

Jerash

On land | Jordan | 1st-8th century CE | Grades 3-5

Name _____ Date _____

Jerash was buried in sand for centuries, which kept its Roman streets amazingly complete.

Read the story

Jerash, known to the Romans as Gerasa, was a city long before the Romans came, but it grew rich and beautiful under Roman rule after 63 BCE. It was part of a group of trading cities called the Decapolis.

Builders laid out a long main street lined with columns, called the Cardo. They built a huge oval plaza, two theaters, temples to Zeus and Artemis, public baths and fountains. When Emperor Hadrian visited in 129 to 130 CE, the people built a giant arch to welcome him.

Later, Jerash became a Christian city with many churches decorated with mosaics. In 749 CE a strong earthquake shook the region and wrecked much of the city. Over time it was covered by sand and soil.

How it ended

Jerash got smaller after its trade declined, and the earthquake of 749 CE destroyed much of what was left. Sand and soil buried the ruins, which protected them until archaeologists dug them out.

Key words

- colonnade: a long row of columns
- Decapolis: a group of ten cities in the Roman Near East
- hippodrome: a stadium for horse and chariot racing

Wow facts

- Chariot wheel ruts are still visible in the paving stones of the main street.
- Hadrian's Arch was built to welcome an emperor's visit.
- In the South Theatre, a voice at the center of the stage echoes loudly.

Talk about it

1. What clues on a street could tell you how people traveled long ago?

2. Why might people welcome an emperor with a giant arch?

Try this

Draw a map of Jerash as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. In which country is Jerash?
 - A. Jordan
 - B. Greece
 - C. Spain
 - D. Egypt
2. Which emperor's visit was honored with an arch?
 - A. Hadrian
 - B. Nero
 - C. Trajan
 - D. Caligula
3. What destroyed much of Jerash in 749 CE?
 - A. A volcano
 - B. An earthquake
 - C. A tsunami
 - D. A blizzard

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/jerash/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. Jerash is in northern Jordan.
2. A. Hadrian's Arch was built for his visit around 130 CE.
3. B. A strong earthquake shook the region in 749 CE.