

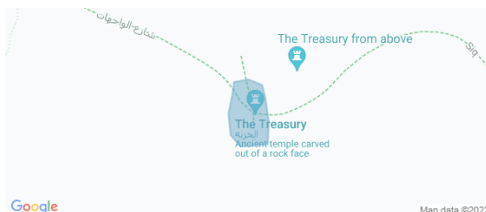
# Khazneh (Petra)

also known as "Al-Khazneh", "The Treasury", "Al Khazna"

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Entry tags: Nabataea, Monument, Religious Place, Mausoleum, Polytheistic, Jordan, Near East, Graeco-Roman, Tomb, Greco-Roman Influence, Religious Group, Ancient Mediterranean, Temple

The Khazneh, or Treasury, is one of the most famous buildings in Petra, Jordan. Carved into the rock face of the famous "Rose-Red City," the Khazneh is the first building visitors see after leaving the Siq, the dark 160m long rock gorge which functions as entrance and defense for the city. The Khazneh looms far above the visitor's head and awes them with its rose colored rock and exquisite reliefs of vines, amphorae, and larger-than-life deities and animals. The two story faux temple façade includes Corinthian column capitols and two eagles atop the roof. A depiction of the Egyptian goddess Isis takes center stage of the second story and the divine twine, Castor and Pollux, flank the entrances on the first floor. Though aniconic worship was most prevalent among the Nabataeans, by the time the Khazneh was created, external influences were permeating many aspects of the kingdom. As the Khazneh was the first building visitors saw upon visiting Petra, the amalgamation of deities and their anthropomorphic shapes may have been an attempt to make the city seem more familiar to those from different cultures and religious expectations. At the very top of the building, an enormous pot or urn has been partially destroyed from gun fire, because it was once believed to be filled with gold – giving the building its nickname "the Treasury." However, instead of a repository for the wealth of the Nabataeans, the Khazneh is likely a tomb or mausoleum for a king, perhaps Aretas III "Philhellene" or Aretas IV "Who Loves His People." Three crypts lie below the modern ground level and housed nearly a dozen buried bodies – possibly members of the royal family. Interestingly, these crypts are decorated in typical Nabataean style, with crenelated faces rather than a Greco-Roman style. The Khazneh has fascinated modern audiences since its rediscovery in 1812. Featured in such popular movies as Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, the building inspires the imagination and is a favorite picture of the nearly one million tourists who travel to Petra each year.



Date Range: 100 BCE - 200 CE

Region: The Khazneh

Region tags: Jordan, Arabian Peninsula

The Khazneh lies at the entrance to Petra, the capital city of the Nabataean Kingdom.

## Status of Participants:

✓ Elite

## General Variables

### Sources and Excavations

#### Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Suleiman Farajat and Sami Nawafleh, "Report on the Al-Khazna courtyard excavation at Petra (2003 season)," Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan 48 (2005): 373-393.

- Source 2: Judith McKenzie. *The Architecture of Petra*. Oxbow Books Limited, 2005.
- Source 3: G. Markoe, ed., *Petra Rediscovered: Lost City of the Nabataeans*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003.
- Source 1: Björn Anderson, "Imperial Legacies, Local Identities: References to Achaemenid Persian Iconography on Crenelated Nabataean Tombs," *Ars Orientalis* 32, *Medes and Persians: Reflections on Elusive Empires* (2002): 163-207.

## Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: [https://madainproject.com/al\\_khazneh\\_crypt#overview](https://madainproject.com/al_khazneh_crypt#overview)
- Source 1 Description: Online archive for information about on-going excavation and discovery of the Khazneh
- Source 1 URL: <https://nabataea.net/explore/petra/petra-treasury/>
- Source 1 Description: Crowd-sourced information from academics and enthusiasts about Nabataea
- Source 1 URL: <https://zamaniproject.org/site-jordan-petra.html#header5-4t>
- Source 1 Description: 3D model of the Khazneh for the purposes of conservation and education

Has this place been the focus of excavation (pre-modern, illicit, or scientific):

Answer 'Yes' for each period or type of excavation.

– Yes



Type of excavation:

– Scientific



Years of excavation:

– Year range: 2003



Name of excavation

– Official or descriptive name: Al-Khazna Courtyard Excavation at Petra

## Topographical Context

Is the place associated with a feature in the landscape

- Other [specify]: It was carved directly into the cliff face that protects the southeastern side of the city center at the space where the Siq, the 160 m rock canal leading into the city, ends.

Does the place involve human-made features besides structure:

Other features might be ground clearing, terracing, other modifications of the local environment.

– Yes

↳ Type of feature

– Water feature

Notes: Rainwater management was an important aspect of Petra's ancient maintenance - partially for the preservation of the rock-cut facades, partially for survival in the desert, and partially because flash flooding was a danger to residents and visitors.

Is the place situated in an urban or significantly urbanized area:

– Yes

↳ Is there a distinct boundary between the place and the urban fabric:

– No

↳ Is the place located significantly within the urban fabric:

Is the place centrally located, or at the crossroads of significant pathways?

– Yes

Notes: This was the first "building" a visitor would see upon entering the city. It was designed to awe and overwhelm, especially after traveling through the dark, enclosed Siq to reach the city proper.

Is the place situated in a rural setting:

– No

Is the place situated far removed from non-religious places of habitation:

– Yes

↳ Is there an established route of travel connecting it to a wider transportation network:

– Yes

Notes: It sits on the main road in and out of Petra and would be easily accessible to those living in the environs.

## Structures Present

Are there structures or features present:

Instructions: Answer once for each structure/feature or group that can be differentiated.

– Yes

↳ A single structure

– Yes

↳ The structure has a definite shape

–Other [specify]: Internal shape is very odd - including 3 roughly square rooms on the first floor and a crypt with 3 rectangular tombs 6 meters below the current ground level.

↳ What is the function of the structure/feature or group:

Answer "Yes" once for each distinct function

–Other [specify]: Combination of function - likely a memorial context for the crypts, but also a place of worship honoring past kings.

↳ Is the structure/feature finished:

– Yes

↳ Was the structure/feature intended to last beyond a generation:

– Yes

↳ Was the structure/feature modified through time:

– No

↳ Was the structure/feature destroyed:

– No

↳ Has the structure/feature been reconstructed:

– No

### Reasons for Creation/Construction/Consecration

Is the place used for the worship of/communication with non-human supernatural beings:

– Field doesn't know

Is the place used for the worship of a semi-divine human being:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: One theory is that this structure is used as a place for the memorializing (and worship?) of deified Nabataean King Obodas - but it is not currently possible to be confident in that interpretation given the evidence.

Is the place used for the worship of non-divine ancestors:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Incense was found in situ in the crypt, which suggests some form of religious practice or worship took place. However, there is not enough evidence to be secure in an analysis that the buried were worshipped rather than honored after death.

Was the place commissioned/built by an official political entity:

A political entity is a local power structure that leverages a workforce.

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Very likely it was commissioned by the monarch or his family for their crypt (which monarch is unknown).

Were the Structures built by specific groups of people:

– Field doesn't know

Was the place thought to have originated as the result of divine intervention:

– Field doesn't know

Was the place created to mark or commemorate the birthplace of a supernatural or human being:

– Field doesn't know

Was the place created as the result of an event:

– Field doesn't know

Was the creation of the place sponsored by an external financial/material donation:

– Field doesn't know

Was the establishment of the place motivated by:

– Other [specify]: Unknown

Was the place built specifically for housing scriptures/sacred texts:

– No

## Design and Material Remains

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### Overall Structure

Is the place made up of multiple built structures:

– No

Is monumental architecture present:

Monumental architecture is defined here as a built structure that surpasses average human proportions and in general is larger and more complex than is necessary to fulfill the structure's utilitarian function(s). Examples of monumental architecture include Mesopotamian Ziggurats, Egyptian Pyramids, Greek and Roman temples, Mesoamerican Pyramids, North American and Aegean burial mounds, etc.

– Yes

↳ In the average place, what percentage of area is taken up by built monuments:

– I don't know

↳ Footprint of largest single religious monument, square meters:

Please add dimensions in the comments, if known.

– Square meters: 25.3

Notes: The Khazneh has 2 floors with a width of 25.30 meters; compared to the Petra Great Temple which is 7560 square meters.

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Height, meters: 39.1

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– I don't know

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– I don't know

Is the structure/feature made out of natural materials:

Answer [Yes] for each material type

– Yes

↳ Earth

– No

↳ Sand

– No

↳ Clay  
– No

↳ Plaster  
– No

↳ Wood  
– No

↳ Grass  
– No

↳ Stone  
– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:  
– Yes

Notes: It is not a free standing structure - it is carved directly into the sandstone mountain face.

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:  
– No

Is the structure/feature made out of human-made materials

– No

## Decoration

Is decoration present:

– Yes

↳ Is decoration part of the building (permanent):  
– Yes

↳ On the outside:  
– Yes

↳ On the inside:

– Yes

Notes: There is minimal decoration inside - mostly carved doorways and niches in the wall. However, the natural stone produces a swirling decorative effect which is quite intricate and beautiful. This was common practice in most of the rock-cut facades in Petra.

↳ Is decoration attached to the building, i.e. movable reliefs or tapestries

– No

↳ Is the decoration figural:

A figural representation is defined here as one that contains the depiction of discernible human, anthropomorphic, animal, or zoomorphic forms. In general, it differentiates between animate and inanimate beings, as well as between narrative compositions and still life, landscapes, abstraction, etc. Answer [Yes] for each type of figure depicted

– Yes

↳ Are there gods depicted:

– Yes

↳ Are there other supernatural beings depicted:

– No

↳ Are there humans depicted:

– No

↳ Are there animals depicted:

– Yes

↳ Are there animal-human hybrids depicted:

– No

↳ Is the decoration non-figural:

– Yes

↳ Is it geometric/abstract

– No



↳ Floral motifs

– Yes

Notes: Vines, flowers, various types of vegetation, and small vases decorate much of the facade.

↳ Is it writing/caligraphy

– No

↳ Is the decoration hidden or restricted from view:

– No

↳ Are there statues present:

– No

↳ Are there reliefs present:

A relief as opposed to sculpture carved on the round is a work of sculpture in which the figures project from a background support, generally a flat surface. Reliefs can be carved out of stone, clay, or a similar material.

– Yes

↳ Reliefs representing the god(s) worshipped at the place:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: The use of the Khazneh remains unknown. However, the prevailing theory is that it is a tomb or mausoleum, so it seems unlikely that the gods were worshipped there directly - even though Isis among others is pictured on the external face. Those that believe the Khazneh to be a temple would likely dispute this interpretation. It must be noted though that Nabataean religious practice is largely aniconic and as such, the inclusion of Greco-Roman and Egyptian gods on the facade is an unusual inclusion and points to an inter-cultural influence upon the buildings/designers.

↳ Reliefs representing mythological narratives:

– No

↳ Reliefs representing human/historical narratives:

– No

↳ Are there paintings present:

– No

↳ Are there mosaics present:

– No

↳ Are there inscriptions as part of the decoration:

– No

## Iconography

Are there distinct features in the places iconography:

– Yes

↳ Eyes (stylized or not)

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic)

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic)

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic)

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings (abstract)

– Yes

Notes: There are niches for betyl blocks (for the worship of the Nabataean gods, primarily Dushara and al'Uzza) in the interior of the building.

↳ Portrayals of afterlife

– No

↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols)

– No

↳ Humans

– No

↳ Supernatural narratives

– No

↳ Human narratives

– No

## Beliefs and Practices

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### Funerary Associations

Is this place a tomb/burial:

– Yes

Is this a place for the worship of the dead:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: An altar was found in situ in the northern tomb of the crypt with frankincense remnants. However, whether this was for worship or memorialization is unclear.

Is this a place for treatment of the corpse:

– No

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

Co-sacrifices are animal/human sacrifices prompted by the death of the primary occupant of the tomb/burial.

– No

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

↳ Personal effects:

– Yes

↳ Valuable/precious items:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It seems that at least one of the tombs was looted and, thus, precious items may be missing.

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

↳ As cenotaphs:

– No

↳ In cemetery:

– No

↳ Family tomb/crypt:

– Yes

↳ Domestic context:

Interred beneath floors of house, or in areas of domestic activity

– No

## Supernatural Beings

Is a supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: The high god of the Nabataean pantheon is Dushara (also Dousares), a male sky god often depicted through aniconic rectangular stones known as betyls. However, at the Khazneh, he seems to have been amalgamated with the Greek version of Zeus, as indicated by the eagle on the exterior face of the tomb. This is in alignment with the other non-Nabataean figural deities carved in relief, including the Greco-Roman Dioscuri and the Egyptian Isis. In the crypt below the main facade of the Khazneh, there is evidence of burning incense a classical aspect of traditional Nabataean worship, possibly indicated an unusual dichotomy of religious tradition and practice in this location.

↳ Are they anthropomorphic:

– No

↳ Are they sky deity:

– Yes

↳ Are they chthonic (underworld)

– No

↳ Are they fused with king/kingship role (king = high god)

– No

↳ Are they the monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:  
– No

↳ Are they kin relation to elites:  
– No

↳ Are they other type of loyalty or connection to elites:  
– Yes

Notes: Dushara is considered the patron god of the king of Nabataea.

↳ Are they unquestionably good:  
– Field doesn't know

Does the supreme high god communicate with the living at this place:

– Field doesn't know

Are previously human spirits present:

– Field doesn't know

Do human spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– Field doesn't know

Are nonhuman supernatural beings present:

– Field doesn't know

Do nonhuman spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– Field doesn't know

Are mixed human-divine beings present:

– Field doesn't know

Do mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living at this place:

– Field doesn't know

Is the supernatural being/high god present in the form of a cult statue(s):

– Field doesn't know

## Supernatural Interactions

Is supernatural monitoring present:

– Field doesn't know

Do visitors communicate with the gods or supernatural beings:

– Field doesn't know

## Ritual and Performance

### Sacrifices, Offerings, and Maintenance

Are sacrifices performed at this place:

– No

Are there self-sacrifices present:

– No

Are material offerings present:

– Yes

↳ Are material offerings mandatory:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Are material offerings composed of valuable objects:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It seems not, but due to looting, it is impossible to say for sure.

↳ Are material offerings composed of daily-life objects:

– Yes

Notes: Specifically pottery (used only once) and the burning of incense ("Report on the Al-Khazna courtyard excavation at Petra (2003 season)").

↳ Are material offerings interred at this place (in caches):

– No

Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory:

– Field doesn't know

Is maintenance of the place performed:

– Field doesn't know

## Pilgrimage and Festivals

Are pilgrimages present:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It is possible that this was a site of worship and would be part of a pilgrimage. However, no corroborating evidence of this has been found.

Is this place a venue for feasting:

– No

Are festivals present:

– Field doesn't know

## Divination and Healing

Is divination present:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: There is no evidence of this.

Is healing present/practiced at this place:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: There is no evidence of this.

Do rituals occur at this place:

Rituals are visibly enacted behaviors by one or more people for the purposes of religious observance.

– Yes

↳ Do large-scale rituals take place:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Do small-scale rituals take place:

– Yes

Notes: Evidence was found within the Khazneh of burning incense in bowls and then breaking the bowls intentionally after a single use. However, how often or for what reason this was done remains unknown.

↳ Are there orthodoxy checks:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Are there orthopraxy checks:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Are there synchronic practices:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Are there intoxicants used during the ritual:  
– Field doesn't know

## Institutions and Scriptures

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### Religious Specialists

Are religious specialists present/in charge of this place:

Religious specialists are individuals whose primary duties within a population group are not concerned with subsistence or craft production but the maintenance of the religious landscape and culture of the group.

– Field doesn't know

Does this place incorporate a living space for religious specialists:

– No

Is this place used for the training of religious specialists:

– No

Are there formal institutions for the maintenance of the place:

Institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders

– Field doesn't know

### Bureaucracy



Is there a formal bureaucracy present at this place:

A bureaucracy consists of a hierarchical system of accounting and rule maintenance primarily concerned with material wealth.

– No

Does this place control economic resources (land, goods, tools):

– No

## Public Works

Does this place serve as a location for services to the community:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It does not seem likely given the size and primary function of the building as a tomb/mausoleum.

## Writing/Scriptures

Is non-religious writing stored at this place:

Economic documents, records etc.

– No

Are there scriptures associated with this place:

– No

## Bibliography

### General References

Reference: . Petra Rediscovered. Harry N. Abrams.

Reference: Suleiman Farajat , Sami Nawafleh. Report on the Al-Khazna courtyard excavation at Petra (2003 season).

Reference: Michel Mouton, Stephan G. Schmid. Men on the Rocks. Logos Verlag Berlin GmbH. isbn: 9783832533137.

Reference: Judith McKenzie. The Architecture of Petra. Oxbow Books Limited. isbn: 9781842171646.

Reference: G. R. H. Wright. Two Notes on Funerary Monuments at Petra. East and West, 48(1)

Reference: Peter Alpass. The Religious Life of Nabataea. BRILL. isbn: 9789004216235.