

## Hijaz Railway begins operating daily Zarqa-Amman service



The Hijaz Railway ferried over 7,000 passengers between Amman and Zarqa during Ramadan (Photo by Nader Daoud)

AMMAN - A train ferrying passengers between Amman and Zarqa began operating a daily service on Sunday, according to the Jordan Hijaz Railway (JHR).

The train departs from Zarqa at 6:45am and returns at 4:30pm, according to JHR Director General Mahmoud Khazaaleh.

The fare for a one-way journey, which takes about 45 minutes, is 250 fils.

If the need arises, the JHR can operate two trains per trip, each with a maximum capacity of 400 passengers, according to the railway.

"We decided to operate a daily service after we found there was a good turnout for the service we introduced during Ramadan to transport passengers between Amman and Zarqa," Khazaaleh told The Jordan Times in a phone interview on Sunday.

According to Khazaaleh, the train, which runs on the original Hijaz rail tracks, ferried over 7,000 passengers during the fasting month.

In addition, the JHR will operate a train for tourists from Amman to Al Jizah as of next Friday, he said, noting that the fare will be JD2 for adults and JD1 for children.

"We want to activate the train and encourage people to use it as it has not carried passengers for a long time," he said.

The Hijaz Railway was built a century ago at an estimated cost of five million Ottoman gold liras.

In September 1900, Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid called on Muslims across the world to collect donations for establishing a rail track between Damascus and the holy sites in Saudi Arabia to facilitate the transport of pilgrims.

Construction started the same year with a telegraph line alongside the track connecting Damascus with Medina via Amman.

The 1,303km-long track reached Medina in 1908, but never made it to Mecca because work was eventually interrupted by the outbreak of World War I.

Its first trip to Saudi Arabia set off on August 20 of that year, carrying a large number of Arab pilgrims for the Hajj - a 60-hour trip.