The arch towers of Wadi Rum: Burdah, Um Fruth, and the natural bridges most 4x4 tours visit

The Wadi Rum 4x4 circuit hits a handful of natural rock arches — the Burdah Bridge (the highest natural arch in Jordan), Um Fruth, and the smaller bridges. Practical advice for visiting them.

Anas Hu · May 5, 2026

Of all the things you can do in Wadi Rum on a half-day 4×4 tour, the rock arches are the most photographable. The Burdah Bridge, suspended 35 metres above the desert floor on a sandstone cliff, is the highest natural rock arch in Jordan. The Um Fruth Bridge, a thicker shorter span lower down, is the one most visitors actually walk across. There are perhaps a dozen smaller arches scattered across the protected area, and a Bedouin guide can route a 4×4 day around three of them. The standard tourist circuit hits two: Um Fruth in the morning, Burdah after lunch.

Both are worth the climb.

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1Why the arches matter

Wadi Rum is 721 km², a UNESCO World Heritage Mixed Site since 2011, with elevations ranging from 45 metres at the wadi floor to 1,840 metres at Jabal Umm ad Dami (Jordan's highest peak).[1] The geological process that produces the arches is straightforward: the iron-rich sandstone weathers preferentially

along bedding planes, and the wind sculpts the resulting columns into bridges over thousands of years. Most arches in Wadi Rum are still actively eroding — they look the same from year to year, but they're getting thinner.

2Burdah Rock Bridge

The Burdah Rock Bridge sits on a saddle high on the eastern face of Jebel Burdah. The arch is roughly 35 metres above the saddle floor — high enough that the climb is the experience, not just the view. The route up is a 90-minute scramble from the parking spot:

- **Sandstone friction climb.** Easy class III scrambling — exposed in places but well-trodden. A guided group can put 6–8 people on the bridge in an hour.
- **The bridge crossing.** About 15 metres span, 1–2 metres wide. Walkable but exposed — drop on either side. Vertigo-prone visitors stand at the start and turn back.
- **The view.** West across the wadi to the seven pillars; east into the granite escarpment.

3Um Fruth Bridge

Um Fruth is shorter, lower, and thicker than Burdah — a 15-metre span with a wider deck and an easier climb. The walk-up is a 20-minute sandstone scramble. Most 4×4 tours include it as the morning stop. It's the better choice for travellers with kids, vertigo, or a fear of exposed climbing. The view from the bridge isn't as dramatic as Burdah — but the photograph of someone standing on a rock arch in the desert is essentially the same shot from either bridge.

> If you can only do one, do Um Fruth in the morning. It's the easier scramble and gets you the photograph.

4How they fit in a 4×4 day

The standard half-day Wadi Rum 4×4 tour runs 4–5 hours and visits 5–6 stops. A full-day tour adds Burdah. Typical sequence:

1. Lawrence Spring (morning warm-up).

2. Khazali Canyon (Nabataean inscriptions).
3. Um Fruth Bridge.
4. Lunch at a Bedouin camp.
5. Burdah Bridge (afternoon, full-day tour only).
6. Sunset at the seven pillars or a high dune.

The Wadi Rum Visitor Centre at Disi assigns 4×4 tours; book through your camp or the visitor centre directly. Half-day tours don't usually reach Burdah — the saddle is 30 minutes east of the standard circuit.

> **For solo travellers**
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> Most 4×4 tours fill up at the Visitor Centre by sharing the cost — solo travellers pair with couples or groups. Negotiate at the tour desk; per-person pricing drops sharply with 4 in the vehicle.

5Practical tips

- **Footwear.** Trail shoes with good grip — sandstone is grippy when dry, slippery in dust.
- **Water.** Minimum 2 litres per person on a half-day tour; 4 litres on a full-day.
- **Best season.** March–May or September–November. Avoid July–August (40 °C+ on the rock).
- **Photography.** Arch shots work best with a person on the bridge for scale. Drone use requires a permit through the Visitor Centre.
- **Sun.** Wide-brimmed hat + sunscreen. The sandstone reflects the sun back at you on the climb.

References

1. Wikipedia — Wadi Rum

Verified by locals: TBD — this article will be reviewed by a Wadi Rum Visitor Centre-licensed Bedouin guide before final publication. Drafted from Wikipedia.