Dana Biosphere village: a 500-year-old stone village inside the largest nature reserve in Jordan

On the rim of the Dana valley sits a stone village that has been continuously occupied for 500 years. Below it: 308 km² of nature reserve descending from 1,600 m to 50 m below sea level — four climate zones in 30 km.

Anas Hu · May 5, 2026

On a ridge above the deepest valley in Jordan sits a stone village that's been continuously occupied for approximately 500 years.[1] Stone houses, narrow streets, an old mosque, a small mill, and a series of guesthouses where you can stay overnight. Below the village: the Dana Biosphere Reserve, Jordan's largest, descending from 1,600 metres at the rim to 50 metres below sea level at Wadi Feynan in the desert. The four climate zones (Mediterranean, Irano-Turanian, Saharo-Arabian, Sudanian) compress into 30 km of horizontal distance — and the reserve protects all four.

Most Petra-bound travellers drive past the Dana exit on the Desert Highway. The village deserves a full day.

1. Why visit Dana
2. The stone village itself
3. The Biosphere Reserve
4. Where to stay
5. Getting there
6. Practical tips
7. References

1Why visit Dana

Dana is the rare place in Jordan where the natural environment is the headline rather than the archaeology. The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature

(RSCN) manages the reserve and a small set of accommodations. The village is a heritage site protected from development. The combination — quiet stone village, deep nature reserve below — is the closest thing in the country to a serious mountain-village experience.

2The stone village itself

The village is small (a 30-minute walk end to end) and laid out along a single ridge. Notable features:

- **The Ottoman-era mosque.** Restored, still in use, a few hundred years old.
- **The mill.** Old grain mill, partially restored.
- **The pottery workshop.** A living-heritage project run by Dana villagers — local clay, traditional methods, products for sale.
- **The Dana Cooperative.** The women's cooperative makes herbal soaps and dried fruits — products available at the RSCN shop.
- **The Dana Tower Hotel + Dana Hotel.** Older guesthouses on the ridge, with rooftop terraces overlooking the valley.

> Four climate zones in thirty kilometres. From Mediterranean rim to Sudanian desert below.

3The Biosphere Reserve

The Dana Biosphere Reserve is one of Jordan's premiere nature reserves, with ecotourism facilities operated by the RSCN. The reserve descends from a precipitation regime of 320 mm annually at the rim to arid desert at Wadi Feynan.[1] Notable features of the reserve:

- **Four climate zones.** Mediterranean (rim), Irano-Turanian (middle), Saharo-Arabian (lower), Sudanian (bottom of valley). Distinct flora and fauna in each.
- **Rummana Campground.** Mountain-top campground with stargazing — see the dedicated post.
- **The Feynan Ecolodge.** Off-grid lodge at the bottom of the reserve, managed by the local Ammarin Bedouin community. Solar-powered, candlelit at night.

- **800+ plant species, 215 bird species, 40+ mammal species.** Ibex, wolf, hyrax, and the Caracal cat.

4Where to stay

- **Dana Guesthouse (RSCN).** The flagship — restored stone houses with terrace rooms overlooking the valley. ~80–120 JD per person. Book early; sells out in spring and autumn.
- **Dana Tower Hotel.** Family-run, rooftop dinner, the warmest welcome. Budget option ~30–60 JD.
- **Rummana Campground.** RSCN-managed tents on the mountain top. April–November only. ~50–70 JD per person.
- **Feynan Ecolodge.** Off-grid, ~150–200 JD. The most romantic of the lot. Combine with a Wadi Ghuweir or White Dome trail hike.

5Getting there

Dana is in the Tafilah Governorate, accessed via the Desert Highway. From Amman:

- **Self-drive.** 2.5 hours each way via the Desert Highway, 3+ hours via the King's Highway (more scenic).
- **JETT bus.** No direct service; the closest bus drop is at Tafilah, then taxi 30 minutes.
- **Combined road trip.** Natural stop on Amman → Karak → Dana → Petra → Wadi Rum (3-day southern circuit).

> **For solo travellers**
>
> The Dana Hotel is the social option. Easy to meet other travellers at the rooftop dinner. The reserve is best as a 2-night stop.

6Practical tips

- **Best season.** March–May or September–November for the rim; year-round at Feynan (low elevation, milder winter).

- **Book ahead.** RSCN accommodations sell out 4–6 weeks ahead in spring and autumn.
- **Reserve fee.** A few JD per person; included in some accommodation packages.
- **Combine with.** Petra (75 km south, 90 min) or Wadi Mujib (60 km north). Dana works as the southern Karak/Dana / northern Petra pivot.
- **Photography.** Sunrise from the Dana Guesthouse terrace is the signature shot. The valley below fills with mist on cool mornings.

References

1. Wikipedia — Dana, Jordan

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