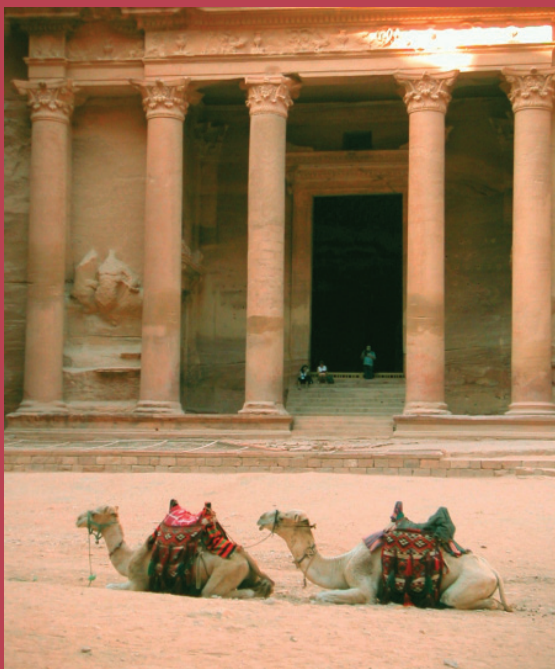


THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO JORDAN



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



March 2007



A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to Peace Corps and to Jordan!

Your decision to accept this invitation marks the beginning of a two-year challenge unlike any you may have known.

As you follow world news, you may find yourself wavering between two positions, both valid and both relevant to your commitment process. On one hand, the political realities of this region are volatile and far from resolved, which may give you pause. On the other hand, there is a need in Jordan for mature individuals who can work and contribute, despite tension or harassment. If there were ever a time and place for Peace Corps to demonstrate its three goals to the fullest: it is now, it is in the Middle East. Jordan is currently the only Peace Corps program in the region, increasing our visibility and our potential.

The above may sound idealistic, but there is the pragmatic, realistic side that is just as important for you to consider in your review of the materials assembled in this *Welcome Book*. I have been here for four years and having served in many countries and capacities with the Peace Corps, I can say wholeheartedly that Jordanian people are among the warmest and most welcoming I have encountered. They are proud and independent and strongly hold their ideals and values, yet they are open to others' ideals and values, particularly when presented in a congenial and exploratory exchange. Jordan is modern and sophisticated in many realms, yet faces significant challenges in others. The Peace Corps has been invited to Jordan to contribute to its development goals and to add skills, perspective, and energy in fields where our Volunteers offer something unique. And you do!

The most successful Volunteers maintain a healthy balance between *idealism* (“I have something to contribute, I can make a difference, and I have the luxury of time and opportunity to do so.”) and *pragmatism* (“I want to develop new skills, advance my professional development, challenge my own thinking, and explore where and how I fit in the world.”). If you are too idealistic, disappointment will come hard and fast when you cannot single-handedly transform the world. However, if you are overly focused on personal achievement, you may lack sufficient motivation or commitment to overcome barriers, resistance, or inertia, and may miss the joys and rewards of living simply. A sense of humor will stand you in good stead. We need to take our work seriously, but not ourselves.

We look forward to meeting you at Queen Alia Airport. We are interested in what you bring to your service and what you seek to accomplish. For each of you, this will be a distinct journey shaped by your goals, strategies, and expectations. The staff and I are counting on you. Involving you in our vision and plans for Peace Corps/Jordan is key to our success and contribution as well. We will do all that we can to create the “possibility” of an outstanding tour...creating the “reality” of these two years will be up to you.

Darcy Neill
Country Director

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PEACE CORPS/JORDAN HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of Peace Corps in Jordan

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is one of the more recent countries to invite the Peace Corps to provide technical assistance to its people. Peace Corps began in Jordan in 1997 as the result of discussions between the late King Hussein and former President Clinton. American-born Queen Noor and influential politicians familiar with the Peace Corps were instrumental in establishing this productive relationship.

Jordan is the eighth Arab country to have hosted the Peace Corps over the years, but the only one in the Middle East with a current program. Now, more than ever, Volunteers are essential in bridging gaps between, and dispelling myths about, our country and this region. Volunteers can foster peace through trusting relationships, mutual respect, and diligent contributions.

The first group of 27 Jordan Volunteers began their service in July 1997 in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) supported by the royal family. In 1998, Volunteers began working with the Ministry of Education, teaching English in rural primary and secondary schools. Our current youth development project got underway in 2001.

Due to security concerns, the Peace Corps suspended its program and withdrew Volunteers in November 2002. In 2004, however, Peace Corps/Jordan resumed programming, welcoming 25 English teachers, 10 special education Volunteers, and 15 youth development Volunteers for

assignments at underserved schools and centers. In July 2005, 32 Volunteers in all three sectors arrived. Currently, there are about 60 Volunteers serving throughout the kingdom.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Jordan

In collaboration with formal partners, Peace Corps/Jordan concentrates on three primary areas: English education, youth development, and special education. In Jordanian society, a significant percentage of the population is well educated and relatively sophisticated. At the same time, in many rural areas, infrastructure, education, and social services are limited.

Volunteers in the education project work in and outside the classroom, assisting Jordanian teachers in formal and nonformal approaches to teaching English in rural schools. As native speakers, Volunteers are especially valuable in improving students' and teachers' confidence and fluency. Supplementary to classroom responsibilities, Volunteers initiate projects, such as language resource or computer training centers, clubs and libraries, and almost any project that addresses local priorities.

His Majesty King Abdullah II launched a national socio-economic development plan in January 2002 that emphasizes the development of human resources through Internet and computer education and improved education in English, science, and mathematics. This involves everything from syllabus review to upgrading teacher qualifications. The Ministry of Education and Peace Corps staff collaborate to define the role Volunteers play to support these reforms.

The youth development project focuses on identifying opportunities for Jordanian youth, particularly young women and girls. Approximately 60 percent of Jordan's population is under the age of 21. For this reason, Volunteers are involved

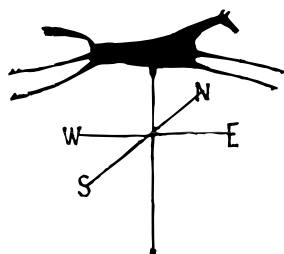
in both government-sponsored and NGO-supported youth centers in promotion of the kingdom's National Youth Strategy (NYS), working with staff and youth to encourage healthier lifestyles, including nutrition, exercise, and hygiene. They promote life skills so youth can assume a greater leadership role in their communities.

In the special education sector, Volunteers work with physically and mentally challenged individuals who are often marginalized in traditional Jordanian society. Volunteers have effectively increased public sensitivity and worked with Jordan's Ministries of Education and Social Development to integrate hearing and visually impaired students into the mainstream school system.

Peace Corps Volunteers in Jordan bring unique skills and ideas to address the needs of their communities. Combining local assets and Volunteer creativity produces more sustainable projects. Successes have included working with a local community to allow girls access to a local youth center; repair of used wheelchairs for redistribution to the needy; developing local Special Olympic programs; implementing summer camps for female youth; creating therapeutic playgrounds for disabled children; promoting local Volunteerism by involving university students in Peace Corps projects; and creating a variety of teaching materials in Arabic.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: JORDAN AT A GLANCE



History

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a modern, Middle Eastern, sovereign state, which was established in the middle of the 20th century. The geographical area in which Jordan is situated has a fascinating history of settlement and organized community life stretching back almost 9,000 years. Stone Age inhabitants lived along the river valleys half a million years ago. Permanent stone and mud brick houses were first constructed around 8000 B.C.E. As of 3200 B.C.E., urban life has been recorded in walled cities situated throughout the land. Semitic Amorites settled the area of Canaan in the Jordan River Valley around 2000 B.C.E. Subsequent settlers and invaders included the Egyptians, Israelites, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, Turks, and the British.

Until the early 1900s, political boundaries in this region were based on clan migrations and affiliations rather than geographical lines drawn in the sand. The modern boundaries of Jordan were established when the League of Nations mandated that Great Britain administer the former Ottoman territory now known as Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, and Iraq. During this time, the Hashemite Prince Abdullah was chosen to rule the semi-autonomous Emirate of Transjordan. In 1946, Britain abolished the mandate and Transjordan became the Kingdom of Jordan. In 1948, Britain oversaw creation of the state of Israel, and the West Bank was assigned to Jordan. Violence erupted as a result of this mandate, causing more than 1 million Palestinian refugees to flee, many into Jordan. This wave of refugees nearly doubled the population of Jordan, putting social and economic pressure on the country.

In 1951, King Abdullah I was assassinated outside the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. His son, Talal, ruled for one year before being proclaimed unsuitable. Abdullah's grandson Hussein, only 17, became King of Jordan. Ruling from 1952 to 1999, Hussein was one of the longest reigning monarchs in the world, surviving a number of Egyptian and Palestinian attempts to overthrow his rule. He was extremely popular among the East Bankers and the Bedouin population of Jordan.

As a result of the 1967 war between Israel and the Arab states, Israel obtained military occupation of the West Bank. Immediately following the war, Palestinian refugees again flooded into Jordan. The country's economy suffered the loss of valuable agricultural lands, tourist income from the holy lands, and revenues from the West Bank. In 1988, Jordan renounced its claim to the West Bank.

In 1991, Jordan agreed to participate in direct peace negotiations with Israel sponsored by the United States and Russia. This breakthrough led to a host of new developments. Legislation passed in 1992 ending martial law, legalizing political parties, and reducing government monitoring of the media. In 1994, Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty permitting trade, travel, and tourism between the two nations. Since then, the tenor of Jordanian-Israeli relations has varied and, at times, been strained due to actions in and reactions to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

King Hussein passed away early in 1999 and was succeeded by his son, King Abdullah II, who has continued his father's policies of trying to bring peace and stability to the region.

Government

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy ruled by King Abdullah II bin Hussein. The constitution gives the king broad powers

to determine domestic and foreign policy, while the prime minister and cabinet manage daily affairs of government. Parliament consists of a 55-member senate appointed by the king and a 110-member popularly elected chamber of deputies. Parliamentary elections were last held in June 2003, and parliament reconvened in July 2003. The constitution provides for an independent judiciary.

Economy

Jordan has a mixed economy, with a significant but declining government role, few natural resources, and very limited water supplies. The government is increasing the role of the private sector and improving the country's investment climate by pursuing sound economic policies and trade and investment liberalization, including a landmark free trade agreement (FTA) with the U.S., that went into effect in December 2001. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth has strengthened since 2000, yet high poverty and unemployment rates (13.4 percent) remain significant problems; per capita income is estimated at about \$2,164.

People and Culture

In general, Jordanians are friendly and hospitable to Westerners. Many urban Jordanians were educated in the West and speak excellent English. While Jordanians will often voice criticism of American policy in the Middle East, individual Americans are generally well-liked and treated respectfully.

Jordan has a population of about 5.3 million of whom 95 percent are Sunni Muslim. Arabic is the official language. The literacy rate is 90 percent and life expectancy stands at about 71 years. The population includes approximately 1.7 million Palestinian refugees who reside in Jordan. Christians and

Shiites represent small minorities, and there are even smaller numbers of non-Arab Sunni Circassians from the Southern Caucuses, as well as Armenians and Kurds.

Depending on the source, Palestinians represent 60 percent of the population. Some continue to live as registered refugees in United Nations-supported camps, but many have established Jordanian citizenship and play important roles in the country.

Many Jordanians claim lineage from Bedouin forefathers. They are often among the underprivileged in Jordanian society. While many Bedouin have left nomadic life and only periodically graze their animals, others have settled in government-funded villages where water and animal feed are provided. Still, a large percentage of Bedouins have decided not to accept government medical and educational assistance in an attempt to maintain a lifestyle that has served them well for generations. Bedouins are proud, honorable people who represent an ancient system of cultural values and norms slowly dying out in Jordan.

Environment

Jordan is about the size of Indiana, a total of 89,544 square kilometers, with geographical and climatic extremes. The country is divided into three geographic zones: the Jordan Valley, East Bank Plateau, and the East Bank. The Jordan Valley stretches the length of the country from its northern border with Syria south to its border with Saudi Arabia. The East Bank Plateau is the most populated region, whereas the East Bank is mainly desert stretching to the Syrian and Iraqi borders.

The climate varies widely from region to region. The Jordan Valley can reach 40 degrees Celsius (roughly 110 degrees Fahrenheit). Amman and Petra often enjoy snow in the wintertime. The Plateau's weather is predominantly warm

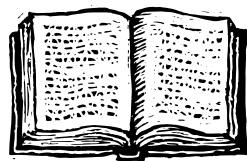
and dry with temperatures ranging between 20 to 30 degrees Celsius. Lastly, the East Bank and the desert are extremely hot and dry in the summertime and windy and freezing in winter.

Western Jordan is Mediterranean in climate with moderate precipitation falling in winter and early spring. The weather is usually sunny with temperatures ranging from 80 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit with low humidity. The days are usually hot and the evenings cool. The fall season is pleasant. During the winter, snow sometimes falls in the higher elevations, while early spring rains create a green countryside. The eastern and southeastern areas of Jordan have a very hot and arid desert climate, while the Jordan River Valley is considered semi-tropical.

Winter can be unpleasantly cold especially during long periods of precipitation. But the rain is always welcomed! Most Jordanians have heaters in their homes, usually portable and fueled by kerosene, propane, or electricity. Many houses in Jordan are concrete and trap cold air, adding to the discomfort.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



We offer a list of websites for additional information about Peace Corps and Jordan or to connect you with returned Volunteers. Please keep in mind that links change frequently. We have tried to make sure these links are active and current, but we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, keep in mind that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of Peace Corps or the United States government. You may also find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, remember that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience Volunteer service in the same way.

General Information about Jordan

www.state.gov

U.S. State Department website publishes background notes and periodic travel advisories for countries around the world. Find Jordan and learn more about its social and political history.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

Online world atlas includes maps and geographical information about countries around the world. Each country page includes links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that cover comprehensive historical, social, and political matters.

<http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/res.html>

Allows you to search for statistical information on United Nations member states.

www.worldinformation.com

Source of current and historical information about countries around the world.

Jordan-specific Websites

These sites provide news and information on Jordan.

www.jordantimes.com

The Jordan Times, major daily English newspaper

www.petra.gov.jo

Jordanian News Agency (in Arabic and English)

www.nic.gov.jo

Jordanian National Information System

www.usembassy-amman.org.jo

U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan

Regional Information

www.arabinfo.org

Website for Voice of the Arab world, a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing education and information to Arab and Muslim people around the world. Contains extensive information on Arab and Muslim countries, music, books, news, and links to other sites.

www.4arabs.com

A source for Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern sites. You can find information on Arab countries, culture and related links.

International Development in Jordan

<http://www.usaidjordan.org/>

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

www.undp-jordan.org

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/jordan_statistics.html

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Connect with Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/peacecorps>

This Yahoo site hosts a bulletin board where prospective Volunteers and returned Volunteers can come together.

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “friends of” groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities. Or go straight to the Friends of Jordan site: www.friendsofjordan.org.

<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>

This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web Ring. Browse the Web ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts from countries around the world.

<http://peacecorpsonline.org/messages/messages/467/2300.html>

Contains contact information for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Jordan and other information about programs in Jordan.

Suggested Books about Jordan and the Middle East

1. Armstrong, Karen. *Islam: A Short History*. NY: Modern Library; revised update edition, 2002. Discusses the history of the region from the sixth-century days of the Prophet Muhammad to the present.
2. Asad, Muhammad. *Road to Mecca*. KY: Fons Vitae; reprint edition, 2001. Autobiography of an Austrian journalist who traveled throughout the Middle East immersing himself in the Arab culture and converting to Islam.
3. Bowker, John. *Voices of Islam*. Rockport, MA: Oneworld Publications, 1995. Examines common misunderstandings of Islam.
4. Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck and John L. Esposito. *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1998. Essays exploring the impact of Islamic resurgence on gender issues in several Muslim countries.
5. Harik, Ramsay M. and Elsa Marston. *Women in the Middle East*. London: Frank Watts Publishing, 2003. A brief introduction to this complex subject.
6. Hourani, Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; revised edition, 2003. A single-volume history of the Arabic-speaking peoples of the Islamic world through several decades, beginning with Islam's rise in the 7th century to the late 1980s.

7. Nydell , Margaret K. *Understanding Arabs. A Guide for Westerners*. Yarmouth, ME: International Press; third edition, 2002. Introduction to the Arab culture that covers beliefs and values; religion and society; role of the family, friends, and strangers; roles of men and women; etiquette; and communication.
8. Patai, Ralph. *The Arab Mind*. New York: Hatherleigh Press; revised edition, 2002. Explores Arab culture, religion, and issues.
9. Robins, Philip. *A History of Jordan*. MA: Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Surveys Jordan's political history from the early 1920s to the present day.
10. Viorst, Milton. *Sandcastles: The Arabs in Search of the Modern World*. NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995. Introduction to the history and current political situations in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

NOTES



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service we take for granted in the United States. Though the Jordanian mail service is generally reliable, some mail may simply not arrive (fortunately this is not a frequent occurrence, but it does happen). Advise family and friends to send all letters via air mail. Mail can sometimes take as long as two to four weeks between U.S. and Jordan in either direction.

If possible, write your family on a regular basis and number your letters. Experience has shown that when a month or two goes by without news from the Volunteer, friends and loved ones become very concerned. Please advise parents, friends, and relatives that mail may be sporadic and that they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly.

Packages can be sent via international mail through the U.S. postal system. All packages addressed to you are subject to customs. Hints: Used items are usually delivered customs-free, while new items are taxed at full value. Smaller packages (particularly those in padded envelopes) seem to make it through with relative ease.

Important: Never have anyone send cash through the mail. Such letters seldom arrive. Packages are inspected by custom officers.

Your address during pre-service training will be:

“Your Name,” PCT
c/o Peace Corps/Jordan
P.O. Box 6338
Amman 11118
Jordan

During pre-service training, mail should be sent to the above address. Mail will be forwarded to the training site regularly. Do not have packages sent during training, as they will have to be cleared in Amman and you will not have access to the post office during working hours. Once you are at your permanent site, it will be wise to get to know the post office staff and have mail sent directly there. In Jordan, personal relationships are extremely important and can help with red tape.

Telephones

Generally, high quality, long-distance communication is available. However, Volunteers have had little success with calling cards (AT&T, MCI, etc.). It is possible to purchase Jordanian pre-paid international phone cards in various JD (Jordanian dinar) denominations, but these can only be used for public phones. Cellphones from the United States will not work here. Cellphones can be purchased in Jordan, and many Volunteers purchase them (at their own expense) to keep in touch with family and friends in Jordan and in the United States.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

While computers are available in most schools and in some host agencies in Jordan, you should not expect your work site to have Internet access or e-mail. Internet cafés are found in all major cities, usually at a cost of JD1 (U.S. \$1.40) per hour. Some Volunteers have laptops. The Peace Corps office has three computers and a printer for Volunteer use during office hours. Volunteers must coordinate their use among themselves.

Housing and Site Location

After completing pre-service training, you will move to your actual work site for two years of service. Your host agency or school will have helped to identify acceptable housing within the local community. Your living accommodation is intended to be simple and comparable to your Jordanian neighbors. Most buildings in Jordan are concrete and not insulated. Your house/apartment will likely have one or two rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. The Peace Corps will provide a refrigerator, gas space heater, stove (no oven), and a small allowance for the purchase of essential household items. Washing machines, clothes dryers, air conditioners, and central heating are seldom found in either urban or rural areas and will not be featured in Volunteer housing, but you will have indoor plumbing, electricity, and hot water.

Volunteer accommodations must meet the Peace Corps' health, safety, and security standards, yet be modest and typical of the area in which you work and live. You may have an apartment or a free-standing house, some part of which may be occupied by the owner's family. You will also have the option to live with a host family that can enhance your cross-cultural experience.

You are expected to live in the village where you work. This is very important! Some of your Jordanian supervisors and co-workers may commute from the nearest town and be less involved in community life. However, as a Volunteer, you are more than an employee doing a job. You are considered a member of the community in which you work, and there is no better way to demonstrate this than by being visible and involved.

Other Volunteers will be within relatively close proximity due to Jordan's small size and reliable transportation. You may have another Volunteer in the same village, or it may be a few hours by bus to the nearest Volunteer site. The Peace Corps office in Amman is no more than a four- or five-hour drive from the furthest Volunteer site (public buses may take longer).

Living Allowance and Money Management

Once sworn in, Volunteers receive a monthly living allowance in Jordanian dinars. This living allowance covers daily needs such as rent, utilities, food, and toiletries. Depending on lifestyle choices, most Volunteers live comfortably on their monthly living allowance. Volunteers also receive a small leave allowance.

Peace Corps/Jordan establishes a bank account (with an ATM card) for every Volunteer. All allowances are deposited directly into that account. ATM access is exceptionally good throughout Jordan.

There should be no need to supplement your living allowance with money from home. In fact, you are discouraged from using personal savings to raise your lifestyle above that of your Jordanian colleagues. Volunteers may, nevertheless, wish to bring along a credit card for emergencies, trips, or special occasions. American Express, Visa, and MasterCard are accepted in many hotels, shops, and restaurants frequented by tourists, especially in the capital and larger towns. In Amman, there are a number of places to change money with little or no commission. ATMs are widely available and will accept most major bankcards. Banks will charge at least a 1.5 percent cashing fee for traveler's checks and some will only cash them for their customers.

Food and Diet

High-quality food is generally available in Jordan. Tea, unleavened flat bread (pita), rice, and yogurt are Jordanian staples and you can find a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables at reasonable prices. In addition, eggs, powdered milk and drink mixes, canned tuna, pasta/noodles, and processed cheese are also on hand. Lamb, chicken, and goat are common; however, due to their relatively high cost, they are not always included in daily diets. In general, meals are rice-based and mildly spiced.

Vegetarians will experience minimal problems in ensuring an interesting and wholesome diet. You should be aware, however, that most meals in Jordanian homes are eaten from a common plate, and there will likely be meat on the plate.

Small shops, called *doucans*, are found everywhere, even in the smallest rural community. The range of goods offered depends on the size of the community and local preferences. Only very basic foods and household necessities are found in the smallest stores. There are several 24-hour supermarkets in Amman and a few other cities, and mini-markets are universally found in provincial towns.

Islamic law forbids eating pork and drinking alcohol. Although somewhat tolerant of other people's beliefs and customs, rural Jordanians are likely to show little respect to Volunteers who are known to drink—especially if it becomes public knowledge through gossip or if the physical effects of overindulgence are apparent. Tea, Arabic coffee, soft drinks, fruit juices, and bottled water are readily available throughout the country.

The holy month of Ramadan follows the Islamic calendar, so its timing changes every year. Ramadan is a time when nothing is consumed during daylight hours (fast is broken at nightfall). Smoking is not permitted during the day. Volunteers should be respectful of religious requirements and significance during the month of Ramadan. As Ramadan will begin while you are still a trainee, you will experience what that entails during pre-service training.

Transportation

As a Volunteer in Jordan, you are not permitted to own, rent, or operate any form of motorized vehicle, including motorcycles. Volunteers are also not permitted to be a passenger on a motorcycle. Most Volunteers can catch a small village bus from

their home into the nearest city. In these small cities, they can catch a bus to Amman. Although buses are cheap and universal, they can be time-consuming and unpredictable, as they do not run on fixed schedules. Since most village buses stop running at nightfall (4:45 p.m. in the winter), patience and planning are required. Within larger regional centers, private and shared taxis are most frequently used. Travel on buses within Amman is manageable, but at first it will be an adventure as there are neither set schedules nor posted routes.

Geography and Climate

The geography of Jordan is varied, from the Dead Sea at 1,300 feet below sea level (the lowest place on earth) to mountains reaching 5,700 feet. On the western edge of the country, the Jordan River winds its way through a low valley into the Dead Sea. Mountains rise to the east of this valley, with Amman located on the central highlands. About 80 percent of Jordan is arid, rocky, and receives less than 100 millimeters of rain per year. The temperature varies from 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer to below freezing in the winter. Skies are blue and sunny from March until November, and from November to March when it does rain, it pours.

Professionalism, Dress, Behavior

Jordan is a Muslim country and you will work in rural areas and small towns. Jordanians take great pride in their personal appearance no matter what their economic status. Dress codes are very conservative. To gain the acceptance, respect, and confidence of your co-workers, it is essential that you dress and conduct yourself modestly and professionally. Suits are not required, but clothing should always be neat and clean. It is not appropriate to wear jeans or T-shirts at the workplace or on social occasions. (As you adjust to Jordanian

culture and can make more informed decisions about dress, you may find a few social or tourist situations where jeans would be acceptable.) Shorts are never appropriate for male or female Volunteers, regardless of the weather or activity. Halter-tops or tight-fitting apparel worn by women are considered offensive and provocative by Jordanians and must not be worn. Most women in Jordan cover their hair with a scarf, and while Volunteers will not be expected to do so, they may still receive some pressure to cover. Female Volunteers wear loose-fitting clothing that covers wrists and ankles and shirts that reach mid-thigh. Male Volunteers wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts for work. The packing list section at the end of this book goes into more detail regarding appropriate choices. Dressing according to local custom is crucial for successful integration.

Important! Appropriate clothing can easily be purchased once you've arrived. There is no need to pack an entire wardrobe before you see for yourself what the dress codes are really like.

The weather can be very hot, so natural fibers will be more comfortable. Winters are cold and sometimes wet with snow falling in some areas. Appropriate warm clothing and layering are necessary, as most buildings and offices are insufficiently heated.

Jordanians generally do not exercise outdoors, but a few Volunteers have eventually felt comfortable running in their villages with the appropriate attire. Volunteers should consider options for indoor physical activity (jumping rope, yoga, etc.).

The Peace Corps expects Volunteers to behave in a manner that fosters respect within your community and reflects well on you as a citizen of the United States and a Volunteer in the Peace Corps. You will receive ample training in appropriate behavior and cultural sensitivity during pre-service training.

As a Volunteer, you have the status of an invited guest, and thus you should be sensitive to the habits, tastes, and taboos of your hosts. Public drinking or even references to alcohol are offensive and can be damaging to a Volunteer's reputation and, hence, effectiveness. Also, there are strong taboos regarding intimate relationships, and extreme discretion must be exercised. Unmarried Muslim women engaging in sexual relations may be subject to severe family retribution and even death. It is forbidden for unmarried males and females to be alone together. This applies to Volunteers as well, so it is inappropriate for males and females to visit each other at their sites. You must constantly monitor your personal behavior and understand the consequences of your actions.

Long hair on men is not culturally acceptable and male trainees should arrive at staging with short, undyed hair.

Body piercing is unacceptable and tattoos must be covered at all times. Pierced ears for women are acceptable.

Social Activities

Volunteers find the hospitality and generosity of Jordanians to be a wonderful part of the culture, and visiting and tea drinking will likely become a daily routine for you. Social activities will vary depending on where you are located as well as your gender and marital status. Many Volunteers attend weddings, parties, and picnics with Jordanians and often visit neighbors' and colleagues' homes for lunch or tea. Most social activities revolve around food and family, and there can be pressure to eat a lot. During Ramadan, Volunteers often fast and are invited to share *iftar* (a feast of traditional Jordanian dishes) with neighbors and friends at sunset.

There is strict separation between genders in Jordan. For example, men and women, although celebrating the same occasion, will do so in separate areas. Male Volunteers should not expect to socialize with female Volunteers after training at either's site. This standard is applied even to visiting friends and family members of the opposite sex.

Personal Safety

More information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is detailed in the Health Care and Safety section, but this is such an important issue that it cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, having limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as wealthy are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies to help Volunteers reduce these risks and enhance their safety and security. That said, you are expected to take primary responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

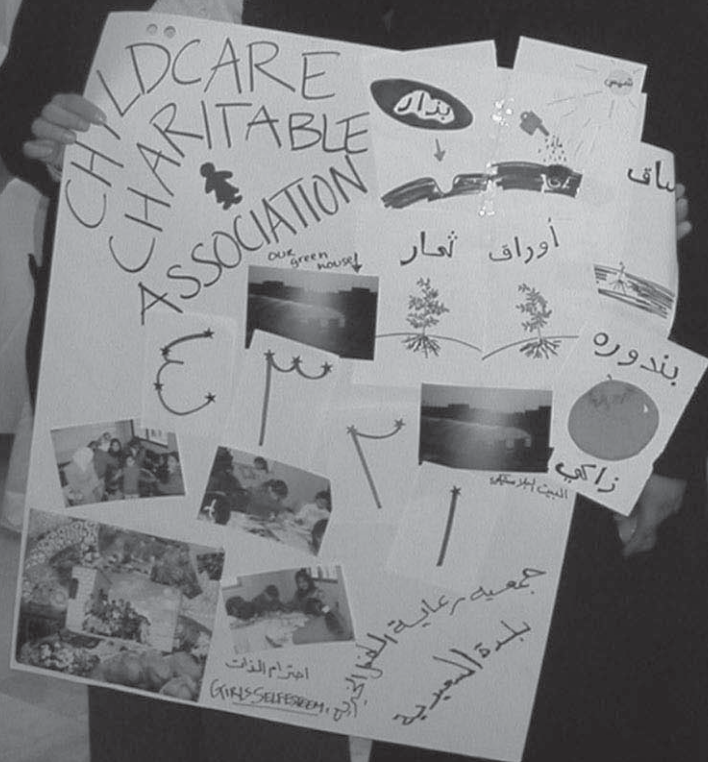
Although the potential for job satisfaction is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter numerous frustrations. Due to financial or other challenges, collaborating agencies do not always provide the support promised. The pace of work and life is much slower than what most Americans consider normal. For these reasons, your Peace Corps experience will be a journey of emotional peaks and valleys as you adapt to the new culture and environment.

You may be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work, perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will ever experience. Often you will find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your counterparts with little guidance from supervisors. You may work for months without seeing any visible impact or without receiving feedback on your work. Development is a slow process! Positive progress is often seen only after the combined efforts of several generations of Volunteers. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without the validation of immediate results.

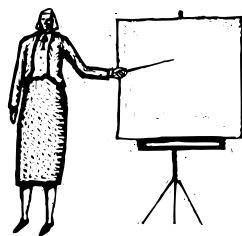
Though you will not be making as many environmental adjustments in Jordan as you might in other Peace Corps countries, you must be aware of and accept the significant cultural adjustments you will have to make (not drinking alcohol, gender expectations, loss of privacy). Be open to these changes and take time to consider them before leaving the U.S. Jordan is a beautiful country with generous people. The adjustments may be difficult at times, but it will be worth it to become a full participant in your community.

To approach and overcome these challenges, you will need maturity, flexibility, and resourcefulness. You must make a commitment to integrate into your community, withhold judgment, and work hard, if you expect to be a success. Peace Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the highs are well worth the lows and most depart feeling that they have gained as much as or more than they gave.

NOTES



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Training is an essential part of your Peace Corps service. Pre-service training will provide you with the support, information, and opportunities to enable you to live and work effectively in Jordan. We will build upon the experiences and expertise you bring to the Peace Corps. It is important to approach training with an open mind, a desire to learn, and a willingness to become involved. Trainees officially become Peace Corps Volunteers after meeting the training competencies and requirements of pre-service training.

The 11-week training provides you the opportunity to learn new skills and practice them as they apply to Jordan. You will receive training and orientation in language, cross-cultural communication and adaptation, development issues, health and personal safety, and technical skills pertinent to your assignment. The skills you learn will serve as a foundation that you will build upon throughout your two years. You will experience local culture and customs on your own through your stay with a host family and the community-based training.

For the first few days after your arrival, you will stay at a central training facility. There you will receive vaccinations and be introduced to basic language skills and the cross-cultural adaptation process. After this initial period, trainees will be divided into village groups of five to six trainees and a language and culture facilitator and move to their village to begin community-based training. You will live with Jordanian host families and learn Arabic and Jordanian culture and focus on building technical skills. Living with your host family will be intense at times, but also one of the most rewarding aspects of your service.

Note: Married couples assigned to different projects will have to live in separate villages during training as technical training is conducted at different sites.

The goals and assessment criteria that each trainee must meet to become a Volunteer will be clearly articulated at the outset. Staff and self assessment of your performance is a continual process, characterized by a dialogue between you and training staff. During these 11 weeks, some of you may determine that two years of service in Jordan is not appropriate for you. Training staff, in consultation with permanent country staff, will work with you in making this determination by providing feedback throughout training. After successfully completing pre-service training, you will be sworn in and depart for your permanent site.

Training is intense and sometimes stressful. The best advice we can give is to maintain your sense of humor and get as much accomplished as possible. We believe all of the information and each of the experiences you encounter will be fundamental to your success as a Volunteer.

Technical Training

Technical training prepares you by building on the skills you already have and your ability to acquire or develop new skills in a manner appropriate to in-country realities. Pre-service training is conducted by Peace Corps staff, skilled Jordanian trainers, and current Volunteers. Training places great emphasis on your learning to be independent and resourceful within Jordan. You will also develop strategies for transferring skills to your community.

There will be targeted sessions for each project, but much of your learning will be self-directed with guidance by the training staff. On a regular basis, you will take public transportation to the training center for more structured

sessions. This will allow you to benefit from guest speakers and experts and to share and reflect on your progress and experiences with trainees from the other villages. You will review technical sector goals and meet with Jordanian representatives of the agencies and organizations that have invited Peace Corps to assist them.

Language Training

Language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. They are critical to your job performance, help you integrate into your community, and ease personal adaptation to your new surroundings. The language component is the heart of the training program, and you must meet minimum language requirements to become a Volunteer.

Formal language classes are given by experienced Arabic instructors six days per week in your village groups. Arabic is also integrated into health, culture, personal safety, and technical components. You will have both classroom instruction and assignments to work on with your host family and in the community. Your goal is to achieve a competency in basic social communication that you can then build at your site. Prior to swearing in, you will work on strategies to continue language learning during your service. The Peace Corps will provide modest funds to pay for a tutor to continue your Arabic for the first year of your service.

Cross-Cultural Training

Cross-cultural training will include an introduction to Jordan's history, customs, and politics, as well as an orientation to Islamic beliefs and practices. Adjusting to another culture requires three basic skills: the ability to predict the behavior of others; the ability to accept, without judgment, local values and customs; and the ability to adapt your own behavior to conform to that culture's expectations. We do not expect you

to be someone you are not; rather, we expect you to take on the challenge of finding ways to be true to yourself and responsive to local cultural norms.

As part of your 11-week training, you will live with a Jordanian host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition into life at your site. Living with a host family will likely challenge your sense of personal freedom and privacy, but many Volunteers indicate that it is an enriching and vital part of adjusting to Jordan.

Host families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of the pre-service training program and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Jordan. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families that last throughout their service and beyond.

Health Training

You will be given basic medical training and information to maintain your personal health. You are expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own well-being by adhering to all medical policies. You are required to attend all medical sessions. Topics include preventive health measures as well as medical issues that Volunteers may encounter while in Jordan. Sexual health, nutrition, mental health, and personal safety issues are also covered.

Safety Training

During specific safety and security sessions, you will learn to adopt a lifestyle that reduces risk in your home, at work, and during your travels. You will learn appropriate and effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention. The emphasis throughout training will be on your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

Important Packing Note: Prepare one bag that will serve

you throughout the pre-service training period. The second (preferably the larger) one will be stored at the training center until it is time to head to your site. This is not merely an administrative convenience. You will be living with a Jordanian family and, while you will have your own room, your life and your belongings will be very much on display. Americans are often perceived as being materialistic so we encourage you to simplify your existence in these early days. Possessions can be a distraction or a barrier to truly integrating as one of the family or community.

Additional Training During Volunteer Service

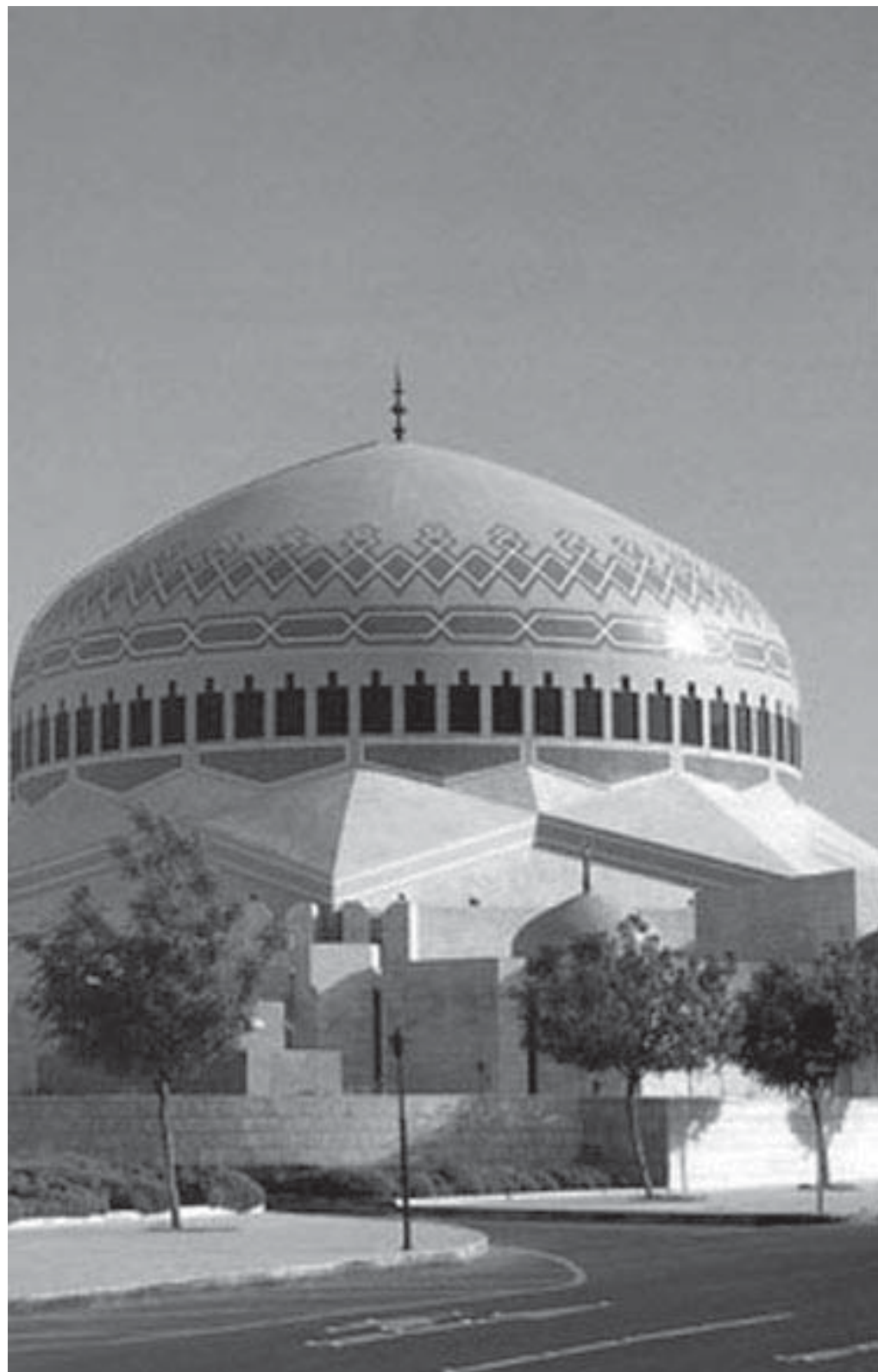
In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continuous opportunities to confirm their commitment to Peace Corps service and increase technical, language, and cross-cultural skills.

There are usually three additional training events:

- *In-service training (IST)*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their progress and experiences with fellow Volunteers and Jordanian counterparts.
- *Mid-service conference (MSC)*: Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year and assessing and adjusting personal and project objectives to ensure a successful second year of service.
- *Close-of-service conference (COS)*: Prepares Volunteers for bringing closure to their service, reviews individual projects and personal experiences, and prepares for readjustment, for life after Peace Corps.

The number, length, and design of these training events are adapted to country-specific priorities and conditions as well as to the needs of the Volunteers. The key to this training system is that events are integrated and interrelated, from pre-departure orientation through the close of service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated collaboratively by staff and Volunteers.

NOTES



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN JORDAN



The Peace Corps' highest priority is ensuring the health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive rather than the curative approach to disease. Peace Corps/Jordan maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer who manages Volunteer and trainee primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services are available at local American-standard hospitals through referral by the medical officer. If you become seriously ill, you may be treated in the capital, Amman, or transferred to the United States for additional testing and/or treatment.

Health Issues in Jordan

Major health problems among Peace Corps Volunteers in Jordan are rare and are often the result of a Volunteer's failure to take preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common health problems here are the same ones found at home, such as colds, diarrhea, hemorrhoids, constipation, sinus infection, skin infections, headaches, dental problems, minor injuries, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), adjustment disorders, and emotional problems. These may be more frequent or compounded by life in Jordan because certain environmental factors here raise the risk or exacerbate the severity of the symptoms or illness. Smoking, for example, is not restricted at work or in public buildings. Volunteers are usually unprepared for the amount of cigarette smoke to which they are exposed. Summers are hot and dry. Dust and wind in parts of the country may cause your throat, nose, and eyes to sting and create cold-like symptoms. Winters, on the other hand, are cold and damp and may lead to sinusitis and upper-respiratory infection.

One of the most common health concerns in Jordan is diarrhea, which can be avoided by thoroughly washing fruits and vegetables and by boiling your drinking water.

Hepatitis is always present in the population. You will be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, meningitis, tetanus, diphtheria, typhoid, MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella), and polio, if you have no documentation of previous immunization.

Helping You Stay Healthy

Peace Corps will provide all the necessary immunizations, medications, and information needed to stay healthy and productive during your two years of service.

Shortly after your arrival, you will receive a medical handbook and supplies for basic first aid and treatment of mild illnesses. Before going to your permanent site you will receive a medical kit. The contents of the kit are listed later in this section. You will have access to replenishment of medical supplies through the medical office. However, you will be responsible for bringing with you an initial supply of any prescription medications. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription medications used daily with you. These will be supplied by the medical office, but if not available in Jordan, they will be ordered from the US and it may take several months for new shipments to arrive.

You will have physical exams at mid-service and at the end of your tour. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Jordan will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be properly treated in Jordan, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, the ultimate responsibility for your health is yours. Proper precautions will significantly reduce risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” should be kept in mind throughout your Peace Corps service.

It is critical to your health that you report promptly to the medical office for scheduled immunizations and that you inform the medical officer immediately of significant illness and injuries.

Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning, amoebas, giardia, hepatitis A, dysentery, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. The medical officer will review Jordan-specific standards for food and water preparation during pre-service training.

HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are present in this part of the world, but, because of sexual mores, are not readily discussed. AIDS is an incurable disease. Peace Corps has adopted worldwide medical policies and practices to protect its Volunteers and staff from transmission of the disease, but it is the Volunteer who bears responsibility for avoiding risks of infection. HIV/AIDS is a concern to all sexually active individuals, both heterosexual and homosexual. Abstinence is the only certain choice for prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, anyone at all, do not assume the person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information about this important issue during pre-service training medical sessions.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical office.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is a health condition that is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions requiring medical attention, but also may have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if a pregnant Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that Peace Corps medical and program standards for continued service can be met. The majority of Volunteers who become pregnant are medically separated.

Feminine hygiene products are readily available for purchase on the local market, and the Peace Corps medical officer will not provide them. If you require a specific feminine hygiene product, please bring a two-year supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

Peace Corps provides Volunteers with a first-aid kit containing basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that might occur during service. These can be restocked periodically at your Peace Corps medical office.

Medical Kit Contents:

- Ace bandage
- Adhesive tape
- Antacid tablets (Tums)

- Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
- Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymixin B ointment
- Band-Aids
- Butterfly closures
- Calamine lotion
- Cepacol lozenges
- Condoms
- Dental floss
- Diphenhydramine HCL (Benadryl): 25mg tablets
- Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
- Iodine tablets (Water purification tablets)
- Lip balm (Chapstick)
- Oral rehydration salts
- Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
- Pseudoephedrine HCL (Sudafed): 30mg tablets
- *Red Cross First Aid and Personal Safety Manual*
- Robitussin-DM lozenges (Cough calmers)
- Scissors
- Sterile gauze pads
- Tetrahydrozoline eye drops (Visine)
- Tinactin cream (Tolnaftate)
- Tweezers

Before You Leave Home: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your physical, mental, or dental health since the time you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records.

If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid duplicate vaccinations, obtain a copy of your immunization record from your physician and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have had any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment once you arrive in country. You do not need malaria medication in Jordan.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth-control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service. While awaiting delivery, which can take several months, you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's Wort, glucosamine, Selenium, or anti-oxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, although it might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about your three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. To reduce the risk of developing serious infection or other eye disease, we discourage you from using contact lenses during your service. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless their use has been recommended by an ophthalmologist for a specific medical condition and Peace Corps Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are over 50 and eligible for Medicare, or have a medical condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about your coverage needs before your departure. Peace Corps will provide all necessary healthcare from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service healthcare benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing plan in effect during your service if you think age and/or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling once you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American

are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2004, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.—with most assaults occurring around 1:00 a.m.

- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a "dummy" wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

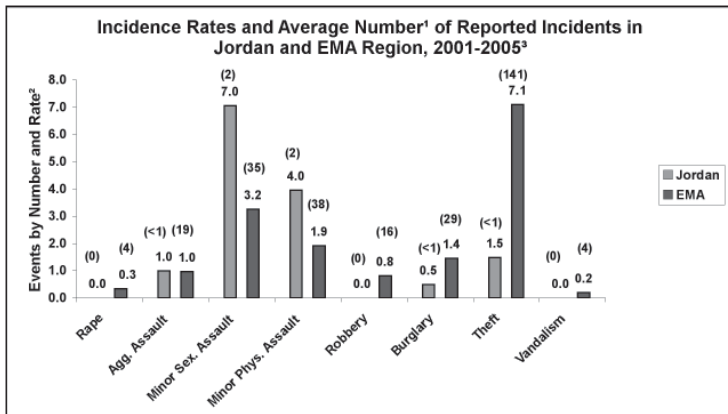
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for

all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer's work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Jordan as compared to all other Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA) region programs as a whole, from 2001–2005. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps' classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2001–2005.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Jordan began as of 2001

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS) and

Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS); the information is accurate as of 10/19/06.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to

successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors and medical officers are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by e-mail at violentcrimehotline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in Jordan

When it comes to safety and security in the Peace Corps, you must be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize your potential as a target of crime. As it does anywhere in the world, crime exists in Jordan. You can reduce your risk of becoming a target by avoiding situations that make you uncomfortable and by taking advance precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions are favorite sites for thieves. Some safety concerns in Jordan follow.

Motor vehicle accidents: This is the single greatest risk to your safety in Jordan. Volunteers are required to wear seat belts when available. Due to high risk of certain modes of transportation, certain countries have placed restrictions on travel. In Jordan, Volunteers are prohibited from traveling after dark, away from their village, except in emergencies. They are encouraged to choose larger buses that appear to be in good repair.

Robbery/burglary: Some Volunteers have been pickpocketed or had their homes broken into in the past, and Volunteers must establish the same precautions and good habits that they would in the U.S. Peace Corps will teach you about proper home safety during training and requires that all Volunteers change the locks (and maintain all keys) before moving into approved accommodations.

Regional conflicts: Jordan borders the West Bank and Israel, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues. More than 60 percent of Jordan's population is Palestinian, and people in Jordan are very sensitive to events that affect Palestinians. When tension is high between the Arabs and Israelis, which is much of the time, there can be large demonstrations of solidarity from Palestinians in Jordan. You are discouraged from traveling to Israel during your service in Jordan. There is no travel to Iraq! Updates about these political situations will be provided as your departure for Jordan nears and frequently throughout your service.

Harassment: Volunteers report varying levels of harassment, such as having rocks thrown at them by children, being called derogatory names by teenagers, and receiving overt sexual comments. This is less likely to happen at a Volunteer's site and more likely to happen in larger cities where Volunteers are anonymous. Strategies for coping with harassment appropriately are discussed at length during pre-service training.

Alcohol abuse: Jordan is an Islamic country and alcohol, although available in Amman and some larger towns, is strictly forbidden by the Muslim religion. A Volunteer should not be seen drinking alcohol at any time and should not even discuss or refer to alcohol while at work or in her/his community. Alcohol use can discredit a Volunteer and the Peace Corps.

Sexual Assault: Volunteers have been targets of sexual assault in Jordan. Alcohol consumption and cross-cultural differences in gender relations are associated with these assaults, and the assailant on occasion has been an acquaintance of the Volunteer. Volunteers who take seriously the training provided by Peace Corps/Jordan regarding sexual assaults can minimize their risk. Volunteers are required to report all assaults and threats of assault to Peace Corps staff so that an appropriate response and support can be provided.

Sex outside marriage is judged harshly in Jordan and may jeopardize your safety and/or ability to develop mutually respectful relationships in your community. Promiscuity puts both men and women at risk. Muslim women may be subject to severe retribution, even death, in the name of family honor.

Homosexual behavior is illegal in Jordan, and gay and lesbian rights are not protected under the Jordanian constitution. Jordanian gays may be jailed and beaten by police. Gay and lesbian Volunteers will have to practice discretion. The Peace Corps is committed to providing confidential support to all Volunteers, regardless of sexual orientation.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must take the primary responsibility for your safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will ensure local acceptance. Do what you would do if you moved

to a new city anywhere: be cautious, check things out, ask a lot of questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the questionable locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can significantly reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, speaking Arabic, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Jordan will require some restrictions to your preferred lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention in large cities and at their sites, but receive far more negative attention in highly populated centers where they are/feel anonymous. In smaller towns, “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress appropriately, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to such negative and unwanted attention. Other methods have helped Volunteers avoid becoming targets for crime. Keep your money out of sight, not in external backpack pockets, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. Always walk with a companion at night.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Jordan

The Peace Corps safety program takes a five-pronged approach to helping you stay safe during your two-year service: information sharing; Volunteer safety training; rigorous site selection; a detailed emergency action plan; and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Jordan’s in-country safety program is outlined below.

Peace Corps/Jordan staff will keep Volunteers apprised of issues that may affect Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer

newsletters and in memoranda from the Country Director. In the event of a critical situation, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

Volunteer training will orient and prepare you for specific safety and security concerns in Jordan. Sessions will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and to exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered at every PC event throughout your two-year service and is integrated into all language, cross culture, and health presentations.

Rigorous site selection criteria are used to identify safe housing for Volunteers before assignment. Peace Corps staff work closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to prepare them for the Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and schools or centers. **Site selection criteria** are based, in part, on relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; suitable housing options and other support requirements.

You will be trained in Peace Corps/Jordan's detailed **emergency action plan**, which provides guidance in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. Once at your site, you will submit a detailed site locator form with address, contact information, maps and travel routes. If there is a security threat, Volunteers may be gathered at pre-determined locations until the situation is resolved. If the situation warrants, the Peace Corps may decide to evacuate Volunteers. Such a decision is made in close collaboration with the U.S. embassy and Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Finally, to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, the safety and security coordinator must be informed of any incident. Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner. Peace Corps collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize current and future risks.



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



One of our nation's greatest strengths is the diversity of our cultural heritage. In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the varied faces of America with our hosts, we are making special efforts to ensure that all of America's diversity is reflected among our Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in its history and that participation continues to grow. These Volunteers are broadening the lessons we are learning about other people, adding to the image those people form about Americans, and "bringing the world home" to more and different American communities. We ask all who serve in the Peace Corps to begin their cross-cultural sensitivity at home, raising awareness about what is right and what is not in the way ethnic and racial groups relate to one another here in the United States.

Television is common in Jordan and perceptions of Americans, unfortunately, come from the programs on the air. Common misperceptions are that all Americans are blond, blue-eyed, promiscuous, and rich. While many Jordanians are educated and familiar with foreign cultures, rural areas tend to be more traditional and may be less accepting of diversity. In Jordan (as in all Peace Corps countries), Volunteer behavior, religion, lifestyle, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics considered familiar and commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed elsewhere. Some of you may experience subtle discrimination, and a few, blatant bigotry. Jordanians are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you live may display a range of reactions to differences that you present.

Overview of Diversity in Jordan

Peace Corps staff in Jordan recognizes the adjustment issues that accompany diversity and endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, there will be sessions to explore diversity and ways, individually and as a group, to cope successfully with these challenges and to be supportive of one another.

In the pre-service training homestay experience, you will live as a family member, and your actions and behaviors will be subject to scrutiny and comment. To ease the transition and adapt to the ways of your host family, you will need to make some temporary, yet fundamental, compromises with who you are as an American and as an individual. You will possibly need to modify how you present yourself, even relative to core elements of your identity. For example, female trainees and Volunteers in Jordan are not able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; Jewish Volunteers may not feel comfortable revealing their religion; political discussions will need to be handled with diplomacy; some of your personal beliefs or past experiences may best remain undisclosed. You must develop techniques and a personal strategy for coping with these and other limitations. Peace Corps staff will be available, of course, to help you feel your way, but the challenge will ultimately be your own.

Be aware that this exercise of discretion and judgment, as well as the requirement to limit some behavior, may create very real personal stress. For some, the impact of such stress will be higher than for others.

We advise you to learn as much as possible about Jordan before accepting this invitation. Use all the resources available to you and/or suggested by the Peace Corps to assess the challenges and evaluate the benefits of service as a Volunteer

in Jordan. It is a marvelous country, with incredible diversity itself, presenting many opportunities for service and growth for any Volunteer. However, opportunities will be maximized when the adjustments required of you by Jordanian reality have, to the extent possible from afar, been realistically anticipated.

What Might A Volunteer Face?

The information below is intended to stimulate thought and discussion. Some of these points are country-specific, some are region-specific. It is important to recognize that these issues may or may not have an impact on your own Volunteer experience. Rather, they are listed to highlight things that one particular group or another may face. As you read, ask yourself, “How would I feel if that happened to me?” and “How could I help other Volunteers if this happened to them?”

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Jordan is a traditional, patriarchal culture. Though Jordanian women are gaining more and more authority in the public eye, there are still few women in top positions in government or the private sector. Women, irrespective of the deference shown to them within the family, are usually not given the public status and respect afforded men. You should understand that this is an essential element of a centuries-old society and culture. On the other hand, it is important to note that Jordanians enjoy a greater level of formal, legal, and institutional gender equity than many other Arab societies. While a major challenge for female Volunteers is a reduction in their independent lifestyle, they can still play an important role in modeling behavior that demonstrates to communities the extended capabilities of women. Gender and development activities are an integral part of Peace Corps/Jordan activities.

Female Volunteers may:

- Find that a single woman living alone is contrary to the cultural norm.
- Receive more unwanted and inappropriate attention from young Jordanian men than they would in the United States.
- Experience the perception that they are “loose,” therefore, not afforded the respect that conservative Muslim women are given by men on the street.
- Have to work harder than male Volunteers to gain the respect of host country colleagues in the workplace.
- Need to keep a low social profile and practice discretion in public (e.g., smoking in public, drinking in bars, restrictions on dress) to avoid unwanted attention and an undesirable reputation.
- Find satisfaction and acceptance in being a part of the “female world” of the community.

Volunteer Comments

“Sexual relationships between Volunteers and Jordanians of the same or opposite sex are almost impossible. Women hold the family honor in the Muslim world and their actions or even suspected actions seen as tarnishing the family honor are sure to bring severe and sometimes fatal consequences to them. Male Volunteers need to understand the serious ramifications for Jordanian women who get involved in even innocent relationships with men from outside the extended family. Men may interact with women in a work setting, but rarely in a social setting.”

“As a female Volunteer in Jordan, you will most likely experience difficulties and frustrations with the role of women. In villages especially, the woman's role is in the home, caring for (and often serving) the children and husband. The men are considered and treated as superior. There are many things that women aren't allowed to do,

such as be out after dark and travel alone, while men have much more freedom outside the home. Expect to have quite a bit of unwanted attention, which can include staring and inappropriate comments made to you in the streets by some men and boys. You can't change these things; you must let them roll off your shoulders and continue on. I was raised to be a strong, independent woman and have found it challenging to be the quiet, submissive woman I am expected to be here. As Americans, we do have the opportunity to be positive examples of independent females and leaders, but we must not push the culture limits."

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Though Jordanians themselves come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, Volunteers of color may face challenges not faced by other Volunteers. Especially in traditional and isolated rural communities, they may experience extra frustration, even insult, in their work while dealing with rigid preconceptions and historical stereotypes. For example, since many of the domestic help in urban areas come from Asia (Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka), there is often a preconception that they are of a "lower class." Volunteers of Asian heritage may not fit into the common image Jordanians have of Americans and may be viewed with skepticism.

Volunteers of color may:

- Be the only minority trainee or Volunteer within a particular program.
- Work and live with individuals who have no experience or understanding of their culture.
- Not receive sufficient personal support from other Volunteers.
- Not find minority role models among Peace Corps country staff.

Volunteer Comments:

“I believe being a Volunteer of color has with it great potential, but offers challenges during the initial community integration phase. Not only am I a foreigner, but I don’t fit the image of what they think an American should look like. However, with this extra challenge comes an extra opportunity to educate and share my Chinese heritage with my community. I know this opportunity for cross-cultural understanding will be worth more than the challenges that may arise. Isn’t this partly why we are here?”

“If you’re not comfortable with who you are racially and even if you are, be prepared to get more than your fair share of stares, blank looks, pointing, and the more-than-frequent comments. Every new person you meet will ask what country you are from or forcefully state one that they are sure you are. Support you may need will usually come from back home or other Volunteers going through a similar situation. But as time passes and you’ve integrated into your community, you will find friends that you trust and new ways to cope with the ongoing racial difference between you and your community.”

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Age is respected in traditional Islamic societies. The views and opinions of senior members, men or women, will garner more respect and be considered with greater gravity than those of younger individuals. Deference to, and respect for, age is integral in this society. Younger Volunteers may have to work harder than their older colleagues to be accepted as professionals.

Senior Volunteers may:

- Encounter frustrations during training in having their needs met for an effective learning environment.

- Need to be more assertive in developing an effective, individual approach to Arabic studies.
- Feel isolated within the Peace Corps community overseas—most Volunteers are in their 20s.
- Not receive the necessary personal support from younger Volunteers.
- Be reluctant to share personal, sexual, or health concerns.
- Find that younger Volunteers look to them for advice and support. (Some seniors find this an enjoyable part of their Volunteer experience, while others choose not to fill this role.)

Volunteer Comment:

“Now a word from an “older” Volunteer. What’s it like? Surprising. You’ll be just another one of the gang, unless you need a special courtesy, which will be given quickly and unobtrusively. The Jordanians are thrilled to have older Volunteers, as I’ve been told many times. You will be happy to see so many children and teenagers who are pleased at your presence and readily show it. Many of us at home are used to being “invisible”; here it’s more likely you’ll be a minor and enjoyed celebrity. The medical system in this country is terrific; the Peace Corps medical officer is efficient and responsive. If you’ve been medically cleared to serve here, come with no worries! The food is great, it’s mandatory to give you a seat on the bus, and the kids will be thrilled to have an older person to look up to.”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Homosexual Volunteers can expect to encounter difficulties. Jordanian society does not openly acknowledge homosexuality. In fact, homosexual behavior is illegal in Jordan and gay and lesbian rights are not protected under the Jordanian constitution. Homosexual Volunteers must be

extremely discreet about their sexual orientation and may encounter particularly trying situations at work and in the community. Many choose not to make their sexual orientation public. Regardless of what is found in the community, Peace Corps is committed to providing support to all Volunteers, regardless of sexual orientation and will work with individuals to address their individual needs.

Gay, lesbian, or bisexual Volunteers may have to contend with:

- Host country acceptance of homosexuality among nationals being different than their acceptance of homosexuality among foreigners.
- Less support from other Volunteers for a homosexual lifestyle. Homosexual Volunteers may serve two years without meeting another gay Volunteer. Also, straight Volunteers and staff may not know how to offer needed support.
- Constant questions about boyfriends or girlfriends, marriage, and sex. Wearing an “engagement ring” can help.
- Most host country homosexuals will have migrated to larger cities while most Volunteers are posted at rural sites, where cultural difficulties may be greater. Relationships with homosexual host country nationals can happen, but as with all cross-cultural relationships, they may not be easy.
- Civil liberties being either nonexistent or ignored; homosexuals may be hassled in clubs or on the street.
- *Machismo*, i.e., talk of conquest(s), girl-watching, and dirty jokes.

For more information, visit the following website: www.lgbrpcv.org.

Volunteer Comment:

“Being gay in Jordan comes with its difficulties. For those of you out of the closet, be prepared to jump back in during your two years. With the exception of Peace Corps peers and staff, your sexual identity is better off not mentioned or even lied about. There are also some people in Jordan who use the word 'gay' or 'lesbian' as a kind of insult, although I've never felt physically threatened or intimidated due to my orientation. You might try thinking about serving in Jordan as an opportunity to develop your identity outside the sphere of sexuality. Even with all these warnings, I can honestly say that being gay in Jordan makes for a fascinating experience in gender relations—I wouldn't think twice about signing up again!”

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

While married couples have a built-in support system, they face other challenges that single Volunteers do not. Couples should be sure that they communicate honestly and respect each other's feelings (likely to change on a daily basis and at a different pace for each of them).

Your roles will be different in this culture.

A married man may be encouraged to be the more dominant member in the relationship or to have his wife serve him. He may be encouraged to make decisions independent of his spouse's views and be ridiculed if he performs domestic tasks. A married woman may find herself in a less independent role than usual and be expected to perform all the domestic chores.

Additionally, competition may cause unease; one spouse may learn language or adjust faster than the other. There may be differences in job satisfaction and/or professional adaptation.

One spouse may be more enthusiastic about joining the Peace Corps, be better able to adapt to the new physical and/or cultural environment, and be less or more homesick than the other. Younger Volunteers may look to couples for advice and support.

Volunteer Comment:

“In our estimation, being married has enhanced our Peace Corps/Jordan Volunteer experiences. First of all, we feel that the gender issues faced are very real; however, being married makes them somewhat easier to deal with. We also feel that being married affords us a greater degree of privacy. Beyond that, of course, you never really feel the same degree of loneliness, etc., because you always have someone there for such things as communication, support, language study, etc.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

For many in America, faith and religion are distinct from other aspects of their lives. In Jordan, Islam shapes every aspect of daily life. This can call for adjustments on your part given the amount of interest or curiosity you'll experience regarding your religious observance or the lack of privacy that will be accorded to this personal matter. All Volunteers need to think carefully about how they will respond to questions about religious beliefs and observance. Declarations of agnostic, atheistic, multi-theistic, or other beliefs will elicit responses varying from confusion to intolerance.

Jewish Volunteers, in particular, can expect to be challenged with respect to religion and politics. Jordan is an Arab country in which the predominant religion is Islam. Furthermore, more than 60 percent of Jordan's population are Palestinians. While they reside in and are citizens of Jordan, Palestinians first came here as refugees from a land that currently forms parts of Israel. Particularly with respect to the Palestinian question, the Middle East has long been subject to conflict—ideological,

religious, ethnic, political, and sometimes physical—between the Arab states and Israel. Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994. However, there are still very few Jews in Jordan except for some members of the expatriate community and no opportunities for public worship.

For many Jordanians, being Jewish equates with Zionism, and they assume that all Americans (Jewish and non-Jewish) are pro-Israel, a political position not generally accepted in Jordan. As a result, if you are Jewish and your religious beliefs or background become known, your efficacy and safety as a Volunteer could be compromised. For non-observant Christians, people may wonder (directly or indirectly) whether you are Jewish. Peace Corps recognizes that there are pros and cons to whatever coping strategy a Volunteer chooses, and we encourage you to consider each of your options carefully. Although the Peace Corps will support all Volunteers' decisions regarding revealing their religion, most Jewish Volunteers have not felt comfortable doing so.

Volunteer Comment:

“I have found that the best way to approach religious discussions in Jordan is with the utmost respect, not only for Islam, but for my own religion and the diversity of religions in the states. Setting up that common ground, in the end, seems to be main thing people care about. It is also absolutely necessary to prepare your stock phrases, some vague and noncommittal and some more concrete, that can help people get a general take on your belief framework. Also, it has been helpful for me to have a few people with whom I can be open. I bounce ideas off them, blow off steam, and, of course, laugh.”



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much baggage am I allowed to bring to Jordan?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this weight allowance. Peace Corps has its own size and weight limitations, and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limitations. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and the carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 50 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not permitted to take pets, weapons, explosives, mace, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are fine), automobiles, motorcycles, or motor scooters to their overseas assignments. Do not pack in your baggage any flammable material or liquid such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, aerosol containers, etc. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

What is the electric current in Jordan?

When it works, it is 50 cycles, 220 volts. There are surges and cuts that put a strain on voltage converters and appliances, so bring good-quality items. The Peace Corps does not provide transformers. Batteries are generally easy to find, but some Volunteers bring rechargeable ones for electronics.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance that are ample to cover expenses.

Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. Another option is withdrawing money from ATM machines in the capital or large towns. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that suits your own personal travel plans and needs. You are responsible for its safekeeping; Peace Corps cannot hold or replace personal funds.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Although neither leave nor guests are permitted during pre-service training, each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service after swearing-in. Leave may not be taken during the first three months of service or the last three months of service except in conjunction with authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you following your first three months at site as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. When extending invitations, remember that in Jordanian culture single men and women do not mix and this may apply even to family members of the opposite sex. Visits of more than one month require permission from the country director. The Peace Corps cannot provide your visitors with travel or medical assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. However, such insurance can be purchased before you leave. Ultimately, Volunteers are responsible for guarding their personal belongings. If you wish, you may prefer to contact your own insurance company; but insurance application forms are available and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Additional information about insurance should be obtained by calling the company directly. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and rarely are satisfactory maintenance and repair services available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Jordan do not need to get an international driver's license because operation of vehicles is prohibited. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses to mini-buses to trucks to a lot of walking. If you vacation outside of Jordan and rent a car, you may find an international driver's license useful, but requirements vary country to country.

What should I bring as gifts for Jordanian friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement; however, you may wish to bring small gifts for the family you will be living with during training. Suggestions include picture frames, baseball hats or T-shirts with a sports logo, makeup and perfume samples, candles, postcards of your home city or state, stickers, coloring books and crayons, scented soaps, inexpensive fragrances, and wall calendars with pictures of the United States. For items illustrating the United States, be sure to screen them for culturally appropriate material that would not offend more conservative cultures.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Site assignments are not announced until about midway through pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff an opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills while finalizing site identification with host agencies. You may have the opportunity to provide input on your preferences. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the process and there are no guarantees. Most Volunteers will live in small towns or in rural villages, usually within an hour or so from another Volunteer.

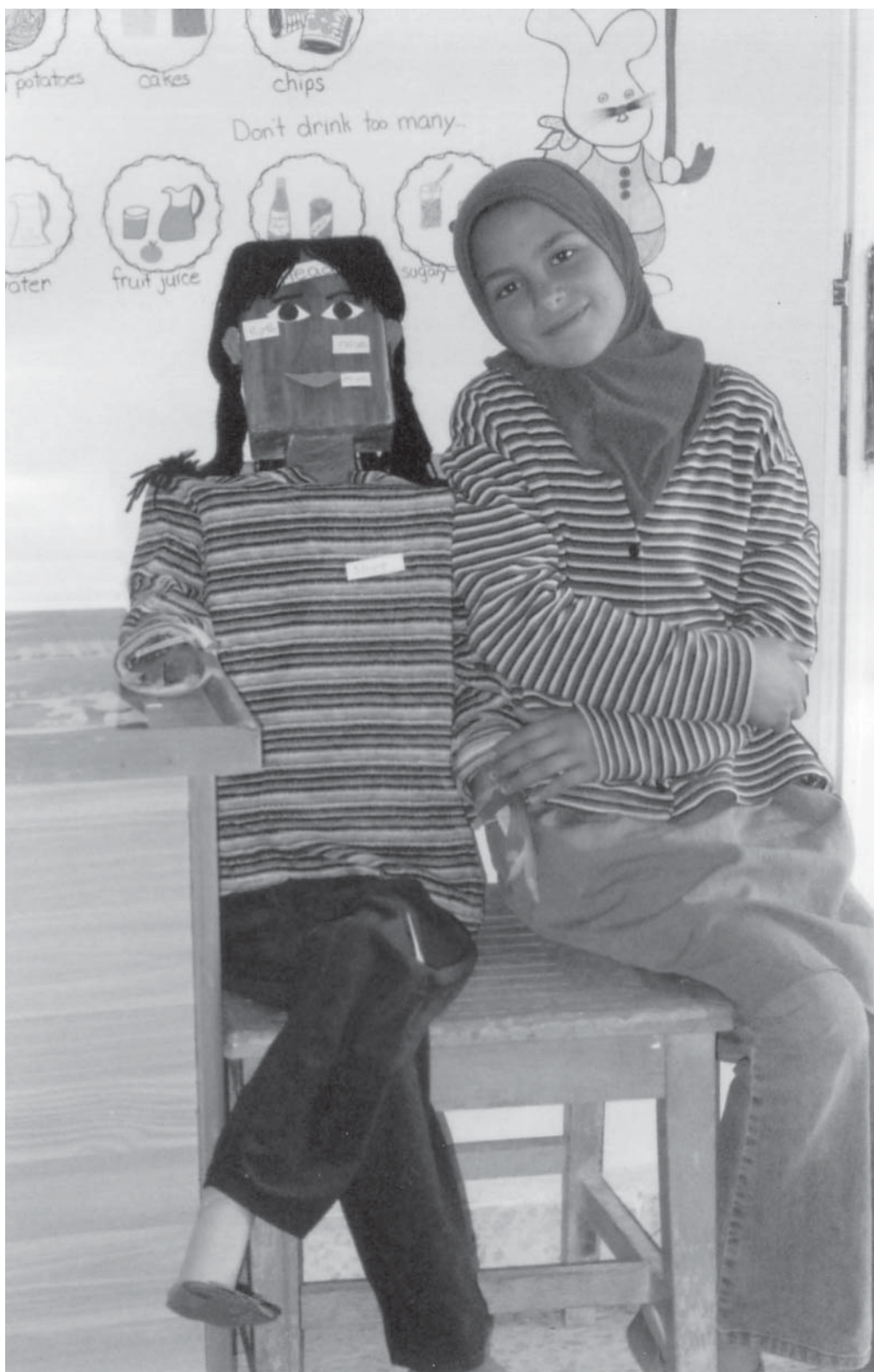
How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 1.800.424.8580, extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574. Washington will then contact Peace Corps/Jordan. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from Jordan's desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 1.800.424.8580, extension 2423.

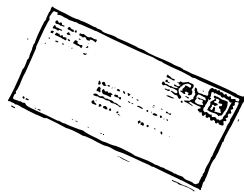
Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

There are Internet cafés and businesses offering Internet access in most major towns in Jordan. Because of weaker telephone and electrical infrastructure in outlying areas, Volunteers in rural sites might be limited to writing and receiving e-mail on their occasional visits to larger towns or regional hubs. Before departing, many prospective Volunteers sign up for free e-mail accounts, such as Yahoo or Hotmail, which they can access worldwide. Because of the high value of laptops, owners significantly increase their risk of becoming targets of crime. Moreover, you will not find the same level of technical assistance and service here as you would at home, and replacement parts could take months to arrive. Subscribing to an Internet service provider via your laptop is unlikely and costly. If you bring a laptop, be sure to buy a high-quality surge protector. Electrical lapses and surges are common. The Peace Corps office in Amman maintains several computers (with Internet access) and a printer in the Volunteer lounge that Volunteers can use.

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM JORDAN VOLUNTEERS



I've been asked to write about a "typical" day in the life of a special education Volunteer. However, there is no day that is the same as another, so "typical" is hard to come by. But, perhaps I'll start with today.

I just got home from breaking the fast with my landlord's family on the first day of Ramadan. There is nothing quite as sweet as the dinner you eat after that first day of fasting, especially when your landlord has 11 teenage children. This Ramadan was especially fulfilling for, after one year in Jordan, I am allowed to help with the cooking and can participate in conversation.

I could tell you about my landlord's family, my village, and all the experiences that I have had. However, what I will remember most when I go home are my students. I am a special education Volunteer and work with kids who have severe developmental disabilities. There is no other group I would rather teach. Every morning I am greeted with at least six hugs (from my own students) and often more from the students in other classes at my center. Some of the staff can't understand the bond I have with my students. I have the feeling that until I arrived, my students had not been shown much affection or love, and they just thrive on it!

Every day I watch my co-workers watch me. Some days I understand clearly that teaching through example is the best kind of teaching you can do. Other days, I wish I could just be left alone to teach my students without being under the microscope. Every day my kids give me love—and many days they give me headaches! At times it hits me that when my students grow up, they will not be what society views as productive, contributing adults in the community. At those times, I wonder if what I do will make an impact. On other days, I hope that if nothing else, my students will feel loved and accepted and that others will learn to value them for who they are.

My community has taught me so much since I've been here and shown such generosity, but there are also things I want them to learn from me. I often wonder how to help someone accept and value a child who has always been shunned. How do you help teachers understand that motivating a child to do well is more successful in the long run if you can get that child to WANT to please you, instead of doing a task because they are afraid of you? Some days it seems impossible. But slowly, over the past year, I have seen changes. I have seen people in my community take notice of how I relate to my students and just maybe they will adopt some of my practices. My hope is that when I am gone, my students will have a better life here in this rural Jordanian village.

When I reflect on my life in Jordan, my students, being part of my community, eating maglooba (eggplant, rice, and chicken) or mansef (lamb with rice and yogurt) and having tea with my landlord's family, these are the things that matter most to me and are the reasons why I joined the Peace Corps. I hope that when you come here you will experience just some of what I have.

Ahlan Wa Sahlan (Welcome)

—Ryan Paulsen

.....

When I first learned I would be working in Jordan with special needs children, I was so scared and so excited all at the same time. I wasn't sure what I had to offer to the special education program in Jordan, but I was eager to find out.

Jordan has made huge progress establishing centers and creating curriculum for children and adults with disabilities. Though there is still have a long way to go, our presence here makes all the difference. Creating awareness is one of the most important parts of my job, and I feel I am effective because people want to know what I'm doing here and I tell them that I work with children with special needs. This opens up conversation that can go just about anywhere, but usually it is an opportunity to discuss why education is important

for all people. I also bring new ideas to my teachers and the director of my center. Together, we find different techniques to improve the center and the education of the children. It is a learning process for all of us and though it's not always easy, we do what we can.

Special education is a challenge all over the world and Jordan is no exception. One challenge is that many teachers are either untrained or underqualified and may lack the compassion and patience so necessary when working with special needs children. One role for Volunteers is to help teachers find alternative ways of discipline and classroom control using more positive reinforcement and less physical control. Children with disabilities have for many years been cast aside and though it is still seen today, there is progress. Things are changing and we are all a part of it. I love my work and wouldn't trade my time here from anything.

It's not always easy and I didn't expect it to be, it's the Peace Corps. I have learned so much about myself as a person and as an educator. When you commit to this, you are committing not only to the Peace Corps, but more importantly to the community you live in, the school or center where you work, and yourself for the next two years. The time you will spend here is so worth it. I'll see you soon. Good luck packing!

—Catherine Stromdahl

.....

Here are some things I wish I'd known about (or paid attention to) before leaving for staging and during PST:

Clothing for Women

- Conservative really means conservative: collar bone to wrists to ankles and loose, loose, loose!! Also, your shirt is too short if you can see the waist of your pants/skirt when you stretch your arms up or bend over.

- Closed-toe shoes are required, another pair of dress shoes is good, and make sure that you can walk on uneven ground without spraining your ankle...best if shoes can easily be slipped on and off.
- Know size conversions...I think (but am not sure) that most clothing in Jordan follows the European scale (e.g., 40~size 6, 44~size 8, etc.; 1,2,3 = S,M,L). This will help a ton if you plan on buying clothes here during your first few weeks.
- It will be very hard to find shoes in sizes larger than 8 1/2 or 9.

Culture and orientation/training

- Plan to take the initiative in organizing groups to get things done (e.g., buying phones, clothes, electronics, hitting the Internet cafes, etc.), and keep in mind that there are only a handful of staff members to help all of you accomplish your shopping/errand goals.
- The training staff is strict (especially in the beginning) for a reason! Some trainees are hosted by (and eventually placed in) more conservative villages than others, and it's critical that trainees see and be seen in the most culturally appropriate light possible.
- The staff is truly open to feedback; don't be afraid to speak up if you think another teaching strategy would work better for the lesson and/or your learning style.
- During homestay, get used to the idea of being told the same thing 50 times by the same person, of having what you already know explained thoroughly while your original question goes unanswered, and of the constant comparison with your village-mates about your language abilities and eating habits.
- Be prepared for children clamoring for your attention: hands waving in your face, attempts to hold your hands, pulling at your hair and clothes...a good strategy to deal with this is to let them know you will only speak

English with them and that you will only allow hand-shaking on the streets...you can visit, make friends, and practice your Arabic in their homes or yours.

- It's discussed throughout PST, but you can never be reminded enough: **You are here to learn from Jordanians and their culture, not to change them.** You will see and experience many difficult/frustrating things that are practiced in this culture, but don't judge what they do before trying to understand how these things are a part of who they are. You are making a difference simply by being who you are right here!

—Constance D. Curtis

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Before service begins, you must first go through 2 ½ months of rigorous training. Peace Corps training is difficult for all Volunteers, yet it presents some added challenges to married couples.

During PST, if you are serving in the same sector, you will be in the same training village. If you are serving in different sectors, you will train in separate training villages. Both situations have their advantages and disadvantages. If training together, you will always have each other for support and will get to share in all the new and different experiences of living life in Jordan together. Some challenges, however, may include pressure to conform to Jordanian gender roles, such as it is the job of the woman to cook, clean, and manage the house (and her job, if she has one), while the husband's job is to work outside the home and socialize.

Married couples (along with all Volunteers) also report a general lack of privacy, as well as many personal questions about marital relations. It's not personal and your training will prepare you to respond to the many questions Jordanians may ask.

If living in different training villages, you will have to learn to adjust to living apart for most of the week and seeing each other during days at the training center. Advantages of training separately are that you get to meet and share the experience

of getting to know two host families and, cumulatively, you will learn more language and gain separate knowledge, which you can later share with each other. Before leaving the U.S., discuss at length how you will deal with being apart. Maybe you will keep journals for each other, write letters, send text messages, or another creative ideas. Training separately is definitely difficult. Be sure to make close friends with the people in your training group and ask the staff for help and support. Communication is also key. Cellphones are popular in Jordan and you should invest in them early and call each other regularly. Whether training separately or apart, it is important to support each other and not bring each other down. Each couple will navigate this differently, so stay positive, communicate often, and develop resiliency strategies together and on your own both before coming to Jordan and after you get here.

In Jordan, most social events are gender separated, so be prepared when visiting neighbors to eat and socialize in separate rooms. Some families will all eat together, some will eat in a room separately from you allowing you to be together, and some will have different rooms for the men and women to eat. This all depends on the conservative nature of the culture. It is more comfortable for women to be with each other uncovered and for the men to be with men, than for men and woman to be together in a formal atmosphere. It is more natural for men to want to talk to men and women with women, so when dealing with people such as your landlord, the husband may have to do most of the communicating. It is also strange for a wife to go to a big city on her own; usually she goes with her husband, family, or friends. As a wife, you must be prepared to forego some of your independence and husbands may have to do things like run errands and do the grocery shopping. Life in Jordan is an adjustment for all Volunteers and in some ways married couples have a greater challenge, but there is also the built-in support. So be patient, put yourself out there, allow your community time to get used to you, communicate with each other often, make friends, and enjoy life in Jordan.

—Jessica Kuhns

Teaching English in Jordan intensifies the challenges teachers face in a typical American classroom; however, it also promises Volunteers many uniquely Jordanian joys. As a TEFL Volunteer, you will teach 12 to 18 lessons per week, concentrating on two or three grade levels or spreading yourself out over all grades. You will travel among classes, as each grade has their own classroom. The curriculum is uniform for all governmental schools. It has recently been dramatically improved, but teaching methods and acceptance of best practices are progressing slowly.

TEFL Volunteers may face daunting and persistent challenges, such as large class sizes (30 to 40 students), a wide range of English levels, blatant cheating, unmotivated teachers, and classroom management without using corporal punishment. As these issues are embedded in Jordanian society, progress in combating them is minimal. So, for your sanity's sake, leave your work at home.

Despite the challenges, there are reasons Volunteers are still teaching. By integrating into your community, you will be well-received by students, you will be adored by all, invited to houses, and given gifts of fake flowers and 15-cent notebooks. Teachers will joke with you and ask your advice on teaching and life. Parents will praise you and profusely thank you. The school also provides an opportune setting to communicate through Peace Corps' World Wise Schools program, carry out small projects, and gain respect in your community.

Such an experience as teaching English in Jordan will test every fiber in your body, but if you can survive it, you can conquer anything.

—Carla Grossklaus

.....

Hi!

Jordan is a great place to Volunteer and as with any Peace Corps assignment is filled with extraordinary highs as well as some very real challenges. Since Jordan has many of the

creature comforts of home, many our challenges come from adjusting to Jordanian cultural norms. Probably the most visible of these is Jordan's patriarchal nature and the separate spheres for males and females. Whereas female Volunteers find interaction and friendship within a circle of females and their social life tends to be based in the home, males interact almost exclusively with males and the public domain is that of men.

As a special education Volunteer in Irbid, most of my interactions in and out of work revolve around my male co-workers. My day involves fixing wheelchairs, teaching English, and sharing endless rounds of tea and coffee. A typical evening's activities may include having some guys over to play cards and watch TV, going to a football game, or spending hours in a café playing backgammon and watching pop videos.

Spending so much time with other men leads to a remarkable level of social intimacy. Jordanians become friends quickly and maintain strong bonds of friendship. While at times this closeness may seem smothering, I have come to realize that it is a vital aspect of learning about Jordan, and my personal relationships have become a highlight of my service.

—Wesley Moe

.....

Ahlan Wa Sahlan!

Around the world, Volunteers are exposed to a slice of life in a foreign country. In Jordan, perhaps more so than in other places, the gender of the Volunteer, the community's level of traditionalism, and the personality of the Volunteer's Jordanian counterpart determine the slice of life to which the Volunteer is exposed. Some female Volunteers work in very conservative areas where culturally it is a struggle just to get girls' families to allow them to come to the center. Other Volunteers find that their most trying difficulty is motivating co-workers to develop new skills and expand center programs. Still other Volunteers find that their biggest challenge is

fostering professional relationships with counterparts and community members who view everything from appropriate dress to appropriate conduct through a powerful cultural lens.

I am a youth Volunteer and I work in an area of Jordan that is less conservative than most. Consequently, I have been exposed to a more autonomous group of Jordanian girls. Every morning, I teach an exercise class for overweight women; every afternoon, I teach English, computer, self-defense, or teambuilding classes for high school and college-age girls. I've also helped my center develop a youth-led website and newsletter, and I've organized overnight camping trips and health workshops.

Between activities, I sit in the office with my co-workers and we talk about our lives, talk about other people, drink tea, dance, and listen to music. From these conversations, I gain fascinating insights into my friends' hopes and dreams, and into the complicated ways in which culture, family, religion, and personalities intersect to shape each individual's life story.

At the beginning of my Peace Corps service, I made the mistake of not devoting enough time to these daily dialogues. I plunged into organizing center activities and, for many months, didn't look back. It took a lot of time (and a lot of frustration and disappointment) for me to realize that my regular participation was an essential way to demonstrate my respect, my good intentions, and my genuine interest in my friends' experiences and stories. Like all Volunteers, I've discovered that my success or failure hinges on my ability to form warm, caring relationships with my co-workers and community.

My day concludes with a short bus ride to my house and a sunset walk with my host family. In the evenings, I read books, exchange mobile text messages with Volunteer friends, and drink hot chocolate as I watch television and reflect on the day's events. If I could describe my life here in three words, I would say, "active, peaceful, and shared."

—Ashley Bates

Greetings from the south, the south of Jordan that is.

My name is Amy and I am a TEFL Volunteer in a small village called Mansourah. I have been here for over a year and the hospitality and friendliness that I experienced on my first day here has not diminished. Now that we are in the midst of the holy month of Ramadan, it seems that the Peace Corps will have to send me another refrigerator to accommodate all of the extra food that has rained down upon me.

Mansourah is a village of about 1,500 people. My school has approximately 120 students in grades one through nine and employs 20 teachers. Every morning I walk out of my front door and see a breathtaking landscape of deep valleys and gently sloping mountains carved out by the elements and speckled by the rays of the sun breaking through the clouds. When I get to school, the students line up the minute they see me coming and all take turns greeting and presenting me with flowers from their gardens. After all the teachers have greeted one another and had a cup of tea, as per Jordanian custom, the school day begins. At day's end, many of the students also see me off with enthusiastic goodbyes.

Now that the holy month of Ramadan has begun Muslims throughout the world are fasting from sunup to sundown. As a result of this religious observance, I get invited to break the fast with one of my fellow teachers almost every night of the week. And on top of this, the teachers almost always give me extra food to take home. Since having been on my own in Jordan, one thing I have not had to worry about was where my next meal was coming from. Plus if I ever run out of store-bought produce, I can always help myself to the vegetables that grow in the garden right outside my front door. This garden, by the way, belongs to my landlord whose family lives above me.

This close proximity to a Jordanian family has meant that I have become almost like an eighth child to my landlord. He already has five daughters and two sons. From the first day of my arrival, this family has tried to accommodate me in every way possible saying if ever I needed anything that all I have to do is bang on the wall. But this has not been necessary for I see my newly adopted family every day. This

close relationship has also meant that my Arabic has steadily improved. Just a few nights ago, we were out admiring the moon and stars from their front porch and I learned how to say the phases of the moon in Arabic.

Well I hope this letter helps paint a brief picture of what have been the highlights of my first month at site. It will be exciting to see what these next two years will bring. If you're ever down south see Petra and then afterwards drop by my village and say hi.

Best Wishes,

—Amy Young

.....

Congratulations on accepting an invitation to a party that is going to change your lives; or at least the way you dress!

Being culturally appropriate in manner, behavior, speech, and appearance is a constant effort and becomes a part of the personality you craft for yourself here. Dressing appropriately plays a huge role in community integration and makes a Volunteer's life a lot easier. Your clothes, if appropriate, become one less thing to be self conscious of and will allow you to focus on more important matters, like whether you want to ride a camel or eat a goat.

One thing to remember is that you will be doing your own laundry in tubs of water in a country that has a shortage; bringing too much white clothing is not advisable. Whites will turn gray and stay gray. However, occasional dry cleaning is not prohibitively expensive. Also, there are tons of used clothing souks (markets) all over the country where culturally appropriate clothing of American and European origin are sold at discounted prices. Bring enough culturally appropriate clothing (according to the guidelines below), but keep in mind that you will be able to supplement your wardrobe here rather cheaply.

As stated in various parts of the Welcome Book, the coverage issue is real. Don't try to skimp on length. It gets hot, so loose clothing is much more comfortable and culturally appropriate.

Attention ladies, here are some tips:

- Pants should be ankle length and loose-fitting.
- Skirts should also be ankle length and without slits. A full-length slip to wear underneath is highly recommended.
- Shirts should be long-sleeved, high-necked, loose-fitting and hit at least 4-5 inches below your hips. You'll need to wear short-sleeved T-shirts or modest tank tops under shirts that are even the slightest bit transparent, particularly white shirts. Do resist the instinct to buy baggy men's shirts. They're convenient, but not terribly tidy.
- You will do a lot of walking; bring sturdy and comfortable shoes for work. Tevas are not really appropriate for work.
- Do bring your favorite pair of jeans and a couple of fun shirts. You'll want to dress up for weddings, in your house (great for de-stressing!), and during trips to Amman.

Men:

- Pants should be dark cotton and khakis for work; jeans for occasional wear.
- Shirts for work can be short-sleeved or long-sleeved button down.
- Bring a pair of sturdy black or brown shoes for work.
- Bring shorts, but only expect to wear them in your house.
- Long hair is not culturally acceptable; dreadlocks, in particular.

Winter Wear:

- Contrary to what you might expect about life in the desert, it does get horrifically cold here from November till February. We all live in concrete houses that trap cold air. Bring a warm coat, thermal underwear, and a couple pairs of good socks.
- Clothes take a lot longer to dry in the winter. Invest in some "quick-dry" clothing to make laundry less of a hassle.

The guidelines for women are certainly stricter, but a professional and tidy appearance is appreciated in both sexes. Jordanians are particular about how they dress and they will expect the same from you. More than that, you'll feel more ready to face the fantastic challenges of every day in Jordan if you're dressed to do so!

In a long skirt and billowing shirt I remain,

—Ami Shah

.....

Hello and welcome to Jordan!

Congratulations on your placement, I hope you are looking forward to a fun, but challenging two years.

Jordan is not an easy assignment. Not because you will live in a Bedouin tent without running water or electricity, if only it were that easy! The main challenge Volunteers in Jordan face is understanding and living within the gender norms. Cultural and religious institutions here have created a gender gap. Both male and female Volunteers (although the women's challenges are more restrictive and often harder) will feel the strain of maintaining these strict gender roles. I wish I could tell you about all of the different ways that this separation will affect you, but the truth is I still don't know all the different ways. I do know it will touch every aspect of your life here in Jordan.

Women and men, especially in rural Jordan, are kept separate in most areas of their lives and you will be expected to respect and follow these cultural roles. From public transportation to your personal lives in and out of the village, there are strict expectations governing your actions. On buses, men and women sit separately and do not speak, and in taxis women normally sit in the back. In many restaurants in smaller towns there is a "family" section and a men's section. When women are dining out in these establishments, they must sit in the family sections to avoid harassment. Cafés are normally frequented by men and only in larger towns will you find cafes where women are more accepted. In the village, women will talk to women and men to men.

Female Volunteers will find their main social life is built around the home, *inside* the kitchens and living rooms. Male Volunteers will be kept far from women in the household and their social lives will center around small *dukans* (small shops) and cafés. This separation can be rewarding for the women who become integral parts of families in their villages and frustrating for the men who might go two years without ever meeting the wives, sisters, or daughters of their closest friends. In the same way, Volunteers must steer clear of Jordanian members of the opposite sex in their villages. Americans of the opposite sex are also off limits. Male and female Volunteers will not find themselves visiting each other's homes. Some male and female Volunteers that live in the same village spend the first six months without acknowledging the other's physical presence (there is a lot of text messaging...). At first, this might seem extreme or even silly, but in order to establish a good reputation this sort of separation is vital.

Volunteers do find some respite in the larger cities where life tends to be more open and Westernized. In Amman, Volunteers can enjoy mixed company in restaurants and most cafes. This relaxed atmosphere does not extend to hotels. Unless Volunteers declare themselves married, they should stay with other Volunteers of the same gender. Even in cosmopolitan Amman and down south in Aqaba, Volunteers need to be on guard because Jordan is a small country and it is not uncommon to run into someone from your village.

It's a lot to think about! Life in Jordan is very different than anything you probably have ever experienced. However, if you are willing to commit to the country and its norms, it will prove very rewarding. That doesn't mean there won't be times when you wish you were a member of the opposite gender, or that you won't think about how much easier it was in the States, but if the Peace Corps were easy, it wouldn't be called "the toughest job you'll ever love."

—Sarah Benson

Hello!

Congratulations on making it through the application process! I am in the last seven months have been here in Jordan for seven months, and the experience is everything I had hoped for. On the one hand, it feels like yesterday that I was doing the same thing you are, studying all the materials in the invitation packet. Do read it all closely! But also it feels like that day on my parents' couch is worlds away (and truly, literally, it is). Once you choose to accept the invitation, there will be a whirlwind of activity—through packing and departure, then training, and then somehow “settling in” at your new home village and starting work.

I teach 11th grade English (and substitute for art classes) at a girls' secondary school in a village of about 5,000 people (two-thirds of them are children), located in the governate of Ajloun (northern Jordan). My school is large (about 500 girls) and quite modern and well-equipped. There are computers, but no Internet. My class sizes range from 14 to 40. I currently teach 14 classroom hours, but I stay at school from 7:30 to 2:00, 5 days a week. When I am not in the classroom, I correct papers, develop my lesson plans, and work with my local colleagues to share ideas, teaching methodologies, etc.

Every day at school the teachers have a delicious pot-luck breakfast: fresh bread, hummus, falafel, olives, fruit jam, hard-boiled eggs, tomatoes, cucumbers—all homemade or home-grown. This past week, I brought peanut butter (bought at Safeway) to share. There is lots of joking, and complaining about lazy students, and teasing about weddings and pregnancies, and discussions of religion and world events. I am happily included in all of it.

I live alone in a great apartment, with fantastic views of hills covered with olive, fig, lemon, apricot, peach, and almond trees. I have a fridge, a gas stove, hot water, and a mobile phone, but not everyone around me has these things. Some people have cars, but most take buses or hitch rides, and a few have donkeys or horses. Hot food or fresh fruit arrives at my doorstep almost daily, sometimes delivered by strangers.

Students hand me flowers on the way to or from school. There are endless requests to visit and be visited, gallons of hot, very sweet tea to drink, and mountains of rice and yogurt to eat. I have been very warmly welcomed here.

It is a very unusual thing for a woman to live alone, and there is lots of concern by my neighbors for my well-being. In fact, I feel no threat whatsoever, of any kind. But I have learned—during training and through reminders from my neighbors—that I must adopt a lot of cultural behaviors that aren't always easy. Dressing appropriately is among the easiest of these adjustments. I can't just "go for a walk" through the village, for example, and seating arrangements on buses are mind-boggling. I avoid eye contact with men in public (bring sunglasses!), and I never smile at a man I don't know, even when being introduced. I don't greet male neighbors and can't teach high school boys without a mother present. All of this is more about protecting my reputation than it is about my physical safety. Certainly, more people are watching out for me, and also simply watching me, than at any other time in my life. I am considered part of many loving, generous families, and I am expected, mostly, to behave as any good daughter would. It is an amazing and daunting experience to be absorbed so quickly into a community.

I have been asked the same questions again and again... How old are you? Where is your husband? Why aren't you married? Where is your mother? How many brothers do you have? Why are you here? Why don't you eat meat? Is life better here or in America? Usually somewhere in there are pointed queries about politics and/or religion, often intertwined. My friends and acquaintances are almost entirely women. Sometimes someone will ask if I mind if her husband, or brothers, or father join us for tea. The men will quiz me again, maybe asking what I know about Islam, how can they get a visa to the U.S., and, with big smiles, whether I would marry a Jordanian. I know I am not the only Volunteer who feels that participating in these intense conversations is among the most difficult—and meaningful—things we do here. One day, shortly after I arrived in my village, I asked a

10-year-old boy what he knew about America, bracing myself for a reference to Iraq, or a computer game, or a movie, and mentally preparing to somehow counter a negative stereotype. What he said was: “I know there are nice people there.” There are lots of lovely surprises like that, and lots of chances to readjust your own stereotypes and misperceptions.

If I could I would welcome you to Jordan the way Jordanians have welcomed me—with sincerity, good humor, and warmth. Then I would give you cushion to lean on, a glass of tea to drink, and we would begin to get to know one another.

—Betsy Vegso

A final thought from all of us (staff and Volunteers)...

The following letter is not from one individual, but is a compilation of the challenges and frustrations Volunteers in Jordan face and about which they talk to staff and each other. While these may not ALL happen to you or may not ALL happen on the same day, they are real and presented to you so that you can imagine how you would cope in these situations: laugh, cry, dig in your heels and survive? If these are not reactions you had in mind (you’d honestly be more likely to quit), please be honest and honorable in accepting your invitation!

Are you up to a bad day as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Jordan? You wake up with intestinal issues following a long evening of forced eating at a neighbor’s house. You endure taunts from school kids, some friendly, some not. Stones are thrown in your direction, just to get your attention. Even though your clothes feel loose and conservative, the stares you’re getting make you think you should cover up even more. At work, people engage you in pointed conversations: you are pressured to reveal details about your sexual history, to explain what’s going on at Guantanamo Bay, to confess what the “real” reasons are for your being in Jordan, to recite the names of the Prophets. Someone condemns America and asks for a U.S. visa in the same breath. Your colleagues seem more

interested in drinking tea than working, and your new ideas are met with indifference. Someone takes you aside to preach passionately about why you should be Muslim. While resting at home, visitors arrive and come in to examine and discuss among themselves every item in your house, including the contents of your refrigerator. A friendly university student of the opposite sex lives next door, and speaks great English, but you can't talk to him/her without scrutiny and criticism from other neighbors. If you are female, you wish you could take a walk alone through your village; if you are male, you wish you could visit families without the father sending his wife and daughters to another room. A relative of someone in your village saw you at a café in Amman (one weekend! one drink!) and now you are battling serious rumors that you go into Amman every weekend to drink alcohol with boy/girl friends. Your parents call because they're concerned about regional violence and keep asking, "Isn't it time to come home?"

These are not exaggerations; they are common experiences. Welcome to Jordan!

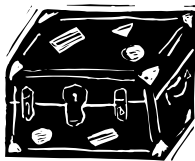
Surely a Volunteer in any Peace Corps assignment has many difficult days. You are probably already anticipating this; these unknown challenges are part of the appeal, right? As you decide whether to accept an assignment in Jordan, please take the time to become familiar with the cultural issues you will face here and determine whether you are capable of living with them. While Jordan on the surface may seem "easy" (hot and cold running water; electricity), it is not.

Don't come if you are thinking, "I will just give it a try, and we'll see if it works out." Don't come if you are thinking, "I'd like to make a change in that culture of theirs." Don't come if you are thinking, "Hey, they have Safeway supermarkets and cellphones, how bad could it be?" Don't come if you are thinking, "Surely an occasional party at a hotel with friends is no big deal." Don't come if your recruiter thought Jordan might be good, but you were hoping for (name your region).

To be successful in Jordan you must be committed to doing all you can to serve the kids of your village. What exactly does this commitment look like? We think you have to live by the rules... the cultural rules of your village and the Peace Corps rules which reflect them. You have to be open and non-judgmental. You have to appreciate that your neighbors have things to teach you, not only about their culture, but also about your own! You have to have a sense of humor, every day. You have to have a bit of courage and a lot of common sense. Finally we think you have to have the strength to behave gracefully, generously, and, yes, peaceably, when you are having a very bad day. This is an amazing opportunity to represent your country and be a part of history, so please take your commitment seriously.



PACKING LIST



One of the most stressful tasks in preparing for Peace Corpsservice is deciding what to pack and what to leave behind. Generally, packing involves a gradual whittling process as more and more items shift from the “Necessities” pile to the “If There’s Room...” pile. The following list has been compiled by Volunteers currently serving in Jordan, based on their experience. There is no perfect list! Please use it as a guide, bearing in mind that experience is individual and tastes differ. Do not try to bring everything on this list; consider only those items that make sense to you personally. Peace Corps will not reimburse you for overweight baggage. Remember, you can get everything you will really need, and most of what you will really want, here in Jordan.

General Clothing

Dress is more conservative and formal than you might think and suggestions from recently arrived Volunteers are listed below. Your appearance is very important as a sign of respect and your effectiveness can be influenced by how you present yourself. Both men and women are expected to look “sharp” with clothes clean and unwrinkled. It gets quite cold in the winter and there is no central heating in the centers or schools. Dressing in layers is key! Any additional clothing you may need is readily available in-country at retail and second-hand shops. However, good quality cotton underwear is generally expensive and hard to find. Laundry facilities are limited, so clothing that can be easily washed by hand and air dried is a good choice. You can wear the same things repeatedly, so pack lightly!

Both men and women

- A warm coat, as well as a lightweight, waterproof jacket
- At least two heavy wool sweaters so that you have one to wear while the other is in the wash or drying
- Silk or cotton thermal underwear—they pack tightly and are quick drying. They can also double as sleeping outfits during the winter
- Scarves for warmth
- Turtlenecks
- Jeans; a pair or two
- Wool socks
- A bathing suit (Women should bring shorts and T-shirt to wear over their suit. Men's bathing suits should be baggy, knee-length)
- Summer hats
- Knitted hat, gloves or mittens
- Loosely tailored pants or khakis and lined pants for winter
- One dressier outfit (for women, either pants or long skirt; for men, a sports jacket/blazer and dress slacks plus a tie) and dress shoes. These will be worn for the occasional official reception, swearing-in ceremony, and other important functions.

Suggestions for Women

Covering up is important and may feel strange at first, but neatness and appropriate dress will enhance your credibility and smooth your integration. All clothing must be loose fitting for comfort and modesty, but still look neat.

- Shirts/blouses: Any top worn on the outside needs to be thigh-length (in other words, covering your behind), loose (masking your shape); and long sleeved. Layers can extend your wardrobe and keep you warmer in winter. Collars or high necklines are important; do not bring anything sheer or opaque (really check yourself in the mirror)

- Dresses/skirts: must be long enough to cover the ankle; side slits must be sewn up
- Pants: loose and long enough to cover the ankle
- Short-sleeved or tank tops only to wear under long-sleeved tops
- Lightweight, long-sleeved jackets for wearing over short-sleeved shirts
- A few pairs of black slacks
- A long cotton slip
- Tights (hard to find here), dress socks, and knee-high stockings (preferably black)

Suggestions for Men

- Tie, belt, dress socks
- Nice short-sleeved dress shirts for summer months
- Professional-looking jacket for warmth and also for the workplace

Shoes

- Comfortable, nice dress shoes for work (closed toe; black is best; avoid suede shoes due to dust and scuffing)
- Sturdy sandals
- Hiking boots
- All-purpose shoes (something to walk, run, bike, or hike in)
- Flip-flops or slipper sandals for use in the bathroom (can be purchased cheaply in Jordan)

Note: When you enter a person's house, you normally take off your shoes. Bring shoes that are easy to put on and take off.

Exercise Clothing

Once settled at site, some Volunteers participate in individual and organized sports. You should bring modest exercise clothes, including sweatpants and sleeved shirts. Do not expect to wear running shorts and tank tops as exercise apparel.

Miscellaneous

- A lightweight towel and washcloth (travel towel is good)
- Decorations for your house (pictures, maps, etc.)
- At least 12 passport-size photos (inexpensive kind available in portable photo booths are adequate). You will need them for your Peace Corps identification, obtaining visas to other countries, medical charts, and the Jordanian residence permit
- Good-quality backpack for travel, as well as a smaller daypack
- Baseball, football, Frisbee, hackysack, or travel games such as Uno
- Camera (film and processing are readily available, but Volunteers recommend bringing a supply of film)
- Sewing items (iron-on mending tape, straight and safety pins, etc.)
- Rechargeable batteries and recharger (with power converter)
- Pocket calculator (preferably solar-powered)
- Small, battery-powered alarm clock or wristwatch
- Duct tape (can be bought in Amman, but costly)
- Stationery
- Compact sleeping bag
- A few good books, which can be traded at or donated to the Volunteer book exchange

- Family photographs (screen these for appropriateness to Jordanian culture. For example, photos of beach scenes with minimally clothed people or scenes with alcohol consumption will be viewed as inappropriate by many Jordanians) Maybe get them laminated because they'll be passed around a lot!
- U.S. stamps (for sending mail via anyone traveling to U.S.)
- Swiss Army, Leatherman, or an equivalent multi-purpose knife
- Favorite stove-top recipes and cookbook (Peace Corps provides a stove top, but not an oven, although it can be purchased separately)
- Journal, diary, or schedule book
- Jump rope, yoga mat, round ball, or any small and light exercise equipment (as an alternative to jogging, which may not be a viable option)
- Small, retractable tape measure
- Items such as scotch tape, scissors, crayons, and markers for teachers (you can buy lower quality here)
- Polarized sunglasses
- Travel guides
- Measuring cups, spoons, etc.
- One or two sets of double-sized bed sheets and pillow cases
- Pocket-size dictionary and thesaurus
- Maps (good for wall hangings and traveling)
- Money belt or other means of concealing passport and valuables when traveling
- Favorite music CDs or tapes

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

Many imported items (L'Oreal, Neutrogena, Nivea, Colgate, Tampax, Always, etc.) are widely available, but they are expensive relative to your Volunteer living allowance. Contact lens solution is also available, but expensive. Tampons are available, but very expensive. If you plan to use them, it is not a bad idea to bring a good supply.

- Makeup (the quality here is okay; if you are picky, pack it)
- Scissors or other hair-cutting device. Every group seems to have at least one person who can cut hair, but you need good scissors to do so
- Three-month supply of any prescription medications

Electronics

If you plan to bring any small appliances, such as hair dryers, electric shavers, or contact lens disinfecters, get a voltage converter. The power is adequate for laptop computers with AC/DC adapters. CD/cassette players can be purchased in Jordan, but are slightly more expensive than in the U.S. If you choose to bring one, make sure you have a voltage converter since batteries are expensive. Hairdryers and irons are readily available.

- Radio with shortwave and medium-wave (A decent shortwave radio will pick up VOA, BBC, and the Jordanian English station)
- Laptop computer. Bring one at your own risk. Power surges are common, so bring a good surge protector. Get personal insurance; Peace Corps does not insure/replace personal items
- Discman with speakers. This can be bought here, but it may make your plane ride more pleasant if you pack it

NOTES



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items are relevant to everyone and the list is not inclusive of everything you should arrange.

Family

- ☐ Instruct family to call the Peace Corps Office of Special Services if there is a critical illness or death of a family member. Telephone: 1.800.424.8580, extension 1470, during office hours; 24-hour duty officer 1.202.638.2574 evenings/weekends.
- ☐ Establish a power of attorney to handle your legal and financial issues.
- ☐ Give Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* booklet to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- ☐ Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for Peace Corps passport and visas.
- ☐ Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- ☐ Obtain personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire 3 months after you finish your service, so if you plan on traveling longer after your service, you will need a regular passport).

Medical/Health

- ☐ Complete dental and medical work.
- ☐ If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- ☐ Bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are presently taking.

Health Insurance

- ☐ Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- ☐ Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your healthcare during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. Often if there is a lapse in supplemental health coverage, it is difficult and expensive to reinstate. (This is especially true when insurers know you have predictable expenses and are in an upper age bracket).
- ☐ Arrange to continue Medicare coverage.

Personal Papers

- ☐ Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

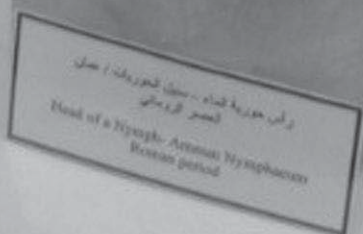
- ☐ Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state).
- ☐ Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- ☐ Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- ☐ Purchase personal articles insurance from the time you leave home for service overseas until you return to the United States (including end-of-tour travel).

Financial Management

- ☐ Obtain student loan deferment forms from lender or loan service.
- ☐ Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- ☐ Arrange for deductions from readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 1.800.424.8580, ext.1770.
- ☐ Leave all important papers, mortgages, deeds, documents, stocks, and bond in a safe deposit box, with attorney or with caretaker.

A black and white photograph of a marble bust of a young woman, likely a Hellenistic or Roman period work. The bust is displayed on a white pedestal. The woman has a serene expression, with large, almond-shaped eyes, a straight nose, and full lips. Her hair is styled in thick, wavy curls that frame her face and cascade down the back. The marble shows signs of age and wear, with some areas appearing slightly eroded or pitted. A small, rectangular label is placed at the base of the bust, containing text in Arabic, Persian, and English.

رأس مجرورة تشابه سنن شمرية / مصر
البحر الروماني
Head of a young woman
Roman period

CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



Please use the following list of numbers to help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

1-800-424-8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps

Headquarters

1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region	Ext. 1835	202.692.1835
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer Email: jordan@ peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2423	202.692.2423

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		1.800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 9-5 EST 202.638.2574 (after-hours answering service)

PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

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