Petra by Night: when to go, what to pack, and the camera settings that work

The candlelit walk through the Siq to the Treasury, three nights a week, with practical advice on whether it's worth the ticket and how to photograph it without ruining your eyes for the show.

Anas Hu · May 5, 2026

It runs three nights a week. You walk the Siq lit only by 1,500 paper-bag candle lanterns set against the stone walls, and at the end of the canyon — where the Treasury is — you sit down on a sand-covered floor with two hundred other people in silence while a Bedouin musician plays an oud and a rebab. Then you drink hot mint tea, photograph the Treasury bathed in candlelight, and walk back through a Siq that's now empty.

It is not a walking tour and it is not a son-et-lumière show. It is closer to a piece of staged quietness, sometimes corny, occasionally sublime, and almost always worth the ticket if you have a free evening in Wadi Musa.

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1What Petra by Night is

Petra by Night is an organised evening event run by the Petra Development & Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA). After dark, paper-bag candles are placed along the entire 1.2 km of the Siq and across the Treasury forecourt. Visitors enter at the Visitor Centre at around 8:30 pm, walk the Siq in near-silence,

gather at the Treasury, sit while a Bedouin musician performs, drink mint tea, and walk back. Total elapsed time: roughly two hours.[1]

The Treasury itself — Al-Khazneh — was built at the beginning of the 1st century AD during the reign of Aretas IV Philopatris. Despite its name, it was almost certainly a mausoleum, not a treasury — the legend that pharaoh's gold was hidden in the urn at the top of the façade is a much later Bedouin tradition.[2]

2Is it worth the ticket?

Honestly, it depends. **Yes** if you've never seen the Treasury and have any interest in what the place felt like when only Bedouin lived there. The Siq lit only by candles is the closest a modern visitor can get to the way 19th-century travellers approached Petra. **Maybe not** if you've already done the daytime walk twice and you're tired — the music is brief, the show ends quickly, and the Treasury at night looks different rather than necessarily better.

The single best reason to go: it is the only sanctioned way to be at the Treasury after sunset. Everything else (the daytime walk, the high-place hike) you can do on your own. The candle-lit walk you can't replicate.

3When it runs + how to book

- **Schedule.** Three nights a week — typically Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Confirm with the Visitor Centre on the day; the schedule occasionally changes for weather or public holidays.
- **Time.** Entry around 8:30 pm; show duration roughly two hours including the walk back.
- **Ticket.** Buy at the Visitor Centre on the day, or at any Wadi Musa hotel. Not included in the regular Petra ticket; not included in the Jordan Pass. Pay separately in Jordanian dinars.
- **Where to stand for the music.** The front row is closest to the musicians but the acoustics are best from rows 4–6. The Treasury façade is fully visible from the back — choose lighting over proximity.

> The candle-lit walk is the only thing you can't do in daylight Petra. That's the reason to go.

4What to pack

- **Headtorch — but turn it off in the Siq.** You'll want it for the walk back to the Visitor Centre after the show, but during the inbound walk a headtorch ruins the experience for everyone behind you. Use it sparingly.
- **Layers.** The Siq is cool by night — even in summer it can drop to 15 °C / 59 °F. A long-sleeve layer makes the difference.
- **Closed-toe shoes.** The flagstones in the Siq are uneven and slippery in places. Don't wear sandals.
- **Cash.** Tea is included with the ticket but the Bedouin sell snacks at the Treasury — small JD notes only.
- **Pen + small notebook.** Sounds odd. Try it — the silence in the Siq is sometimes worth writing one sentence in.

5Camera settings that actually work

The Treasury at night is one of the harder photography subjects in the Levant: high contrast, low light, and a brief window in which the candle illumination is at its peak. Settings that work for a hand-held shot:

- **Phone (modern iPhone / Pixel).** Use the camera's "Night mode" — let the phone do the long exposure. Brace your elbows on your knees. Tap to focus on the Treasury column drum, then re-tap to lock. Avoid the wide-angle lens; the standard lens has better low-light performance.
- **Mirrorless / DSLR.** ISO 1600–3200, f/2.8 if your lens permits, shutter 1/15 to 1/30. Aperture priority works; manual gives more control. White balance: tungsten (3200K) keeps the candles warm without going orange.
- **Tripods.** Permitted but you have to set up at the back of the seating area — don't block other people's view.
- **Flash.** Don't. It ruins the show for the people next to you and washes the candlelit Treasury into a flat grey wall.
- **The shot to wait for.** The musicians stop and the crowd is briefly quiet — that's when the Treasury looks most like a single object floating in candlelight. Take the shot then.

> **For solo travellers**
>
> Petra by Night is one of the few evening activities in Wadi Musa that's genuinely solo-friendly — you're sitting in silence with strangers, not making conversation. Bring a small notebook.

6The unwritten rules

- **Walk in silence through the Siq.** Conversations carry, and the experience depends on hearing your own footsteps on the flagstones.
- **Don't kick the candles.** They are placed by hand each evening. A single careless step extinguishes a five-metre stretch.
- **Keep your phone screen dim.** Even one bright phone behind you breaks the dark adaption of everyone for ten metres.
- **Tip the musicians.** Cash, in JD. They are usually local Bedouin from Wadi Musa.

References

1. Petra Development & Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA)
2. Wikipedia — Al-Khazneh (the Treasury)

Verified by locals: TBD — this article will be reviewed by a PDTRA-licensed Petra-area guide before final publication. Drafted from PDTRA + Wikipedia.