedouin tribes that worked originally in handicrafts and grazing and then turned to trade and became experts in locating water and its utilization by digging canals and collecting it in large and deep tanks. They also recorded many of their works in the

NABATAEANS



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Aramaic writing. However, they developed this type of writing and connected its letters together which made it easy to spread. Their language was northern Arabic in terms of vocabulary and names though it included some Aramaic vocabulary and forms. The Nabataeans settled in southern Levant where they founded an Arab Kingdom called the Kingdom of Nabataeans and took “Salaa” (Petra) as the capital of their kingdom. The kings of Nabataeans adopted a traditional approach in the government and were able to make great political achievements as their state extended to Damascus. However, the King of the Jews Herod with the help of the Romans establish a Jewish state in 31 AD, that included some lands of the Kingdom of the Nabataeans across the Jordan River which led to the division of the Kingdom of the Nabataeans. Jews made many attempts to cement ties with the Nabataeans including the marriage of King Herod of the Jews to the daughter of King Al-Harith IV, to marry the daughter of his uncle and his stepbrother’s wife Herodia, erupting war between the Jews and the Nabataeans that resulted in the defeat of the Jews. King Rab El II (70 – 106 AD) reached an agreement with the Romans where they do not attack him in his life and get on top of the Kingdom of the Nabataeans after his death. However, they broke the agreement for reasons that still unknown and controlled the Kingdom of the Nabataeans in 106 AD putting an end to rule of Rab El II. The Roman ruler in Syria Cornelos Palma became ruler of the Kingdom of Nabataeans on behalf of Emperor Trajan. Nabataeans did not leave any written history with the exception of some inscriptions that speaks in most cases on personal matters. Many of their news came to us from foreign historical sources which are not particularly written for them, but they talked about them in a casual way through their relations with other nations and people such as Seleucids and Ptolemaic. Such relations were describing as sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile according to the existing conditions.



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NABATAEANS' TIES WITH EGYPT



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Dr. Abdel-Moneim Abdel-Halim Sayed has research titled, "Nabataeans Ties with Egypt through Inscriptions on Hejaz Egypt's Eastern Desert Rocks". It published in the magazine of Faculty of Arts and Humanities, King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah that summarizes these links saying that, "The Nabataeans were the most active and the most influential in the Arab Peninsula civilization among the ancient Arab people. Their impact until today is still in the Arabic alphabets, which have their origin in the Nabataean alphabets. The Gulf of Aqaba where the Great Trade Road that penetrated the Arabian Peninsula from the south to the north passes, therefore, their state was of a commercial nature. Its capital was Petra in Wadi Musa, south of Jordan. Their state reached the peak of its prosperity in the first two centuries before and after the birth of Christ (Peace be upon Him) when its borders extended from Madain Saleh in the south to Damascus in north. However, in 106 AD the Romans defeated the Nabataeans and captured its capital Petra. Nevertheless, their commercial activity did not stop but continued for several centuries. Egypt was one of the most important areas that been repeatedly visited by the Nabataean convoys as evidenced by many inscriptions on the rocks of Nabataean valleys extended on the Red Sea coast until the banks of Nile River through the Eastern desert of Egypt. Study of these inscriptions proves that inscriptions found on the rocks of Wadi Al-Hamamat and its valleys resemble in many ways those found on rocks of Al-Hejaz particularly in and around area of Madain Saleh. The similarities are the use by Nabataeans in both regions of Greek Romanian names written either in Greek letters or in Nabataean letters after adapting them to the Nabataean pronunciation as well as the use of Nabataean names adapted to Greek pronunciation. Similarities also include the similar forms alphabets in the two regions. All this evidence suggests a link between the authors of the inscriptions in both regions and that they were subject to Greek and Romanian influence. It is also likely that the crossing point at which Madain Saleh and Nabataeans used to cross the Red Sea on their way to Egypt was at the nearest port Madain Saleh. The point of their arrival at the coast of Egypt was the nearest port to Wadi Al-Hamamat, which makes it more likely that these two points "Al-Qajeh" on the Saudi coast and "Al-Qaseer" on the Egyptian coast that are facing each other.



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FALL OF AL-HIJR



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After the Roman defeated the Nabataean Kingdom in 106 AD, the trade road turned to the Red Sea and Madain Saleh started to lose its importance as a major station on the trade road where goods are exchange and taxes are levy from convoy lords etc. By the end of these advantages that had played a vital role in improving the economic conditions in the area, the people who were no longer merchants, tax collectors, guards for convoys or camel and men transferring the commodities started to abandon the area for good due to the lack of job opportunities and the requirements of well-being stability. Inscriptions point to the relationship between Nabataean kings and their people where a text dating back to the reign of King Rab El II (70106- AD) indicates to his success in the eradication of the revolution led in Madain Saleh by a person named Demsi or Damasi with his followers' people of Al-Hejaz. The revolution supported by northern Nabataean ethnic groups. The revolution was one of the reasons why Rab El II transferred the capital from Petra to Bosra to secure the Nabataean throne from the tribe troubles in Hejaz (according to the book written by Dr. Al-Ansari and Dr. Abu Al-Hassan). The previous presentation shows the picture of Madain Saleh from the sixth century BC until the first century AD. The history of Madain Saleh and Al-Ula from the fall of the Nabataean State and its rule by the Romanian until the emergence of Islam when Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) passed by on his way to Tabouk remains unknown. Ibn Omar narrated that while Prophet Muhammad was passing by Thamud's houses on his way to Tabouk, he stopped together with his people there. The people fetched water from the well from which the people of Thamud used to drink. They prepared their dough for baking and filled their water skins from the wells. The Prophet Muhammad ordered them to empty the water skins and give the prepared dough to the camels. Then he went away with them until they stopped at the well from which the she camel of Saleh used to drink. He warned them against entering upon the people who had punished saying, "I fear that you may be affected by what afflicted them; so do no enter upon them." During Islamic Era, Madain Saleh had no importance, save as station where pilgrims provided with water and supplies and there are Muslim castles for the service of pilgrims and mail. There was also the Hejaz Railway Line established by Sultan Abdul Hamid II together with the main station that was open for service in 1908. Hejaz Railway continued operation until the year 1918 when it destroyed during World War I and stopped working until the present time. During that period, visits and observations made by a number of European Travellers took down many observations about it. Except for the above, the region was no longer important economically or commercially. In 1925, it was subject to the rule of Al-Saud and interest in the area started to increase by the government, which started to the works of graves restoration and protection, train station maintenance and fencing the region to protect from haphazard entrants. It also been linked to Al-Ula by paved road. After the establishment of the Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities, Madain Saleh became a top priority in government plans. It becomes one of UNESCO's World heritage site.



**TOURIST
ATTRACTION IN
MADAIN SALEH**





Madain Saleh is in the north-western part of Saudi Arabia. It administratively belongs to Madinah Region, one of the major regions of Saudi Arabia, which is part of Al-Ula Governorate. It is about 25 km. away from Central of Al-Ula northward. It is border by mountains from the East and West, where the distance between the slopes of the Eastern and Western mountains is about ten kilometers, widening and narrowing depending on the nature of the valley. It also borders Al-Ula Valley, which named in the past as “Al-Qura Valley” from the East. Madain Saleh called by local population “Al-Hijr”, which is the right name of the place. The area consists of rocks made up of red sandstones. These formations are scattered throughout the valley in a fascinating manner. Madain Saleh and Al-Ula in general, considered one of the most fertile oasis in the desert north-west of Saudi Arabia where a lot of fresh ground water and fertile agricultural land exists along the edges of the valley. The most important agricultural products of the area are dates of all kinds and types. The region is also famous for cultivating the finest fruits such as oranges, mandarin, lemon, pomegranate, grapes, mango and kinds of vegetables. The major crafts in the area includes agriculture and cattle rising, especially camels and sheep.

MADAIN SALEH’S TOURIST SITES

Visiting Madain Saleh need to spend at least a whole day within the monumental area to be able to explore its places and to know it more in details. The monumental areas contain sites that worth visiting. It is advisable to seize this unique opportunity by entering the area early in the morning and enjoy sightseeing.

The locations of these monumental areas are as follows:



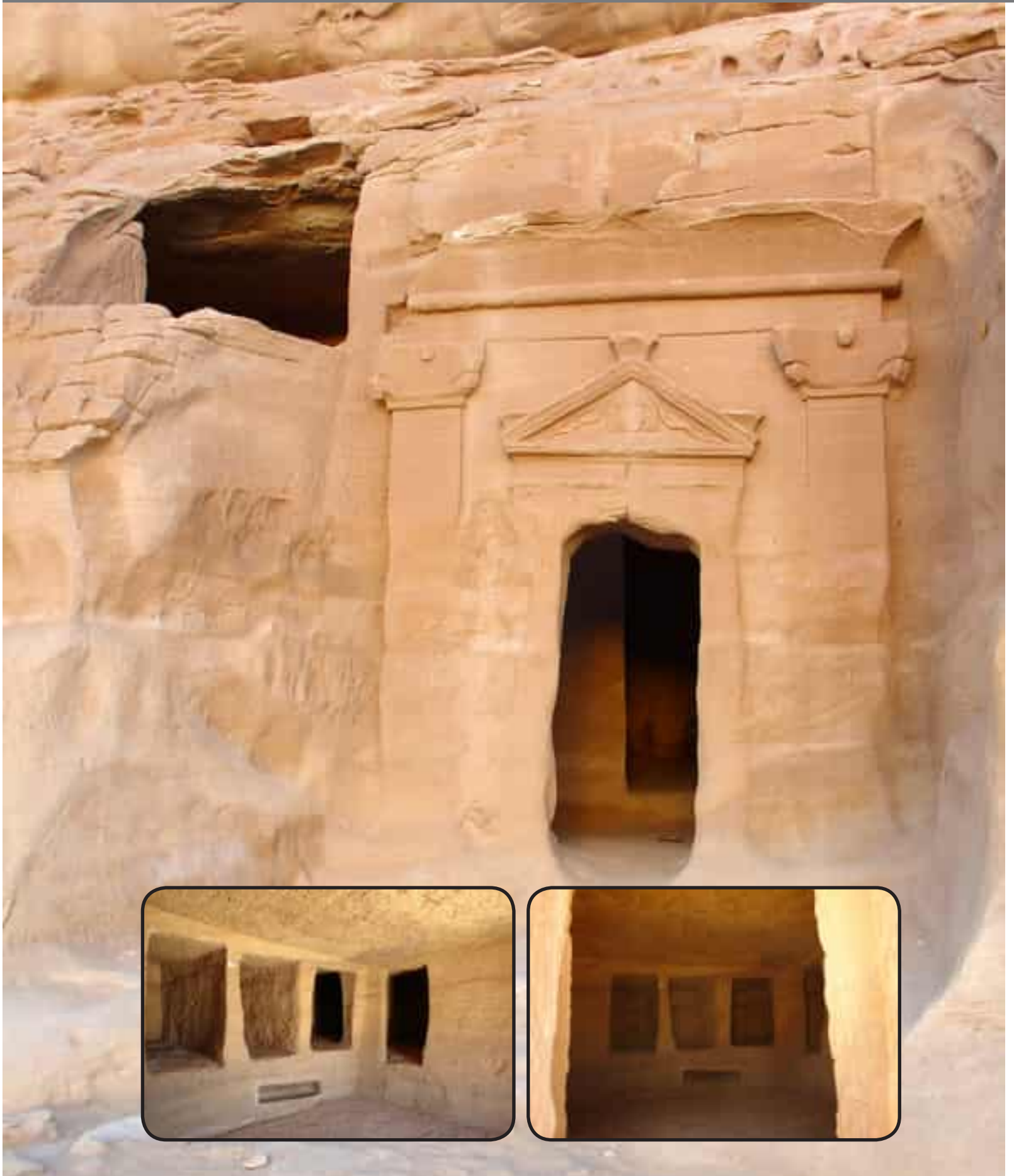
QASR AL-BINT TOMB

It is a set of graves and facades including twenty-nine tombs fascinatingly carved, mostly finished. All of them were made in one mountain. The local people call this Qasr Al-Bint (Girl's Palace). This name has an incorrect account among the local people because they believed the name Qasr Al-Bint is about the story of a young woman killed by her father on top of this tomb which is untrue. The name Qasr Al-Bint has no other meaning or story attach to it. The facades of the graves are distributed to three directions of the mountain extending from north to south. The number of graves and facades in the west are nineteen including one on the top of the mountain where sculpture has not been completed. It can be access through stairs on the western part of the mountain. If this façade were complete, it would be the greatest in Madain Saleh. In the south, there are seven graves, some of them are small and some are medium-size. There are also three large graves to the East of the mountain.

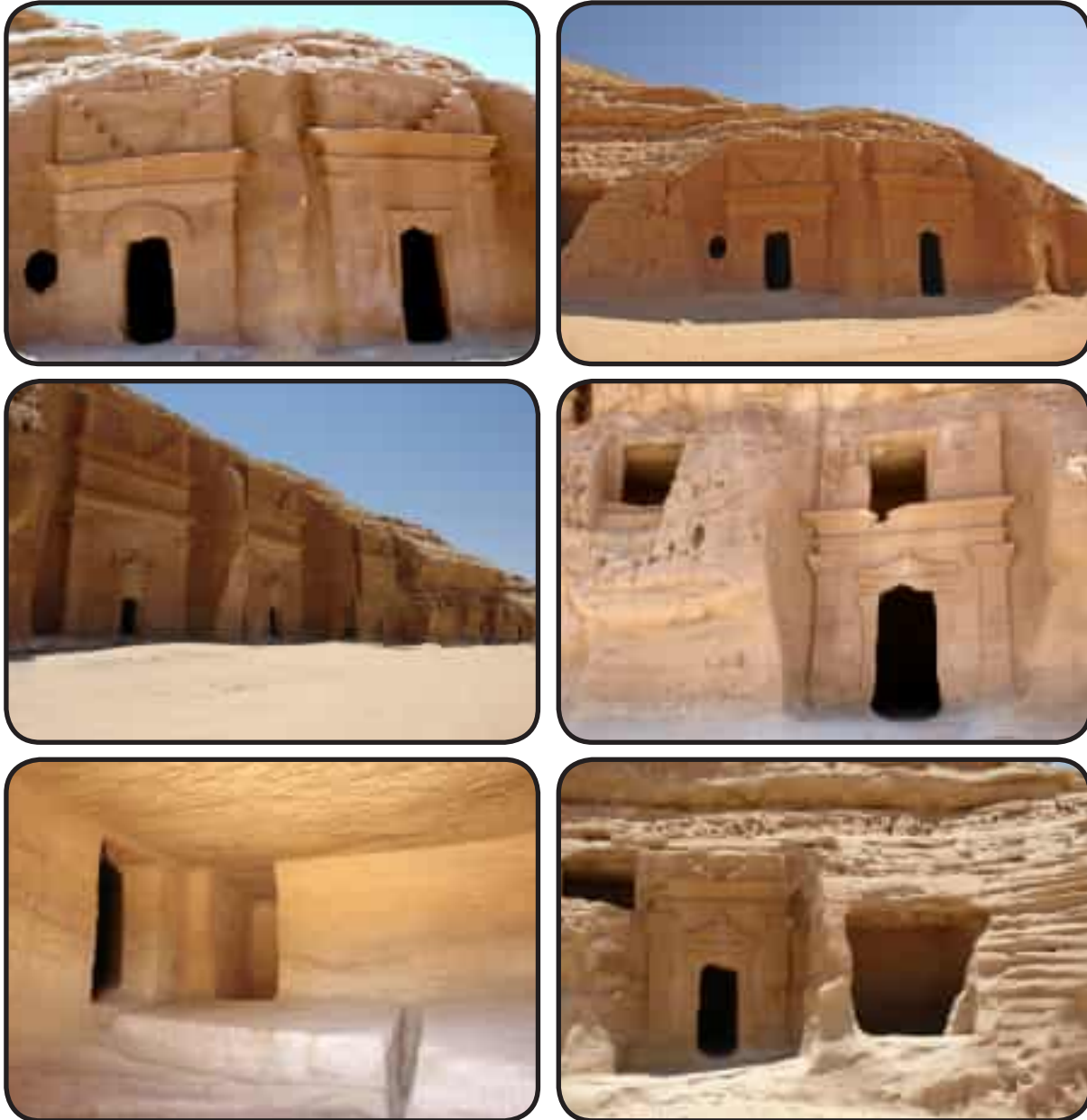
Here is one example of the Inscriptions in Qasr Al-Bint; "These tombs have been built by the leader Eido Ibn Obaido for himself, his children and descendants and to those who will be buried in the tombs. This is Afta mother of Aiyed, the daughter of Habib and his wife daughter of Sili and anyone who appears with a document in his hand that has been written by hand of Aiyed. This tomb is engraved in March of the eleventh year of the reign of King Malichus the King of Nabataeans. Abd Ubada Son of Wahab Allah, Hani son of Obaida and Afsa son of Hoot. The engravers have engraved these tombs."



Madain Saleh



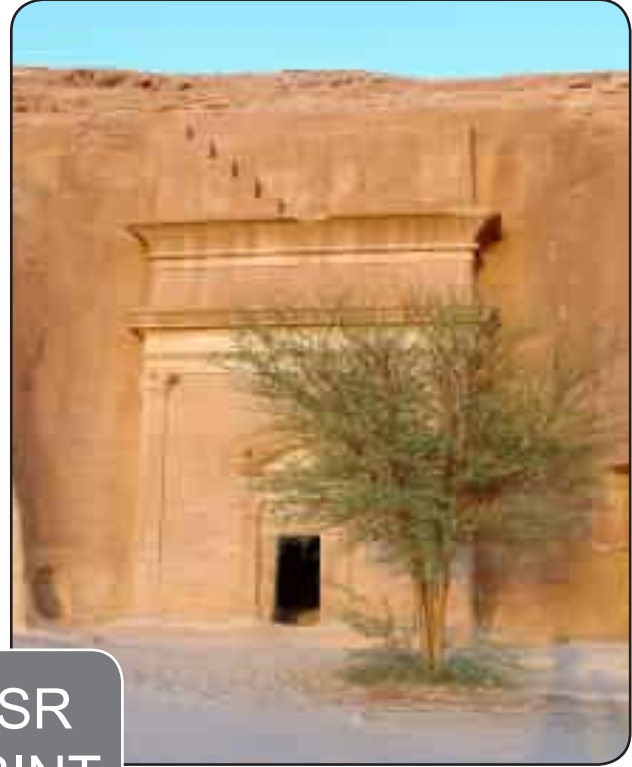
Route to Madain Saleh



INSCRIPTION OF TOMB NO. 39

This tomb was constructed by Kamkam daughter of Haram and her daughter Kwaliba for themselves and their descendants on the month of Tayba the ninth year reign of Aretas, the King of the Nabataeans who adores his people. May Goddess Dushara and his throne Allat in Amand Manutu and Qaisa curse whoever sells or buys this tomb, pledges or grants this tomb, takes out any corpses or bones from it, buries anyone other than Kamkam and her daughter and their descendants. Whoever disregards the above written shall be cursed five times by the Goddess Dushara Hoble and Manutu and pay the priest a fine of one thousand or Harithia of city of Salaa. However, any person who can present a valid document issued by Kamkam or her daughter Kwaliba regarding the said tomb and matters related thereto shall not be subject to the above fines. (This was carved by Wabb Alla son of Abdebad.)

Madain Saleh



QASR
AL-BINT
TOMB



Route to Madain Saleh



ADIWAN





MOUNT ETHLIB (ADIWAN)

Mount Ethlib is in the northern part of Qasr Al-Bint. This collection is locally called Al-Athaleth Mountain. This mountain contains the following:

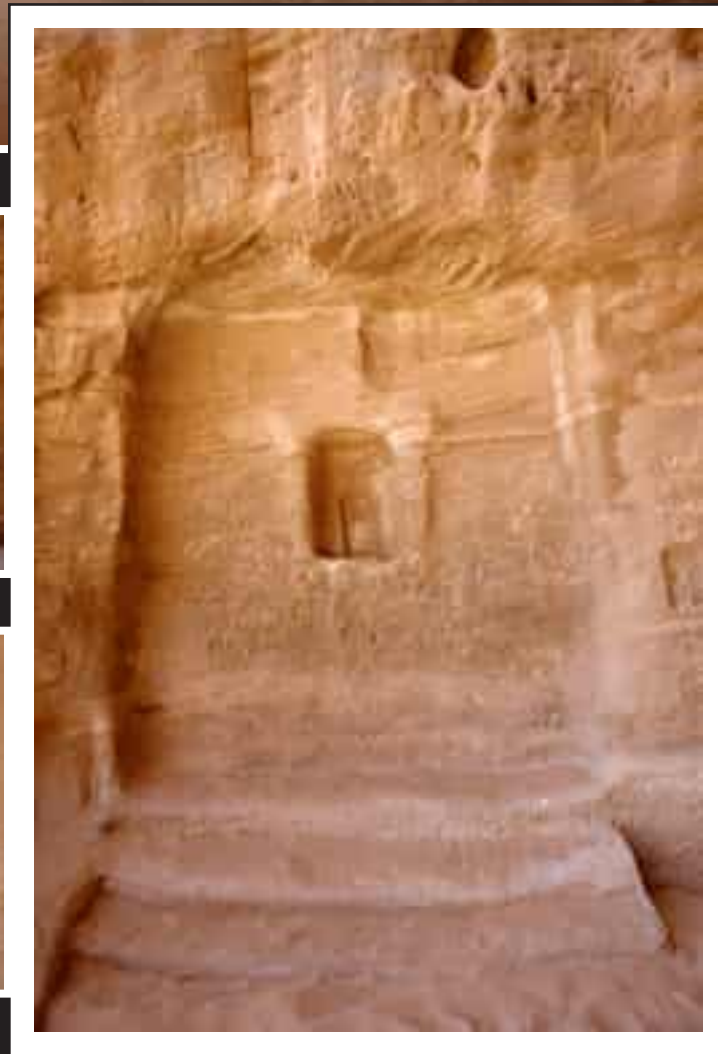
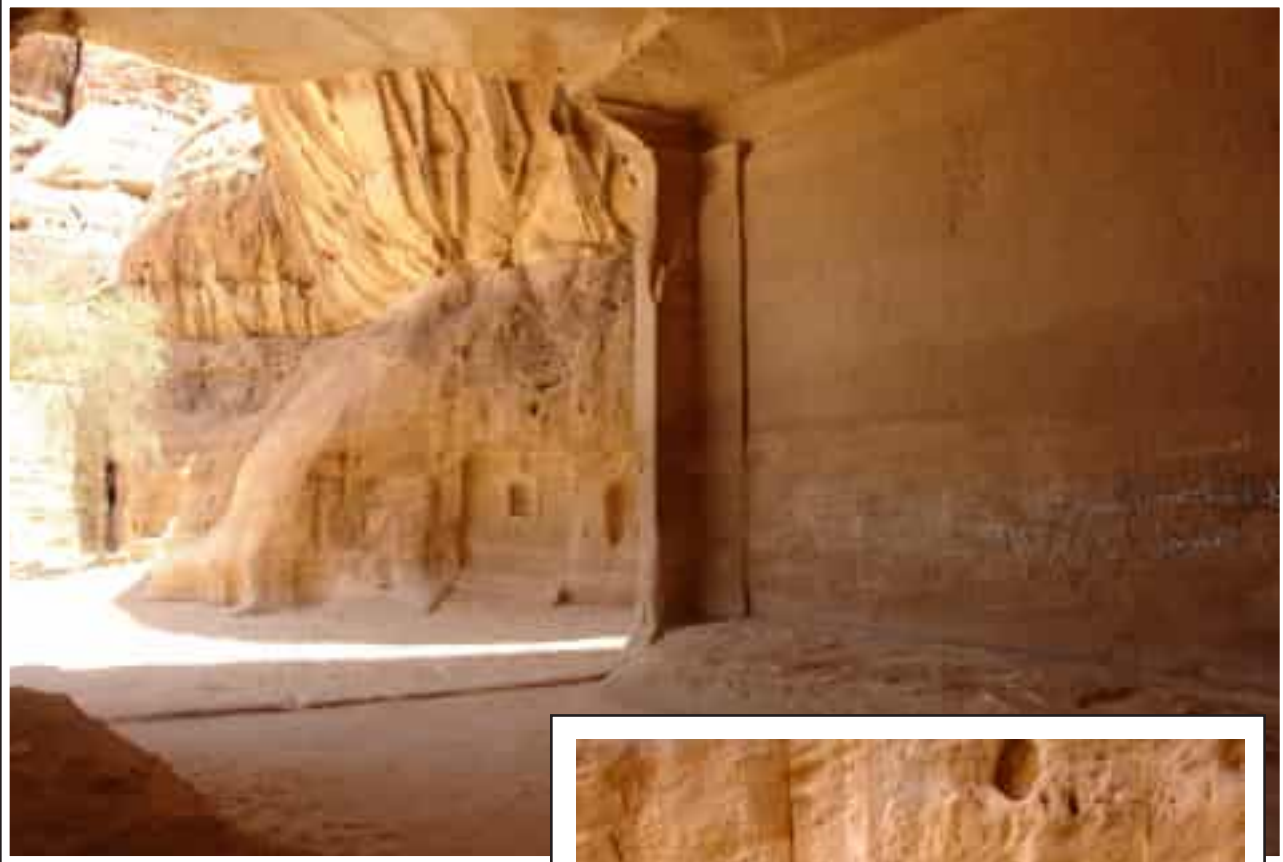
ADIWAN

It is a meeting place of the Nabataean carved out of a huge rock. Local people call it Diwan Abu Zeid and some of them call it Majlis As-Sultan (Sultan's Council). They are local names related to some myths and stories narrated in the area and not based upon scientific facts. The Adiwan is one of the wonderful features in Madain Saleh and considered by many archaeologists as the main place of worship in the region because of the presence of many temples and religious signs in the area. The narrow corridor (Siq) adjacent to Adiwan is one of the rock wonderlands where this temple is located. Outside Adiwan to the left there is water reservoir for collecting rain water through a water conduit carved in the gullies and the surrounding hills.

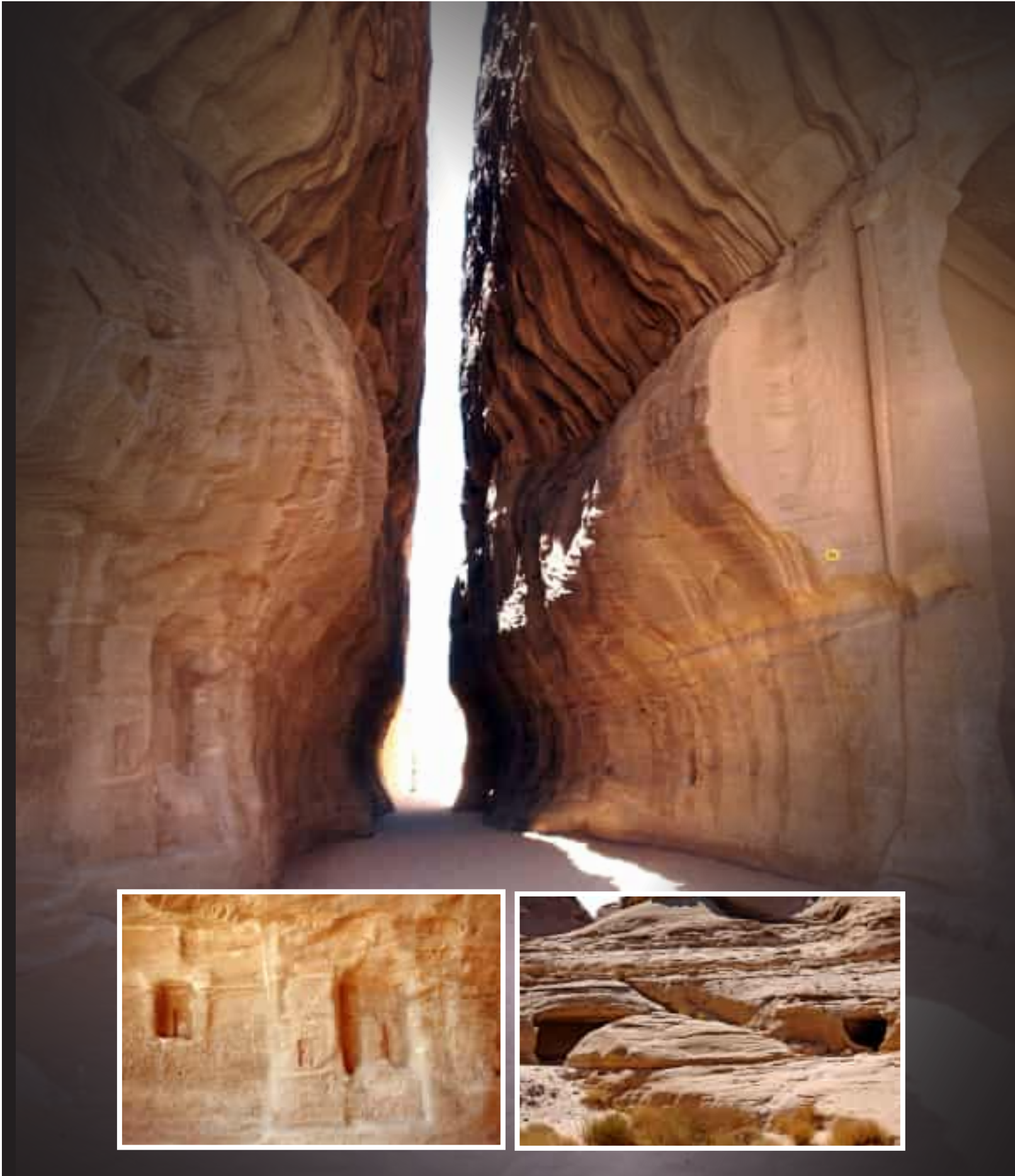
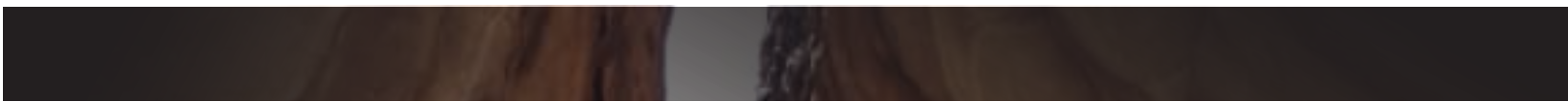
Adiwan is a place where the Nabataean used to perform their religious rites. This carved meeting room measures 9 x 12 meters. The niche (mehrab) in Adiwan area contains religious icons and images of deities. Those niches also contain small stone pillars constituting a shrine to the god Dushara.

Evidence suggests they worshipped many gods, but their supreme deity was Dushara & Allatt.

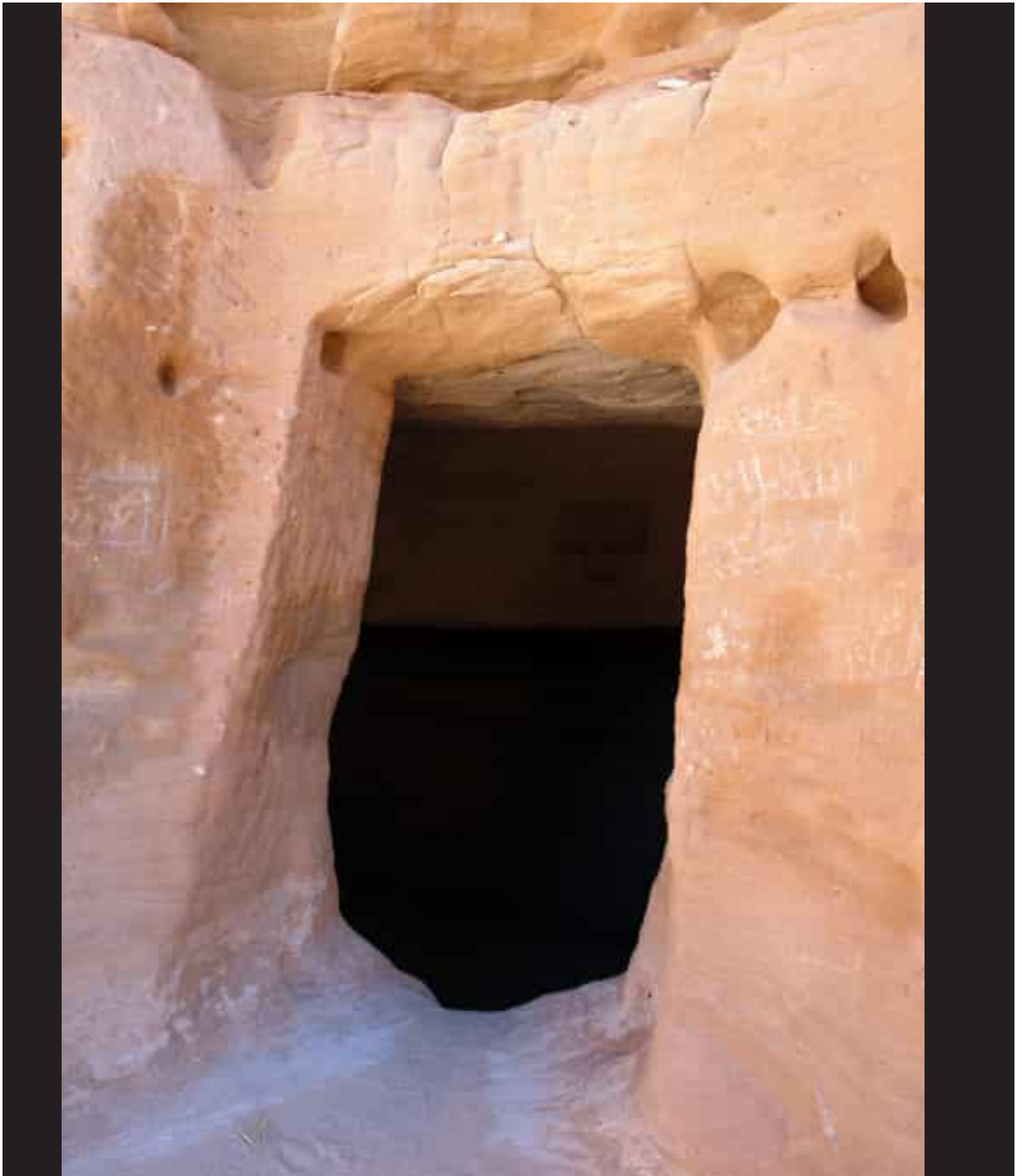
Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh



Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh



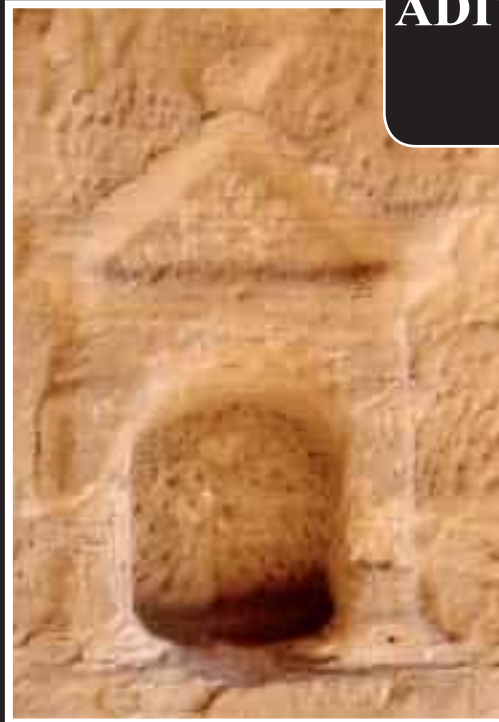
Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh



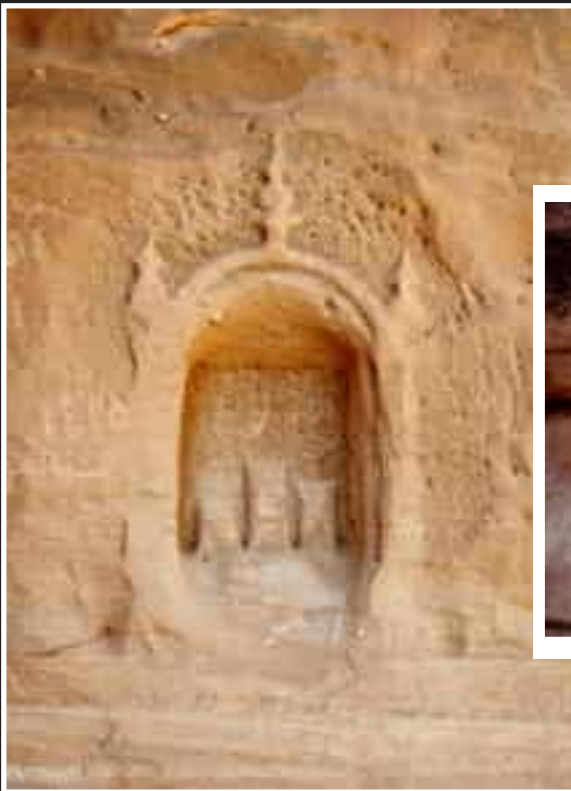
ADIWAN



Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh



Madain Saleh



This range of tombs is located to the north of Qasr Al-Bint. It is composed of three mountains including 14 graves. The first mountain lies to the left hand side from the castle heading to the North. It has six graves at close spaces starting from south of the mountain. They have different forms and sizes.

QASR AL-FAHD TOMBS (CHEETAH TOMBS)



The second mountain lies to the east of the mountain and separates from the first one by road that links area of Adiwān to Hejaz Railway Station to the Islamic Castle, north of the monumental area. This mountain includes five graves, three of them situated to the west of the mountain, one to the south and the fifth is facing eastward. The third mountain is located to the east of the second mountain. It contains three graves and effects of cutting stones for building indicates that the site had been use as a quarry.

Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh



NABATAEAN WELL



It is a well carved out of sandy rocks at a depth of 30 meters and fed by a canal engraved in stone, where water flows unto it during rainfall. Until recently, neighbouring farms irrigated from this well by machines. They ceased using the well only after the deportation of the local population to their new farms in north. There are also other wells in Madain Saleh distributed to the old monumental area, some of them still visible and some are compacted.



Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh

AL-KHOSROF TOMBS



This is located almost at the centre of Madain Saleh, southwest of the Girl's Palace. It consists of two blocs of rock, the first is large and contains 18 tombs, the other is small containing only one grave and it is different in terms of artistic and creative standards. From inside, all of them contain tombs sculptured in their interior walls or etched their burial ground.



Madain Saleh



QASR AL-FAREED TOMBS

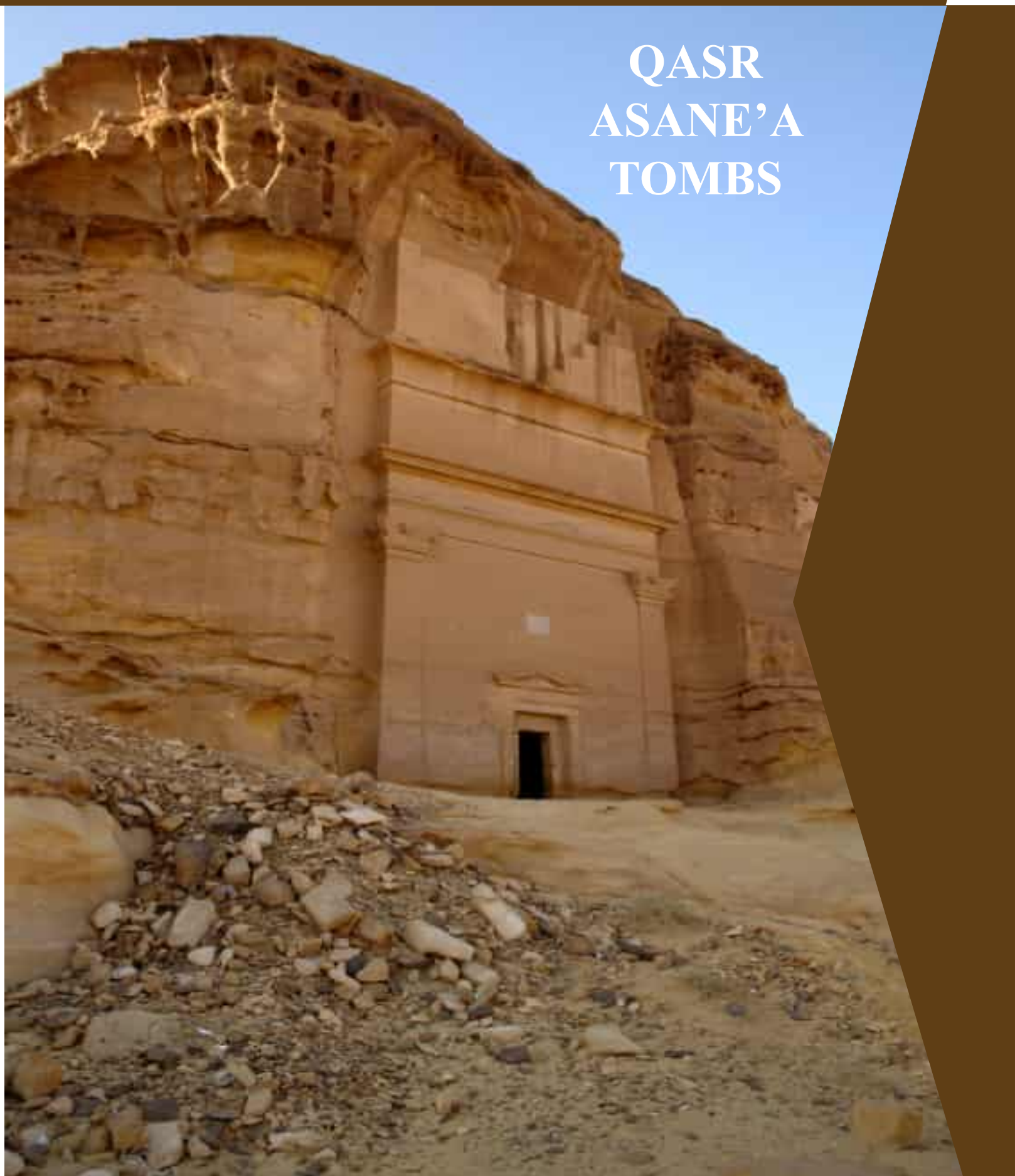
This grave is located in the southern part of the monumental area. It is a large grave occupying a large and distinctive single rock. It is named Al-Fareed Palace (Unique Palace) because it is engraved in a single rock and for the architectural element that is not available in any other façade i.e. two Nabataean columns in the middle of the façade of the northern rock in addition to the lateral columns. What distinguishes this grave from the other is that it is located in a sole independent rock.



Route to Madain Saleh



**QASR
ASANE'A
TOMBS**

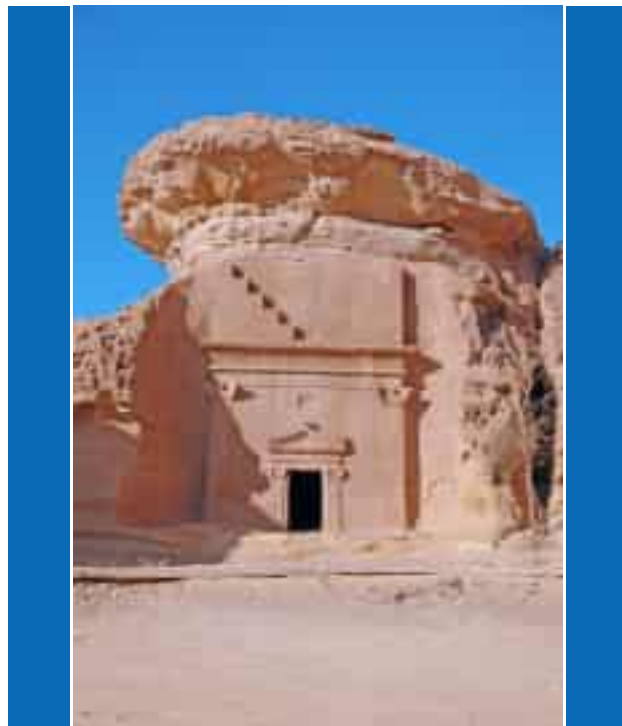




It is located at the southern part of the fenced monumental area that consists of two small hills. This tomb is called by local people Asane'a Tomb wherein stories about Qasr Al-Bint attached to it, which has no scientific basis. It is one of the archaeological sites always visited by tourists when going to Madain Saleh.

The tomb's inscriptions: "This tomb was erected by Melkeon Elghethoor under commandment of Hanin Hivisteon, Chief of guards of his father. The tomb is for himself, his children and his descendants; generation after generation. On the month of Nisan the seventeenth years reign of our master Haritha, the King of Nabataeans who loves his people. (Tomb was carved by Abdul Haritha son of Abdu Obadah)."

AL-KHURAIMAT TOMBS





This group of tombs is located in the western part of the monumental areas after Asane'a Tomb northwards. The number of tombs in this area is fifty-three, distributed to a range of small mountains. The facades are different in terms of arts, sculpture, architecture and decoration. Because of its sandy rocks nature, erosion factors such as wind and rain affects some facades and graves in this group.

Madain Saleh



INSCRIPTION OF TOMB NO. 89

This tomb belongs to Amat daughter of Kamulat, to herself, to her children and her descendants in the fourth year of Ra'bel, King of the Nabataean.



Route to Madain Saleh



Madain Saleh



INSCRIPTION OF TOMB NO. 96

This is the tomb which Halafu son of Qosnatan made for himself and for Su'aydu his son, his brothers and whoever male children may be born to this Halafu, for their sons and their descendants by hereditary title forever. His children may be Umayyat and Sulimat daughter this Halafu and none at all of Su'aydu, his male brothers, their sons and their descendants has the right to sell this tomb or write deed of gift or anything else for anyone at all. Except if one of them writes for a fine to Dushara the God of our Lord in the sum of five hundred Hurethite Sela's and for the same amount according to the copy. This should deposit in the temple of Qaisha in the month of Nisan the fortieth year of Haretat, King of the Nabataean lover of his people. (Ruma and Abd Obodat, the masons.)



Madain Saleh



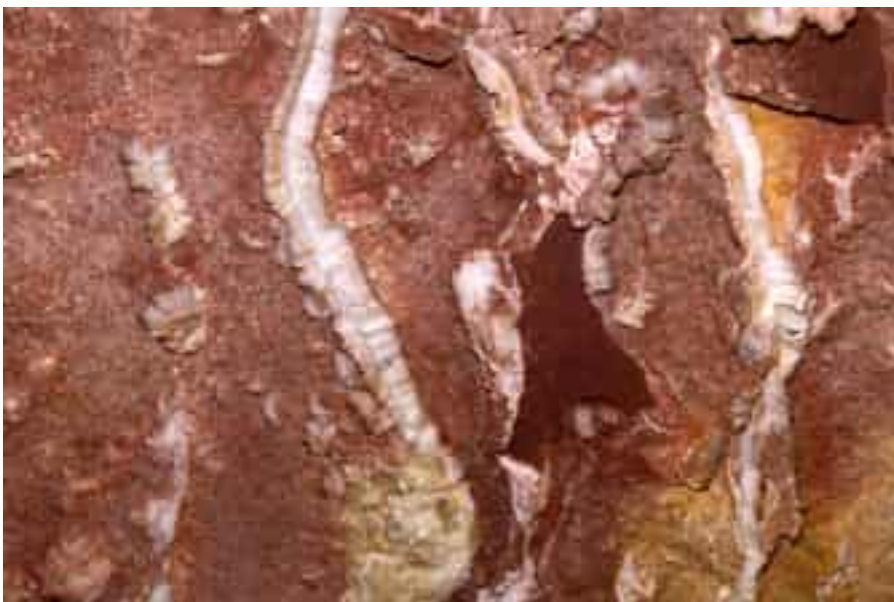
Route to Madain Saleh



Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh



Madain Saleh



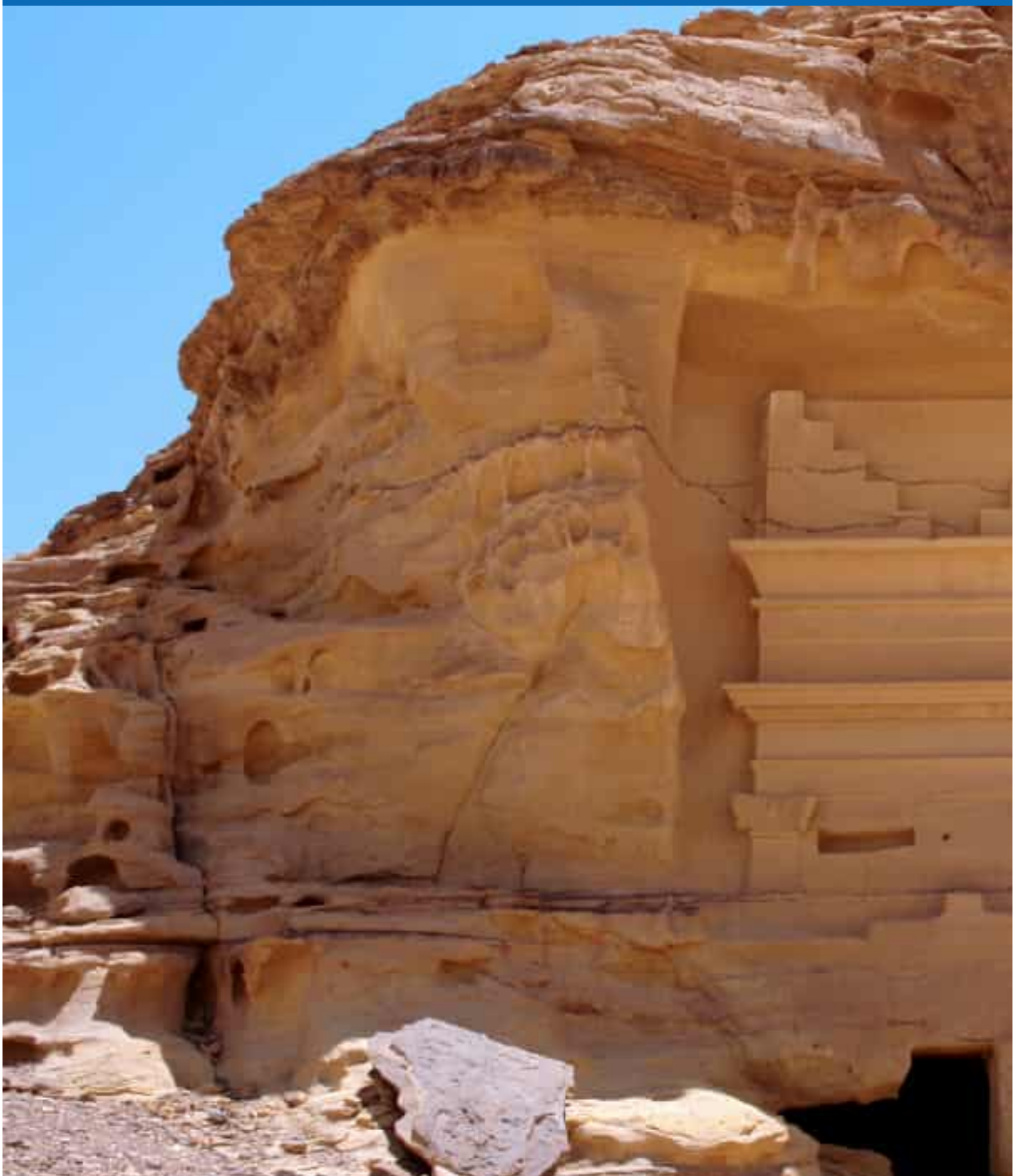
Route to Madain Saleh

ASOLAYMIAH TOMBS

Asolaymiah tomb is located almost in the center of monumental area. This tomb does not contain facades or any architectural arts. This suggests that it was for poor people.



Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh

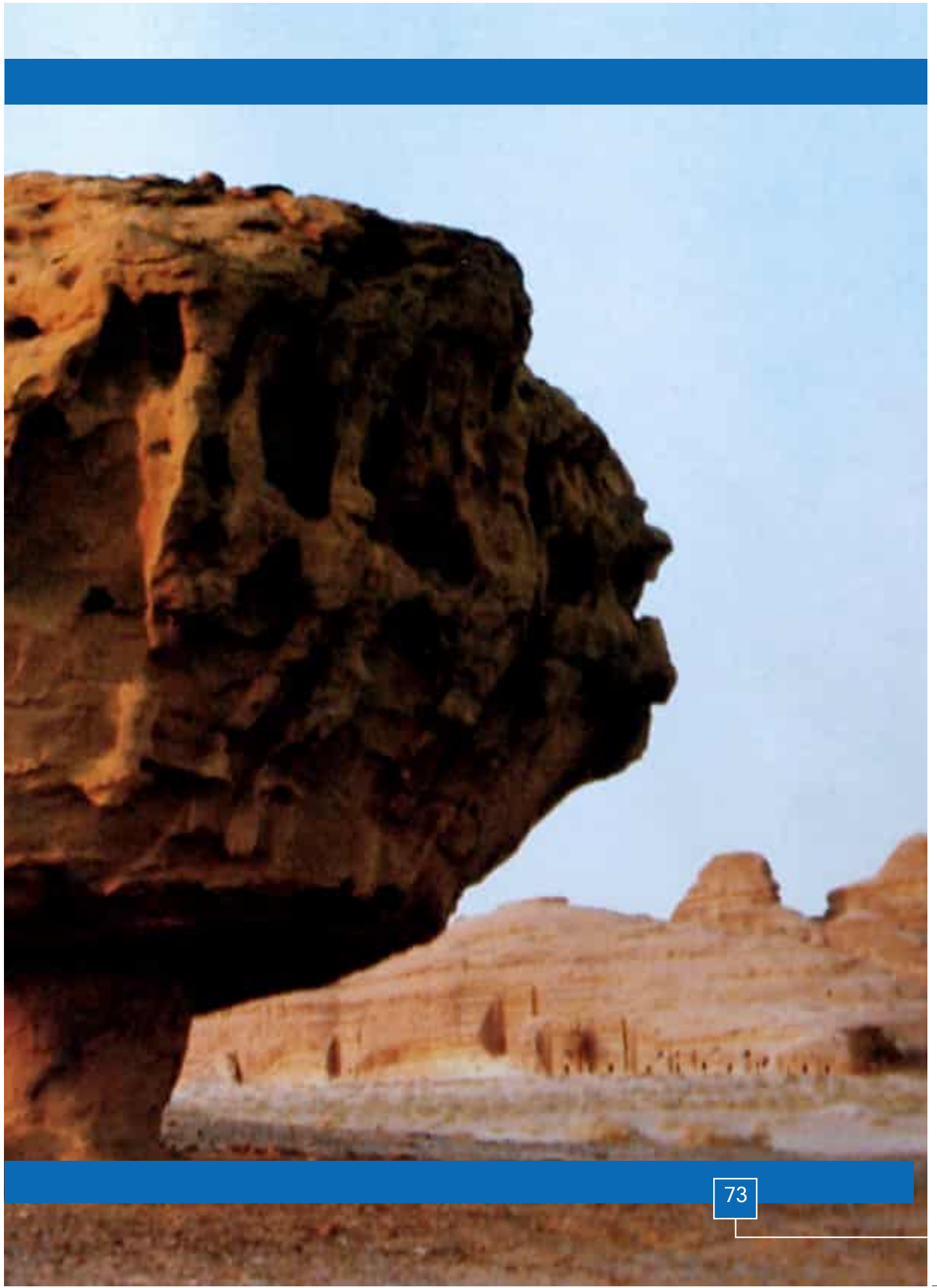


QASR AL-AJOUZ (OLD WOMAN'S TEMPLE)

Qasr Al-Ajouz lies southwest of Qasr Al-Bint Tombs in an independent rocky mass. It is similar in concept to Adiwan as it contains a wide-open hole to the north within which certain niches or sculptured holes. We have no information on the basis of the name.

MARBAT AL-HUSSAN

It is located in the center of the fenced area with a wonderful natural form. It is a natural rock that formed a shape of a tree caused by wind that blows underneath. Below this rock, there are some rectangular carved stones served as chair for whoever stays there.



RESIDENTIAL CITY



Others might be curious if Madain Saleh is city for tombs only? Where do people live at that time? A few studies have shown that the residential area was located in front of Qasr Al-Bint to the west. It is a small space area; there are some signs of simple walls and remains of foundation of destroyed houses. Research said Nabataean Cities are used only for public activities such as worship, theaters and trade and people were living outside cities. The important discovery of an engraved inscription on a piece of stone-board carries valuable information written in Latin about the military, political and urban situation in Al-Hijr dates back to the second A.D. The stone inscriptions translated to English as; "For the safety and health of Emperor Markus Orilus Antonius Augustus carrier of nicknames Arminacus, Gimanukus and Sarmatikus. The people of Al-Hijr renovated the plaza because of the damage by natural cause. People do this by their own will under the supervision of Ligatus Prospator, Lolius Feranus, hundreds of the garrison in the 3rd Siranika and his partner Numisus Kleminus. These works have been executed by Amro Ibn Hayyan, the leader of his people." Research and studies still continues to reveal and discover more secrets in this place.



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Hejaz Railway Station is located in the northern part of the fenced monumental area. It was key major station of Hejaz Railway built by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the last of the Ottoman caliphs. This railway extends from Istanbul, Turkey to Madinah. The approximate age of the station is more than 100 years. It has many buildings including service building, locomotives repair facilities, military housing, warehouses, WC's and water tank near Islamic Castle, post offices and wire telephone service. There are some stalled vehicles and full steam engine inside the station.

HEJAZ RAILWAY STATION





ISLAMIC CASTLE





It is located in the northern part of the fenced monumental area. It is one of the castles built on the pilgrimage and mail road in the era of the Abbasids. Their ages estimated are more than 700 years old. It has nothing to do with the monuments existing in Al-Hijr. Inside, there is mosque, small rooms for housing and beacons for the control, observation and guarding. At the vicinity of the castle, a well can be access from within by castle through a vault linking the outside well going inside. There is also a large pool for the storage of water and pilgrims used to drink beside it.



Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh

MOUNT HUWARA

Mount Huwara is located in Madain Saleh outside the fenced area. This mountain can be seen from anywhere in Madain Saleh because it is unique and high. It is located to the left side of the paved road leading to Therbah Village to the north. It is a wonderful place to spend time at the shadow of the mountain, which is similar to magnificent skyscrapers. It is believed that this name taken from the dialogue of the Prophet Saleh's She-Camel when it was killed by the wicked people near this mountain and rose above it.



Madain Saleh



ASHOQAYMAH

It is located to the west of Madain Saleh outside the fenced area. Ashoqaymah is suitable place to enjoy camping. After visiting Madain Saleh site, resting and having picnic in the shadow of beautiful huge rocks with fresh air is more fun and exciting.





Madain Saleh

BEAUTIFUL MADAIN SALEH

Madain Saleh has beautiful natural mixed formations of mountains with golden color of sand dunes. To confer more brilliance and beauty on the valley, the rocks and mountains consists of different unique rocky formations, caves and cracks developed over the time. You can enjoy the beauty of nature especially the huge rocky formations with multiple features, the color of clear blue sky and valley with golden sands.

Madain Saleh also contains different kind of trees and desert perennial plants, which grow throughout the valley. Madain Saleh is considered among best farms and agricultural land in Saudi Arabia with freshwater that produces the finest different types of agricultural crops.

Route to Madain Saleh



Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh



Madain Saleh



Route to Madain Saleh



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Route to Madain Saleh





Madain Saleh (Al-Hijr)



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