

Phoenix from the flames

The cradle of civilisation, Lebanon is determined to rise from the ashes to shine once again

History

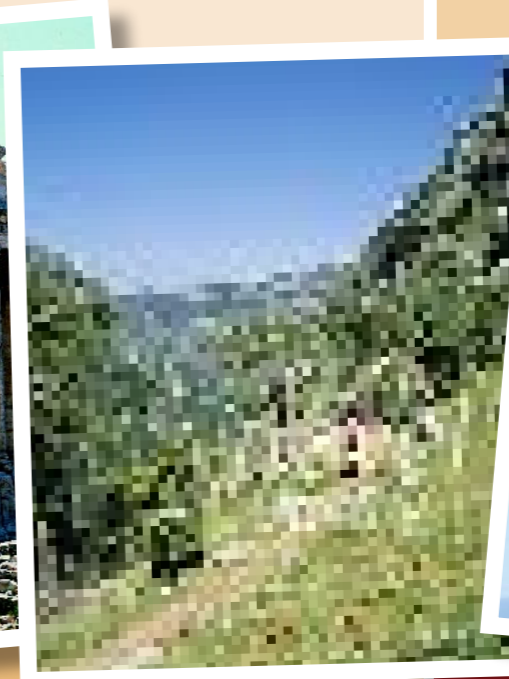
► **Step back in time:** Thanks to its location at the crossroads of Asia, Europe and Africa, Lebanon has been shaped by civilizations throughout history. From Stone Age settlements, to Phoenician city-states, from Roman temples, to crusader castles and Mameluk mosques the country's historical sites are a true encyclopaedia of ancient and modern world history.

► **Living history:** The cities and ruins of Aanjar, Baalbeck, Byblos, Tyre and the Qadisha Valley/Cedars Forest are listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and are a must see for any visitor to Lebanon. The most famous of these is Baalbeck, one of the world's best examples of a Roman site. Each summer the city hosts the Baalbeck International Festival of Music and Drama amongst its shrines and temples.

Attractions

► **City life:** Beirut, the capital of Lebanon and the city that wouldn't die remains a fascinating city. In 1990, Downtown Beirut was in shambles, a deserted no man's land but a decade later, Downtown emerged as Beirut's most fashionable and desirable neighbourhood, with gloriously restored French mandate-era buildings, European and Lebanese cafes, world-class restaurants, luxurious boutiques and stylish pubs.

► **A-Z:** Another attraction is the ancient city of Byblos about 40km north of the coast from Beirut. Byblos has the honour of being one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world being a major Phoenician centre until the 10th Century BC. The alphabetic "phoenetic" script developed here became the precursor of modern alphabets.



Only in Lebanon

► **Ski time:** Lebanon is one of the few winter sport centres in the Middle East and the most extensive. The season begins in December and continues until April. The largest resorts have hotels, chalets good ski lifts. There are six winter resorts: The Cedars (2,300 meters), Faraya-Ouyoun as Siman (1,890 meters), Laklouk (1,740 meters), Faqra (1,750 meters), Qanat Bakish (1,990 meters) and Zaarour (1,990 meters).

Tripoli

Lebanon's second largest city is also the main port and trading centre for northern Lebanon. Habitation of the city goes back to at least the 14th century BC but it wasn't until the 9th century BC that the Phoenicians established a small trading station there. Since then, Tripoli has fallen under Roman, Byzantine and Crusader rule, all contributing to its rich religious and secular historical monuments. Important sites include the Saint Gilles citadel standing above the town on Mount Pilgrim, the Taynal Mosque, the Great Mosque and the Lion's Tower. Tripoli is also home to the bustling and colourful traditional covered Souks, unique Mamluk architecture and plenty of traditional craft shops. Or for a real taste of the city why not try one of Tripoli's delicious sticky sweets oozing with nuts and honey!

Nature

► **Land of plenty:** A short drive from Tripoli you will come across vistas of olive groves and vineyards with lush valleys and mountain peaks at every turn.

► **Tree tops:** At more than 1,800 m above sea level, the Cedars of Lebanon fascinate with their majesty and great age. Known for their long lasting wood resistant to temperature, humidity and decay, King Solomon built his temple in Jerusalem from these cedars and the Egyptians used the wood for shipbuilding and making sarcophagi and the cedar oil for mummification.

► **Pure magic:** Visitors can watch endangered loggerhead and green turtles come to shore to breed along the southern coast or try a guided nature walks in the north in search of medicinal plants and wildflowers.

BUSINESS TIPS

- 1. DRESS UP:** Business people usually wear a jacket and tie.
- 2. LANGUAGE:** English is spoken by many local business people.
- 3. EXCHANGE:** Come armed with business cards as it is usual to exchange these cards on meeting someone for the first time.
- 4. HOURS:** Shops and businesses are typically open Monday through Saturday, 9:00-18:00.
- 5. VISAS:** Visitors from the UK are required to get a Visa but these can be obtained on arrival at the airport.



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Top 5 selling tips

- 1. Variety:** Lebanon has plenty to keep history buffs interested with some of the best examples of Roman sites in the world and with over 5,000 years of recorded history, the country is a treasure trove of archaeological wonders.
- 2. Distance:** Lebanon is only four and a half hours flight from the UK so jet lag isn't an issue.
- 3. Beach living:** Lebanon is bordered by the Mediterranean to the west with a 225 km coastline.
- 4. Adventure junkie:** Sporty visitors will find skiing, hiking, rock-climbing, cycling, snorkelling and diving amongst some of the activities on offer in Lebanon.
- 5. Pack it in:** Lebanon is a compact country making it possible for visitors to be able to experience a wide variety of attractions and activities in one trip.

Where to stay

Whether you're looking to be pampered with five-star service and full spa facilities, or you desire to get off the beaten track and share a traditional Lebanese meal with a local family in a quiet mountain village, you're sure to find accommodation to suit your tastes. Most international hotel chains are now represented in Lebanon including Radisson SAS, Marriott, Movenpick and InterContinental. The country also has some very good three and four hotels and for those on a budget there are also a few mid-range and cheap hotels and the Lebanese Youth Hostels Federation can host foreign youth groups at low prices. Furnished apartments are available for rental on a weekly basis in Beirut and other major cities in Lebanon and usually cater to people coming to Lebanon for a long-term stay but can also be a cost-effective option for families or small groups of travelers.



Lebanese food

Lebanese cuisine is surprising in its diversity and is made up of a rich mixture of ingredients from the various Lebanese regions. Typical gastronomy includes olive oil, herbs, spices, fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, cereals, fishes and meat.

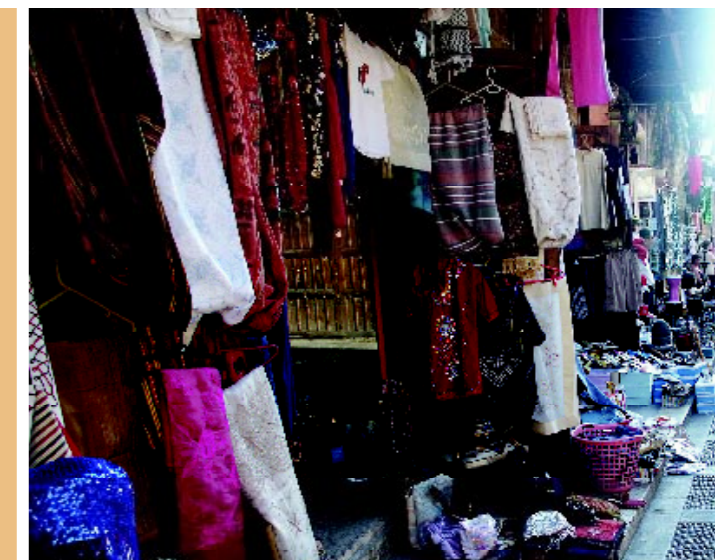
It is known above all for its mezzé, countless dishes of savoury hors-d'oeuvres served traditionally as the starter to a meal. Typically, a Lebanese mezza has 30 or 40 dishes with dishes including tabbouleh salad, hummus, baba ghanoush (dip made from char-grilled aubergine, tahina, olive oil, lemon juice, and garlic purée) and kibbeh nayeh (chickpeas in tahini sauce). The Lebanese flat pitta bread is essential to every Lebanese meal and is often used instead of a fork.

Arak, an anise-flavored liqueur, is the national alcoholic drink and is usually served to accompany a traditional Lebanese meal. Lebanese wine is also popular and is also now beginning to enjoy a worldwide reputation.

Shopping

Shopping in Lebanon is a must. Visitors will be able to find most international brands available, especially in the capital city, Beirut. But what most will want to take home with them are examples of the local products, particularly the handicrafts which visitors can witness being made using traditional techniques and skills that are handed down from generation to generation.

Tripoli and Sidon are known for soap manufacturing, and in the south of the country you can see glass-blowing, basket-making, bell-making, woodwork, embroidery and pottery, to name a few. Beirut is best for contemporary fashions. These can be found along Hamra, Verdun and Ashrafieh Streets, or at one of the city's chic shopping malls.



NEWS UPDATE

Throughout its history Lebanon has gone through many political crises and instabilities. The unity and the faith of the Lebanese people has helped them overcome the difficulties and challenges this small country has faced. Following the latest crisis in Lebanon, the country's highest priority is to overcome the negative consequences of war. In doing so the people hope to map out a better future for the country. The government, the ministry of tourism, private companies, as well as those in associated fields are now beginning the process of recovery. They promoting and encouraging tourism back to the destination by offering economic security and growing opportunities for employment in the sector.

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