07 MAY

IN EXPAT LIVING

The Quarantine Diaries #4: A Stay-at-home Vacation to Jordan

Last week was supposed to be our spring break. Well, technically it was still our spring break, but we weren't allowed to go anywhere, and our trip to Jordan was canceled. So, it was basically the same as every other week, minus the Zoom lessons.

"See Petra" and "Camp in Wadi Rum desert" have been on my bucket list for a long time. And after last year's spring break in Egypt, I was longing to return to that part of the world. To help quell the feelings of wanderlust and utter disappointment, Luke and I decided to recreate our trip at home.

Here was our itinerary (which we fully intend to replicate later this year), and some extremely silly quarantine recreations.

DAY 1: TRAVEL TO AMMAN

UNIX AUTÓALKATRÉSZEK
RO B 77 BJK
www.unixauto.hu 270-8700

Our flight wasn't scheduled to leave Bucharest until 4pm, so we had all morning to take things slow. We had a nice sleep-in, made pancakes, and "packed" (aka cleaned out the closet and swapped out winter clothes for summer). At 7pm, when it was time to pick up our rental car from the Amman airport, we headed down to the garage and started up the 'ole Dacia Logan–coincidentally the same model Thrifty had reserved for us. While we didn't actually leave the building, it was nice to know that our car is still working.

Afterwards, we took the elevator to the 4th floor and checked in to the homiest apartment. We especially liked that it came with a cute dog and plenty of snacks.

Next time, we'll opt to stay at The Boutique Hotel Amman. It's directly downtown, and the owner is lovely (free cancelation and help arranging transportation options).

DAY 2: BREAKFAST IN AMMAN THEN DRIVE TO WADI RUM

The only real plan I had for Amman was to eat breakfast at a place called Hashem. The restaurant has been around since 1952 and is one of the most well-known spots in the city for authentic Jordanian street food.

We'd head over fairly early, secure one of the sidewalk tables, and watch the city wake up as we breathed in the smell of freshly fried chickpeas. It'd be hot and crowded. A server would hurry over to our table-no menu-and ask what we wanted. "One of everything," we'd reply. He'd nod and smile–returning moments later with plates of hummus, moutabel (similar to baba ganoush), falafel, fava beans, fresh herbs and chili paste.

Instead, Luke and I did our best to make falafel and flat bread from scratch. I'm happy to report it turned out very well. We followed this recipe quite closely, with the exception of adding two eggs to the mixture and doubling the amount of fresh parsley. We also chose to roll and flatten the falafel into something resembling silver dollar pancakes, then pan-fried them in a cast-iron skillet just covered with vegetable oil.

After feasting, we had planned to walk around Amman a bit before driving the car to Wadi Rum. Things didn't go to plan though, and we found ourselves on the couch for the rest of the day (followed by a second helping of falafel).

DAY 3: WADI RUM JEEP TOUR AND CAMPING

We were meant to arrive the day before at the Wadi Rum Visitors Center, where a Jeep would pick us up to take us to a Bedouin camp, where we'd stay for two nights.

I imagined waking up in our tent and looking out the window–seeing nothing but red sand and blue sky. Our hosts would invite us to the communal tent for breakfast and tea, then take us on a tour of the expansive desert. We'd hike to canyons to see 2,000-year-old Nabataean inscriptions, drive to natural rock arches, marvel at the towering sand dunes. At night, we'd share a meal of chicken and potatoes cooked over coals, listen to traditional music by the campfire. We'd spend hours staring at the star-filled sky before drifting to sleep.

Back in Bucharest, Luke and I recreated the camping experience by building a blanket fort–something neither of us had done since childhood. We dragged chairs over from the dining room, gathered all the blankets we had in the house, and outfitted the interior with pillows. It was just as fun as we had remembered–and we ended up spending the day and most of the night cozied up in our make-believe campground.

DAYS 4-5: PETRA & PETRA BY NIGHT

After one more breakfast at Wadi Rum Nature Tours and Camp, the staff was supposed to drive us back to our car fairly early in the morning. It would only take about 1.5 hours to drive to Petra, so we'd drop our stuff off at the Rocky Mountain Hotel when we arrived, then spend a few hours exploring Petra. Afterwards, we'd find a restaurant packed with locals and eat a big dinner before crashing.

The next morning, we'd wake up early in hopes of being some of the first tourists to reach the treasury building. The sun's first light would shine on the sandstone, changing its colors from dull beige to rich rose gold. We'd pretend we were archeologists, discovering this prehistoric, abandoned city for the first time. At 8:30pm, we'd return for Petra by Night, to see the Treasury flooded with light and surrounded by candles.

At home, we decided that recreating our own Petra by Night was the perfect excuse to finally use the leftover tea lights from our Halloween jack-o-lanterns.

We lined them up in front of the television screen, which displayed a picture of the floodlit Treasury, and found some Bedouin flute music to play through the speakers.

DAYS 5-6: THE DEAD SEA

Another huge bucket list item was in store for this day: float on the Dead Sea! But first, we had to get there. The plan was to drive the 2.5-3 hours from Petra (Wadi Musa) to Wadi Mujib, which is a river canyon located in a vast biosphere reserve. After hiking the Siq Trail, we'd hop back in the car and drive along the coast to the Dead Sea Shore for breathtaking views and once-in-a-lifetime photo opportunities. Then, finally, we'd reach our destination for the next two nights: Ramada Resort Dead Sea.

Day six was reserved for nothing but mud baths, beach time, and taking cliché pictures of one another reading newspapers while floating on the sea. Instead, I recreated this magical moment by adding a little too much Epsom salt to my bath and treating myself to a mask while Luke hovered over me with the camera.

DAY 7: EXPLORE JERASH AND FLY HOME

DACIA
UNIX AUTÓALKATRÉSZEK
RO
B 77 BJK
www.unixauto.hu
270-8700

Our last day in Jordan was reserved for walking around one of the world's best preserved Greco-Roman cities: Jerash. It's located about 100km from the Dead Sea and 50km from Amman, and looks seriously impressive. We planned to spend a few hours exploring Hadrian's Arch, the hippodrome, the forum, the agora, and anything else we found appealing before eating lunch. Then, we'd head to the airport to return our beloved Dacia Logan and fly back to Bucharest.

Unfortunately, we weren't able to do anything fun to recreate this day. Our intention was to find a Roman ruin puzzle, but even the lamest puzzles ever (Mickey lying on his side; a shepherd with his flock; a fruit bowl) were sold out. So, we took the dog on a long walk and enjoyed the sunshine.

. . .

This was clearly not the spring break we had envisioned, but we made the most of it. And we'll eventually get to Jordan–hopefully before our Jordan Pass expires.

Tell me: Were any of your trips canceled because of COVID-19? Comment below, and let's daydream together!

RELATED

The Quarantine Diaries #2: We're all in this Together
March 28, 2020
In "Expat Living"

The Quarantine Diaries: Entry #1
March 24, 2020
In "Expat Living"

The Quarantine Diaries #3: Stuck
April 13, 2020
In "Expat Living"

Quarantine Diaries

10 Comments

Erin Connolly POSTED AT 19:27H, 07 MAY

This is awesome. You're wonderful and amazing.

Jennifer Stevens POSTED AT 19:59H, 07 MAY

Thank you! I think you're pretty wonderful and amazing too. xo

Paige POSTED AT 20:33H, 07 MAY

This is AMAZING! You two are incredible! Positive and inspiring in hard times. Love it!

Jennifer Stevens POSTED AT 10:06H, 15 MAY

Thanks, girl! We have to create moments of joy during tough times, right? I hope you and your beautiful family are doing well. xo

Karen Nicolai POSTED AT 04:47H, 09 MAY

We had to cancel a week in the British Virgin Islands on a small catamaran sailing through the islands and great diving…Then we had to cancel a trip to Alaska, starting in Vancouver, sailing to Alaska ending with a week in Homer, AL for fishing and wildlife viewing. But life goes on and we are still healthy. I want to tell you how much I LOVE reading your blogs. Please keep it up!

Jennifer Stevens POSTED AT 10:07H, 15 MAY

Thank you so much, Karen! That BVI trip sounds amazing! Hopefully you'll be able to reschedule sometime soon. We also had to cancel a long weekend in Berlin and our summer vacation to Australia to see family. Happy to hear that y'all are healthy. That is the most important thing.

Fiona Moss POSTED AT 12:02H, 09 MAY

Love this and your positivity! Petra will await you … it is amazing!

Jennifer Stevens POSTED AT 10:08H, 15 MAY

Thank you! You have definitely helped with the positivity aspect. 🙂

Patty Blank

POSTED AT 09:19H, 12 MAY

Another great read, Jen! Petra was one of he highlight ports on my world cruise in 2006. We had to by pass do to high seas. It remains on my bucket list! I had to cancel a 10 day Alaskan Cruise in June. I really want to see Glacier Bay before it melts! My list continues to grow and it feels weird not to have a future plan to travel.

Jennifer Stevens

POSTED AT 10:10H, 15 MAY

Thanks for reading all of my quarantine posts, and for the lovely comments! An Alaskan cruise sounds amazing; hopefully you'll be able to reschedule for next year. It does feel weird not to have any travel plans, and the uncertainty is definitely anxiety-inducing, but we will get through this. Stay healthy! 🙂