The Irbid archaeology museums: two collections at Yarmouk University, plus Tell Irbid itself

Two of the best regional archaeology museums in Jordan are on a single university campus 70 km north of Amman — the Museum of Jordanian Heritage and the Jordan Natural History Museum, plus the still-occupied Tell Irbid downtown.

Anas Hu · May 5, 2026

Most travellers in Jordan skip Irbid. It is the country's third-largest city, two hours north of Amman, and on the surface it has the energetic ordinariness of a working university town. But Yarmouk University's campus holds two of the most thoughtful regional museums in the country, and the modern downtown is built directly on top of Tell Irbid — an Early Bronze Age settlement with continuous occupation from approximately 3,200 BCE. If you've done the Decapolis loop (Jerash + Umm Qais + Pella), Irbid is the urban node that pulls them together.

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1Why visit Irbid

The city is the natural base for a north-Jordan archaeology trip. Irbid has two notable museums: the Museum of Jordanian Heritage and the Jordan Natural History Museum, both on the campus of Yarmouk University. Spring through autumn the campus is open to the public; winter access is more restricted.[1]

2The two museums

- **Museum of Jordanian Heritage.** The flagship — pottery, bronze tools, glass, and an excellent ethnographic section on Jordanian Bedouin and rural life. Allow 90 minutes.
- **Jordan Natural History Museum.** Smaller — geology, fauna, the natural history of the Levantine corridor. Allow 45 minutes.

Both are on the Yarmouk University campus and within a short walk of each other. The Museum of Jordanian Heritage's regional pottery sequence is one of the best teaching collections in the country — useful context for any visit to Pella, Jerash, or Umm Qais.

3Tell Irbid: the city under the city

The modern downtown is built directly on Tell Irbid, the Early Bronze Age mound. Excavations at Tell Irbid have revealed continuous occupation from approximately 3,200 BC. You can't usually walk the tell itself — it's under the city — but the museum collections include Tell Irbid pottery, and the local archaeology department occasionally runs guided "city under the city" walks.[1]

> The modern downtown of Irbid is built on a 5,200-year-old settlement. The pottery is in the museum.

4Getting there

Irbid is roughly 70 km north of Amman, about 90 minutes by car. The Yarmouk University campus is on the southern edge of the city — easier to access by taxi than self-drive in the city traffic.

- **JETT bus.** Frequent service from Amman's Tabarbour station. Roughly 90 minutes; modest fare.
- **Self-drive.** 90 minutes on the Amman–Irbid highway.
- **Combine.** Irbid is the natural overnight stop on a Jerash + Ajloun + Umm Qais + Pella circuit.

> **For solo travellers**
>
> Easy half-day. Bus from Amman in the morning, museums + lunch in the campus cafeteria, bus back in the afternoon.

5Practical tips

- **Tickets.** Both museums charge modest fees in JD.
- **Hours.** Closed on Fridays and major holidays. Check before visiting.
- **Photography.** Permitted in most galleries without flash; ask front desk.
- **Combine with.** Pella (40 km west), Umm Qais (40 km north), or Jerash (40 km south).

References

1. Wikipedia — Irbid

Verified by locals: TBD — this article will be reviewed by a Yarmouk University archaeology faculty member before final publication. Drafted from Wikipedia.