



Essential Petra:

How to make the most of a one-day visit

With its wind-whittled landscape, honeycomb tombs and silent canyons blessed by forgotten gods, the ancient city of Petra embraces human history on an epic scale. The breadth of the site, which is sprinkled over numerous mountains, accessed via narrow slot canyons and stretches across dry river beds, means a visit to Petra demands time.

Most visitors allow at least two days to do it justice - one day to get acquainted with the key monuments and a second day to bask

in the majesty of this world wonder. Does that mean that those on a tighter schedule should give it a miss? Not necessarily. With 24 hours to hand, a night in Wadi Musa and some forward planning and insider knowledge, the essentials of Petra can just about be captured in a day.

Sunrise in the Siq

Start off at 6am with a brisk downhill stride towards the Siq. Too early for the horse-handlers, the path is quiet at this time

of day with only the occasional desert lark giving voice to the dawn. Sunrise brings with it the hint of the wonders to come, with blocks representing ancient gods to the right and tombs to the left. You then reverse into semi-darkness as the path slithers into the narrow defile known as the Siq.

This dark, sacred corridor with its pockets of residual night caught between the looming cliffs is cold at dawn, urging the visitor to quicken the pace. But it's worth pausing here to notice the details: a fig tree sprouting from the

rock, the ancient water channel chased into the cliff, votive shrines marking age-old holy spots.

10am at the Treasury

Described in every guidebook worth its salt, the moment when the path through the Siq slides into sunlight in front of the Treasury is one of the defining experiences in Petra. The play of light on the honey-coloured facade contrasts with the brooding gloom of the passage through the Siq. As the sun slowly trickles down the Treasury columns, it lights up differ-