

The arch towers of Wadi Rum: Burdah, Um Fruth, and the natural bridges most 4x4 tours visit

The Wadi Rum 4x4 circuit hits a handful of natural rock arches — the Burdah Bridge (the highest natural arch in Jordan), Um Fruth, and the smaller bridges. Practical advice for visiting them.

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Of all the things you can do in Wadi Rum on a half-day 4x4 tour, the rock arches are the most photographable. The Burdah Bridge, suspended 35 metres above the desert floor on a sandstone cliff, is the highest natural rock arch in Jordan. The Um Fruth Bridge, a thicker shorter span lower down, is the one most visitors actually walk across. There are perhaps a dozen smaller arches scattered across the protected area, and a Bedouin guide can route a 4x4 day around three of them. The standard tourist circuit hits two: Um Fruth in the morning, Burdah after lunch.

Both are worth the climb.

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1Why the arches matter

Wadi Rum is 721 km², a UNESCO World Heritage Mixed Site since 2011, with elevations ranging from 45 metres at the wadi floor to 1,840 metres at Jabal Umm ad Dami (Jordan's highest peak).¹ The geological process that produces the arches is straightforward: the iron-rich sandstone weathers preferentially

along bedding planes, and the wind sculpts the resulting columns into bridges over thousands of years. Most arches in Wadi Rum are still actively eroding — they look the same from year to year, but they're getting thinner.

2Burdah Rock Bridge

The Burdah Rock Bridge sits on a saddle high on the eastern face of Jebel Burdah. The arch is roughly 35 metres above the saddle floor — high enough that the climb is the experience, not just the view. The route up is a 90-minute scramble from the parking spot:

- **Sandstone friction climb.** Easy class III scrambling — exposed in places but well-trodden. A guided group can put 6–8 people on the bridge in an hour.
- **The bridge crossing.** About 15 metres span, 1–2 metres wide. Walkable but exposed — drop on either side. Vertigo-prone visitors stand at the start and turn back.
- **The view.** West across the wadi to the seven pillars; east into the granite escarpment.

3Um Fruth Bridge

Um Fruth is shorter, lower, and thicker than Burdah — a 15-metre span with a wider deck and an easier climb. The walk-up is a 20-minute sandstone scramble. Most 4×4 tours include it as the morning stop. It's the better choice for travellers with kids, vertigo, or a fear of exposed climbing. The view from the bridge isn't as dramatic as Burdah — but the photograph of someone standing on a rock arch in the desert is essentially the same shot from either bridge.

If you can only do one, do Um Fruth in the morning. It's the easier scramble and gets you the photograph.

4How they fit in a 4×4 day

The standard half-day Wadi Rum 4×4 tour runs 4–5 hours and visits 5–6 stops. A full-day tour adds Burdah. Typical sequence:

1. Lawrence Spring (morning warm-up).

2. Khazali Canyon (Nabataean inscriptions).
3. Um Fruth Bridge.
4. Lunch at a Bedouin camp.
5. Burdah Bridge (afternoon, full-day tour only).
6. Sunset at the seven pillars or a high dune.

The Wadi Rum Visitor Centre at Disi assigns 4×4 tours; book through your camp or the visitor centre directly. Half-day tours don't usually reach Burdah — the saddle is 30 minutes east of the standard circuit.

For solo travellers

Most 4×4 tours fill up at the Visitor Centre by sharing the cost — solo travellers pair with couples or groups. Negotiate at the tour desk; per-person pricing drops sharply with 4 in the vehicle.

5 Practical tips

- **Footwear.** Trail shoes with good grip — sandstone is grippy when dry, slippery in dust.
- **Water.** Minimum 2 litres per person on a half-day tour; 4 litres on a full-day.
- **Best season.** March–May or September–November. Avoid July–August (40 °C+ on the rock).
- **Photography.** Arch shots work best with a person on the bridge for scale. Drone use requires a permit through the Visitor Centre.
- **Sun.** Wide-brimmed hat + sunscreen. The sandstone reflects the sun back at you on the climb.

References

1. [Wikipedia — Wadi Rum](#)

Verified by locals: TBD — this article will be reviewed by a Wadi Rum Visitor Centre-licensed Bedouin guide before final publication. Drafted from Wikipedia.