



# Lebanon Traveler

A publication of Hospitality International in a joint venture with General Secretariat of Tourism - Lebanon 4 September - November 2012

Lebanon 8,000 LBP

**VISIT**

**RELIGIOUS SITES**

**YOU NEVER**

**KNEW EXISTED**

**Discover**  
the legend  
of the firebird

**Follow**  
the olive oil trail

**10**  
MUST VISIT  
IN CHOUF



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# Lebanon Traveler

## unveils Lebanon's hidden treasures



It's Fall and for the most part, this means back to the stress and discipline of daily life. Although Summer is over, and very few tourists are roaming the streets, the sun is shining, the weather is warm and days are long enough so that it still feels like our favorite season.

Fall in Lebanon is a very pleasant extension of summer that eases you into the cold of winter. But, while you are busy getting back into your regular routine, there are plenty of ways to enjoy the outdoors for just one more time, for one more activity, for one more event... and then it's back to reality.



So, why not try your hand at rock climbing or if you are not feeling so adventurous this is the perfect season to take a drive and discover the luscious Chouf Mountains. While you are there, make a detour to Ain Zhalta and check out a truly creative hidden gem.

Have you ever taken part in an olive oil tasting? No, well it's time you did. Just follow the olive oil trail for an interesting experience. And as winter sets in and the weather gets colder, a nice visit to the Soap Museum will make you think about a common yet essential everyday object.



At Lebanon Traveler, we are committed to showing you, our *Lebanon*. A Lebanon where the Saint Barbara tradition still counts, where cutlery is handmade, where shepherds roam the mountains, where corporate responsibility runs in its capital's streets and where nostalgia is environmentally friendly - a Lebanon where we still believe in miracles. Whether you are a local or a foreigner, there's always something you need to learn about Lebanon and that something is here, in Lebanon Traveler



*Your feedback as a reader and as a user of this information is very important for us to develop quality sustainable tourism in Lebanon. Enjoy and share your experience on [info@lebanontraveler.com](mailto:info@lebanontraveler.com)*

*The Lebanon Traveler team*

# Lebanon Traveler

A publication of Hospitality Services in a joint venture with Beyond Beirut

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We welcome views on any relevant subject but request that letters be short and to the point. The editor reserves the right to select and edit letters. Please e-mail your comments to [info@lebanontraveler.com](mailto:info@lebanontraveler.com) addressed to the editor or fax them to + 961 | 482876.

Published by Hospitality Services s.a.r.l.  
Burghol Building, Dekwaneh, Lebanon  
P.O.Box 90 155 Jdeidet el Metn 1202 2020  
To advertise contact our office at  
Tel: +961 | 480081 Fax: +961 | 482876



The cover photo was taken by Michel Bsaibes in Sawfar [michel.bsaibes@hotmail.com](mailto:michel.bsaibes@hotmail.com)

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# Evening with Walkabout Drum Circle at Freykeh

Location Freykeh old silk factory

Tel +961 3 42730

Date 21 September at 9 PM

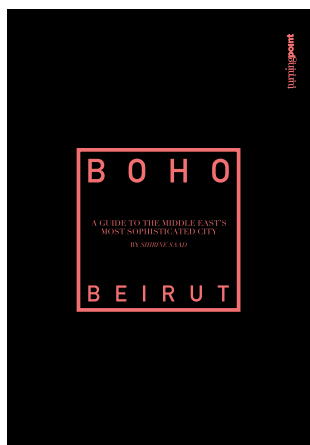
Entrance Fee 20,000 LL

In the beautiful setting of an old silk factory in Freykeh, Mounir Abou Debs will host a night with the Walkabout Drum Circle, bringing sounds and beats from Asia, Africa and Australia. The evening will introduce you to the history and sounds of 5 different traditional Mouth Harpm instruments followed by a live solo by Jade Balaben. A presentation of West African Mandigue music on drums will follow, during which the group will play different instruments to showcase their variety. The evening will conclude with a Didgeridu Solo.



# Insightful and hip, Boho Beirut

Sophisticated City is an insider's guide that captures the culture and glamor of a post war city that is pulsing with creativity. "In recent years the generation that had grown up in Lebanon or abroad during the war is determined to contribute to their country's future," explains author Shirine Saad "They are creating a new energy, mixing local traditions and the skills acquired throughout their travels, and collectively redefining the country's new identity. Now despite the tense political atmosphere in the region, Beirut is buzzing with innovation. I wanted to share that energy with the world."



# Diving with Dale Corazon

Date 30 September at 9 AM

Location Saframarine Resort, Block B

Fees 40 USD including lesson, boat ride, lunch and resort entrance

Tel + 961 70 986118

Don't miss the opportunity to explore the underwater world of the Lebanese seabed with Dale Corazon. Spend the day at the beach learning to dive. The lesson begins with a description of the equipment used and underwater life followed by a 30 minutes dive at a depth of 5 to 6 meters to put theory into practice. As you wait for your turn to dive, you can relax at the pool and enjoy the many offerings of the Saframarine resort. After an exciting dive, lunch will be served, followed by a boat ride. Dale Corazon is about sharing good times and being together; that's why the event is not a simple diving event, but a full day to enjoy the beach and good company.



# Two-week charity mountain trek

In an effort to promote ecotourism and philanthropy, the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the AMAR International Charitable Foundation, have created a 440-kilometer hike that will kick off in September to help raise money for drug awareness and English programs in the country. The trek takes place along the Lebanon Mountain Trail, from Qobeiyat in the north to Marjayoun in the south, passing through 75 villages and towns. "The project will show that Lebanon is a land of real beauty, talent and optimism," said Britain's Ambassador to Lebanon, Tom Fletcher, adding, "It will show Lebanon's real selling points to the world." Baroness Nicholson, the executive chairman of the AMAR, aims to make the Lebanon Mountain Trek an annual event before the start of the academic year; thus encouraging university students from all over Europe to come here for two weeks to embark on a challenging hike and raise money. The idea of using the trail to raise money for charity was first realized by a young British woman, Caroline Brooks, who will launch the project by hiking the full length in 17 days, from 25 September until 10 October. She aims to raise 30,000 USD, half of which she will donate to the AMAR Foundation. Volunteers are welcome to join in on any part of the trek. All of the money raised through donations and sponsorship for participants, will go to AMAR.



# Beirut International Film Festival

**Date** 3-11 October

**Location** Cinema Abraj

**Time Starts at** 5 PM

**Fee** 5000 LL/ticket

**Tel** +961 1 202411 and +961 70 141843

Attended by international and local directors, producers and actors, the Beirut International Film Festival (BIFF) screens more than 35 movies including feature films, shorts, documentaries and children's films. A reference for the independent movie lover, the BIFF has become an important hunting ground for international scouts. This year, like the past 11, promises to be an excellent program with many undiscovered talent. During its ninth year, the BIFF welcomed Francis Ford Coppola who came for the opening and a unique Q&A for a lucky few. Make sure to book your place ahead of time as tickets are sold out fast!



# Lebanese Rock Festival

**Date** 12 October

**Location** Beirut Hippodrome

**Time** 7 PM

**Fees** 30,000 LL/ticket The past decade saw the rise of a new trend in music. Lebanese rockers began to fuse Western rock with Oriental music and/or lyrics, which resulted in various types of Oriental Rock. The Lebanese Rock Festival aims at honoring this new sound by bringing together several prominent Lebanese rockers and offering fans an amazing night with their favorite performers. Part of the profits from this event will go to the May Jallad Foundation for cancer as well as the Faire Face NGO as part of the Hard Rock Pinkoctober fest. The festival does not stop with the concert. There is plenty of entertainment and food to satisfy all your cravings.

# Vinifest

**Date** 3 - 6 October

**Location** Beirut Hippodrome

**Time** 6 PM to 12 AM

**Entrance Fee** 20,000 LL/pers

**35,000 LL/2pers**

The 5th annual Vinifest is the perfect fall event to prepare for the cold season and find the perfect vintage that will delight and warm you up. Vinifest has gained the reputation of being the best forum for showcasing and consuming wine and food. Under the theme of Food and Wine pairings, this year's event will include a themed evening, a wine school, live cooking demonstrations and a photography competition. So drink and enjoy your time, just make sure you have a designated driver.

# Beirut Cooking Festival

**Location** Pavilion Royal, Biel, Beirut

**Date** 8-10 November

**Time** 11 AM to 8 PM

**Tel** + 961 1 480081

Three mouth-watering days await you at the Beirut Cooking Festival (BCF). The show will be packed with recipes, new trends, and delicious treats. Meet celebrity chefs during the live demonstrations, sample new dishes at the live cooking stations, enjoy the best vintages during the wine tasting session, learn mixology secrets from the top bartenders, check out how organic fruits and vegetables are grown in Lebanon, learn all about olive oil, get ideas for setting your next dinner table and grab a signed copy of your favorite cookbook. Over 50 exhibitors will be showcasing the latest in accessories, food, kitchen equipment, tableware and more. BCF will also launch the first ever Beirut Gourmet Week that will have restaurants, bakeries and even dieticians offering a special event or dish to celebrate the festivities.





# Subito Trio Concerts

23 September, 8 PM at St John Baptist Church, Byblos

25 September, 8 PM at Assembly Hall, AUB, Beirut

27 September, 7 PM at USEK, Kaslik

28 September, 8 PM at Safadi Cultural Center, Tripoli

Subito Trio is all about classical music. Founded in October 2010 in Stuttgart Germany by Sooksan Ratanapol (Clarinet), Jana Semaan (Cello), and See-Eon Kim (Piano), the trio's mission is to demonstrate that classical music is exciting. In addition to the performance, the concert is moderated to give a better understanding of each piece. It is the group's belief that for an audience of non-musicians, moderation is necessary to ignite interest in the subject. And most importantly, the concerts are free and held all over Lebanon for maximum attendance and exposure.

## Salon du livre Francophone de Beyrouth

Date 26 October - 4 November

Location Biel

Time 10 AM to 9 PM

Tel +961 1 420205

The third most important book fair after Paris and Montreal, the Salon du Livre Francophone de Beyrouth has become an annual rendez-vous for French book enthusiasts everywhere. It is the perfect time to meet with prominent authors and learn all about them in person. Attend unique cultural workshops, listen to talented storytellers during live reading sessions, and check out the up and coming talent through the many competitions available. This year's guest of honor is the French Academie giving unprecedented insight on literature and publishing.



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photos  
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good enough,  
then you're not  
close enough.

– Robert Capa



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# Style, Service and Splendor by the Mediterranean



Overlooking the Mediterranean in its entire splendor, Le Royal Hotels & Resorts – Beirut is just minutes away from the city’s modern airport, bustling downtown area, famed Jeita Grotto, Casino Du Liban, old souks of Byblos, majestic ski resorts and upscale shopping districts. With spacious rooms and suites, Le Royal Hotels & Resorts – Beirut boasts sumptuous dining options, spectacular leisure facilities and sophisticated business amenities in an atmosphere of luxury.

## DINING

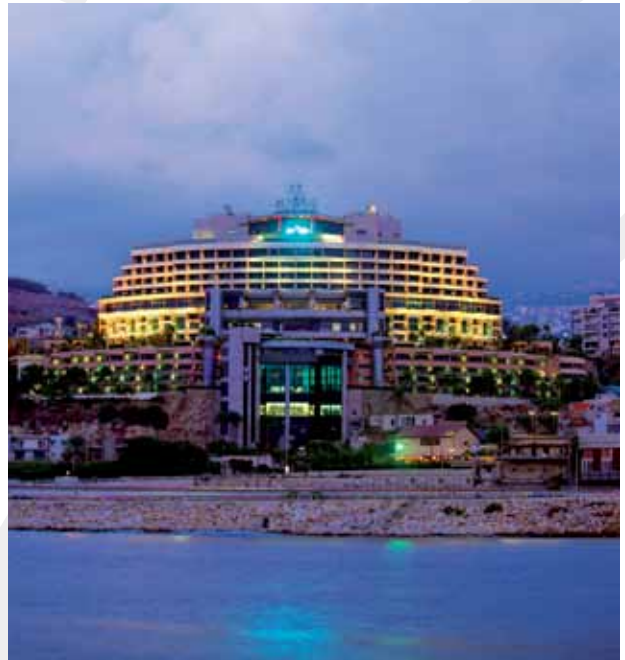
From Italian, Mexican and seafood specialties at Le Jardin du Royal, to continental cuisine at the Titanic Piano Bar, there is a variety of flavors to tease the palate. Warm barbeque nights by the pool and Sunday brunch have been conceived by Le Royal Hotels & Resorts – Beirut’s award-winning chefs to satisfy all guests. For an unforgettable voyage into Lebanese hospitality and late-night entertainment with belly dancing, Diwan Shahrayar presents an ideal Arabian setting where a delicious variety of meza and grilled meats can be enjoyed. For a different meal experience.

## LEISURE

Along with one of the most sophisticated Aqua Parks in the region; the WaterGate Aqua Park, Le Royal Hotels & Resorts - Beirut also boasts an award-winning SPA renowned for its exclusive health treatments using Swiss products by Dr Burgener Switzerland, made with the finest marine extracts, essential oils and herbs from the Swiss Alps. Dr Burgener Switzerland SPA products involve personalized botanical extracts and creams carefully mixed to meet each guest’s particular needs. The Royal SPA also includes a slimming center, Turkish bath, Jacuzzi, sauna, steam room, state-of- the-art gym, aerobics studio, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, tennis and squash courts.

## ADDITIONAL FEATURES

High-speed wireless Internet access. Modern audio-visual equipment. Flexible meeting and banquet rooms with natural daylight. Facilities for disabled guests. Children’s programs. Live entertainment.





# The return of the shepherd

I have a confession to make. I love nature. I love everything about it.  
I love its sights, its peacefulness, its seasons...

During my frequent walks through the mountains of Sannine, I met up with many shepherds and got to know them quite well. It is this exceptional experience that I would like to share with you.



# Pierre Sakr

June 2012



Most of the shepherds come to Sannine from Aarsal as soon as the snow melts. This year, they came in mid May, as the snow remained pretty heavy in the mountains until then. They do not fear the cold but the snow complicates their journey. They rent land, some say from the government and others say from landowners, and in return they are allowed to roam the area with their cattle.



Like all nomads they prefer to erect their tents close to a water source, which is why there is a hefty concentration of shepherds in the Rakakib El Jamal and Mraj el Dichar areas of Sannine.

I used to think I worked hard and my life was tough, but this all changed when I got a taste of a shepherd's lifestyle. This is what tough is all about. The roughness of life is reflected on their skin. Even kid's faces are scorched from the fierce heat of the sun and the freezing cold of the night.



The men wake up at dawn to take the cattle out to graze, while the women take care of the kids, prepare the food and tend to other everyday chores. The men know each and every one of their herd, and no matter how big the herd, if a single animal goes missing they will notice. Their protective instincts are always on alert. One or more dogs run around the herd to keep it in place.

The men return at sunset and leave the herd in the hands of women who line them front to back and attach every two together to stop them from moving. Once they are all in place, the women begin the milking process. They start at the top of the line and move forward till each and every animal is milked. Most of the milk collected is sold to the dairy farms in the area and the rest is kept for their use.



It is fascinating to see how the hierarchy works with the tribes. The elders' words have standing, men impose their opinions and women just go with the flow. Although women do not have much authority, the eldest mother or grandmother of the tribe is highly respected. Mature sons do not dare cross her and the younger women follow her instructions to the letter. The whole family, down to the third and even fourth generation, lives under the same tent and shares food, duties and more.



**Share your nature experience with us and let others learn by writing to [readersexperience@lebanontraveler.com](mailto:readersexperience@lebanontraveler.com)**



What I enjoyed seeing most were the children. Despite their tough life, they ooze innocence and playfulness. They walk barefoot through the plains. Their only toys are the baby sheep or goats and whatever is handy like sticks and stones. Children until the age of 10 or 12, stay with their mothers in the camp while their fathers take the herds to the mountains. They are so very shy, always hiding in their mother's skirts when talked to, but once they get to know you, they are a most welcoming bunch. Now that they trust me, whenever they see me arrive, they just hop on my 4x4. It's a real pleasure to be around them. *Pierre Sakr is the Managing Partner of Zenith Signs & Neon (Lebanon)* [facebook.com/pierre.sakr.7](https://www.facebook.com/pierre.sakr.7)





# Focus on responsible tourism

The phrase responsible tourism is often used without a second thought, but what do we actually mean by it? Pascal Abdallah of Responsible Mobilities takes time out to explain the concept and map out a responsible destination just for you.

Responsible tourism is an attitude. It calls travelers to a higher standard. It goes far beyond tagging your trip as “Responsible Tourism” or being accommodated at a rural guesthouse. We intend to help reader and travelers distinguish from the various definitions and theories related to responsible tourism and make the right choice.

In every issue of Lebanon Traveler we will explore different concepts, such as ecotourism, volunteerism, etc. . . and catch up on the latest news about responsible tourism in Lebanon and around the world. We will learn about successful projects that implement or aim to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – eight international goals that all UN member states have pledged to achieve by 2015. And, you will also have the chance to use the Responsible Destinations list, developed by the Responsible Mobilities Tour Operator, to discover positive places of beauty and culture around the country. As a starting point, in this Fall 2012 issue let us review the evolution of responsible tourism.

## Responsible tourism principles

### Ecotourism

After about 30 years of wildlife tourism, operators were concerned that their visits might be actively contributing to its decline through negative environmental impact. They began to advocate the idea of “leaving no trace”. This became better known as ecotourism.

### Problems with ecotourism

Over the next decade, the increased number of tourists began to take its toll. Local communities living alongside the wildlife population were angered by the incursions. They felt that if they were to set aside some of the best areas in their local area for (often) overseas visitors, then they too should benefit. These local communities face the 'opportunity cost' of not, for example, using these areas themselves or chopping down trees and taking firewood if an area is to be conserved for wildlife. The population cannot afford to do this without some form of compensation from tourism.

As the years went by ecotourism became an increasingly popular form of marketing and sadly abused by green washers, who exploited its marketing potential without addressing any of the conservation or community issues. In short, there was insufficient focus on the impacts of tourism.

### Responsible travel and tourism

Responsible travel and tourism acknowledges two important factors. First, the impact of tourism is cultural and economic, as well as environmental. Second, tourists and the tourism industry must take responsibility for their impact. Initially the definition of responsible tourism tended to focus on maximizing the positive social, economic and environmental impacts and minimizing the negative ones. A better example comes from the Cape Town Declaration, which described responsible tourism as 'creating better places to live in and to visit.' Note how the benefits to local people are central to this idea.



## Responsible tourism *at a glance*

- Involves local people in decisions that affect their lives
- Makes positive contribution to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage
- Generates greater economic benefits for local people
- Provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists

## Responsible Destinations

One way to discover Lebanon is to adopt a responsible tourism attitude and follow a few guidelines that minimize our impact on the environment. We suggest a 2-day excursion in the Batroun region with trips to the Assia, Bshaale, Douma, and Tannourine villages.

Travel to Assia from Batroun, via the Bejdarfel road. Start your visit by discovering the pottery makers at Assia and learn how they produce traditional kitchen wear. Proceed to Bshaale and visit its famous 12 old olive trees, which according to some are millenary trees. Continue towards St Estephane church from where you can walk (90 minutes) to Douma.

Before reaching Douma, you cross by the Monastery of St James (Roman remains in the monastery's structure) and the nearby Saint Jacques Farm (where they produce the only Lebanese "foie gras" in the Arab world), where you can have lunch.

Continue to Douma, (the mountain's main trading hub in the 19th century) where you can visit the Old Souk and try the local "raha loukoum" or ice cream, and among the attractions here is the historic Greek Orthodox Monastery of St John, richly decorated with murals of Byzantine style art.

Here you can have the choice of finishing your day by staying in Douma at Grand Hotel Douma or the Maatouq Guesthouse, or continuing to Tannourine where to can spend the night at the Sarkis Guesthouse. On day two, we suggest you go for a walk and discover the Tannourine Cedar Forest Nature Reserve to learn about its rich history. On your way back to Beirut, take the Hadath el-Jebbe Chekka road

### Local guides in the region

Hayat Chalhoub in Douma (+961 3 349036)

Georges Sarkis Harb in Tannourine (+961 3 679055)

Or full package tour from Responsible Mobilities (+961 3 218048)



## Responsible Attitude

### Get active now!

- Always use a local person living in the area, to whom you pay a fee, to show you around. It's better if you ask for the trained local guide, this way you can guarantee good service.
- Always try to opt for local guesthouses in order to minimize economic leakage. This means keeping the money you pay in the region instead of paying hotel chains, who do not invest back in the community or the local environment.
- Try to car pool in order to minimize CO2 emissions. You can ask Responsible Mobilities for their Clean Mobility tours, during which public transportation is used.
- Always buy items from the local craftsmen you visit in the villages, otherwise compensate the time they spend with you by donating a small amount of money. This will help keep these traditions alive.
- Try to buy local goods in order to encourage the local economy.
- Do not litter and don't pick any flowers or shrubs.
- Do walk on trails to avoid harming local plant life.





# News from abroad

## 2012 the year of sustainable energy

Recognizing the importance of energy for sustainable development, the United Nations General Assembly has designated, by its resolution 65/151, the year 2012 as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All. This presents a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of increasing sustainable access to energy, energy efficiency and renewable energy at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Energy services have a profound effect on productivity, health, education, climate change, food and water security, and communication services. Lack of access to clean, affordable and reliable energy hinders human, social and economic development and is a major impediment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Today, 1.4 billion people still do not have access to modern energy, while 3 billion rely on "traditional biomass" and coal as their main fuel sources.

## Celebrating World Tourism Day

Tourism today is at the forefront of some of the world's most ambitious and innovative clean energy solutions. The aviation industry is implementing cutting-edge technologies to make aircrafts lighter than ever before, commercial flights are beginning to use bio-fuels in their fuel mix, key card systems and energy saving light bulbs are increasingly being implemented in hotel rooms worldwide. And, tour operators are asking for energy efficiency throughout their supply chains as well.

The 2012 theme for World Tourism Day on 29 September is 'Tourism & Sustainable Energy: Powering Sustainable Development'. As the most widely celebrated global day for tourism, it represents a unique opportunity to highlight the steps taken so far by the international tourism community to power sustainable development. The theme is also an opportunity to ensure international tourism continues to play a role in tackling the major energy challenges of our time, being addressed by the 2012 United Nations International Year of Sustainable Energy for All.



## World Responsible Tourism Day

Travel companies, organizations and individuals are signing up to World Travel Market World Responsible Tourism Day (WTM WRTD), a universal movement that's growing like quick-fire. Since its introduction five years ago, WTM World Responsible Tourism Day, in association with the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), has captured the hearts and minds of industry professionals everywhere. No one has ever brought the industry together in this way – helping build a solid, sustainable future for travel and tourism.



Wednesday 7 November, WTM World Responsible Tourism Day 2012, will be marked, not only at World Travel Market, but around the world with special events, communications and consumer promotions demonstrating the industry's determination to make a real difference. In Lebanon, the Tour Operator Responsible Mobilities will celebrate this occasion, as it does every year, with a 2-day event. The program is listed on page 69.



*Pascal Abdallah, a pioneer in responsible tourism in Lebanon, is a social entrepreneur. He started his activities back in 1997 by promoting tourism that supports nature conservation, cultures preservation and generates economic benefits to local communities. Co-founder of Beyond Beirut and LMT Association in Lebanon, he is today the manager of Responsible Mobilities where Tour Operating meets with Tourism Research, Expertise, Consultancy and Development in the rural areas. Pascal is a university lecturer in tourism and heritage and manages a local guesthouse in North Beqaa. He has advised the Shouf Cedars Biosphere Reserve for a 5 year ecotourism strategy (2009) and ANERA for the DHIAFFEH network.*

# 10 things to do in Chouf



## 1. Deir Al-Qamar

Without a doubt, Deir Al-Qamar is one of Lebanon's prettiest villages. It also has an interesting history that reflects the country's tolerant religious roots. The village once hosted an active church, synagogue, mosque and Druze meeting hall all on the central square. Nowadays, it's a sleepy town, especially charming at sunset when the bats flit overhead and the old buildings on the square resemble a fairytale setting. Deir al-Qamar's roots lie in the Middle Ages when Fakhreddine, the Druze governor of Lebanon, extended his power throughout the region to cover an area roughly equivalent to modern-day Lebanon. He succeeded in uniting what was once a number of small fiefdoms. Due to water shortages, he moved the capital to nearby Deir al-Qamar, which has numerous active springs. Over three centuries later, the village remains one of the best-preserved examples of 17th & 18th century provincial architecture in the country.

### Checkout

Emir Fakhreddine Maan Mosque  
Younes Maan Palace  
Silk Khan  
Fakhreddine Palace  
Youssef Chehab Serail  
Saidet At-Tallé Church

Tel +961 5 505 624 - [deirqamar.org.lb](http://deirqamar.org.lb)

## 2. Moussa Castle

About 2 km out of town in the direction of Beiteddine is Castle Moussa, a truly unique waxworks museum. It is a testament to the love of a woman and the stubbornness of its creator. Filled with strange mechanical tableaux, a life-size recreation of the Last Supper and probably the biggest collection of guns and weaponry you'll ever see, it took Moussa nearly 60 years to complete. His tenacity is simply awe-inspiring and the result of his life's work is on display for generations to enjoy.

On the way down to Beiteddine, about 1 km on the left hand side is La Bastide, a nice place to stop over for a night. It's clean, friendly and comfortable with 20 lovely, flower-patterned rooms, many with wonderful views across the valley.

**Admission 7500 LL**

**Winter opening 8 am – 6 pm**

**Tel +961 5 500 106**

**[moussacastle.com](http://moussacastle.com)**



## 3. Beiteddine

Some 50 km southeast of Beirut, Beiteddine is the name of both a village and the magnificent palace complex that lies within it. The palace, former stronghold of the 18th-century governor Emir Bashir, can be seen from across the valley as you approach it. A cross between traditional Arab and Italian baroque (the architects were in fact Italian) its grounds descend over several terraces, planted with poplars and flowering shrubs. There were three other palaces in the vicinity, built for Emir Bashir's sons. Of these only one, Mir Amin Palace, is still standing and is now a luxury hotel just beyond the main part of the village (see page 20).

### **Beiteddine Palace**

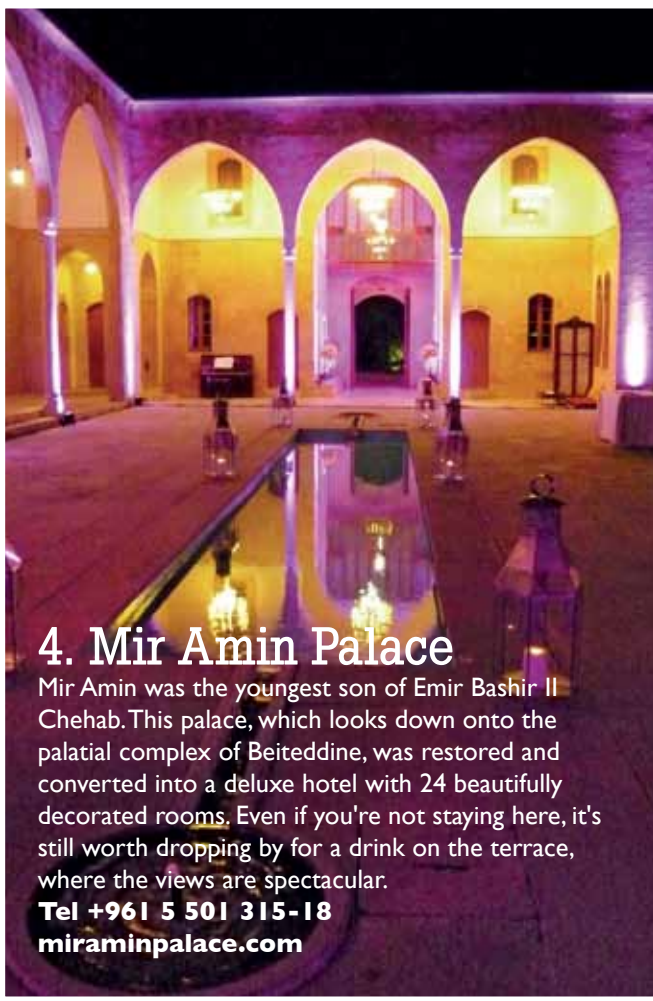
This magnificent, early 19th-century palace complex was built over a period of 30 years, beginning in 1788, and became the stronghold of Emir Bashir. It is the greatest surviving achievement of 19th-century Lebanese architecture and an impressive symbol of Bashir's power and wealth. Most areas except the courtyards and old stables are kept locked, so it's hard to see anything for the price of your ticket. A guide with an all-important key can be persuaded for about 10,000 LL, unless you manage to tag along inconspicuously behind another group.

**Admission 7500 LL**

**Winter opening 9 am – 3:30 pm**

**Tel +961 5 500077**

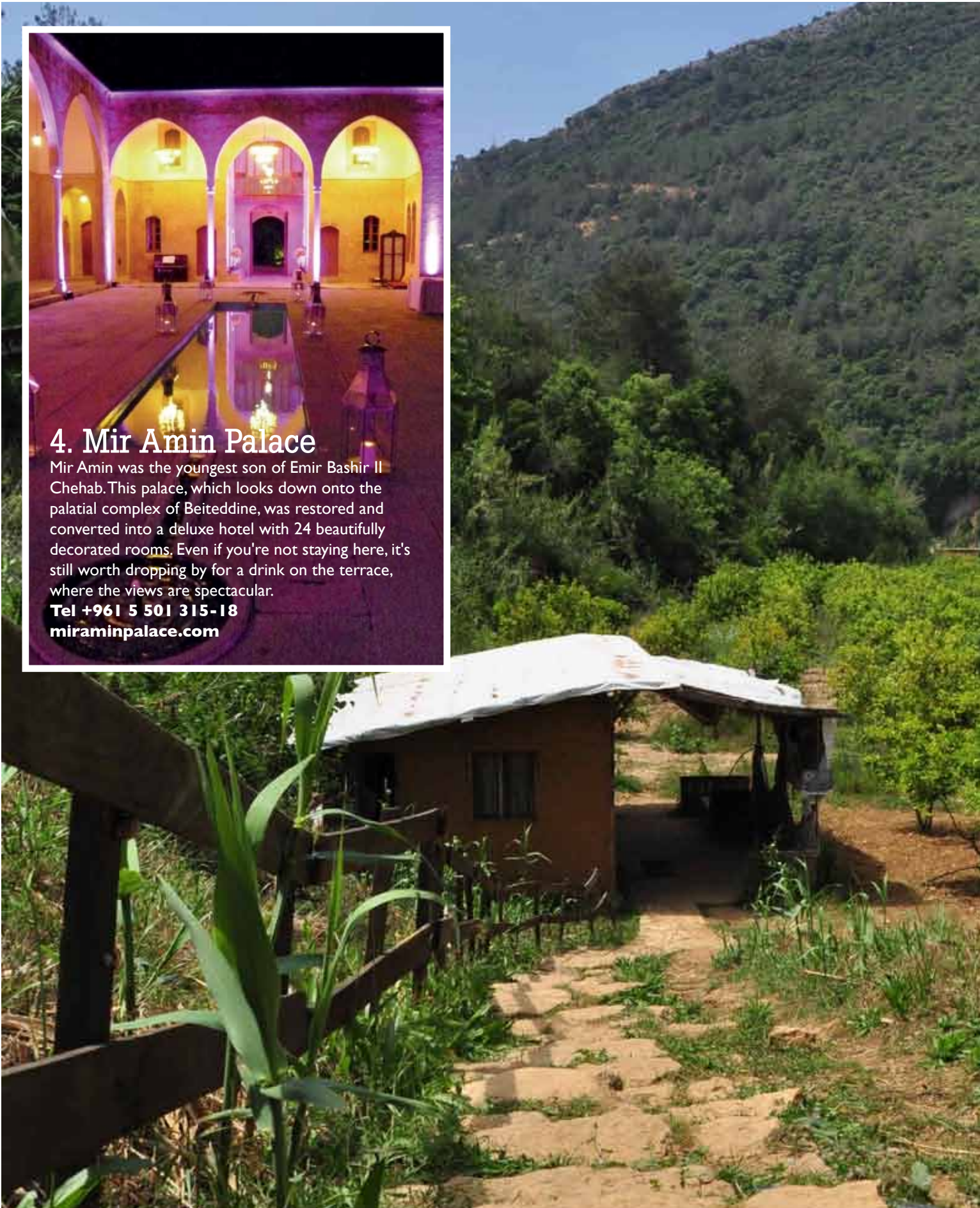




#### 4. Mir Amin Palace

Mir Amin was the youngest son of Emir Bashir II Chehab. This palace, which looks down onto the palatial complex of Beiteddine, was restored and converted into a deluxe hotel with 24 beautifully decorated rooms. Even if you're not staying here, it's still worth dropping by for a drink on the terrace, where the views are spectacular.

**Tel +961 5 501 315-18**  
**[miraminpalace.com](http://miraminpalace.com)**



## 5. Baakline

This town, which lies about 4 kilometers southwest of Beiteddine, was the first capital of the Maan dynasty that settled here around 1120. It has beautiful old homes and the local handiwork shop produces very good crochet work, although their main craft is carpet weaving that is very similar to Persian rugs.

**Tel +961 5 300528**



Photo courtesy of Lori Yapoujjan

## 6. Ain Merched

A kilometer further along is a delightful setting with a waterfall and pools framing the background of a large and pleasant restaurant. The temperature near the falls can be quite cool even during the hottest days of summer.

**Tel + 961 5 310220**



Photo courtesy of Ruth Moucharafteh

## 7. Maaser El Chouf

This is the site of one of Lebanon's most beautiful cedar forests. It is also a choice spot for walking enthusiasts. From the top of the mountain, at 1940 meters altitude, there is a panoramic view over the Bekaa, the Litani Dam and Lake Qaraoun.

**Tel +961 5 350380**



## 8. Moukhtara

About 9 km south of Beiteddine is the town of Moukhtara, the seat of the Jumblatt family and de facto capital of the Chouf. The Jumblatts' 19th-century stone palace dominates the town. Consisting of three large buildings, it has its own hammam, a garden with a collection of Roman sarcophagi and a waterfall that tumbles into an ornamental pool. There are public reception rooms that are sometimes open to visitors. Every weekend when he is in residence, Walid Jumblatt, head of the family and leader of the Druze, spends his mornings listening to the complaints of his followers. If you happen to be there, you will see the long line of petitioners as they wait to see their leader.

Baadarane, 7 kilometers south of Moukhtara, is another remnant of Lebanese feudal architecture. You will find the old palace of Ali Pasha Jumbat allied to Fakhreddine II, as well as other residences still inhabited today. Amatour, halfway between Moukhtara and Baadrane, is where you can see more houses built in the traditional style that characterizes the Lebanese mountainside. Looking down over the village is the ancient "khalwa" or meeting place used by the Druze for prayer and meditation.

**Tel +961 5 311 234**





## 9. Chouf Cedar Reserve

The largest of Lebanon's three natural protectorates, the Chouf Cedar Reserve represents a quarter of the remaining cedar forests in the country and 5% of Lebanon's entire area. The reserve marks the southernmost limit of Lebanese cedar (*Cedrus libani*) growth, and incorporated within the protectorate are six cedar forests. Of these, the Barouk and Maaser ech-Chouf forests have the largest number of ancient trees - some are thought to date back 2000 years. Hunting and livestock-grazing bans are strictly enforced and a number of species of flora and fauna have returned to the area in recent years. More than 200 species of birds and 26 species of wild mammals (including wolves, gazelles and wild boar) either live in or pass through the area. Also within or just outside the reserve's boundaries are a number of historical sites. These include the remains of the rock-cut fortress of Qab Elias and Qala'at Niha, in addition to the Shrine of Sit Sha'wane - a female saint venerated by the Druze - which is a site of pilgrimage for local residents.

**Admission 5000 LL**

**Opening 9 am – 7 pm**

**Tel +961 5 502 230 and +961 3 682 472**  
**[shoufcedar.org](http://shoufcedar.org)**

## 10. Barouk

Barouk village, situated at the base of mount Barouk is covered with a magnificent Cedar forest. The Natural Reserve in this area covers 500 square kilometers of Cedar forest with around 3 million trees, which extend from Ain Zhalta to Barouk and Maaser el Chouf. It includes many natural and historic sites and encompasses a wide variety of wild fauna and herbs. It is an ideal and unique area for hikers to explore however, a permit should be obtained from the Natural Reserve's office.

**+961 5 240 222**





# The simple life on Mount Hermel

Nature is still perfectly unspoilt in Lazaab, an eco-lodge overlooking the lush Bekaa Valley, so far removed from civilization that it would be impossible not to relax and enjoy the surroundings. Sabina Llewellyn-Davies spends a day there.



A few years back, Bou Madiane Al Fahili, a passionate hiker from the region, set up an eco-friendly lodging area in Al-Bweib, 1,900 meters above sea level, in the shadow of Qornet al-Sawda (Lebanon's highest peak). He called it Lazaab, meaning juniper in Arabic, after the many juniper trees scattered all over the surrounding hills. From this isolated lodge you can see right across to the northern part of the Bekaa Valley. It is a place of total calm and serenity with no other building for miles and miles. Bou Madiane used only ecological materials such as stone and wood for the construction of the lodge. Built in the old rural style, it looks like it has been there forever. And just like its surroundings, it is all quite simple. The four bedrooms have just mattresses on the floor. So, for an overnight stay bring your sleeping bag. There are bathrooms with hot running water, powered by the eco-friendly solar panels, but make sure to bring a towel and soap.

Bou Madiane is a charismatic proprietor as well, adding character to this rustic experience. A civil engineer and nearly 50 years old, he left the city eight years ago after getting fed up with life and moved to El Hermel, his native land. It was a personal choice, and a good one at that. He is happy, in a place where it's silent and clean, where people are simple and kind.

When I first went to the lodge a few years ago, I was surprised when he took us on a long hike through some rough terrain, wearing open toe sandals! It was November and raining. His knowledge of the area is vast. While walking, Bou Madiane points out the plants and shrubs which of course he knows by name,

and tells us to look out for a very special juniper tree, presumed to be 4,000 years old. The oldest one in the country, he says! The hikes can be as long as one hour to 12 hours - yes, 12 hours. This particular hike starts from el Hermel to the Cedars, passing by Qornet Al Saouda.

The nearby Assi River is famous for its trout and if you overnight at Lazaab, Bou Madiane grills the locally caught fish to perfection on an outdoor fire. He serves it up with a delicious array of regional specialties in the dining area of the lodge, on rustic wooden tables next to the chimney.

It gets quite chilly up at this altitude, even in summer, and the Fall is colder. And then there is breakfast, another feast that includes fried eggs, local cheeses and a sampling of kishik, a local specialty made from yoghurt and grain.

"Well, I put on all that weight which I lost after the long hike yesterday," said my friend Kris during breakfast. "Never mind," said her husband Tom, "you need to eat to have energy. We are going on a five hour hike after breakfast."

There can't be many parts of the country where you walk for hours without seeing a single soul, but this region is certainly one of them and Lazaab is a unique spot to overnight and escape the maddening crowds of Beirut.

**Lazaab, Al-Bweib**  
**Tel +961 3 797 569 or +961 71 146 915**  
**lazzab.net**



## What to bring

- Towel and soap
- Comfortable clothing
- Walking shoes
- A sweater for cold nights
- Sleeping bag
- Cap
- Sunglasses
- Walking stick if needed
- Small backpack
- Sun block



TAKE ME THERE





# BAROUK

Photo courtesy of Nina Sharabati

## HIDDEN GEMS



# An abode with a mission

In the Chouf Mountains, 1220 meters above sea level, lays the quaint village of Ain Zhalta, where a rare gem for art lovers in particular and beauty lovers in general is hidden. Residence Alia is a “maison d’artiste” where painters from all over the world are invited to find inspiration, express their feelings and create, create, create! Fadi Mogabgab, founder and owner of this project, takes us on a private tour of this one-of-a-kind residence in Lebanon.

Originally from Ain Zhalta, Mogabgab is a gallery owner and “merchant of paintings” as he likes to call himself. Looking for new escapes, he went back to his village, which was deserted during the Lebanese civil war, and found an old house that he renovated and inhabited with his family in the summer time. He then began to invite artists from all over the world to Ain Zhalta to find inspiration. However, having guests in your own home proved to be very impractical, which prompted him to buy the house next door in order to continue his mission.

“Residence Alia and my house are separated by the village stairs. It is named after my wife. Originally, it was an old house that needed a lot of work, but my wife and I were up to the challenge,” explains Mogabgab. The house was built about 150 years ago in the old tradition of stones and arches. In the 30’s, a story was added with the art deco touches of high ceilings and beautiful tiles. Unfinished walls on the roof show that an additional level was planned but did not see completion.

“My wife and I wanted to keep the spirit of the house, leave it the same way it was but that was no easy task as the house needed

a lot of work,” explained Mogabgab. The couple cleaned up the façade, replaced the old windows and replanted the garden. It took some time, but the result was well worth the effort. The basement is a simple storage place, while the artists reside on the first floor. But it is on the roof, in the outdoors, where the workshop is located. There they let their imaginations go and paint, surrounded by an idyllic view of the village and the local old church. The blue metal staircase that was added to access the roof gives the house quite a distinctive cachet. “The house does not





look as if it was renovated, it feels like it has always been this way and we just cleaned it up, and that's exactly what we had in mind," he stresses.

The relaxed atmosphere of the Residence Alia makes it an ideal home away from home for artists who come in quest of a muse. The artists paint as they please and when on a break, take a stroll in the garden, where if they are in a culinary mood, they can pick their own organic vegetables and fruit. This year, Mogabgab is hosting an English and an Italian painter:

"The other day I caught a trout from Nabe el Safa for my daughter. I brought it back home for the painters to draw, just like in the nature morte tradition. It was a beautiful day and everybody joined in, even our cat, who stationed right under the fish, was thinking of ways to get his paws on it. The final paintings were quite astonishing. I am planning another session with a wild boar. Hopefully the village hunters will find one very soon," says Mogabgab.

The artists are inspired by everything in the village, from its fauna and flora to its charming views of the surroundings. "I have a special understanding with my guests," he says, clarifying, "Each and every painting created on premises has the Ain Zhalta signature on it to testify its provenance. It is also a way for me to promote my village and my country. I guess I could say I am contributing to tourism in my own way."

When Residence Alia is not hosting international talents, it serves as a guesthouse for family and friends. "Our country has many places that are still unknown by Lebanese, while others have become a tourist hub. For me, when I encourage people to come here, I am exposing them to hidden treasures that should not be hidden at all. We have a wonderful country and we should explore it all," concludes Mogabgab.

**Visits available only upon reservation**  
**Fadi Mogabgab +961 3 734520**

***"Originally, it was an old house that needed a lot of work, but my wife and I were up to the challenge"***



Photos courtesy of Fadi Mogabgab



# Tannourine Rock climbing

The mountainous cliffs around Tannourine sheltered early Christian monks from religious persecution and offered solitude to hermits for centuries. Now the orange escarpments are alive with cries of “Yalla!” Rock climbers have transformed the crags into a sports haven where climbing enthusiasts meet to test their courage on routes of all difficulties.

**Katy Anderson** takes a closer look.

Four climbing sectors have been built to an international standard on the limestone walls around Tannourine El Tahta village, to the delight and curiosity of locals who can make out climbers' vertical progress from their balconies.

The pride that villagers feel for their surrounds is obvious from the revered statues of the Virgin Mary tucked into lofty alcoves and the nightly illumination of the hermit grotto. So what do locals make of climbers drilling bolts and scaling the walls with ropes?

"You're writing history! You're doing a great thing," says Faouad Harb, a village elder. "Our ancestors climbed these rocks and lived in them and you're doing the same," adds Harb.

Pioneering climber Georges Massoud scaled Tannourine's cascade barefoot in the 1920's. Long before the days of adherent climbing shoes, he rubbed sand on his feet for better grip and used to climb with traps for quail in order to feed his family. He lived to be 107 and died only recently. The main climbing sector is named 'Massoud' in his honor, as well as one of the towering 30 meter routes, an apt epitaph for this Lebanese climbing legend.

Massoud's house is reputed to be one of the oldest in Lebanon and was featured on the cover of National Geographic Magazine. The traditional Lebanese home is nestled at the foot of the main rock climbing sector and Massoud's son greets climbers with an invitation to drink coffee before heading up the hill to wrestle with gravity.

Today's climbers are excited to try increasingly more challenging routes. "I just made it to the top and I want to try something more difficult," enthuses local climber George Chéhade.

The need for advanced level climbs built to an international standard is the call that Will Nazarian, cofounder of the international Rock Climbing Association for Development (R-A-D), responded to. As well as raising the bar for climbers escaping the busy indoor gyms of Beirut, it's hoped that the impeccable quality of rock will be a pull for climbing tourists from all over the world.

Tannourine is an hour and a half drive away from Beirut. Visitors come to escape the city heat and enjoy a leisurely lunch made with locally grown ingredients. The restaurants are built out on platforms over a river and the abundance of water from the snow-capped mountains upstream, combined with the leafy shade of the verdant valley, gives the place an otherworldly charm. The climbing developers hope increased tourism will benefit local business.

Bert Harb runs the Fourmil store in town and says she worried last year when tourist numbers declined. "I need tourists for my shop," she says. "Now I see many climbers, they come into my shop, they're buying soda, chips, chocolate, it's very good for my store".

Tannourine's mayor is very supportive of the venture. "I want Tannourine to be the national center for rock climbing," says Mounir Tarabay. He sees climbing as an invaluable ingredient in the local authority's long-term objective of becoming a privileged destination for ecological tourism. "This is the backbone of the development

# Climbs in Tannourine

## Tannourine, Olive Grove Sector

- Khalas Habibe, 6c, extension 7a+, 48m, First Ascent (FA) George Emil - Hard severe
- Yalla Balla, 6b, extension 7b, 42m, FA Will Nazarian Very severe

## Tannourine, Cascade Sector

- Ashtarut, 6b, FA Will Nazarian - Hard very difficult

## Tannourine, Georges Massoud Sector

- Sharmuta, 7b+, 25m, FA Will Nazarian - Hard very severe
- Fatoush 7c+, 20m, FA Will Nazarian - Extremely severe
- Call me when you're bleeding, 5c+, 25m, FA George Chéhade - Moderate
- Georges Massoud, 6a, 30m, FA Katy Anderson - Difficult
- Boobies in Batrone, 7a+, 28m, FA Will Nazarian - Mild very severe
- Tannourine, the Water the Cedars Drink, 6c+, 30m, FA George Emil - Hard severe

## Tannourine, The Ant Sector

- Ant, 4-, 12m, FA Katy Anderson - Easy beginner
- Bee, 4+, 12m, FA Katy Anderson - Easy beginner



strategy we're implementing to invigorate economic activities aimed at keeping people in the village all year round," he said.

"The climbing is almost as good as the food. The valley's a climbing paradise," says Will Nazarian, from Oregon, USA, who put up the majority of the climbs. In a two-month bolting mission in Spring 2012, R-A-D together with Lebanese climbers Jad Khoury and George Emil established 18 bolted rock climbs.

Lebanese climbing champion Emil was inspired to name one of his climbs after a brand of water from the nearby spring: "Tannourine, the water the cedars drink".

A difficult climb, graded 6C+, the route seems made for climbing with hand and foot holds channeled into features by water erosion over millennia.

Climbing is a sport requiring physical strength and agility as well as experience using ropes, and knowledge of safety procedures. Easy climbs have been established for local youngsters who can try the

sport under the supervision of monitors during open days. "It's harder than it looks!" gasped a local youngster, fresh from the fray.

There are other climbing sectors within a stone's throw of Tannourine. Around 45 climbs were established by the French military at Harissa Tannourine, at the turn of the millennium. There's also a short sector in Chatine near Tannourine El Fauqa. The area certainly has the terrain and the potential to become an international climbing destination and can certainly rival any site in the Middle East.



*Katy Anderson is an international communications consultant and former BBC World Service broadcast journalist. Her passion for rock climbing combined with a love of travel brought her to Lebanon where she discovered a climbers' paradise. She narrates the history of rock climbing in Lebanon and follows in the footsteps of those legendary climbers. The recent construction of routes built to international standard may promote rural tourism development and has certainly fueled the ambition of local climbers.*



Photos courtesy of Katy Anderson/AAV

**The name, difficulty and length of each climb is indicated at the base.  
For more information on resources of guiding companies  
Jad Khoury or George Emil on the Rock Climbing Lebanon Facebook page  
or at [jad.khoury@gmail.com](mailto:jad.khoury@gmail.com)  
For maps of climbing areas [climbinglebanon.com](http://climbinglebanon.com)  
To contribute to the bolting activity and donate to R-A-D's mission [r-a-d.org](http://r-a-d.org)  
Municipality Tannourine +961 6 500020**






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**Ministry of Tourism**



## The olive oil trail

Olive trees grow throughout the Mediterranean coastal region, especially on the hillsides of Lebanon's rural landscape. Farmers take a very personal stance on the quality of the olives produced and the integrity of the oil. Taste, of course, is the best way to judge olive oil, so bear that in mind when you visit growers during harvest, sometime between October and December.

Tasting oil fresh off the press can be quite an experience, and purchasing oil directly from producers provides the added economic benefit needed by local communities. The selection of olive oil presses and producers in Akkar (a region in Lebanon's far north where the calcareous soil best suits the Souri olive variety) featured on this tour offers visitors the opportunity to taste and purchase traditional products directly from their source. However, make sure to call ahead of time.

### **Mar Touma and Haddara**

The Akkar olive oil trail begins in the small village of Mar Touma. Drive along the main road from the town of Tripoli towards the Akkar region. After about 28km, you will reach the crossroad of Berkayel. Continue for around 400m, then turn right at the signpost for Mar Touma, just after a petrol station. Continue for a few hundred meters until you reach the next signpost to take a right turn. As the road winds through stunning scenery, you will notice a sign after 800m, indicating the village's first modern olive oil press completed in 2010. Here, you can stroll through the nearby olive groves and explore an underground warren of caves that were previously home to residents of Akkar, centuries ago.

Return to the same road and take a right turn to the villages of Deir Dalloum, Zouk el Moukashrine. After a short drive, you will come across a traditional olive oil press on the right hand side of the road. Farmers from across the country come to process their oil at this communal press. A short walk from here, on the same side of the road, an old stone wheel previously used for pressing, is on display. If you continue uphill to the village of Haddara, towards an elevated viewpoint at an old stone wall, the views from here stretch as far as the Mediterranean Sea and to the Syrian coastline. A one-kilometer hike off the road to the left, leads to the spring of Ain Tachde.

**Walid Haddara +961 3 885480**

### **Zouk Habalsa**

Drive back down to the main road and after 750 meters, turn right at the sign for Zouk Hosniyeh. Continue on in this direction towards the village of Zouk Habalsa. Here you can visit the traditional press where the owner produces organic certified oil. As you walk through the olive groves you'll notice several beehives that produce a citrus-tasting honey that is particular to this region. The honey can be purchased from the village women's association that specializes in molasses, rose and orange blossom water, as well as olive oil soap. Drive down to the main road and take a right turn towards the village of Harkour.

**Riad Hoblos +961 3 325102**

### **Hakour**

A town with a rich history, Hakour is notable for its impressive archeological sites. A Roman bridge still stands in the town, now the site of a modern mosque. A small store right on the main road specializes in preserved olives, olive oil and soap, as well as local peanuts and homemade Arak.

Behind the shop, a track leads uphill past olive trees and giant cacti plants to Tell Arqa, a Roman archeological site with incredible views of the valley. Excavations here unearthed Roman clay pots that may have been used for transporting olive oil. Return downhill



and take a left turn on the main road, then take the first turn left and head towards the traditional olive oil presses. The old water mill next to the river Ariss is an interesting stop, as is the local church set on a hill with an ancient burial ground.

**Zafer Nasser +961 3 810300**

### **Minyara**

The next stop along the route is Minyara. Take the main road from Hakour for two kilometers. At the sign for Minyara, take a left turn off the main road to reach the local modern olive oil press. Head back to the main road to visit the traditional press. Cross the main road and head up to the local village. After 500m, you will see a small park featuring statues by local artists. Cross the road to the right to explore the rock chapel of Our Lady. Legend has it that miracles have taken place there, making it a pilgrimage site for many believers.

**Joud Berdoukian +961 3 172007 (traditional press)**

### **Bkarzla**

Bkarzala has had a long-standing reputation for olive oil production. From the statue park of Minyara head uphill, pass the village of Karm Asfour to reach Qantara. On the outskirts of the village you can see an ancient Roman bridge over the Oustouwan River. The road continues through expansive olive groves to reach Bkarzla, home to several traditional presses.

**Elias Saba +961 3 271055**

**Badoui Morkos +961 3 343101**

**Bassem and Tony Sleiman +961 6 805038**

**Fouad Obeib +961 3 246274**



### **Cheikh Taba to Zwarib**

Continue your drive until you reach Halba. Turn off the main road on the right (before a supermarket). After 100m on your left, you will reach the village of Cheikh Taba, home to a traditional olive oil press that also has fine olive oil soap. Return to the village's main road and head up the road, passing through olive groves. During harvest season you can even join in with the locals. Just ask for Marwan Nader who can arrange for this memorable experience as well as bed & breakfast accommodations with a local family. Stop to take in the breathtaking views from the Anwar mountain range down to the Mediterranean Sea.

**Elias Rassi +961 3 474527**

### **Baino**

Halba is the largest town en route and was the center of the region's olive oil industry. Today, there are no functional presses. Do make a stop though for local preserves and handmade candles at the women's association on the main road. From here, take the road to Baino, the final destination on this route. It is a picturesque drive through the premier olive growing province of Akkar, where you will see farmers harvesting. They are always welcoming and pleased to share their technique. Upon arrival in Baino, take a stroll around town to view the traditional Lebanese houses. Then, continue to the St. Theodore Church square, home to a traditional stone wheel olive oil press. Also, visit the village's modern press where the owner has established an olive oil boutique, housed in an old stone barn.

**Dahoud Kafrouni +961 6 360847 (traditional press)**

**Youssef Fares +961 3 283724 (modern press)**

## **Take a break and pick your own olives**

Celebrate the olive picking season from November till late December in Baino, Akkar, home of the "Zejd" olive and olive derivative products. For either one day or an entire weekend, handpick your olives and learn about olive oil extraction and tasting in the picturesque Baino countryside.

In the 19th century, the Fares family began cultivating olives and pressing the oil in their quaint mountain village in north Lebanon. Today, the family tradition is perpetuated with Olive Trade® through the production of quality Extra Virgin and organic olive oil.

During your stay, you can take a leisurely walk among the olive trees where you will be introduced to sustainable olive picking practices and organic farming. After visiting the olive extraction unit and familiarizing yourself with the state-of-the-art extraction techniques, it's time to taste the oil and discover its different flavors and characteristics. Savor every bite of the warm traditional Lebanese bread right out of the saj (oven) dipped into freshly pressed olive oil - an unforgettable experience!

30 USD/person excluding transport (15 people minimum)  
45 USD/day per person including transport (20 people minimum)  
Above prices include welcome breakfast and lunch.

**Tel +961 3 283724**

## **Producers to look out for**

If you are on the look out to buy the best olive oil, then look no further. Below are the winners of the Horeca 2012 Extra Virgin Olive Oil Competition. Contact them for a truly unforgettable experience.

**1st winner:** Cooperative for the production and development of Olives in Dar Beshtar and Koura **Tel +961 3 566326**

**2nd winner:** Willani **Tel +961 3 228849**

**3rd winner:** Biomass sal **Tel +961 3 868882**



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# The migration connection

Lebanon's geographic position places it at a strategic stopping point for birds along the African-Eurasian migration paths, which creates huge bird watching opportunities, especially during the fall season from mid-September through to mid-October.





Over 300 species of birds can be seen in the Lebanese skies and that is mainly due to the country's diversified landscape, which even attracts birds that are threatened with extinction such as the Imperial Eagle and the Sociable Lapwing. And, there are many opportunities to see certain species that are rather more common such as raptors, harriers, water birds and others like the Syrian Serin and the Palestinian Sunbird.

### **Aammiq Wetland**

This 100-hectare, privately owned wetland in the Bekaa Valley was declared a national nature reserve in 1999. It lies on one of the most important bird migratory routes in the Near East and is the largest natural wetland in Lebanon.

### **Palm Islands Nature Reserve**

Located about 30 minutes from the coast of Tripoli by boat, the Palm Islands Reserve is made up of three small islands. Established as a national nature reserve in 1992, the site is recognized as an Important Bird Area by Birdlife International. It is also an important egg-laying site for endangered sea turtles.

### **Al Chouf Cedar Nature Reserve**

The Al Chouf Cedar Reserve is the largest nature reserve in Lebanon. It comprises 6 cedar forests stretching over 50,000 hectares in the Mount Lebanon range. In addition to the reserve's important flora, Bird Life International recognizes the reserve as

an Important Bird Area. Wolf, lynx and fox are among the other animals native to this area. The reserve has an information center, and accommodation facilities are available. Outdoor activities in the reserve include hiking and trekking (1,300m to 2,000m), bird watching from the watch-tower beside the lake, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

### Horsh Ehdn Nature Reserve

The rich biodiversity of this protected forest makes the reserve a unique place to visit. Extending over 4 valleys, the forest harbors many endangered mammals and birds, and most of the tree species found in Lebanon. A mixed forest, the reserve includes conifers, such as cedars, as well as wild pear and wild apple. New, well-planned footpaths of different levels are great for hiking and it is an ideal place for bird watching, hiking and snowshoeing.

### Tyre Coastal Nature Reserve

Established in 1998, the 380-hectare Tyre Coastal Nature Reserve encompasses a variety of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and one of the most beautiful and scenic sandy beaches in Lebanon. The pools of Ras el-Ain, used since Phoenician time, create small areas of marshland that serve as a freshwater habitat. A great variety of birds can be found in the reserve, whose sandy beaches are an important nesting site for endangered sea turtles.

Of the following eleven declared sites, two are government declared nature reserves and only two are conserved by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) with the cooperation of local communities through the Hima approach (a community-based approach to managing the natural and human resources that utilizes traditional knowledge and modern-day innovation). Three of the sites have active NGO conservation and four presently have no protection at all.

These sites regularly welcome significant numbers of internationally threatened species or other species that are of global conservation concern. Most are known to have a noteworthy assembly of species whose breeding distributions are largely or wholly confined to one biome and a meeting point site



where at least 20,000 storks (Ciconiidae), raptors (Accipitriformes and Falconiformes) or cranes (Gruidae) often pass by during the autumn migration.

### Other lesser known sites

- The Hima Aanjar - Kfar Zabad
- The Reem – Sannin Mountains
- The Tannourine Cedars Nature Reserve
- The Hima Ebel es-Saqi
- The Semi Deserts of Ras Baalbeck
- The Qaraaoun Lake, Beirut River Valley and Jabal Moussa Mountain
- The Upper Mountains of Akkar - Donnieh
- The Bentaël Forest Nature Reserve and the Ramlieh Valley

### For further reading

- S Vere Benson's Birds of Lebanon
- The Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East
- The periodical Sandgrouse, a publication of The Ornithological Society for the Middle East (OSME)

### Who to contact

Trained guides are available in the nature reserves, and eco-tour operators run bird watching hikes and treks through many of these beautiful areas.

- The Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL - Birdlife's national partner) [spnl.org](http://spnl.org)
- Birdtalk Shadi Indary +961 3 196439



### Where to stay

Ebl Es-Saqi  
Saadeh guethouses (they have 4)  
Host: Samira Saadeh  
Tel +961 3 745712

Dana Hotel in Ebl Es-Saqi  
Tel +961 7 831000 and +961 3 421233  
[danahotel.com](http://danahotel.com)

For other guest houses  
in various locations log onto  
[dhiafeeprogram.org/lodgingmap.asp](http://dhiafeeprogram.org/lodgingmap.asp)



# The Soap Museum

Although Tripoli may take credit for being the center of the traditional soap-making industry, Sidon has Lebanon's first museum, courtesy of the Audi Foundation, dedicated to the craft. Located in the old city, the 13 century stone building, adapted for use as a soap factory in the 19 century, once produced soap to meet the needs of the hammams (bathhouses).



This ancient city, better known as Saida, is approximately 40 km south of Beirut. On approach, the first thing you see is the Sea Castle, a crusader castle built by the Knights of St. John in the 13th century. Cross the road and head towards the old town or medina. Made of arched alleys and walkways, with several levels only accessible by ladders, the medina is an exceptional sight. Shops and workshops are squeezed into tiny niches in the structure, giving the impression of caves. The medina is of course inhabited and the souks are very lively.

Situated on El Shakrieh Street in the middle of the Medina is The Soap Museum. Once a working factory, it has been restored and transformed into a thematic museum. It illustrates the history of soap making in the region, its development and manufacturing techniques. Visitors can see a demonstration of how traditional olive oil soaps are made and learn about the history of the "hammam" (bath) traditions.

For centuries, the building was the location of a soap factory, which went under modification a number of times. As you enter through the glass doors, you are immediately enveloped in the sweet soap aroma. The ingredients include: olive oil, bay leaf, slasola kali (a plant from Syria), laurel oil, and mi'a (a traditional perfume that is distilled from the resin of styrax - a tree that grows in Hermon and Turkey).

The well laid out gallery and trilingual (Arabic, English and French) descriptions take you through the entire soap making process. Meander through the many levels of the factory and observe the different stages that are involved in soap making. Beautifully lit showcases exhibit the different molds in which the soap is pressed, and towers of soap bars, piled high in an elaborate pattern to facilitate ventilation to dry the soap, are everywhere.

Thus, visitors explore the different steps of the traditional olive oil soap production; raw materials, fuel and adopted practices for the preparation of the paste, liquefaction, drying, cutting into bars and final drying prior to packaging and marketing. These installations are illustrated on panels that include drawings and tools.



Towards the end of the path, visitors can watch a documentary retracing the different steps of traditional soap manufacturing, as well as the shaping of colorful extruded soaps that are typical of Tripoli city.

The museum has a stylish café, which also sells books and locally produced treats such as figs in syrup, preserved goat cheese and orange-blossom water, and a boutique that sells soap and bath products that make great gifts. The museum is open daily except on Friday from 8:30am to 5:00pm.

Leaving the museum and delving further into the maze you find an Ottoman palace, the Palais Debbane. It's a prime example of Arab-Ottoman architecture and decoration, wedged into the entire structure of the medina, but surprisingly large on the inside. You can climb three stories up to the roof and get an overview of the layout of the old town. The wood carved ceilings, furniture and carpets should not be missed.



## The Collection

The historic section of the museum introduces artifacts that were found during onsite excavation and which include remains of clay pipe heads dating from the 17th to 19th century, as well as pottery fragments. The Oriental Tobacco Pipe, or Chibouk as known in



Turkey, comprises three elements. The head is made from clay. The size and form of the head made from clay evolved in par with tobacco availability. By virtue of the length and used wood of the stick, which varied in length between one and four meters, it was possible to determine the social rank of the person who smoked it. Different kinds of wood were utilized amongst which jasmine wood was the most expensive since it absorbed all the nicotine.

Cherry wood, ebony wood, apricot wood and rose wood were also put to use as well as balms, mastics, canes and ivory which were used by peasants. The jasmine or cherry wooden sticks were usually decorated with pearls, wrapped with silk and fixed by golden or silver threads. The bottoms of the pipes were typically made from amber. However, women used coral bottoms and rich people used lacquer bottoms and garnished them at times with precious gems. This craft was first exercised in 1599 and lasted until 1929. The oriental pipe was produced in Turkey, Greece, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The Audi Foundation is currently assuming historical studies concerning these pipes.

[fondationaudi.org](http://fondationaudi.org)

# Traditional treats

Every city has its hidden culinary secrets, and Beirut is no different. Foodie, Sandra Khalil, crisscrossed the city in search of renowned eateries that have been around forever and are often taken for granted by the locals, yet remain a regular address for a quick, reasonable and authentic Lebanese meal.

## Hamra & Ras Beirut



### Broad Beans at Manara

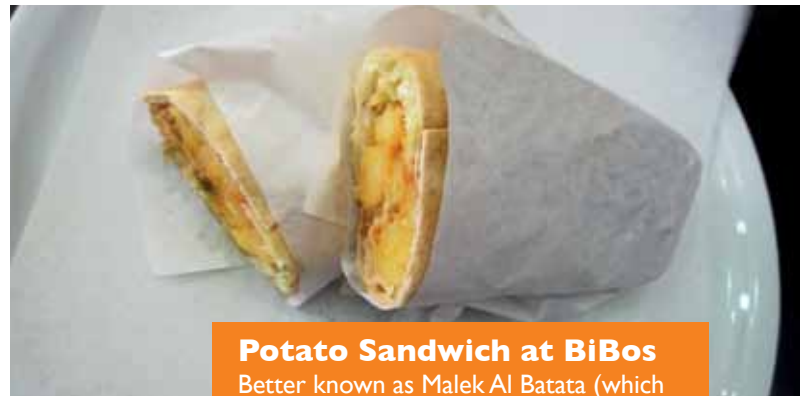
Rain or shine, day or night, you will bump into the “kalwi ya foul” vender when taking a stroll along the seafront, locally known as the Corniche or Manara. From his cart he will serve you hot broad beans on a plastic plate, sprinkled with salt and cumin, and garnished with lemon slices. As you walk and enjoy the sights you will be delighted by this basic yet delicious treat. A small plate will set you back 2000 LL, a medium one 3000 LL and 5000 LL for a large one. And, if you are worried about the calories, you can always walk it off! Can be found daily anytime between 5 am and 3 am the next day



### Spinach Fatayer from Faysal

Originally a restaurant, which has transitioned into a snack bar, Faysal has been on Bliss Street for an age and is one of the most visited addresses in the area. Although it is known for many things, my favorite item on the menu is the Spinach Fatayer: A pastry filled with the perfect mix of spinach, onions, seasoning, lemon juice and olive oil. The fatayer come in two sizes, small and large, and although the stuffing is the same, I personally prefer the small ones, as they have a higher concentration of oil in the dough. A large fatayer costs 1500 LL, while the mini versions go for 500 LL per piece.

Tel +961 | 367281 or +961 | 367830  
Opening hours 24/7



### Potato Sandwich at BiBos

Better known as Malek Al Batata (which literally translates as The King of Fries), BiBos, specializes in, yes you guessed it, fries! The potatoes are selected daily, peeled, cut, fried to perfection, salted and served. On a loaf of Arabic bread, the chef spreads ketchup, adds the fries, cabbage and mayo salad, pickles and then wraps it up. A variation is to add some aioli to the mix. Certainly not on the light side, this fried treat will set you back 3000 LL.

Tel +961 | 344107

Open daily from 10 am to 2 am the next morning

### Manakoucheh at Furn Abed Al Aziz

Perhaps one of the most consumed street foods in Lebanon, the manoucheh is one treat that Lebanese miss most when abroad. Resembling a pizza, it is spread with a thyme and olive oil mix and cooked in the oven. At Furn Abed Al Aziz, located in the midst of Hamra's busiest crossroad, facing Hallmark, they use Accaoui cheese as an alternative. For those who wish to sample both types, there are two options: either get the mini version or, which is proving a more popular choice, get a manouche cocktail that is half cheese, half thyme. A thyme manouche costs 1000 LL, while the cheese is 2000 LL, and for a small extra charge, you can garnish it with fresh vegetables!

Open daily from 7 am to 4 pm



### Antabli Hamra

Established in the 60's, Antabli was known for its fountain in the Beirut Souks and was the number one address for Lebanese sweets. The civil war ravaged its previous location and Antabli moved and opened several branches, one of which is in Hamra. This is where you go to satisfy your sweet tooth. All kinds of desserts are available from megleh (a cinnamon ground rice dish) and mouhalabiyeh (almost like a blancmange) to simple custard and jelly. However, we suggest you try the "riz bi halib" (rice pudding), a traditional and very simple dessert made from ground rice, sugar, milk and a touch of orange blossom water. For Lebanese, this is a treat that was always available in their grandmother's fridge. Sweet and refreshing with a whiff of nostalgia, the riz bi halib at Antabli is not to be missed and it will only cost you 1500 LL.

Tel +961 | 739326

Open daily from 9:30 am to 1 am the next morning



### Cocktail Pieces from Bliss House

Need a boost of energy after walking the streets of Beirut? Try the Cocktail Pieces from Bliss House. In a cup, your server will mix juice with fresh pineapple, kiwi, banana, strawberry and other available fruit pieces and top it with cream (achta). For that extra energy drizzle it with honey and sprinkle with pistachio nuts. This healthy but filling treat will set you back 4500 LL for a small cup, 6000 LL for a medium one, and 7500 LL for a large. Around since 1978, Bliss House has been serving this cocktail to generations of AUB-ites (American University of Beirut students)!

Tel +961 | 366290 and +961 | 366292

Opening Hours 24/7

# Spears and Mar Elias



## Lahem biajeen from Ichkhanian Traditional Bakery

Established in 1946 and better known as Furn Al Arman (The Armenian Bakery), Ichkhanian offers a very unique variation of a very popular Lebanese dish. Lahm Biajeen consists of finely minced meat mixed with onions, garlic, tomatoes and spices spread on a very thin pizza like dough and baked in an open oven. But, Mme Ichkhanian, who runs the bakery, has her own personal recipe and cooks it the Armenian way with special spices, or the Halabi way with pomegranate syrup and pine seeds. A sprinkle of salt and squeeze of lemon juice won't go amiss. Enjoy it hot, straight from the oven. If you are craving both, you can always take a mini size of each. A mushroom version is available for vegetarians. The large pastry is priced at 2000 LL, the medium costs 1000 LL, and the small ones go for 750 LL each. Tel + 961 | 375178 and +961 3 216012

Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9 am to 3 pm

## Barbar

Originally a butcher, Barbar has grown to be one of the most popular snack chains in Lebanon. Clean, tasty and affordable, people rush there to satisfy their hunger. From pizzas to Lebanese specialties and all kinds of sandwiches, Barbar has it all. We suggest you try the kafta sandwich. Ground meat, mixed with parsley and onions that is grilled and served in a sandwich with humus and a unique mix made especially for it. You can always accompany it with some fries but the sandwich stands well on its own. Open 24/7, Barbar is busy all day and all night.

Tel +961 | 379778 and +961 | 379779

Opening hours 24/7



## Foul & Balila from Le Professeur

Le Professeur specializes in "foul and balila", which can be consumed for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Foul is a mixture of boiled beans and chickpeas mashed together, then seasoned with a lemon, olive oil and garlic dressing. Balila is boiled chickpeas with a similar dressing but lots of cumin. Served hot with a side of fresh radish, mint, olives, green onions and even a hot pepper sauce, they are a very traditional breakfast beloved by many Lebanese. Every foul maker has his secret ingredient that sets his dishes apart from the rest. At 6000 LL (per dish) it is worth every penny!

Tel +961 | 703666

Open from 7 am to 10 pm





# Achrafiyeh

## Falafel Freiha

A fried chickpea and bean paste Falafel sandwich is deliciously satisfying and Freiha, who has been in Achrafiyeh for ages, does it best. Watching the sandwich being prepared is perhaps what makes your mouth water the most. After taking out the hot balls from the boiling oil, the chef squashes them on the bread, then adds tomatoes, chopped parsley, pickled turnip and covers them with tarator sauce (tahina, lemon and garlic). He then rolls the sandwich tightly and voila - a scrumptious and substantial vegetarian treat for a mere 3000 LL.

Tel +961 | 321608

Open from 10 am to 10 pm



## Shawarma Sandwich from Boubouffe

A household name, Boubouffe has also been around for quite some time. The menu lists a variety of sandwiches but Boubouffe's best is the shawarma because it is a charcoal grilled! Whether chicken or beef, Boubouffe's shawarma is a delicious mix of meat and spices cooked to perfection, wrapped in Lebanese pita. While the beef is seasoned with hummus and vegetables, the chicken shawarma is enhanced with a mild garlic sauce and fries, making it all the more flavorsome. As far as the price goes at 8000 LL, Boubouffe's shawarma sandwich is a bit more expensive but here the saying 'you do get what you pay for' rings true, so indulge yourself!

Tel +961 | 200408 and +961 3 334040

Open daily from 8 am to 12:30 am the next morning

## Chicken Sandwich from Lala Chicken

As far as simple chicken sandwiches go, you cannot beat the taste of Lala Chicken that has been around since 1967. The chicken is cooked on a charcoal grill, then cut into small pieces and spread on pita. The sandwich is then grilled again over the hot charcoal and once the bread is well toasted, the chef opens it up carefully as to not break the bread and spreads the inside with aioli sauce. Expect to eat at least two of these tasty sandwiches! If you are off carbs, you can always eat the grilled chicken dipped in the garlic sauce.

Tel +961 | 203986 and +961 3 544519

Open daily from 11 am to 11 pm



## Ice Cream from Hanna Mitri

One of the last places that still makes Arabic ice cream the old fashioned way. Hand made daily with natural products and fresh fruits, this is the ice cream that will make you swear off all other ice cream. Hanna Mitri and his wife are the sole keepers of the secret recipe and offer their customers unique flavors such as rose water, apricot, blackberries, melon and many more. The lemon sorbet is deliciously mixed with lemon zest, the apricot contains pine nuts and the almonds in the almond flavored ice cream are mixed with caramel. An Arabic ice cream cone, with as many flavors as you want, costs 3000 LL.

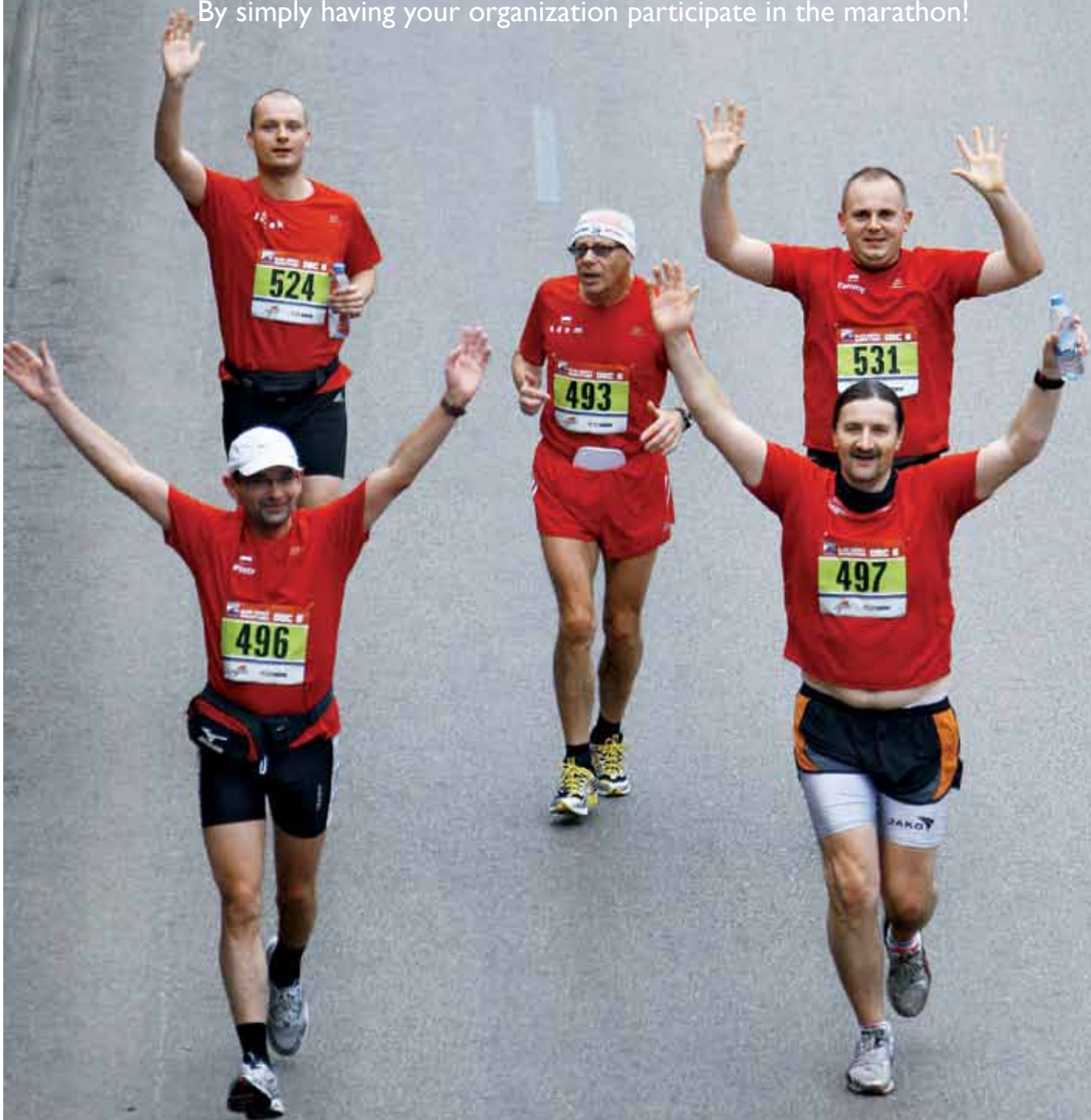
Tel +961 | 322723

Open hours daily 10 am to 7 pm closed on Sundays in winter

# ***RUN FOR YOUR BUSINESS***

The BLOM Bank Beirut International Marathon, one of the most awaited events in the country, is on its way November 11. Why not take advantage of this annual event to promote your company and build team spirit at the same time? How?

By simply having your organization participate in the marathon!



It all began with May El Khalil, a runner and businesswoman. After surviving an almost fatal accident while running, El Khalil realized the urgency of such a project. The 1st ever Beirut Marathon took place October 19, 2003 with over 6,000 people from 49 different countries participating. By 2009 more than 32,000 runners from 76 countries were at the start line, making the race one of the biggest running events in the region. In 2010, the IAAF granted the BLOM Beirut Marathon the Bronze Label as an international standard road race event, making it a necessary stop for professional marathon runners.

Apart from the Beirut Marathon, look out for regional races to encourage tourism outside the capital. This year there was a Grand Prix Series that covered Saida, Batroun, Aley and Zahle.

### Everybody's Invited

With unity as its core theme, the marathon includes several races to make sure that all are included no matter their age, race, or fitness level. If you are a professional runner, you can join the international participants and run the full 42K for a shot at the title. If you are a sports enthusiast or you just want to take part in a beautiful day out, you can always run the 10K fun race. Children up to age 17 have their share in the marathon with the 5K Youth Run. Of course, a unique race is dedicated to people with special needs. Even mommies to be and toddlers can join in on the fun in the 1K run with Mum. Reaching out to all sides of the political scene, there is a 3K race for MPs of any political alliance, as well as members of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, stationed in the country. Like I said before, everybody's invited!

### Race as a company

As an organization, company or corporation, your participation in the marathon can be extremely beneficial to you and your employees. When you run as a company team, you naturally bond together and create camaraderie increasing morale in the workplace. The employees will meet in a social setting, have fun with each other and learn to know one another outside the constraints of the office. Running together and encouraging each other to reach the finish line will enhance their team spirit, which will reflect on their work performance.

Racing as a company also provides excellent exposure for your establishment. You can have everybody wearing the same t-shirts with the company logo, or create another gimmick to get noticed in the crowd. In fact you can be as creative as possible, from holding balloons, wearing clown outfits, to face painting or staging a wedding with a bride and groom and their guests. All will get you noticed and will create a buzz around your company.

### Make a difference!

Mixing business with pleasure can also be beneficial for a charity of your choice. You will have the same exposure as a participant in the marathon with an added value of donating to a good cause. The public will appreciate your initiative and applaud your sense of corporate responsibility, not to mention the personal satisfaction you and your employees will get out of it.

It would be wonderful to have your staff pick the cause they want to run for. Before you register, have them vote for their favorite



# Tips for a successful 10K race!

## 1 Have a plan.

Follow a training plan that fits your lifestyle and give yourself at least 10 weeks to prepare. You can train in less time; however it helps to have a little extra time in case of illness, vacation or life's chaos.

## 2 Be consistent.

As you make your way through the training program, remember not every run will be your strongest. If you are having a rough day, slow the pace and get through it. It is all part of the training process and breaking through to your running best.

## 3 Go easy.

A solid 10K run is the sum of good, bad and sometimes ugly workouts. When the program calls for easy runs, focus on keeping a "happy pace", one where you can easily talk and feels almost effortless. Running easy translates to a stronger, faster and longer distance run down the road.

## 4 Go faster.

In order to run faster, you need to train at a faster pace. Dedicate one workout each week to running short 1 to 2 minute intervals at a hard effort, followed by equal time of easy running. Repeat the workout for at least 3 weeks and then add one more interval.

## 5 Go longer.

A great way to build endurance is to invest 1 running workout each week and slowly add half a kilometer to your longest run.

## 6 Include a few dress rehearsals along the way.

Every run is an opportunity to practice logistics for race day. You consider everything from what to eat for dinner before the race to breakfast, race attire, fuel and pacing. This will prepare you better and avoid second guessing yourself if the race nerves kick in.

## 7 Make it social.

Running with a group of friends or with a buddy improves motivation & performance and provides a solid source of accountability to keep you moving towards your goals.

## 8 Train your mind.

In the final 5 weeks of training, dedicate one run per week to running a negative split i.e. cut the distance in half, run the first half easy and gradually dial up the pace until you're at a comfortable hard effort for the final half-mile. Don't forget to practice your finish line smile!

## 9 Warm up pre-race.

About 10 to 15 minutes before the race starts, walk briskly for 3 minutes. Then run easy for 5 minutes and finish with 4 or more 10 second pick-ups at a faster pace.

## 10 Run efficiently.

Rest up for race day. Remove your strength-specific workouts. Review the race course and note the turns and run the course like an elite runner by taking the tangent at every turn. Taking a long way around every corner can add distance and you don't want that.

charity. The democratic process has a way of uplifting morale. Once the cause is picked, register through the association and you are ready to go!

## Train ahead of time

10Ks are not exactly a walk in the park. You might need to train for them and these training sessions can also be an excellent bonding experience for you and your staff. You can create a schedule for those who wish, and follow a training plan. You won't have to do much research to build one, as many are available free on the internet. If you care for a more personal approach, the Beirut Marathon Association offers free training sessions. For a group of a certain number of people, the BMA will assign you a personal trainer that can coach through the whole process.

Training for the marathon is usually done outdoors. However, if the weather is too harsh, you can always train on a treadmill. You can find tips about that on the internet.

The Beirut Marathon is an event that involves everybody! Mothers and babies in their strollers, professional runners, amateur runners, young kids, people and their pets, all will get to the finish line cheered by a crowd of family and friends. It is a day of joy, fitness and unity. Use it to instate its values into your company all the while promoting yourself and having fun!



## Deadlines and Fees

### 10K Fun Run

**Registration deadline:** October 10

**Fee:** 25 USD international 35000 LBP for Lebanese  
[beirutmarathon.org](http://beirutmarathon.org)



# REGISTER RUN & WIN

The Hospitality industry will join the  
**42.195 KM relay race**

Teams from hotels, restaurants, night-clubs, pubs and hotel management schools will compete.

- **When** November 11, 2012 at 7.00 a.m.
- **Where** Starts at Normandie water front and ends in Martyr Square
- **Teams** 6 runners make up a team  
 runner 1: 5k – runner 2: 10k – runner 3: 6k  
 runner 4: 9k – runner 5: 5k – runner 6: 7.2k
- **Participation fee** USD 150\$/ team
- **Your visibility** Your team can run wearing its uniform

The winner team will be on podium during the award ceremony to be covered by local and pan Arab media

To register contact Josette Hikri +961 1 480081 ext 108  
 or by email to [josette@hospitalityservices.com.lb](mailto:josette@hospitalityservices.com.lb)

# 11 November



**Need training guidance?**  
 BMA can provide you with a training program, FREE OF CHARGE

# *The legend of the bird*

Tucked away on the slopes of Tumat Niha, in the south of the country, amidst majestic mountains, vibrant orchards and imposing waterfalls lays the charming remote region of Jezzine. Traveling sisters Ragini and Dhvani Thapar visit the 'City of Falls' and uncover the legend of the firebird.

Jezzine is a humble town steeped in history, culture and tradition. Its name was derived from an ancient Aramaic translation for the word 'store' or 'depot'. This was due to the fact that historically, since it served as a storing location for goods, Jezzine was popular among traders traveling from old Sidon to the edges of the caravan route.

Renowned for its handicrafts, a visit to the recently revamped old souks is a must. There you can find the much-prized (and often presented as official gifts to visiting dignitaries) cutlery made of elaborately inlaid bone. These handmade wares with their "phoenix" handles are synonymous with Jezzine. The design behind the firebird pattern changes from family to family but the story is the same.

## **The source**

Traditionally the black firebird handles were carved from dusty brown cow or bull-horns that when polished, transform into a lustrous jet-black color. There was a time when these raw materials

were brought from France, Germany, Italy, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, now however, they are mainly found locally. The white firebird handles were made of camel bone and sourced from Egypt, Iraq and Syria, as well as Beirut, Ebel Saki, Jezzine and Tripoli within Lebanon. Pre-stamped with the name of the company that manufactured it, the stainless steel is usually from either Italy or France. The firebirds are decorated with thin colored resin pipes in hues of light grey, teal, soft blue, red, black, white, yellow and green, as well as pure silver sheets and brass, both of which are sourced directly from Lebanon to support domestic production.

## **The families**

The significance of Jezzine cutlery is that it's a traditional craft. Many of the artisan workshops fashion each item by hand, from the very first step to the last. Only around ten families in Jezzine are masters of this trade.

Founded in 1770, Haddad Cutlery uses artificial materials for the intricate handles because of cost and efficiency. Part of its charm



are the resulting 'ribboned' striations of different shades of color. Some cutlery items occasionally have flecks of gold luster, cleverly integrated into the bird design. A main element in their "phoenix" inlay work is brass. Tony Haddad is currently head of operations for the company and employs the artisan work of a grandfather and grandson team. The Haddads have showrooms in Jezzine and Beirut.

Abdelnour Craft Shop founded in 1771 is now owned by Maroun Abdelnour. Like Haddad, Abdelnour is phasing out natural materials in favor of artificial, because the color isn't deep enough or uniform (the bone ranges from black to brown).

It is also becoming difficult to source natural materials - possibly because of increased global eco-consciousness and partly because of the endangerment to animals. Furthermore, natural bone cutlery requires nearly double the work and is nearly double the price. Sometimes, demand is low because of the increased cost due to the extra attention required during production.

Interestingly, Abdelnour artisans used Indian gazelle antlers until it became illegal nearly 15 years ago. Currently, their primary natural supplier is Mozambique and occasionally other parts of Africa, while the artificial materials are from France and Italy. Each piece is sold in an elegant, felt-covered box of artificial leather. Currently the company has 18 firebird designs that change with time and local crafting trends. Sold only in Jezzine, the family business has no website and relies entirely on word-of-mouth.



Stages of the firebird, from raw to near-complete



Ghazi Abou Rashed of Eid Abo Rashed Cutlery explains that his family's artistic history began with his father in 1940. Ghazi himself began as an apprentice in 1950 and was soon joined by his brother, keeping the leadership within the family, but supported by the skills of four local craftsmen.

Approximately 60% of Eid Abo Rashed Cutlery is artificial and there are 12 distinct designs inspired by nature. The colors of the sky, plants and birds, differently shaped leaves and the beauty of the Lebanese landscape are their muse. Customizing and engraving are available in their only showroom in Jezzine.

Maroun Aoun is another craft-house that relies entirely on word-of-mouth for its publicity. With only one showroom founded nearly sixty years ago, the artisans use only natural materials. Firebird-handle wares are available in just black and white, dotted with color.

Aoun carries on a tradition that his grandfather (after whom he was named) began 90 years ago. The senior Aoun's passion for this labor of love has trickled down through the generations.

When asked about the secret behind this local handicraft, the younger Aoun and his son Farid were all too happy to

demonstrate the process step-by-step, to help the layman better understand this elegant bird-shaped design.

### Timeframe

When handmade with natural materials, the average time to make a single "phoenix" bird from whittling to polishing is about 45 minutes. Factories work 6 - 8 hour days and make a total of 8 - 12 pieces per person. Although Aoun is happy to take on a worthy apprentice to teach the craft to, only locals need apply, as this craft is specific to Jezzine. Occasionally, these family-run workshops also hire local seasonal help.

### Instructions for care

For the handle-end that is made from natural materials, it is best to manually wipe away any food residue with a moist cloth. To clean the serving side, use a very mild solution of soap and run it under a gentle stream of room temperature water. For non-natural pieces, clean both the handle and metal with standard cleaning agents. Then, rinse and wipe dry to prevent watermarks.

**Abdelnour +961 3 719602 from 10 am to 2 pm**

**Abo Rashed +961 7 780082 from 8:30 am to 1:30 pm & 3 to 8 pm**

**Aoun +961 7 781099 from 10 am to 2 pm**

**Haddad + 961 3 683369 from 9:30 am to 7 pm**

## A step-by-step tutorial

- 1 Prepare:** Each "fire bird" is made of two identical joined pieces of horn/bone.
- 2 Carve:** From a whittled finger-sized section that is clamped steady, a distinct bird-shaped outline is formed and when satisfactorily uniform, the piece is buffed smooth.
- 3 Grooves:** Interlocking 2 mm grooves are inlaid with tiny strips of silver and filed to create a silver-lined look.
- 4 Wings:** The brass wings come with a series of pre-bored small holes. Aligning holes are drilled into the corresponding carved bird piece. On a wooden block the metal 'teardrops' are shaped with a mallet, then hand-drilled and nailed in place.
- 5 Pipes:** Thin colored resin pipes are cut into half-inch pieces, fitted into the brass wings and filed even. They add a touch of color to the bird.
- 6 Headpiece:** The head is etched with an electric circular saw. Red resin cut into small triangular shapes is used to create the traditional "rooster" comb. Individual hand-sawn notches achieve the pleasing scalloped effect.
- 7 Three-step-finish:** For 30 seconds, the bird is buffed on a machine that resembles a spongy wheel, covered with something akin to soft sandpaper. Next is smoothening with what looks like a mini black rubber tire, followed by an efficient polishing on a third wheel similar to a small mop.

Finished, the piece is hot to the touch. The crafted components of the Jezzine bird are attached to the stainless steel cutlery body and voila it is ready for purchase.



Jack Farah, Haddad craftmaker of 4 years



# *Recycling old memories*



Specialized in murals, interiors, decorative finishing and restoration of antique murals, SUMI Furniture, launched in 2011 by Nathalie Yared, recycles old wooden pieces into items that trigger nostalgia and childhood memories.



If you are looking for something that is a little different, but still gives you the feel of Lebanon SUMI is the place to visit. We sat down with Yared to find out what inspires her.

### **What is the idea behind SUMI Furniture?**

Well, my objectives involved both form and content. First of all, I wanted to work on recycling furniture. I wanted to show that furniture could be given a second life. Second, I wanted to pay tribute to popular culture by using well-known brand logos that reflect our childhood.

### **How did it all start?**

It all started when I found an old kitchen table and painted it, just for fun for me, with the Bonjus pineapple drink logo. I was stunned by the results so I decided to take it a step further.

### **What do these logos represent to you?**

In a city that is segmented, constantly changing and in which we have lost most of our benchmarks, I realized that these logos were among the few things that could link us all. Whether you are rich or poor, Muslim or Christian, a city or rural dweller,

you will always associate 'Ras El Abed' (now called Traboush), a chocolate treat made by Ghandour, with a time in your childhood. Some of these logos have disappeared or have not been seen since the late 80's, early 90's. Seeing them again reminds people of the precious moments of comfort these products gave us during the civil war era.

### **Do you do all the work yourself?**

I have a small team. We are three people in all. I pick the furniture, restore it and choose the logos, but the actual drawing and painting is done by all three of us, as it is a very long process.

### **How much effort goes into a piece and how long does it take to finish?**

It takes quiet a long time to finish a piece. First of all, it depends on the piece of furniture, whether it is made from scratch using recycled wood or used as is. In both cases it is sent to the carpenter for repair and restoration. We then strip it of its original color. After this process, the painting phase begins in my atelier. First there's the base color and then the drawings. Each piece is completely hand painted.



### What has been the reaction to your work?

Much to my surprise, the furniture has been very favorably received! Although many pop artists and designers have been using these logos way before I have, when I offered my take on them, I thought the public would already be jaded, but I was wrong.

### Do you have a favorite piece?

The cigarette rolling paper brand 'waraq el sham' is probably my favorite piece so far because of the intricacy of the design and its overall sobriety and choice of colors.

### What's next?

SUMI Furniture has just started. We have a lot of private orders and we are looking forward to taking part in upcoming events and fairs. In August, we finished a new collection.

In parallel, I am still teaching decorative painting classes offered at my studio for small groups of up to four students. Different techniques are taught such as wood graining, marbling imitation, gilding and silvering, patinas, and trompe l'oeil, painted on various pieces of furniture. Founded in 1997, my company Nathalie Yared Peinture Decorative provides professional painting services including exterior walls, interiors, decorative finishing and restoration of antique paintings. And of course, I have my restoration work for old villas and churches.

Normally, when an object is recycled, it is actually downcycled as in, it is broken down into something of lesser quality, a process that not only consumes energy but also ends with the material being used in inferior roles. Upcycling on the other hand, adds value by transforming or reinventing an otherwise disposable item into something of higher quality, and this is exactly what SUMI is doing. It's the ultimate in reuse and sustainability, all the while safeguarding popular elements of Lebanese culture.

[nathalieyared.com](http://nathalieyared.com)



Photos courtesy of Nathalie Yared

# No small miracle

A place of natural beauty and wonder, Lebanon is known for its snow-capped mountains and rich cedar wood. And apart from bustling cities and a vibrant nightlife, it was known as a country where miracles took place! Mentioned 71 times in the Old Testament and with 18 recognized religious sects, you can imagine how many pilgrimage sites it has. Lebanon Traveler visited eleven impressive lesser-known localities to give you a taste of what is on offer.

## In the East



### The Shrine of Syeda Khawla

**Getting there:** Baalbek, 85 km northeast of Beirut, via the Damascus Road  
The striking mosque with its blue mosaic minarets, and an interior filled with mirrored tiles and a gilded mausoleum is worth the trip alone. The story goes that Syeda Khawla, the daughter of Imam Hussein, was somewhere between a newborn and two years old when she accompanied the caravan of women and children taken from Karbala to Damascus. She died en route in Baalbek and was buried there by her brother, Imam Zainul Abideed. A tree was planted beside her grave. Three hundred years ago, Syeda Khawla spoke to a member of the Motada family in a dream, asking him to divert a stream away from her deceased body. The dream occurred numerous times. The family excavated the site and discovered Syeda Khawla's grave. A small shrine was built at that location in her honor. In 2005, the spectacular new shrine and the mosque seen today took its place, though the original cypress tree is still intact.

**Discretion:** Dress respectfully. Women are advised to wear loose fitting clothes that cover arms and legs, as well as a headscarf.

**Out & About** You can't go to Baalbek without visiting some of the largest and best-preserved Roman ruins in the world.

### Shrine of Prophet Noah (Nuh)

**Getting there:** Zahlé, 55 km east of the capital, via the Damascus Road

In the village of Karak, near the city of Zahlé, is, according to local tradition, the grave of Prophet Noah. Yes, the one who saved all the animals in his ark when God flooded the Earth. It seems that the village mosque was built from the ruins of a Roman aqueduct, of which some arches remain, and the tomb of Noah, which is around 30 meters in length, is covered by prayer mats and located in a room adjacent to the mosque.

**Discretion:** Dress respectfully. Women must wear loose fitting clothes and a headscarf.

**Out & About** Zahlé is famous for its wineries and Arak. Visit Chateau Ksara, Massaya, Domaine Wardy, Chateau Khoury or Al Karram Arak. Try the local ice cream - traditional, handmade Arabic ice cream with miskeh (anis seed), sahlab (a starch based beverage) and cream, otherwise known as Ashta, from Khalaf or Abou Sleiman.

### Saydit Beshwet

**Getting there:** 105 km from Beirut, and just 20 km northwest of Baalbek, between Deir el-Ahmar and Barqa

The village of Beshwet is at the center of all pilgrimage sites, visited by tens of thousands of believers every year. In 1880 the people of Beshwet wanted a special statue dedicated to the Virgin Mary. A Jesuit priest was able to construct a copy of Our Lady of Pontmain in her golden crown and blue star-spangled robe for the villagers. It is believed that invalids have been cured with prayer at the site. The Virgin has also appeared to a boy named Mohammed, telling him not to be afraid. He later claimed that he witnessed the statue move. Today, Saydit Beshwet is a popular pilgrimage site for people from all faiths around the world.

**Out & About** Oyoun Orghosh is a must! The springs are replenished by melting snow from the peaks of Jabal al Mekmel and Qornet al Sawda. They form a small natural lake surrounded with a number of cafes.

# In the South

## Our Lady of Mantara (meaning awaiting)

**Getting there:** Maghdouché, 50 km south of Beirut and 8 km southeast of Sidon

The 'water into wine' miracle in Qana is well known. Less known is the cave above Sidon, where the Virgin Mary rested as Jesus preached in the city below. A shrine, cemetery and a church mark the spot of the sacred cave. The remains of a shrine to the goddess Astarte (once worshipped by the Phoenicians) can also be found. On a neighboring hilltop is where Jesus and Mary once stood.

**Out & About** Sidon has an ancient port, sea castle and labyrinth-like souks. The beautifully restored Soap Museum is a must, as is the last Phoenician glassblowers in nearby Sarafand.



## The shrine of Prophet Jonah (Younes)

**Getting there:** 27 km south of Beirut and 10 km north of Sidon

Today, Jiyeh in south Lebanon is known for its pristine beaches. It was once however, famous for a whale and a prophet. Jonah failed to follow God's orders and tried to escape by boat. Facing the wrath of God, Jonah was tossed from his boat and swallowed by a whale. He spent three days repenting, before God ordered the whale to vomit Jonah onto dry land, at the ancient city of Porphyreon (present day Jiyeh). Today a temple stands in Jonah's honor.

**Out & About** Jiyeh's coast is home to some of the best private beach resorts in the country.

## Khalwat el-Bayda

**Getting there:** Near Hasbaya, south Lebanon, 114 km from Beirut  
This is the principle sanctuary of the Druze, consisting of 40 hermitages of Khalwat, where thousands of initiates come each Thursday on spiritual retreats.

**Discretion:** Visitors should request permission from the resident sheikh before venturing around the site. Women are asked to wear headscarves.

**Out & About** Hasbaya's huge citadel is its primary touristic site, owned by the Chehab emirs. On the banks of the Hasbani River is a scattering of outdoor restaurants that serve deliciously prepared trout.

# In the North

## Shrine of prophet Joshua (Yusha' bin Nu)

**Getting there:** 70 km north of Beirut  
The Shrine of Prophet Joshua in El-Menyeh, Tripoli is said to have been the site of a number of miracles for the sick. The tomb is in a cave with a depth of over 15 meters. Water is said to drip down onto the tomb in order to quench the prophet's thirst, since according to locals he died thirsty.

**Out & About** Wander around the old souks of El-Mina, the port area of the city. Or, satisfy your sweet tooth with a visit to Abdul Rahman Hallab and Son, who have been making traditional Arabic sweets since 1881.

## Qadisha Valley

**Getting there:** Head north to Chikka (20 km south of Tripoli), turn right and head into the mountains Qadisha or the Holy Valley is a UNESCO listed world heritage site. You could literally spend weeks here discovering the scattering of cave chapels, hermitages and monasteries that have been cut from rock, where generations of monks, hermits, ascetics and anchorites found asylum.

**Out & About** Visit the Qannubin Monastery on the northeast side of the Qadisha Valley. Said to be the oldest of the Maronite monasteries, its foundation is often attributed to the Emperor Theodosius the Great in 375AD. Cut into the rock cliff side, there are monastic cells, church, cloister, and accommodation for travelers.



There are of course many other religious sites worth visiting through out Lebanon [sacred-destinations.com](http://sacred-destinations.com)

# Celebrating Saint Barbara

In Lebanon Eid El Barbara is all about good food and fun-filled memories. It is a longstanding tradition where kids wear disguises and roam their neighborhoods looking for treats. And no it's not Halloween!



The legend has it that Barbara was the daughter of a rich pagan named Dioscorus, who kept her in a tower to shelter her from the outside world. But, to his dismay, she embraced the Christian religion. After hearing his daughter's confession, he drew his sword to kill her when miraculously, an opening appeared in the tower wall and she was transported to a mountain gorge, where she disguised herself and hid. Later she was found, tortured and condemned to burn. However, her wounds

healed instantly, and the torches kept burning out. Finally, she was beheaded at the hands of her father, when all other methods failed.

Saint Barbara, a Virgin Martyr, is the patron saint of firefighters, soldiers, etc, those who have dangerous professions. She died by the sword, but her killers were struck down by lightning, so she is often called on for protection from lightning and from violent and unpredictable death. She is one of the 'Fourteen Holy Helpers', a group of saints venerated together in Roman Catholicism. But, because of doubts about the historical accuracy of this story, Saint Barbara was removed from the Catholic liturgical calendar in 1969. However, like Saint Christopher and Saint Expedite, who were similarly "de-sainted" at the same time, her popularity continues unabated.

The iconography of Saint Barbara generally shows her dressed in white and red. The sky may be dark and foggy, with jagged flashes of lightning above. Often the tower, in which she was kept captive, is depicted in the background, but in some images, she holds a small model of a tower in her hands or wears a crown that mimics the crenelated top of a stone fortress-tower.

In addition to the tower, images associated with Saint Barbara include the sword with which she was beheaded, a chalice, the palm branch of her martyrdom, and the lilies of virginity. A little





plant bearing white daisy-like flowers, either Feverfew or Life Everlasting, often blooms at her feet.

The Lebanese celebrate Eid el Barbara (which literary means the Feast of Barbara) on the eve of December 3rd in commemoration of her martyrdom on the 4th. Saint Barbara, whose name means barbarian woman, is believed to have lived at around 300 AD and according to local legend she was a young Roman girl who lived in the Bekaa region. Loyal to pagan gods, in this version, her father was governor of the Roman city of Baalbek. And yes, he kept his daughter under lock and key in a tower.

The story continues that she converted to Christianity, and to elude her father, she disguised herself when she escaped from the tower. Thus the tradition of dressing up was created. While fleeing persecution, Barbara supposedly ran through a freshly planted wheat field, which magically grew instantly to cover her path and hide her. But the soldiers eventually captured her and she was beheaded on orders of her father. The legend goes on to say that lightning struck the father and he died shortly after.

A local tradition on this day is to plant wheat seeds (or chick peas, barley grains, beans, lentils etc...) on a bed of cotton wool. The seeds germinate and grow to 6 inches in time for Christmas, when the shoots are used to decorate the nativity scene, usually placed below the Christmas tree to recreate one of Barbara's miracles.

According to legend, kids when roaming the neighborhood scream, "hesuhlee ya Barbara", imploring Barbara to run away. And, replicating her escape, kids of all ages change their appearance, dress up and put on masks. Then, they meet up with their friends and go around the neighborhood collecting treats that vary from chocolate to money.

But treats are not free. The kids pay for them by singing a song or by dancing accompanied by tambourines and derbake (a type of hand drum). There is also a special song for the occasion with many variations depending on the situation. If, after the performance, the host gives the kids a good treat, they reward them with song that ends with a compliment. If not, the song ends with an innocent insult, which results in kids running away as quickly as they can.

Even school activities revolve around Eid El Barbara, as kids draw, cut and decorate their own cardboard masks. Upon returning home, many proudly wear their mask and surprise their parents. In the old days, parents used whatever was handy to dress up their children, and kids were so happy to wear their mother's dresses and father's jackets.

If you want to join in on the fun, just check out one of several churches dedicated to Saint Barbara. Or, visit the southern Christian village of Maghdouche, where Eid El Barbara is celebrated with a masquerade parade through the streets. Another option is Baalbeck, where the Greek Catholic Cathedral is dedicated to her, and believing that Barbara was a local girl, this regal city celebrates in style. In fact all you have to do is follow the trail of noise in your neighborhood. All in all it is a day to share joy, laughter and lots of sweets!

**Municipality Baalbeck Tel +961 8 370 214 - 377 019 - 377 150**  
**Maghdouche Tel +961 7-200311**

Like any joyous occasion, Eid el Barbara is also about food. According to Barbara's story, she hid in wheat fields, which is why a special wheat dessert is prepared. Boiled barley is flavored with orange blossom water and served with almonds, pistachios, raisins, walnuts, pine kernels, and sweetened with either sugar or honey.

Other traditional deserts include maacrons and aawamat, which are basically two different versions of fried dough soaked in sugar syrup and qatayef, a sweet dough, like a crepe, filled with either ashta (cream) or a mixture of crushed walnuts with sugar and orange blossom water with a drizzle of sugar syrup. A high calorie feast indeed!



CALENDAR

# Exploring Lebanon

We have selected your ultimate excursions to Lebanon's heritage sites with two of the country's renown tour guides. To make the most of the stunning country side, all full day trips depart at 8:30 in the morning.

## Full day excursion



**Baalbeck Ksara and Anjar**

Thursday & Saturday  
Rate: USD 80



**Sidon, Tyr and Echmoun**

Monday  
Rate: USD 84



**Jeita, Harissa and Byblos**

Saturday & Sunday  
Rate: USD 85



**Cedars, Bsharreh and Qozhaya**

Wednesday & Sunday  
Rate: USD 70

Kurban  
Tours

Wild  
Discovery

Monday, Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday  
Rate: USD 78  
Special Rate on Wednesday USD 65

Monday & Thursday  
Rate: USD 78  
Special Rate on Thursday USD 65

Friday, Saturday & Sunday  
Rate: USD 88  
Special Rate on Friday USD 75

Tuesday & Thursday  
Rate: USD 68  
Special Rate on Tuesday USD 55

## Half day excursion

### Beirut

Beirut City Tour & National Museum

Departure 1:30 pm

Kurban Tours

Tuesday

Rate: USD 45

Wild Discovery Travel & Tourism

Wednesday & Sunday

Tuesday

Rate: USD 32

### Jeita & Byblos

Wild Discovery Travel & Tourism

Departure 8:30 am

Wednesday & Friday

Rate: USD 62

### Deir El Qamar & Beiteddine

Wild Discovery Travel & Tourism

Departure 8:30 am

Wednesday & Sunday

Rate: USD 45

### Jeita & Harissa

Departure 8:30 am

Kurban Tours

Saturday & Sunday

Rate: USD 58

Wild Discovery Travel & Tourism

Saturday & Sunday

Rate: USD 55

### Tripoli

Wild Discovery Travel & Tourism

Departure 8:30 am

Saturday

Rate: USD 48

*All of the above are subject to change without prior notice & require a minimum of two people. Please call ahead for reservations. Days of the week marked red indicate a discounted fare subject to availability.*

wilddiscovery.com.lb

Tel +961 565646

kurbantravel.com

Tel +961-01614914



Tripoli



# Your autumn activity calendar

## September

**Saturday 15**

### **Sunset Hike**

Hrajel - Esprit Nomade

**Saturday 15 & Sunday 16**

### **Wilderness Camping in Tannourine**

Balou3 Balaa  
Adventures in Lebanon

### **Camping and Excursion**

Hammana - Great Escape

**Sunday 16**

### **Tannourine Reserve Hike**

Tannourine  
Adventures in Lebanon

**Saturday 22**

### **Sunset Hike**

Mamboukh - Esprit Nomade

**Sunday 23**

### **Hiking** (advanced level)

Jabal El Knisse - Great Escape

### **Baskinta by Bike**

Baskinta - TLB Destinations

**Saturday 29**

### **Jujuba Day**

In partnership with the local community and local farmers for World Tourism Day  
Aain Halazoun  
Responsible Mobilities

### **Sunset Hike**

Saghbine & Aitanit  
Esprit Nomade

**Saturday 29 & Sunday 30**

### **WE for Singles**

Hamana - Great Escape

**Sunday 30**

### **Paragliding in the Lebanese Skies**

Ghosta - Adventures in Lebanon

## Hiking

Chouf Cedars Reserve  
Byblos & Beyond

## October

**Sunday 7**

### **Cedars of Karm el Mohr**

Karm el Mohr  
Esprit Nomade

### **Apple Picking**

Location:TBA  
Byblos & Beyond

**Sunday 14**

### **Palm Islands**

Tripoli - Esprit Nomade

## Hiking

Ehden Nature Reserve  
Byblos & Beyond

**Sunday 21**

### **Amiq Wetland and Wine Tasting**

Bekaa - Byblos & Beyond

### **Autumn Colors Hike**

Bakish & Baskinta  
Esprit Nomade

**Thursday 25**

### **Adha Hike**

Tannourine & Hadath  
el Jobbeh  
Cedar Reserve  
Esprit Nomade

**Sunday 28**

### **Autumn Colors Hike**

Bshenneta - Esprit Nomade

## November

**Sunday 4**

### **Autumn Colors Hike**

Ehden Reserve Nature  
Reserve - Esprit Nomade

**Saturday 10 & Sunday 11**

### **Clean Mobility/Slow Travel**

In partnership with the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, Tawlet Aammiq, Arc En Ciel Association & Aanjar Municipality for World Responsible Tourism Day  
Bekaa - Responsible Mobilities

**Sunday 11**

### **Hiking**

Laklouk - Byblos & Beyond

### **Temples & Autumn Colors**

Niha (Bekaa) - Esprit Nomade

**Sunday 18**

### **Discovering Traditional Lebanese Houses**

Amchit - Byblos & Beyond

### **Hike**

Zgharteghrine  
Esprit Nomade

**Thursday 22**

### **Autumn Colors Hike**

Tannourine Reserve  
Esprit Nomade

**Sunday 25**

### **Discover Baadarane and Deir El Kamar**

Chouf - Byblos & Beyond

### **Hike**

Mrosti - Esprit Nomad

## December

**Sunday 2**

### **Arak Making**

Tannourine  
Byblos & Beyond

### **Monasteries & Autumn Colors**

Qadisha - Esprit Nomade

**Saturday 8 & Sunday 9**

### **International Mountain Day Weekend**

Location:TBA  
Responsible Mobilities

**Sunday 9**

### **Hiking**

Qadisha - Byblos & Beyond

### **Hike**

Qartaba - Esprit Nomade

**Sunday 16**

### **Hiking**

Ehmej - Byblos & Beyond

### **Temples & Roman Temples**

Nabi Ayla - Esprit Nomade

**Sunday 23**

### **Monasteries & Autumn Colors**

Qadisha - Esprit Nomade

**Sunday 30**

### **Hike**

Adonis River - Esprit Nomade

## Contact list

Adventures in Lebanon  
adventuresinlebanon.com  
Tel +961 3 732425  
+961 71 443323

Byblos & Beyond  
byblosandbeyond.com  
Tel +961 9 540857  
+961 3 912205

Esprit Nomade  
esprit-nomade.com  
Tel +961 3 223552

Great Escape  
greatescape.com.lb  
Tel +961 3 360027

Responsible Mobilities  
+961 3 218 048

TLB Destinations  
tlb-destinations.com  
Tel +961 4 419848

## USEFUL CONTACTS

### Airport

**Rafic Hariri  
International Airport**  
+961 | 628000

The only international airport in the country, its website is extremely well organized and is updated every 10 minutes with the latest arrival and departure times, delays and cancellations. Certified airport taxis (with the airport logo on the side) are available for a fixed rate. However, you can bargain with other taxi drivers for a lower rate. You should be at the airport 2 hours prior to your flight.

[beirutairport.gov.lb](http://beirutairport.gov.lb)

### Banks

Banks cashiers are normally open between 8am and 2pm from Monday to Friday, and until noon on Saturday. Most banks open longer hours for transactions that are not cash.

### Bus Routes

#### Inside Beirut

##### Bus 1

##### **Hamra to Khalde**

Begins on Sadat Str and passes by Emile Edde Str (better known as Lion), the Bristol Hotel, Verdun, Cola, the airport and Kafaat before reaching its final destination in Khalde.

##### Bus 2

##### **Hamra to Antelias**

Begins by the gas station next to Barbar on Emile Edde Str and passes by Radio Lebanon, Sassine Square, Mar Mikhael, Borj Hammoud and Dora before finally arriving in Antelias.

##### Bus 5

##### **Ain El Mreisseh to Hay As-Saloum**

Begins in Manara on General De Gaulle Ave, and continues south, passing through

Verdun, Tariq Al Jdideh, Bourj al Barajneh and the Airport before finally ending in Hay As-Saloum.

##### Bus 6

##### **Cola to Byblos**

Begins in Wata at Cola and continues northeast passing through Dora, Antelias, Zalka, Kaslik, Jounieh and finally ending in Jbeil (Byblos).

##### Bus 7

##### **Badaro to Bharssaf**

Beginning near the National Museum (Matahaf) in Badaro, this bus travels east through Beit Mery, Broumana, and Baabdat before finally arriving in Bharssaf.

##### Bus 8

##### **Hamra to Ain Saadeh**

Begins at AUH and then passes through Mar Elias, Becharra el Khoury, Sassine Square, Karam el Zeitoun, Bourj Hammoud, and Jdeideh before finally ending in Ain Saadeh.

##### Bus 9

##### **Barbir to Nahr el Mot**

Begins in Barbir and continues through Fum el Chebbak, Sin el Fil, Habtoor, Salloume, Dekwaneh, Sabtieh and Mar Taklah before finally ending at Nahr el Mot.

##### Bus 12

##### **Burj Al Barajneh to Hamra**

Begins in Burj Al Barajneh and continues through Haret Harek, Ghobeiri, Chiah, Sabra & Chatila, Cola, Salim Salam Str and by the Bristol Hotel before finally ending in Hamra at AUH.

##### Bus 15

##### **Cola to Aley**

Begins at Cola and continues through Bir Hassan, Mar Mikhael Church and Hazmieh, before finally ending in Aley.

### Currency

The national currency is the Lebanese Lira. One US dollar is equivalent to approximately LL 1,500. The US dollar is accepted almost everywhere. International bankcards are accepted in most places; look out for signs. Foreign currency is easily exchanged. Banks, ATMs and exchange bureaus can be found in main cities and towns.

### Driving

It is easy to rent a car if you have a valid Lebanese or international driving license

### Parking

Public parking lots are available around the city and either charge a set fee or by the hour; at rates that typically range from LL2,000 to LL5,000. Another option, is to take advantage of valet services available at almost every bar and restaurant in the city, which usually cost around LL5,000 or LL7,000 if you're parking at a hotel.

### Regulations

You should have a fire extinguisher in the car; wear your seatbelt at all times and always carry your mandatory government insurance, car insurance, car registration and driver's license with you at all times when driving.

### Electricity

The two-pin rectangular plug system is used and adapters are easy to find. Most areas have, at least, a three hour power cut per day; more in areas outside the capital. Almost all establishments have generators automatically set to operate when the power cuts.

### Tipping

Gratuities are usually in the region of 10 - 15%. As a rule, taxi drivers do not expect a tip. Tip porters USD 1.00 per piece of luggage and restaurants 10% of the bill.

### Transport

#### Outside Beirut

##### Charles Helou

Buses leaving from here will take you to destinations north of Beirut. You can also catch a taxi or service to Damascus from here. Be prepared to wait for the bus or service to fill up before they depart.

##### Cola

Packed with buses, taxis and services that will take you to destinations south of Beirut.

##### Dora

An intersection for services to the north, buses stop here too. You can get to Dora by service or van from the beginning of the highway by the port.

Services (taxis that go along certain routes and take up to 5 people, LL2,000 each), street taxis (LL10,000 - 12,000), vans (LL1,000) and private buses (LL1,000).

Prices are correct at time of going to press.

### Useful numbers

+961 | 449557 Beyond Beirut  
[beyondbeirut.com](http://beyondbeirut.com)

+961 | 340940 Ministry of  
Tourism

[lebanon-tourism.gov.lb](http://lebanon-tourism.gov.lb)

+961 International Code  
| 112/999 Internal Security

125 Civil Defense

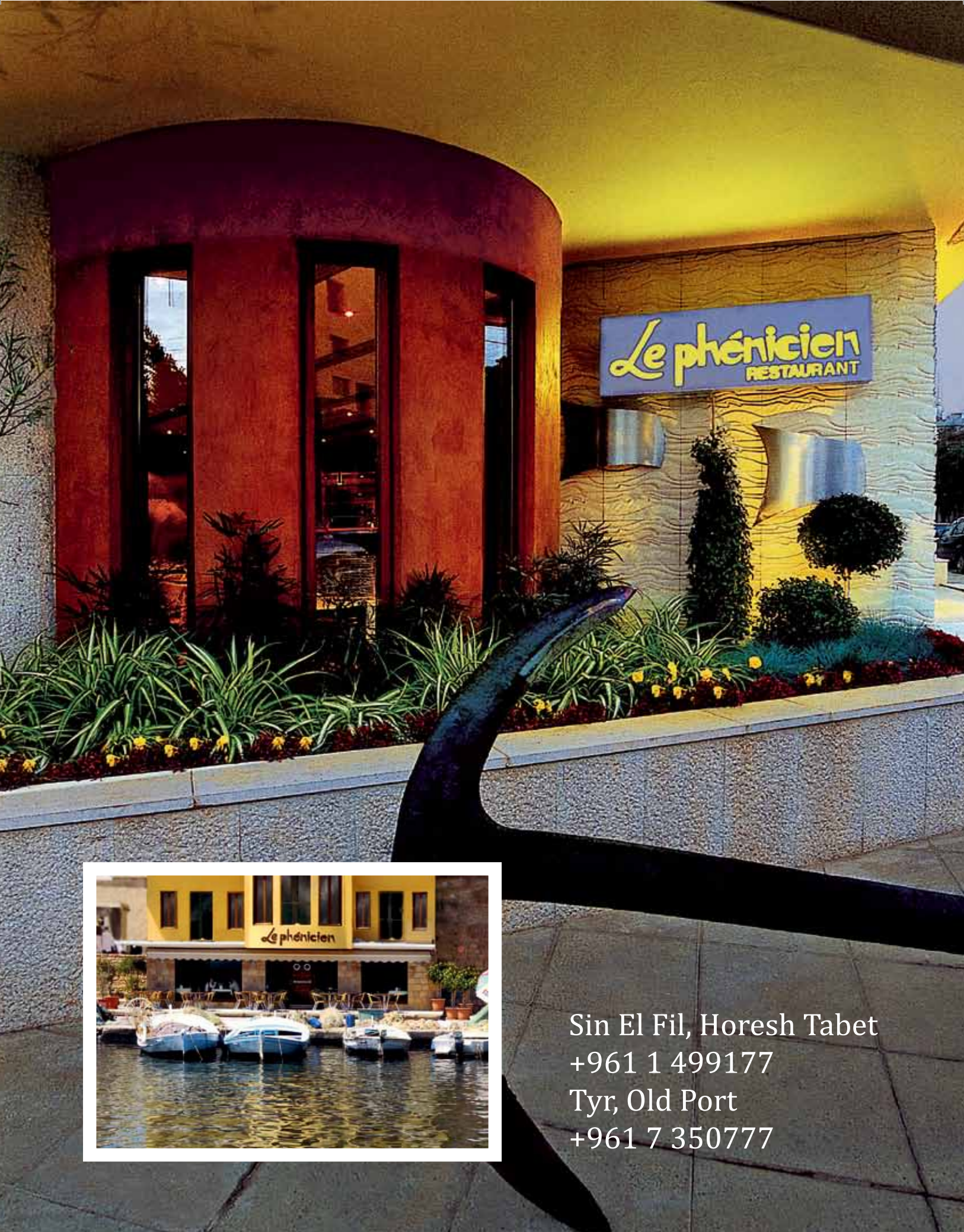
140 Red Cross

175 Fire Department

120 Directory

1515 OGERO Directory

1718 Weather



Sin El Fil, Horesh Tabet  
+961 1 499177  
Tyr, Old Port  
+961 7 350777

# A new dawn



## SKYTEAM

welcomes



Middle East Airlines - Air Liban | [www.mea.com.lb](http://www.mea.com.lb)

