



[*Staying Places*]



PETER VITALE



FOUR SEASONS HOTEL AMMAN

SOPHISTICATED OASIS TOP CHOICE IN JORDANIAN CAPITAL

When in Amman, there really is no better place to stay than at the Four Seasons Hotel Amman – it's simply the best. The top choice for government dignitaries and corporate executives, the sophisticated 192-room hotel appeals to discriminating leisure travelers too. We shared the elevators with both the president of Brazil, who was traveling on business, and an Abercrombie & Kent group of tourists.

Once past the airport-like security at the outside gates, you enter a creamy gold, Jordanian stone and marble, high-rise oasis. The airy lobby has several smaller parlors, where guests may take afternoon tea or a light lunch.

Large, recently refurbished rooms and suites are done in gold, camel and soft blue colors and have expansive hilltop views of the city, both modern and Bedouin-traditional – through one window, we looked out across a field of sheep, a shepherd and even a donkey, right beside a busy highway. Luxury touches include Bulgari Green Tea bath amenities, Italian linens and flat-screen TVs.

The Four Seasons is an ideal base for making a daytrip to the Crusader castle of Ajloun and the ancient Roman city of Jerash (and watching the re-enacted live chariot

rites) – about an hour's drive from Amman. But at the end of the day, the hotel's spa area is particularly welcome. We swam laps in the large indoor pool, which has a domed ceiling with star-shaped blue glass skylights. There's also a beautiful outdoor pool surrounded by columns, open in warmer weather – magical at sunset when the city is bathed in a golden glow and the call to evening prayer resonates over the hilltops.

For dinner, the excellent Oriental restaurant artfully presents a cross-over menu selection of Chinese dim sum, Japanese sushi (with silver chopsticks) and lightly prepared Thai curries. Or go Italian at the romantic Vivace, featuring black truffle risotto and braised beef cheeks with Portobello mushroom. Either way, you'll toddle off to your comfy bed, sated and content.

— JANICE AND GEORGE MUCALOV