



Lebanon Traveler

A publication of Hospitality Services in a joint venture with Beyond Beirut - Issue 5 December 2012 - February 2013

60+
best hikes

Winter
hot
list

20 Ultimate winter breaks

10 Must visit in Bcharre

Beaufort Castle - a hidden gem with a view

Snowboarding - everything you need to know



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Lebanon Traveler

unveils Lebanon’s hidden treasures



Winter is coming...winter is here!

We immediately associate wintertime with holidays, gifts and good times with friends and family. There are also those cold rainy nights that eventually turn into sunny days with patches of snow the next morning. For each of these days this season, Lebanon Traveler has a treat for you.

On the sunny days of winter you can go from Beirut to Batroun by bike or get an adrenaline rush while snowboarding on the slopes. You can always take a ride to Ehmej and check out its natural beauty, visit the southern hidden gem Beaufort Castle or simply take a break in Bcharre to visit the 10 suggested sites. The weekends are an ideal time for a mini-escape and Lebanon Traveler has planned many of these to please all tastes and whims.



For the rainy days, there is still a lot to do indoors. Dive into the big blue waters on a visit to the Wonders of the Sea museum. Shop for local products of traditional marquetry and beautiful design bags or checkout if there is a Zajal evening taking place and drown yourself in Lebanese culture.



The holiday season is packed with activities for the whole family and we made sure you can mark them on your calendar: From plays to exhibitions and unique performances, we listed it all. Winter is upon us indeed but we will make sure that it is an active one!

We've proven that winter is a time not to stay home...unless you are cuddling up in front of the fire with a cup of hot chocolate and the latest issue of Lebanon Travel.

Happy winter to all!

The Lebanon Traveler team



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

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

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The cover photo taken by Lina Hassoun won the "Winter Time" competition
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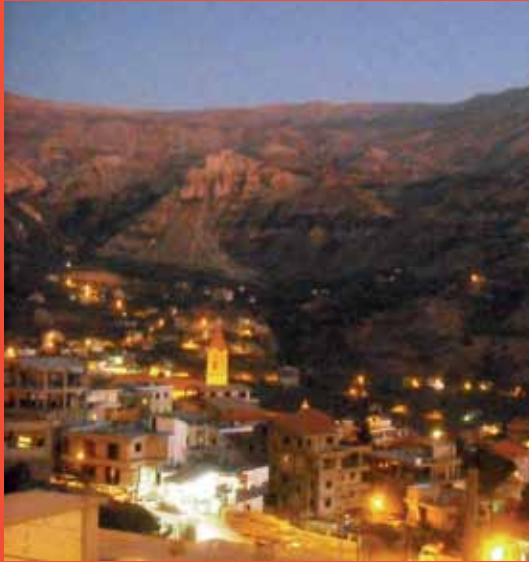
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Sarah's Bag is less known outside of the Middle East, but something of a phenomenon inside it...

NEWS

Back to roots initiative

Lebanon's Minister of Tourism Fady Abboud, during his visit to Brazil to promote Lebanon, revealed practical steps that aim to preserve the unique relationship between Lebanon and Brazil, which has the largest Lebanese diaspora in the world. The minister launched the "Come to Lebanon for a visit" program, as part of his "Back to the roots" initiative that targets young expatriates. The program aspires to attract more than 10 thousand young expatriates to keep a close relationship with their homeland, through presenting the youth with reasonable and secure lodging prices in Lebanon. He also stressed the quest to open a direct flight path between Lebanon and Brazil, pointing out it was the right of every Lebanese expatriate in Brazil for this to happen. It was however agreed to launch a website, where an online petition calling for the direct flight path could be established and where officials could voice the basic demands of the Lebanese Diaspora in Brazil. Abboud discussed his project with members of the community, associations and businessmen so as to develop the proper mechanism to promote this program. He also met with local travel agencies.



Honeymoon for charity

Instead of relaxing in the Caribbean, newlyweds Matthew and Hazel Packer used their honeymoon to cycle all over Lebanon and raise funds for SOS villages. The 3-day ride, which took place in October, had the couple crossing over 450 kilometers of beautiful Lebanon countryside, meeting its inhabitants, visiting three SOS villages & raising around 3,000 USD.



Beyond Beirut's second sustainable tourism development forum takes place

This Lebanese Sustainable Tourism Forum, organized by Beyond Beirut with the collaboration of the Ministry of Tourism, is the first of its kind to promote dialogue and a linkage among local tourism stakeholders and to involve entrepreneurs and municipalities in rural areas with national tourism stakeholders, in an effort to expand sustainable tourism across the value chain to all regions of Lebanon.

Following the success of last year's first edition, this second edition is about Destination and Product Development. Active municipalities and national tourism providers are provided with a platform to exchange views, discuss constraints and elaborate solutions with the goal of expanding local tourism in rural areas of Lebanon. A workshop on product

development will also allow municipalities to brainstorm on potential products to further develop post-forum in their

respective areas. The forum will take place on December 14, 2012 at the University of Balamand.





Arcenciel wins international award

Arcenciel, the Lebanese NGO that has been acting within the spirit of sustainable continuity through 7 programs implemented over its 27 years of operation, has won the 2012 Nestlé Creating Shared Value (CSV) prize for its Wataneh program that works to improve the sustainability and competitiveness of Lebanese agriculture. The prize is awarded every other year to support an innovative project, an inclusive business, or a social enterprise in the area of nutrition, water or rural development. This edition picked winners from 634 applicants, from 76 countries and crowned the efforts of 3 NGOs: Arcenciel from Lebanon, Fundación Paraguaya de Cooperación y Desarrollo from Paraguay and Excellent Development from the UK, who will be sharing more than 500,000 USD. "It's simply wonderful for Arcenciel to have one of our key programs recognized with such a prestigious international award," said one of its founding members Pierre Issa.

Mada in FITS 2012

Mada Association, a Lebanese NGO involved in solidarity tourism, partook in the International Forum in Fair Tourism that took place in Morocco during October 2012, under the main theme of development of sustainable tourism. Mada shared its experience on the issue by joining an Oriental Caravan that crisscrossed the eastern part of Morocco to encourage smaller tourism project holders.



Road show to wraps up

Reed Travel Exhibition, organizer of GIBTM, took to the road a series of brand new and Levant-focused education and networking forums for Meetings, Business Travel and Incentive based companies to gain insight and knowledge to enhance their trade show experience. Entitled "GIBTM Talks: Maximizing your ROI", the road show that began in Muscat visited Doha, Manama, Amman and Beirut during October. "Business travel remains an important factor in augmenting tourism and hospitality revenues and with facilities like the Beirut International Exhibition and Leisure Center (BIEL) offering tailor-made space, the stage is already set for Lebanon to capitalize on new opportunities," declared Lois Hall, GIBTM exhibition manager.



Photo courtesy of Khalil Charafeddine

Stylish Gemmayze

According to Complex magazine Gemmayze is one of the top 50 most stylish neighborhoods in the world. "Beirut has a bohemian culture, and it's nestled in Gemmayze, an older area populated with narrow streets and gorgeous buildings from the French era. It's also full of bars and pubs, though there are very few nightclubs in the area, which lets you know it hasn't been heavily commercialized," writes Julian Kimble, the lead city guide writer for the magazine. Places in the spotlight include Concerto, Zinc, the Angry Monkey and Coop d'Etat. The article was accompanied by precious advice: do not drive down there!



International Forum Morocco



APEAL at the 55th Venice Biennale

The Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon (APEAL) was commissioned by the Lebanese Ministry of Culture to organize, manage and execute the Lebanese pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale, a leading cultural event in the world. Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, curators for the event, picked a selection from the works of Akram Zaatri, whom they deem to “represent a generation of artists that for the last two decades contribute actively to the Lebanese artistic scene.”



Municipalities take center stage

The exhibition “Baldati Bi’ati 2012” hosted by Solidere took place during November at the Jewelers’ Souk, Beirut Souks. Organized by the Nature Conservation Center at the American University of Beirut, the exhibition was held under the patronage of the General Directorate of local departments and councils in the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities.

The exhibitions underlying objective is to highlight the important role played by the communities in the protection of the environment and to showcase the best practices adopted by each town towards nature’s conservation. During the opening ceremony, the winners for Baldati Bi’ati contest were announced and included Maaser El Chouf, Manara, Aakoura, Barka and Bcharreh. Winners were towns/villages that have performed best through social activities and programs to raise awareness about the need to protect the environment. Mr. Mahmoud Ayoub from Manara won the “2012 Environmental Pioneer” award for successfully planting about 13000 different native tree species in Manara with a survival rate of over 90%.

TEDx Beirut

18 speakers and artistic performers from various backgrounds, over 1200 attendees, excellent organization, wonderful social spaces and activities - that’s what TEDxBeirut was all about. The event took place in November under the theme “All we need is...” which translated into what drives motivation, success and more. Speakers, which included Dr Charles Elachi, professor and director of NASA Jet Propulsion Laboatory, Rabih El Chaer, managing director of the Lebanese Transparency Association and Suzanne Talhouk, founder of Feil Amr among many others, inspired the attendees by sharing their personal experiences and the causes of the change in their vision and perspectives.



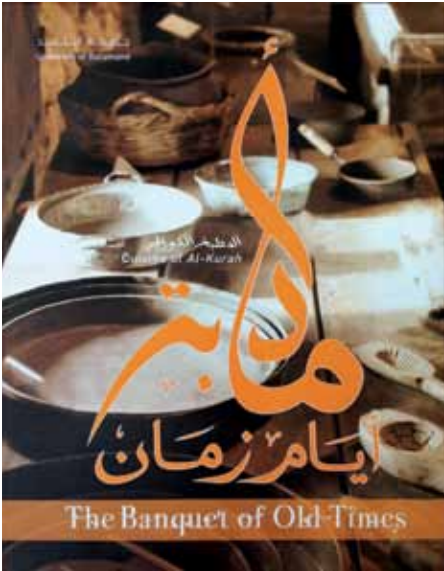
International Mountain Day

On the occasion of the International Mountain Day, Byblos & Beyond with the collaboration of the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association organized a special hike. With Christian Al Akhras as their guide, the hike started in Falougha and went all the way to Ain Zhalta, better known as section 17 of the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT). Along the way Al Akhra shared his knowledge of the different fauna and flora, as well as the risks and dangers of urban pressure threatening the Lebanese mountains.

The LMT Association also recently published its first bi-annual magazine, LMT Society. The magazine describes the activities of the LMT Association and contains breathtaking photos of the trail and its heritage. It presents the work of the association in Community Development, Conservation and Youth and Education. The names of all thru-hikers are printed as well as Adrian Life Members. You can also find a list of LMT items for sale including books, guidebooks, and fleece tops. A review of LMT in the international press and on the international scene is also displayed including participation in the Second World Trail Conference in Jeju, Korea.



BOOKS



The Banquet of Old Times

A deliciously elegant book that will take you back to a time when the rhythm of the seasons was slower and food was in harmony with the climate, the soil and the water of the Koura region in Lebanon. Through an integrated approach to food, the book relates the connection of man to land and traditions, in times when food had a dimension that celebrated life itself. Noting food related utensils used in the past, the book highlights recipes that reflect the constraints and joys of life in olden times. Beautifully illustrated and intelligently designed, The Banquet of Old Times is an invitation to reproduce recipes that have been carefully adapted to suit modern-day lifestyles. The chefs at the University of Balamand replaced pinches of salt and handfuls of bulgur with grams and cups to enjoy authentic flavors as they were meant to be enjoyed. This book has encouraged other villages in Lebanon, where the diversity of its landscape, micro-climates, culture, traditions and a rich history generates an incredible variety of dishes, to revive them as Koura has. Published by Balamand University, the Banquet of Old Times teaches you all about recipes from tomato soup to kishek, from eggs with fennel to hroo osboo, from msabbahet el darwish to dandelion with oil, from keebah arnabiyeh to hrisse. The book is not a mere collection of recipes but a journey to the heart of Koura and a glimpse into its lifestyle and traditions.



A Guide to the City

Politics put aside to unfurl Beirut's layered history, from a Phoenician port city, to an Ottoman case study, to its Modernist years of glory and its current attempts at a glitzy makeover no matter the odds. Carole Corm with contributions by Gregory Buchakjian on art, Kamal Mouzawak on food, Hani Asfour on architecture, local insights from fashion designer Rabih Kayrouz, wine critic Michael Karam, writer Rachid el Daif, art dealer Naila Kettaneh-Kunigk and many many more.



Gotta Love Lebanon

When she first came to Lebanon 20 years ago, Joanna Sayad didn't know what to do, where to take her kids and when to enjoy what. Through a lot of trials and errors, she triumphed over the mess and abundance of Lebanese activities and is now offering her expertise to help others avoid her "activity seeking" troubles. Published by Turning Point, the book offers a great guide to family activities all over the country. A must read for those wishing to experience Lebanon's little known kid-friendly activities.



Wallpaper City Guide

The iconic Wallpaper City Guide series has added Beirut to its portfolio. In a practical pocket sized guide, it takes you into the very unique places of the city that will please the pickiest design lovers and gourmet eaters. Landmarks, hotels, urban life, shopping, sports and getaways will allow you to know the city like the back of your hand. Of course there is the architectural tour that makes this guide different from others. The guide shows you Beirut in all its glorious aspects.

Get your photo published

Lebanon Traveler is holding a photo competition, to choose the cover of its magazine. Talented photographers from all over the country may submit their entries online to info@lebanontraveler.com in order to be considered. The next deadline for the picture that best reflects "Spring time" will be February 15th 2013 for our upcoming issue. Here are our top 32 out of 94 "Winter time" entries for this issue including the cover and the "Take Me There" photo.

Firas Daccache



Ghassan Nakad



Gulay Badran



Hadi Abou Ayache



Imane Fakhoury



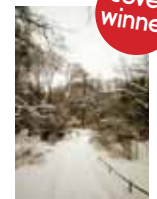
Karim Sakr



Jean Bou Dagher



Lina Hassoun



cover
winner

Maroun Chaccour



Mhamad Chaddad



Ruth Moucharafieh



Take
me
there



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Silent autumn stormy winter

The winding trails through Lebanon's high peaks proved to be quite a challenging journey. Bsharre in northern Lebanon was the starting point of long hike traversing the highlands of Dahr el Qadib, Qornet es Sawda, Arasiya, Brissa, Mrebine, Wadi Jhanam, Meshmesh and ending up in Qammoua plains. We set off on what started out as pleasant day but ended with a stormy night. We could not reach Akkar's Qammoua forest as planned. The mountain highlands and plains offer shelter for alpine plants and transhumant communities that move with the seasons and rely on nature for survival



Elsa J. Sattout

December 2012



An early breakfast in a tribal tent allowed us to savor traditional dishes and flavors. The hardened yet tender faces of the women told the story of their tempestuous relationship with the land while the men's faces reflected the harsh conditions of the grazing pastures, year after year after year. Walking the trail

that reaches one of the highest summits in the Middle East is an experience not to be missed. For those wishing to gain a glimpse into Lebanon's natural landscape, the scenery from above is a spectacular treat. The inviting blue sky with its white clouds defeats the wind, rain and snow to envelope you in a crisp invigorating coat.

However, the journey was not yet over and more challenges lay ahead. After reaching the highest peak we took another tough trudge to further pass through the Jord Dunnyeh. As we explored the tactile environment the path tested our physical limits, but we were able to find a dirt road that was exhausted by farmers, herders and hikers. Old junipers covered the ground and became the mementos we held onto to remember our journey. As the silence of the autumn cold turned into an unexpected winter storm, a dose of harsh reality hit us hard. Our journey was over. It was time to seek shelter and return to our comfort zones.

Mountaineering in Lebanon sparks the enchantment of unveiling the other face of the "Mediterraneity" in an Eastern Mediterranean context. It invites you to experience its diverse cultural and natural landscapes and transforms your sense of self. As winter sets in and most of us begin a period of reflection and rest, my thoughts will be with my new found friends and our reunion in the spring.

Elsa J. Sattout is an Assistant Professor in Biodiversity Conservation & Sustainable Management at NDU



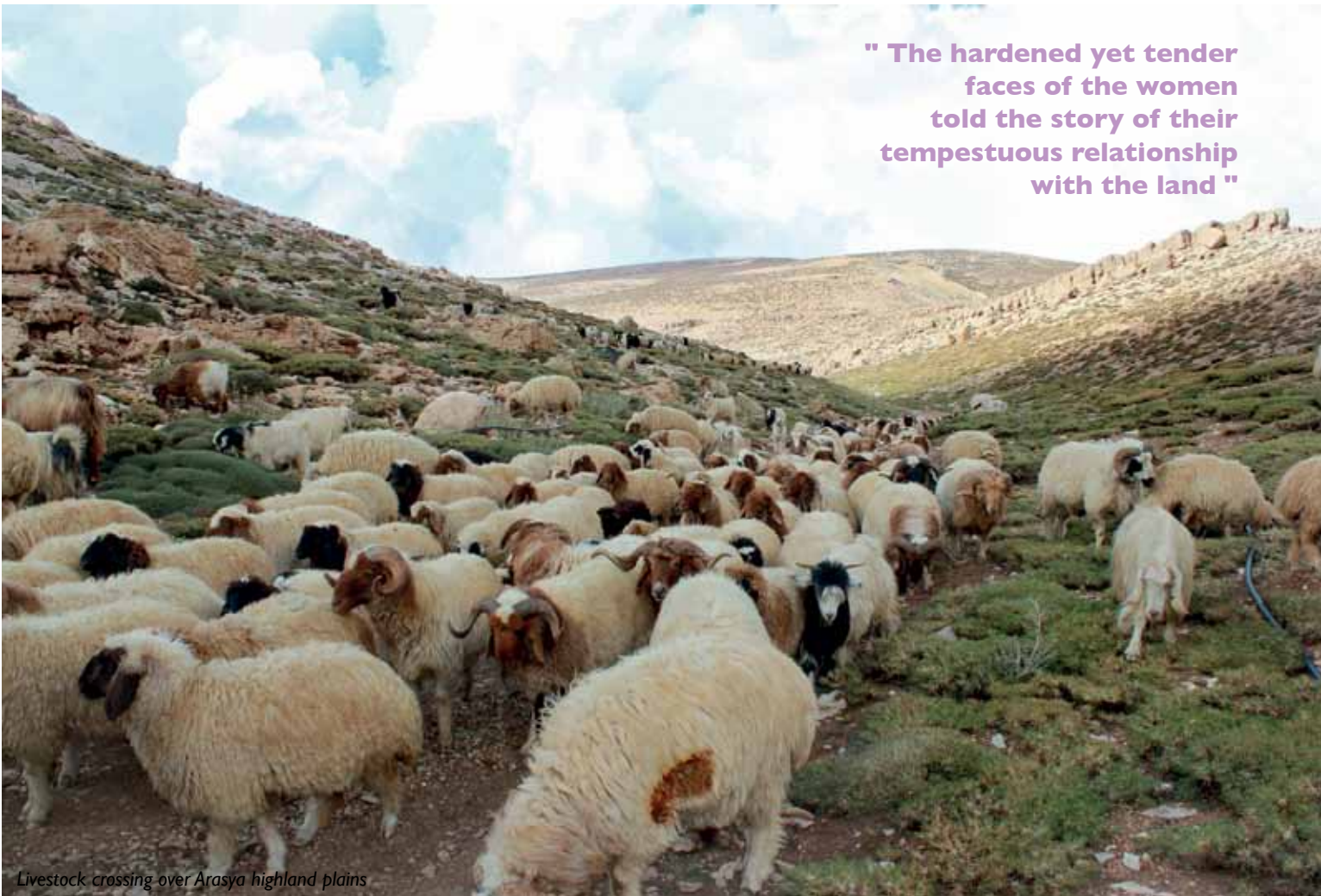
Dahr El Qadib



Women of the tribe

Hikers carrying out hand-made sled by the locals





" The hardened yet tender faces of the women told the story of their tempestuous relationship with the land "

Livestock crossing over Arasya highland plains



Traditional tent of transhumant herders community



Crocus cancellatus Herb. cilicicus Boiss

What to read

We have selected blogs highlighting different aspects of Lebanon for you to follow

- blogbaladi.com
- ifthebagfits.com
- lebanonaggregator.com
- myculinaryjourneythroughlebanon.blogspot.com
- nogarlicnoonions.com



Photos courtesy of Pascal Abdallah - Snowshoeing Qanat Bekish

A step in the right direction

In this winter issue of Lebanon Traveler, Pascal Abdallah of Responsible Mobilities goes back to the origins of sustainable tourism, in relation to the UN Millennium Development Goals* and find out how the tourism sector as a business, can be used as a solid tool for development to meet these goals

What are the UN Millennium Development Goals?*

In September 2000, building upon a decade of major United Nations conferences and summits, world leaders came together at United Nations Headquarters in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets - with a deadline of 2015. These have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) shown in the box on your right.

How does tourism support the MDGs?

As the 2015 deadline approaches, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) invites the private sector to help



Good to know

In 2010, 940 million tourists crossed international borders and worldwide international tourism receipts amounted to USD 919 billion. Tourism represents 30% of the world's exports of services (USD 1 trillion a year) and 45% of the total services exports in developing countries.

address these global challenges. Poverty, hunger, gender inequality and environmental degradation can be alleviated through the sustainable development of tourism and UNWTO is working with the industry to maximize the positive impacts of tourism worldwide.

Tourism generates wealth and can play a significant role in four of the goals, which are eradication of poverty, gender equality, environmental sustainability and global partnerships for development. As the United Nations' specialized agency for tourism, UNWTO is committed to demonstrating the value of the sector while promoting tourism development that is responsible, sustainable and universally accessible, paying particular attention to the interests of developing countries.

Creating opportunities

Besides its impact on economic growth and sustainable development, tourism is one of the sectors better positioned to deliver on jobs, perhaps the single most common issue of concern at this time. Tourism creates opportunities for entrepreneurship and provides millions of direct jobs worldwide, as well as countless more through its multiplier effects on related sectors such as trade, manufacturing, construction or agriculture. It is already one of the largest employment sectors in many countries and a fast entry vehicle into the workforce for young people and women in both urban and rural communities.

UNWTO is working with UN sister agencies, governments, the private sector and civil society to catalyze action and advance the tourism sector's contribution to the achievement of the goals. In line with its Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, UNWTO has created TOURpact, a framework for Tourism Partnerships for Development, advancing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through international tourism.



St John icon maker

We have selected a responsible tourism project in each of Lebanon and Jordan to explain their impact on their community

How Lebanon's amended lodging regulations helped the DHIAFEE program

In a country rich with sites that appeal to a wide variety of travelers, the DHIAFEE* Program believes that visitors will enjoy the opportunity to stay in local communities where they can gain an authentic experience of life in Lebanon, while helping in preserving local heritage.

DHIAFEE supports small, family owned hotels, guesthouses, camping sites, youth hostels, religious lodgings and bed and breakfasts – collectively called Cottage Inns – in realizing their full business potential, created for the first time in the Middle East a network of alternative and low cost tourism lodgings facilities. The program involves capacity building and marketing support while promoting responsible tourism and small business development.

In 2008 between the Martine Btaich (program manager at ANERA), Pascal Abdallah (expert in responsible tourism and advisor of the DHIAFEE program) and Wadih Hage (expert from the ministry of tourism) worked together on an indepth review of the existing law of hotel regulation in Lebanon and presented the results of their collaboration to the ministry of tourism. A new decree was then issued in September of 2011 through the official newspaper. The regulations were simplified to make it easier for families and individuals living in rural areas with to invest in tourism through guesthouses and the like.

The most important terms of the new law being the definition of the characteristics and conditions of investment in a guesthouse. The papers needed include the request of a trade name, an ID certifying that the investor is Lebanese and above 21 years of age, a judicial record, a statement from the mayor of the village, a proof of rental or ownership of the house, a certificate from the municipality and photos of different parts of the house. The new law also lays out the duties and rights of the investor and the traveler.

*The USAID funded DHIAFEE Program was conceived by American Near East Refuge Aid (ANERA), partnering with Al-Kafaat Foundation and in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism, in 2006 in recognition of the outstanding potential for tourism to contribute to the economic development of communities throughout Lebanon. dhiafeeprogram.org



Auberge Al Rashid



Hotel Akl

Jordan destination review

As part of an ongoing USAID-sponsored skills development program, The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) was invited to participate in site visits of Jordan's ecotourism, nature-based and adventure travel destinations to be followed by a one-day workshop (17 Nov 2012) with the members of the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) and the Jordan Inbound Tourism Association (JITA), who also sponsored the event. Along with TIES, a representative from the Adventure Travel Trade Association and Wildland Adventures also contributed to the program.

The purpose of the site visits and workshop was to help Jordan's tourism community to better understand the ecotourism and adventure tourism markets, in order to enhance existing product and develop new product that can compete in the growing global tourism marketplace.



Feynan Ecolodge

In order to better understand the perceptions of ecotourism opportunities in Jordan and visitor expectations and preferences that influence decisions in choosing a destination, TIES conducted an online survey distributed to its members and subscribers through an email newsletter and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn). A total of 348 responses were collected during the survey period (9 - 15 November 2012), and the following is a summary of the responses.

Jordan's destination awareness survey revealed that

65.9% considered personal safety and security as "very important" when choosing a destination. A further **50.0%** said it was cultural attractions while **52.6%** stressed it was unspoiled nature and **57.9%** believed it to be commitment to conservation.

In terms of the respondents' perception to Jordan as a tourism destination, **48.8%** strongly agreed that this included cultural attractions while only **32.2%** cited the Interpretation of cultural heritage.

27.5% didn't know that there were guided nature-based activities. A further **28.4%** didn't know that Jordan was committed to sustainability while **26.9%** didn't know of the Kingdoms commitment to conservation. And **29.0%** were not aware of the availability of parks and protected areas in their country.

The survey shows that among this group of highly eco- and sustainability-minded travelers, Jordan is known for its cultural attractions, but still lacks awareness in terms of ecotourism-specific aspects (such as interpretation, parks and protected areas).

Lebanon Traveler and Responsible Mobilities have chosen for you a 2-day itinerary in the region of El-Maten. During which you will visit the villages of Qanat Bakish, Baskinta and Khonshara

First day

Stage 1: Reach Qanat Bakish via the Bikfayya - Baskinta road. Start your visit by renting your snowshoes at Snow Sport in Baskinta. Then you can have breakfast at Georges Aroyan's traditional bakery at the entrance of the town before setting off on your hike.

Stage 2: Continue towards the plateaus of Qanat Bakish at an altitude of 1750 meters above sea level, here you will have an amazing panoramic view over Sannine's peak Al-Mzar to the east and the Mediterranean Sea to the west.

Stage 3: You can start with a snowshoe loop at the foot of the old ski lift and climb to the planted cedar forest at 1900 meters, then go down to the plane again near the Snow Land Hotel and Ski School. While snowshoeing, remain silent so that you and your teammates can come across the hares in the area that point their long ears over the rocks. You can even follow their steps on the snow and find their holes.

Stage 4: End your day at Hobeika guesthouse in Baskinta village. The owner, Georges Hobeika, will be more than willing to guide you during your walks in the region. A well-heated guest and living room await you after a traditional meal, starting with steaming special lentil soup.

Stage 5: In Baskinta, meet the families of famous Lebanese authors such as Michael Naimeh and Sleyman Kettaneh.



Georges Hobeika offering a refreshing glass of Mawared



Snow on trees after a storm

Second day

Stage 1: Visit the nearby village of Khonshara and its rock perched monastery of St. John from the Greek Catholic community. An old church with a wooden iconostasis offers you a quiet place to meditate.

Stage 2: After your rest, wet your palette at a newly found winery and savor the different locally produced wines.

Stage 3: Don't miss the unique printing press museum and the astonishing icons painting workshop.

Stage 4: Time to go home after two days of culture and nature.

Get a guide

Georges Hobeika +961 3 451113

Carole Akl +961 3 825068



St John printing press museum

10 things to do in Bcharre

A quaint and welcoming town in the heart of the Qadisha Valley, Bcharre is a great place to stop en-route to the Cedars or stay for a few days and explore the sites. What it lacks in size, it more than makes up for in art, history and culture. For all information concerning Bcharre, contact the municipality on +961 6 672888



1. Gibran Museum

In keeping with his wishes, Khalil Gibran (1883-1931), who immigrated to The United States and published his most famous work, *The Prophet* in 1923, was buried in a 19th century monastery built into the rocky slopes overlooking Bcharre. The monastery, which has been converted into a museum, houses a large collection of Gibran's paintings, drawings, gouaches and some of his manuscripts. His coffin is in the monastery's former chapel, which is cut straight into the rock. The views of the valley from the museum's terrace are quite amazing.

Admission 5,000 LP

Opening Hours Nov - Mar 10am - 5pm,

Mar - Nov 10am - 6pm, closed Mondays

+961 6 671137

gibrankahlilgibran.org



2. Notre Dame De Lourdes Grotto

Part way up a small path near the museum is a small cave with a spring. The site is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Legend has it that she took pity on a Carmelite monk who had to carry water up to the monastery each day to water his vegetable patch. Small candles and statuettes sit on an altar that has been built around the spring.



3. Qadisha Grotto

This small grotto extends about 500m into the mountain and has great limestone formations. The grotto is a 4km walk from Bcharre. Follow the signs to the L'Aiglon Hotel and then take the footpath opposite to it. Then enjoy a picturesque 1.5km walk to the grotto. Admission 4,000 LP
Opening Hours June until first snow 8am - 5pm



4. The Cedars

With its chalet style hotels and string of wooden hut souvenir shops lining the main road, Lebanon's oldest ski resort has quite a bit of charm. The village is named after the historic grove of Cedar trees that stand at an altitude of more than 2000m, on the slopes of Jebel Makmel, about 4km from Bcharre. Known locally as Arz ar-Rab (Cedars of the Lord), they are under the protection of the Patriarch of Lebanon, who built a chapel in the cedar grove in 1848.



5. Qornet Es Sawda

At 3088m, this is the highest peak in Lebanon. The view from the summit stretches west to the sea and east to the Bekaa Valley and Anti-Lebanon Mountains. A road suitable for walking (two hours) or for four-wheel drive vehicles starts from Dahr el Qadib on the highest point of the road between the Cedars and Yammouneh.



6. The Qadisha Valley

The best way to hike into the valley is to take one of the steep goat trails that lead out of Bcharre and down to the valley below. If that's too strenuous, you can drive a car to Deir Mar Elisha and park it there while you walk along the valley floor. A hike from Bcharre to Deir as-Salib takes about six hours, there and back. A steep return hike from Bcharre to Deir Mar Antonios Qozhaya, (around 12km) will take the whole day, with stops for picture taking, exploring and a picnic.



7. The Monasteries

The Lebanese Maronite Order, the first order to be officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, was founded here in 1695. The monastery of Mar Elisha (St. Eliseus) goes back much further. By the 14th century it was already the seat of a Maronite bishopric. It was restored in 1991 and turned into a museum. To get there take the main road from Bcharre heading east, turn off at the small blue sign for the Qadisha Valley and follow the narrow road to the monastery.

Legend has it that at the end of the 14th century, the Mamluk Sultan Barquq, escaped from imprisonment in Karak Castle and sought refuge in Qadisha. Due to the hospitality shown to him, he paid for the restoration of Deir Qannoubin. The church is half-built into the rock face and is decorated with frescoes dating from the 18th century. To get there, take the path leading from the village of Blawza. The walk takes about an hour each way. Just past the turn-off for B'qaa Kafra, as you head east there is a small path leading to Deir Mar Semaan, a hermitage founded in 1112 by Takla, the daughter of a local priest called Basil. Concrete paths lead down to the four-room hermitage carved into the rocks, where Mar Samaan (St. Simon) evidently lived. The walk takes about 15 minutes.

Deir Mar Elisha +961 6671559



8. Deir Mar Antonios Qozhaya

This hermitage is the largest in the valley and has been in use since it was founded in the 11th century. It is famous for establishing the first known printing press in the Middle East in the 16th century. The museum houses a collection of religious and ethnographic objects as well as an old printing press that was used to publish the Psalms in Syriac, a language still used by the Maronite clergy during their services. Near the entrance to the monastery is the Grotto of St. Anthony, known locally as the 'Cave of the Mad', where you can see the chains used to constrain the insane or possessed, who were left at the monastery in the hopes that the saint would cure them. To get there, take the road from Aarbet Qozhaya but ask a local for directions, as it is tricky to locate.

+961 6 99504

qozhaya.com



Overnighting

The Cedars

La Cabane +961 6 678067

L'aiglon +961 6 671529

Bcharre

Chbat +961 6 672672

Palace Bchareh +961 6 671460

Where to eat

The Cedars

Le Pichet Des Cedres +961 6 678075

Mon Refuge Auberge +961 6 678050

Bcharre

River Roc +961 6 671169

Wadina +961 3 3341345



9. B'qaa Kafra

Just off the road between Bcharre and Hasroun is B'qaa Kafra, the highest village in Lebanon (elevation 1750m) and the birthplace of St. Charbel. The saint's house has been turned into a museum, which commemorates the saint's life through paintings. It is open daily, except Mondays, with a shop and cafe at the entrance. The village now has a new convent named after St. Charbel and there is a church, Notre Dame, across the way from the museum..

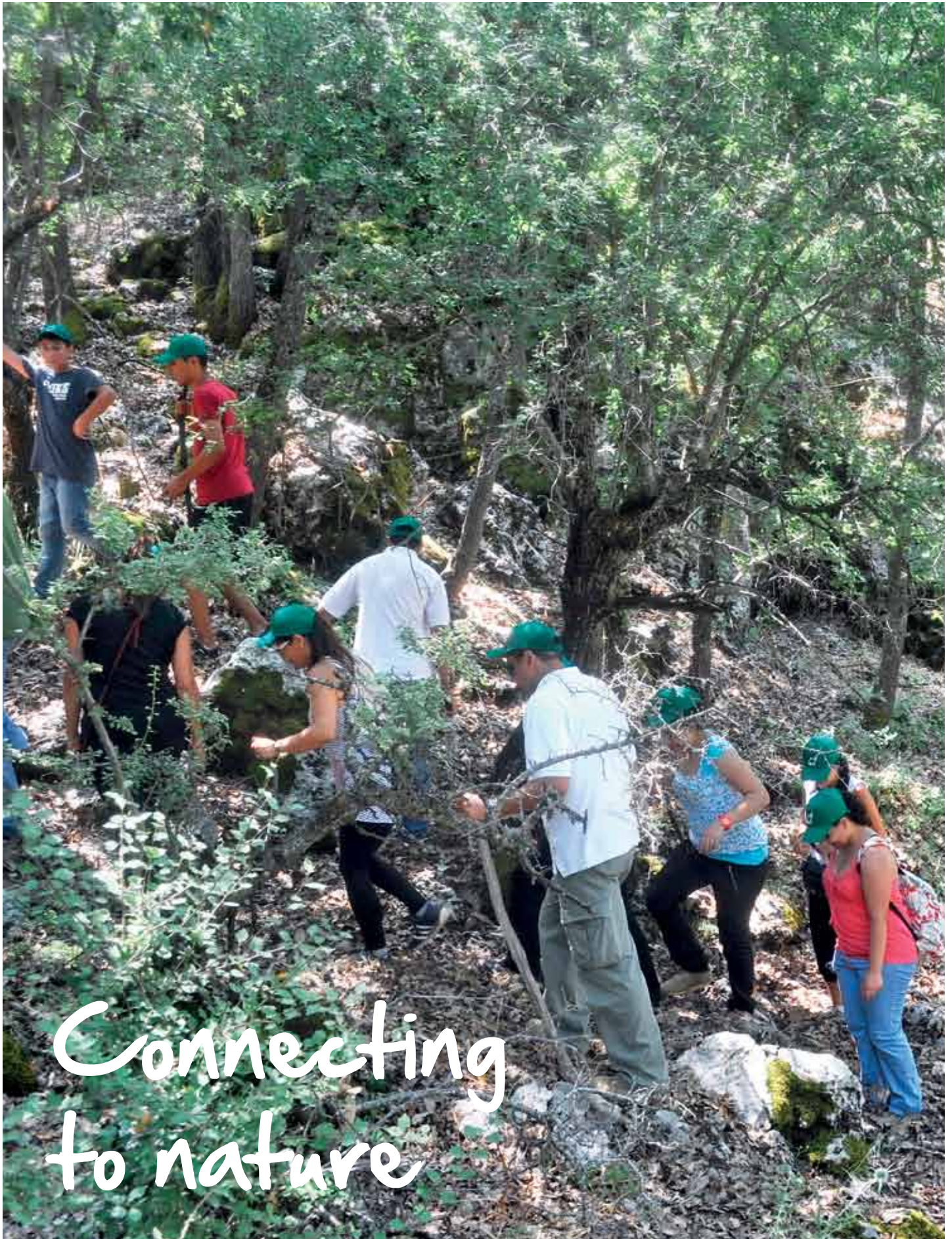
St. Charbel +961 6 591086
B'qaa Kafra municipality

10. Diman

In Diman, on the south side of the valley, is the summer residence of the Maronite Patriarchy, which moved there from Deir Qannoubin in the 19th century. It is a large modern building on the side of the road nearest to the valley. The site is well worth a visit for its panoramic paintings of the Qadisha Valley and religious scenes by the Lebanese painter Saliba Doueihy that date back to the 1930s or '40s when the spire of the church was built. The grounds behind the building lead to the edge of the gorge and have views across the valley.

Diman Patriarchate +961 6 591188





Connecting
to nature



**Imane Khalifé,
director of
eco-touristic
development in
Ehmej shares**

the love she has for her home town

Khalifé, a vibrant thirty-year old is at the helm of a large project for touristic development in Ehmej. The project, created by the municipality, headed by its president, Nazih Semaan, is in close collaboration with the Ehmej Association for Development, a non-profit association created in 1995 with the objective to preserve the rural identity of this mountain village.

The journey, which began with a simple idea, has grown into a stable project. Its philosophy of responsible economic development inspires all the inhabitants of Ehmej.

“Year after year, we are developing tourist attractions and the main reason behind this is our love for our village and our wish to share it with everyone. We are now able to host visitors, but creating mass tourism is not in our interest. For our tourism project to become a reality, it has to be a responsible one. We are not interested in damaging nature, quite the contrary, we want to preserve it,” explains Khalifé.

With this in mind, many thematic and educational hiking trails were created, as was an information bureau that raises awareness about eco-tourism. In addition, a guesthouse called Arz Ehmej and a small adventure park with a Tyrolean rope, a climbing wall and a trail for bicycles were established.



“Saying environmental protection is the same of discussing our future because if we want to survive, we have to know how to safeguard it from harm,” emphasizes Khalifé. She compares Green Ehmej, as she likes to call it, to a little pearl slowly opening its shell. Her favorite activity without any hesitation is hiking on Hafroune Mountain, at an altitude of 2 000m to admire the exceptional view it offers. It’s named after the ancient king Hafroun, who is said to have dug deep into the rocks to reach a water source and let it flow. The inhabitants of Ehmej are more than willing to share each legend or story hiding behind every rock and pathway.

“Like a lot of residents here, my father spent his days cultivating the fields and for a long time I couldn’t understand his deep connection to the land. However, this eco-touristic project opened my eyes,” stresses Khalifé. She believes it is not enough to love your village if you want it to thrive. As the manager of the project, her aim is to

offer the village inhabitants the possibility to develop through a commitment for the good of the environment.

For instance the project offers village guides specific training on the surrounding environment, as well as the history and wildlife of the area. Hikers, who are interested in discussing the land and what is being done to protect it, now have local guides capable of disseminating vital information.

Discovery circuits will soon be put into place thanks to the cooperation of the Mada Association*. The program will also include mosaic workshops, visits to farms, assisting farmers with the harvest and maybe even a snow festival.

“I am just a messenger. It is in the hands of 4,000 inhabitants held together in solidarity that have helped preserve the environment and distinguish us from other villages,” says Khalifé. “Nature lovers, your invitation is open,” she adds.

**The Mada Association is a Lebanese, secular and non-political association that helps in building bridges between villages working on environmentally-friendly touristic development projects and local communities with sponsors, institutional investors and other experts. Mada supports initiatives such as guest houses, rural guides, host tables training locals (help in creating paths, training groups, hosting tourists and promoting etc...)*

ecotourism@mada.org.lb

Ehmej Association for Development
+ 961 70 227730
ehmej-eco.org



In high times

Towering on a hill in the Arnoun area, Kalaat Cheiif, aka Beaufort Castle, stands tall, a witness to Lebanon's history from the middle ages till modern times. Visiting the castle is a lesson in history, architecture and no doubt an excuse for a beautiful outing in the southern countryside

The history

The strategic location of Beaufort Castle has proven to be useful for armies and throughout the ages. In 1139, Fulk, King of Jerusalem, captured the site and gave it to the lords of Sidon, who shortly after began the construction of the castle. Very little is known about the fortification before that date.

In 1187 the Crusaders lost the stronghold to Saladin's army in a crushing defeat during the battle of Hattin. However, Reynald of Sidon put up quite a fight before the castle's eventual fall. Reynald met with Saladin and pretended to have Muslim affinities. He claimed he would hand over the castle peacefully but needed time to

safely extract his family from the Christian city of Tyre. Saladin gave him 3 months to do so, but instead Reynald stocked up on supplies and repaired the castle. When it was time for the handover, Reynald requested an extension but Saladin insisted he give up the fortress immediately. When he refused, Reynald was taken prisoner. After a bloody battle, Saladin was given control of the castle in exchange for Reynald's release.

In 1240, the castle reverted to the crusaders as a result of a treaty negotiated by Theobald I of Navarre. In 1260, the Knights Templar bought the site from Reynald's grandson, Julian of Sidon, but relinquished control to the Mamlukes, eight years

later. Cheiif Castle remained in their control till the 16th century.

Fakhr el Din II took over the castle in the 17th century and added it to his network of fortifications. The Ottomans then controlled the fortress until the 1921 French Mandate after having defeated Fakhr el Din in the early 18th century.

In 1976, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) occupied the castle before its capture by the Israelis in the Battle of the Beaufort in 1982. The Israeli army converted the site by building bunkers and remained in the castle until their retreat from South Lebanon in 2000.

The architecture

The Beaufort Castle has the distinct features of a crusader castle. However, many invasions and the 1837 Galilee earthquake caused great damage to the fortress. The remains, however tell quite a story.

The fortress has three levels. The first level, which is carved in the stone, was used as a warehouse to store ammunitions and food. It is part of the original defense wall. This section of the castle was modified when it was

under control of the Israeli army and is currently not open to the public.

When you visit, you will notice that the second and third levels have recently undergone renovation. There are two towers, the main one is on the southwestern side known as the Don Juan Tower and the second is on the northeastern side. The towers were mainly used for surveillance. Just like any medieval fortress, you can find several narrow openings from where soldiers used to shoot their

arrows onto invading armies.

The Litani River (which can still be seen) surrounds the castle. In times of war, hot oil was poured over the water and set on fire to prevent the enemy from getting any closer.

A unique architectural feature of the castle is its entrance. While it was common in Europe to enter through the first floor, in Lebanon the convention was for a ground floor entrance as can be seen in this construction.



**" I see myself standing at
the highest point of the
tower and believing that
it was the highest point in
the world "**
Rafic Ali Ahmad



The promenade

“From the parapets, the whole of Lebanon was laid out below like an aerial photograph,” writes journalist and author Nicholas Blanford. Beaufort Castle overlooks the Litani River, which flows past it on the east. The fortress allows stunning panoramic views of southern Lebanon and northern Palestine. Surrounded by greenery, trees and beautiful forests, the view is nothing short of spectacular. From the top, you will get to view Shebaa Farms (a source of political controversy), the proud Mount Hermon and the glistening Mediterranean Sea.

The castle has undergone some renovation in the past years with the addition of rails and stairs for an easier visit. However, make sure to keep your kids safe and near you at all times. The entrance is free. Follow the steel ramp of the eastern cliff to get to the ruins and enjoy.

Once your visit is over, enjoy a traditional cup of coffee at a nearby restaurant while basking in the glory that is South Lebanon.

Why is it called...

Beaufort

The crusaders named it Beaufort (French for beautiful fortress) highlighting its magnificence and beauty.

Cheif

Cheif is the Aramaic word for “high rock”. The Arabic name for the castle reveals its unique location.



Get a guide

The Guides of Lebanon Association is an excellent source should you need a guide to take you around the country.

+ 961 1 636162

Jihad Mortada, also a member of the association, will guide you through the south. +961 3 374103

Make sure to call ahead of time!



Getting there

Once you get to Nabatiyeh, make sure not to enter into the city but follow the road to upper Nabatiyeh, which will lead you to Arnoun. Beaufort Castle is 2 km away from Arnoun. If you get lost, do not panic! Ask a local, they are always eager to help.

Where to stay

Dana Hotel

+961 7 831000

+961 3 421233

Check out

- Ebel-As Saqi reserve
- Rachaya El Fokhar village and pottery

Lebanese theater legend Rafic Ali Ahmad remembers Beaufort Castle

I am from Yohmor El Cheif, a village right below Cheif. I spent a great part of my childhood in Beaufort Castle. I used to go there alone. When I think about it now, I see myself standing at the highest point of the tower and believing that it was the highest point in the



world. There could not have been a higher location anywhere in the world, simply because when I looked towards the west, I would see the sun setting and what seemed like silver chains sparkling and dancing on the sea. When I turned towards the south, there was Mount Hermon and all it holds in terms of history and religion. I could also see the Houleh plain, north of Palestine. After seeing this vast stretch of land, I could not grasp the notion that there were borders.

Even the sun takes its time to rise in this area, as it is enjoying the scenery. For a little boy, this was a panoramic view of the universe. I was perhaps the only 12-year-old kid that could travel to three countries at once. I visited Palestine and Syria, while standing in Lebanon. Is there any point in the world where you can see three countries at the same time? Well, it's possible from Beaufort Castle.

As kids, we used to go to the castle at night and blind the birds. It was a hunting game. I know the castle like the back of my hand - every stone, corridor and step. It is there that I first met people from outside my village and country or even the continent. If I learnt some French words, it is due to the tourists that visited the castle. I would talk to them and try my hand at explanations about the castle and its history, as if I knew all about it. That's where I met Eric and his sister Anne who sent me a postcard of his house on the Seine River (he actually pointed to it with a red arrow that he drew) and with whom I corresponded for a while.

Beaufort Castle was my gateway to the world. It opened my eyes to something new and exciting. It's what gave me the incentive to leave my village and discover what was beyond it.

Surfing the snow

Lebanon has a total of six major resorts and in each of them snowboarding has become incredibly popular. The mild weather conditions, warmth of the locals and uncharted backcountry slopes make it a great place to try out this fun sport



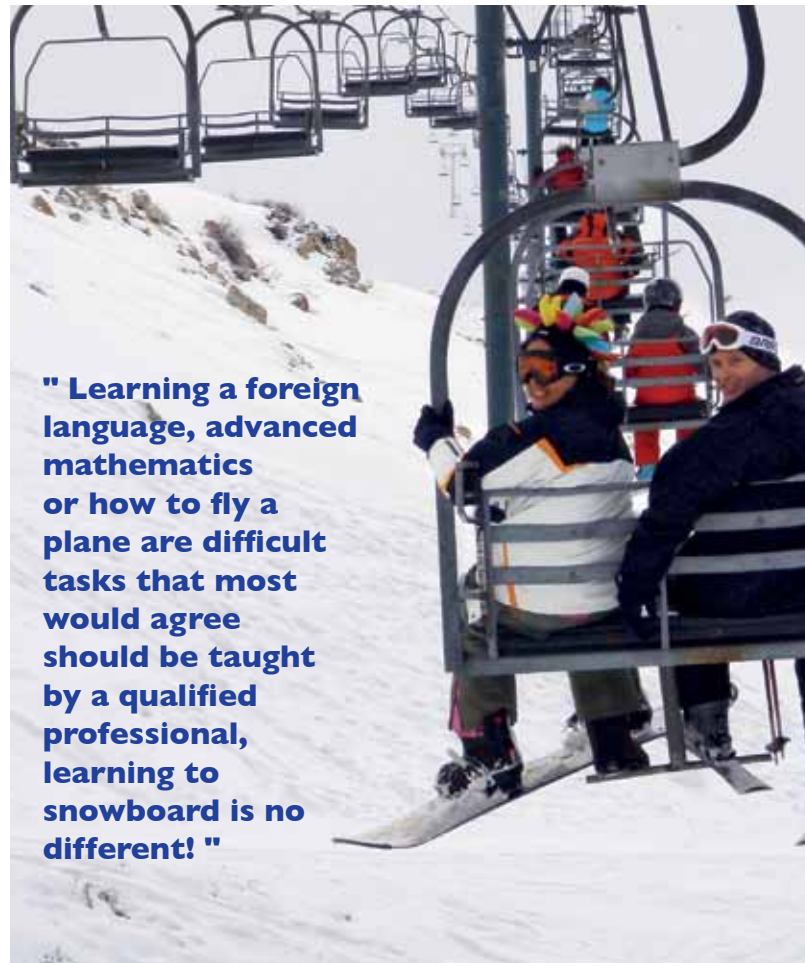
Photo courtesy of Lina Hassoun

Snowboarding's history has many influences including surfing, skateboarding, "snurfing" and skiing. Its roots may be traced back to the early 1920's, when children built makeshift snowboards out of barrel staves and rode them sideways down a snowy hill.

Sherman Poppin further developed the sport in the U.S. in the 60's after inventing the "snurfer" for his daughter to play with and later in the 70's and 80's by Jake Burton Carpenter. In 1998, it became a Winter Olympic Sport. Today, snowboarding is one of the fastest, if not the fastest, growing sport in the world. It has succeeded in attracting a large share of winter resort goers, especially the younger generation.

Snowboarding is a winter sport that involves descending a slope that is covered with snow while standing on a board attached to a rider's feet, using a special boot set onto a mounted binding. It is a universal trend and Lebanon is no exception. Snowboarding fans range anywhere from 35% to 65% of the daily attendees at Lebanese winter resorts, while just a couple of decades ago, in 1991, a mere 10 snowboarders took to the Lebanese slopes.

Living in an age where everything moves swiftly, youngsters have found a perfect way to express themselves through snowboarding. The Lebanese mountains are also well suited to the practice of this sport, since there aren't many extreme vertical drops. Besides the six major resorts, the potential for backcountry snowboarding is also huge. Around 95% of the Lebanese mountains are untouched so the rides are simply breathtaking. The mild weather in winter makes it a great destination for snowboarders from around the world.



" Learning a foreign language, advanced mathematics or how to fly a plane are difficult tasks that most would agree should be taught by a qualified professional, learning to snowboard is no different! "

Tips for beginners

Learning to snowboard can seem frightening for those with no winter sports experience, but it shouldn't be! With a little preparation and a positive attitude, learning to snowboard can be the first exciting step towards a lifetime of fun on the slopes. Adhere to the checklist below and you'll be shredding down the hill in no time. Remember learning to snowboard doesn't have to be hard and it shouldn't be intimidating.

If you've never been on a snowboard before, you'll want to familiarize yourself with the different types of equipment, proper clothing and accessories before you head out to the slopes. If it's your first time snowboarding, rent a snowboard and snowboard boots. There's no point in investing in all that equipment until you're sure this sport is for you.

Make sure you wear warm, comfortable clothing. Snowboarders spend a good amount of time sitting on the ground, so waterproof snowboard pants are a must. You may also want to rent a helmet and wrist guards to minimize the possibility of injury on your first day.

Equipment

- Snowboard • Snowboard boots • Backpack (for your gear)
- Goggles or sunglasses • Helmet • Wrist guards

Clothing

- Long underwear (shirt and pants)
- Gloves (two pairs)
- Turtleneck or sweatshirt
- Snowboard socks (two pairs)
- Snowboard jacket and pants (insulated and waterproof)
- Neck gaiter
- Winter hat or helmet (Dressing in layers is your best bet. You'll be able to add or remove a layer depending on the weather.)

Accessories

- Hand/foot warmers • Lip balm • Sunscreen
- Bandana/chamois (to wipe goggles clean)

Get a trainer

We have selected a number of sites that have recommendations and testimonials for trainers

snowboardleb.com
skiinglebanon.com
skileb.com
skimzaar.com
skifarayamzaar.com



Lebanon



متعة المفاجآت
Pleasantly Surprising

www.destinationlebanon.gov.lb



Ministry of Tourism

Where to hit the slopes

The Cedars

The Cedars Ski Resort is Lebanon's oldest winter haven dating back to the early twentieth century. Its stunning scenery and the quality of the snow make it an exceptional snowboarding venue.

Getting there

130 km and two hours away from Beirut by car. To get there, keep going north on the coastal main road until you get to Chekka, one city before Tripoli. In Tripoli, take a right upwards through Amioun and keep going past Kousba, Turza, Hadet, Hasrun, Bazaoun, and finally Bcharreh, which is a few minutes away from your destination.

Where to stay

The La Cabane wooden lodge is located right on the slopes of the Cedar Forest and offers cozy accommodations and snowshoe hire upon request.

La Cabane + 961 6 678067

Overnight in one of these charming wooden lodges, located right at the entrance of the Horsh Ehdén Nature Reserve operated by Remonda Sayde Yammine.

La Reserve Horsh Ehdén +961 3 751292

For reservations in Amioun call Skileb + 961 70 103222

Faqra Club

Faqra ski resort, located in the village of Kfardebian has only four slopes, but offers great runs. With Faqra's picturesque location and diverse facilities, it's well worth the trip.

Getting there

45 km away from Beirut. Take the coastal highway to the north then turn right after the Dog River tunnel. Keep going straight up the mountain on the main road past Jeita, Ballouneh, Faytroun, Faraya, and then finally Faqra Club.

Where to stay

The Auberge Beity is a hostel run by the charismatic Josephine who offers generous hospitality and a hearty breakfast.

Auberge Beity +961 9 710109

Faqra Club +961 9 300601



Laqlouq

With its retro 60's vibe, jagged mountain ridges and tree laden terraces, the Laqlouq resort (at an altitude of 1750 to 2000m) is a boarder's paradise.

Getting there

Laqlouq's resort can easily be reached by taking the main coastal highway north to the city of Jbeil. Take your right up towards Annaya, Mar Charbel's monastery and then another right before the checkpoint to Ihmij Village to reach Laqlouq resort. The village is 62 km from the capital and around an hour and fifteen minutes drive.

Where to stay

Laqlouq Resort +961 3 441112

Mzaar Lebanon

Mzaar boasts 80 km of ski tracks, spread out over 42 different trails. The highest point (2 465 meters) offers a spectacular view over the Bekaa Valley, Laqlouq, the Cedars and the coast. Challenging slopes can be found off-piste or at the peaks of Jabal Dib and Warde.

Getting there

Mzaar is 46 km from the capital and around an hour drive. Go north down the coastal highway until you reach the Dog River. Take the road going up and to the right towards Zouk Mosbeh. Keep going upwards past Jeita, Ballouneh and Faytroun, until you reach Faraya village that is 6 km under the Mzaar slopes.

Where to stay

InterContinental Mzaar Resort and Spa is less than an hour drive from Beirut, and is a 5-star establishment with 140 rooms and suites, conference facilities and a variety of dining venues. Kfardebian, Ouyoun El Simane +961 9 340100

Qanat Bakish

Located 1900m above sea level, Qanat Bakish is perfect for a peaceful snow-filled escape. There's also a road that connects this resort to the Faqra resort, so you can easily combine the two into one trip. Be warned it needs to snow heavily for this slope to function

Getting there

Qanat Bakish is 47 km from Beirut and takes an hour and a half to get there. The best route is to take the road to Faqra and keep going upwards.

Where to stay

Snow Land Hotel +961 3 340300

Zaarour (currently under going development)

This is the closest resort to Beirut. Its North-facing slopes offer a panoramic view across the famous Valley of the Skulls.

Getting there

Zaarour's resort is 54 km from Beirut, which should take you about an hour and a half by car. One option is to take the road from Sin El Fil and go past Mansourieh, Beit Mery, Broumana, Baabdeth, Bikfaya, Dhour Choueir and Mrouj. Another option would be heading north on the coastal main road, turning right into Antelias and going straight up on the Bikfaya road, past all the villages mentioned above.

Where to stay off the beaten track

The Tannourine Reserve, one of the largest and densest cedar forests in Lebanon, boasts around 6000 trees. Forest ranger George Sarkis operates a guesthouse close to the reserve.

George Sarkis guesthouse + 961 6 500007

In Barouk, you can stay at the Myrna Boustani guesthouse in the village. It offers cozy and comfortable rooms in a lovely traditional setting.

Myrna Boustani guesthouse +961 3 633862

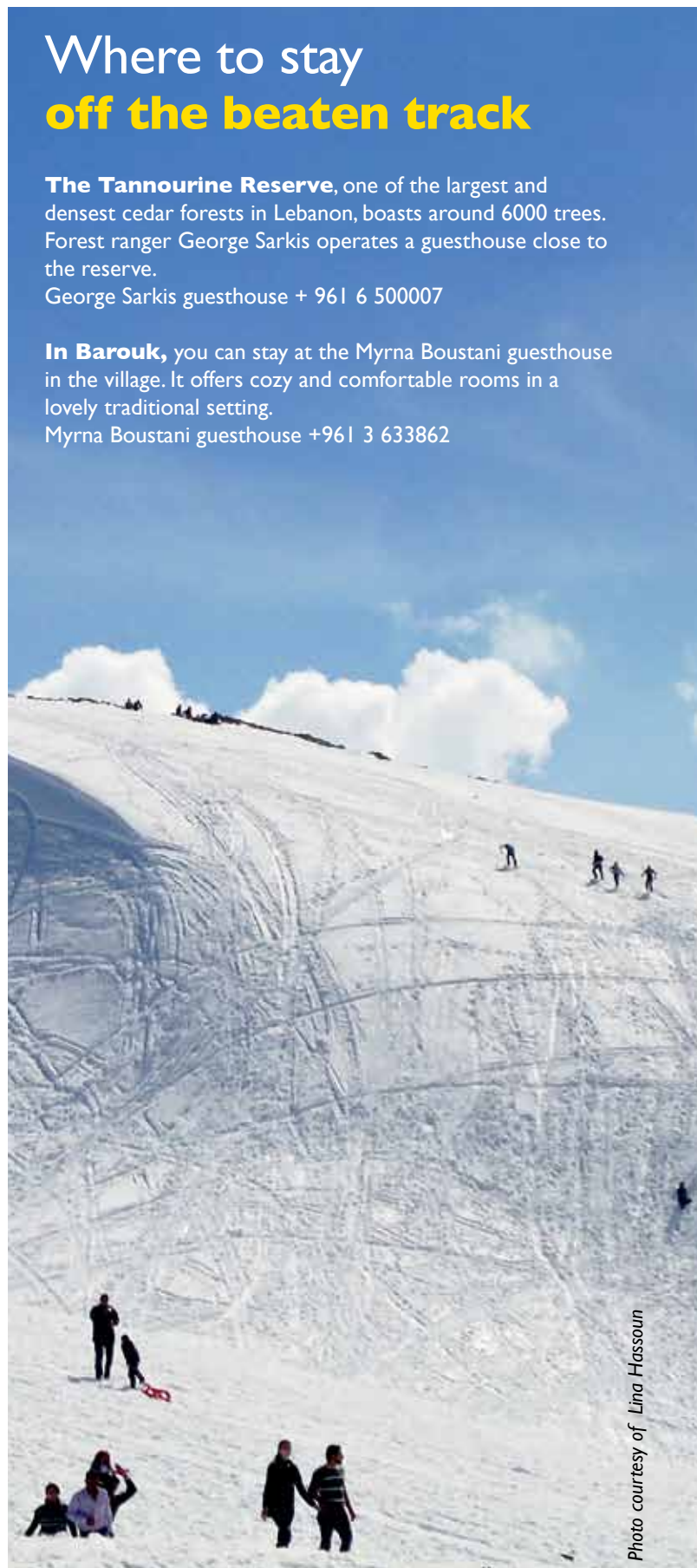


Photo courtesy of Lina Hassoun

TAKE ME THERE





Taken from
FARAYA

Photo courtesy of Ruth Moucharrafieh

INDOORS

The big blue

In the midst of the Jdeideh industrial zone lies a calm haven of culture and mystery. Created by brother and sister team, Assad and Janine Yazbeck, the Wonders of the Sea museum offers a unique escape to the world under the sea





" The clownfish and the sea anemone help each other survive in the ocean. The clownfish, while being provided with food, cleans away fish and algae leftovers from the anemone. In addition, the sea anemones are given better water circulation because the clownfish fan their fins while swimming about "

INDOORS

Located 10 minutes from the heart of Beirut, a traditional Lebanese house dating back to the 19th century hides within its walls the secrets of the deep waters. The Wonders of the Sea Museum offers an educational and cultural experience unlike anything you've ever seen. The aim of the museum is not to merely inform and entertain, but also to inspire a sense of ecological responsibility. Visitors are compelled to think twice before harming or polluting the sea in order to ensure the safety of those adorable little creatures they were introduced to.

The visit usually begins in the projection room, which was left intact in its original décor, dating back at least a century. Notice the curtains and the details of the ceiling then dive into the film highlighting the live section of the museum, with short stories about the aquarium's inhabitants.

Once the film is over, it's time to take a stroll through the different sections of the museum. Good lighting and informative bilingual signage (English and French) make the stay quite agreeable. The piece de resistance is the seashell section, which contains one of the biggest and most extensive collections in the region. Janine Yazbeck who owns the museum with her brother Assaad, began collecting seashells since she was 9. What once began as a little girl's hobby turned into a beautiful display of unique shells from all over the world. She went on to study oceanography and now shares her passion through the Wonders of the Sea museum.



As you walk around, you will observe different varieties of seashells: smallest to largest, male and female, colored to white. You will see shapes and sizes you never knew existed. Don't miss the murex, an important shell in Lebanese history when the Phoenicians used it to extract the color red.

Continue on to the invertebrate section where you will discover a wide collection of sponges, crustaceans, corals and sea urchins scientifically classified. Some of the species have transversal cuts, enabling you to see the inside of the shell. Notice that the invertebrate's bodies are compartmentalized, and the animal lived in the larger section.

Moving on to the equipment section, you will see historical nautical equipment that was used on boats. From the telegraph to the scuba suit, you will go back in time and see how it was done in the old days. You would be interested to know that in the waters off the Lebanese coast, you can find dolphins and sharks. Check out the teeth of a shark, up close and personal in the replica section.

One of the most popular sections of the museum is the salt-water aquariums, where you can discover the different species of fish, crustaceans and sea urchins. From crabs, to octopus, starfish or seahorses, you will learn all about the peculiarities of each and every species. For instance, it is the father seahorse that incubates and gives birth to the babies, and porcupine fish, when scared, puff up their bodies projecting spines as a defense mechanism. Finally, in a room all alone, brace yourself for the ferocious shark! The 6-year old shark that has reached its adult size, approximately 30cm long might look harmless swimming on its own in circles, but don't get too close... Of course at the museum, you can observe him quite safely.

Once your visit is over, you can relax in the garden that surrounds the house. Kids will enjoy feeding the ducks and the fish in the pond, while parents take a well-deserved break.

wondersofthesea.net



Around the museum

Take a short walk to the Jdeideh Municipal garden. There are several snack shops across the road, as well as a number of restaurants in the vicinity:

- La Citadelle, International Cuisine Jdeideh +961 1 875103
- The Jasmine Room, Chinese Cuisine Zalka +961 4 721521
- Roadster Diner, American Specialties Jal Ed Dib + 961 4 722721



Good to know

Opening hours

October to June: Mon/Fri: 8:30 till 13:30

Sat/Sun: 15:00 till 19:00

July and August: Mon/Fri: 8:30 till 13:30

- If you are driving, parking is available.
- Do not forget your camera, as photo opportunities are numerous especially in the garden.
- Bring some old bread for the ducks & fish.

From Beirut to Batroun by bike

Winter is the time to snuggle up with a good book next to the fireplace, but when the sun peeks through the clouds, experience an exhilarating outdoor adventure by cycling along the coast from Beirut to Batroun

Step 1 Get a bike

If you don't own a bike, you can always rent one. You can either go to Cyclo Sport in Gemayze that rents bikes by the hour, with special rates for 12 and 24-hour rentals or Beirut by Bike located in Biel that also offers similar options. Sundays are ideal for bike trips since the roads are less congested. Wear a sporty outfit, and a thermal jacket to stay warm. And of course, a helmet and gloves for safety. If you do fall, your hands are usually first to touch to ground and you need to protect them.



Step 2 Have breakfast



Fady Taha, Owner and trainer at Lebanon Xtreme Leisure says, "As you are in for a long ride (around 55 kilometers) it is best to have something light yet energizing. Have some carbs, oats and milk just make sure it is not too heavy. Have breakfast

at least one hour before you move. Pack dried fruits for the ride. Of course you need water to keep hydrated. Gatorade or something similar will do as well. To avoid cramps, have some bananas before you leave". For more advice +961 3 956767



Step 3 Get pedaling

The first stretch leads you from your departure point to the Forum of Beirut at Karantina, so whether you are renting or have a bike, let's set off from the entrance of BIEL. Once you get to Karantina, you can leave the busy highway and get onto the coastal road. Go past the Forum towards Burj Hammoud, where you can cross the highway under the bridge along the Beirut River. If you don't want to go on the highway, an alternative route is to start at Paul on the corner of Gouraud Street, cycle right down the street till you hit Mar Mikhail, past Lebanon Electricity till you reach the crossroad of Bourj Hammoud. From here, you can easily get to the sea road. You should now be on the coastal road, which is hopefully less crowded. Be careful though! Always stay on the side of the road at all times.

Step 4 Karantina to Dbayeh

The next leg will take you from Karantina to Dbayeh. The sea road will eventually run perpendicular to the highway. This is when your quiet ride will become noisier, but don't fret. Take a water break once you reach the Dbayeh Corniche. Relax your muscles while admiring Beirut's skyline. Enjoy your triumph and get ready to move again.



Step 5 Dbayeh to Jounieh

Now you will head for Jounieh along the coast until you reach Naher el Kaleb (Dog River). You will have to go over the bridge to cross the river, then under the highway to get back to your main trail, closer to the coast. If you have time, take a look at the historic wall where invading armies have marked their passage, finally ending with the seal declaring Lebanon's independence on the 22nd of November 1943. Keep on pedaling, past Kaslik and its residential buildings till you reach central Jounieh and the old city. Take a well-deserved break in one of the many restaurants. Have a snack and some juice for energy.



Photo courtesy of Abdo Nader

Step 6 Jounieh to Jbeil

You are half way there, and now that you're all rested, it's time to hit the road towards Jbeil. After you've crossed Jounieh's old town, pass by the Telepherique and Maameltein area until you reach the Casino du Liban. As you continue towards Tabarja, you will notice an inclination in the road, meaning you will need extra effort to pedal for about half a kilometer. It will be all worth it, once you reach the top. The scenery will change and you will ease on down into the coastal villages, with their historic houses and red roofs. Jbeil is a wonderful coastal city and worth spending some time in. Grab lunch at the old souk or next to the port.

Step 8 Returning home

You have two options: either by bike or by car. If you wish to pedal home, make sure to leave as early as possible, since it tends to get dark fairly early in winter. Your bike should have reflectors and you better wear a reflective jacket. You can use public transportation, but it will be less of a hassle to call a cab and let them know you need space for your bike.

Step 7 Jbeil to Batroun

You still have about 12 to 16 kilometers of cycling before you reach your final destination, but this is the best stretch of the whole trip. There are no inclinations and greenery surrounds you. Once you get to Batroun, reward yourself with a cold beer at Pierre and Friends or try their famous fresh lemonade.



Photo courtesy of Abdo Nader



Reader's experience

Hady Kahale, a cycling enthusiast describes the ride from Dbayeh to Batroun as 43 kilometers of pure pleasure. "It is a sporty, mainly easy ride full of treasures to see along the way," he points out.

Kahale's Cardinal Rule

Leave the Beirut Dbayeh stretch for stunt riders, fans of loud horns and fuel tanks in dire need of a paint job. Park the car in Dbayeh and take advantage of the calmness of the coastal road from there on.

The highlights

Jounieh and its old souk, with its many Sunday morning charms including the smell of fresh ground coffee. Conquering Tabarja hill and the energizing feeling you get from knowing it is the one and only uphill section of the ride.

Then once you pass Safra, the treasure box is opened. Fidar, forgotten by time but proud of its marine past and present. Jbeil, with its millennial charm, a detour of the port is a must. Amchit with Furn el Sabaya, well worth a stop for its exquisite mankousheh and signature mouwaraga sweet.

After Camping Amchit take the small road by the side of the sea and you will find yourself in surreal surroundings, an area completely abandoned over the surf. Marvels of architecture, bridges built by the Australian and British Corps after WWII that you pass time and time again without ever noticing. The beautiful coastal houses of the Monsef area hiding behind their walls of bougainvillea.

On arrival at Batroun

Reward yourself with a thirst quenching lemonade from Le Garage. For those who can continue towards Rachana following the trail of northern wines and pay a well-deserved visit to one of the wineries, with their Botrys grapes from ancient Greece. If you are not in the mood for wine then take a liberating dive in the azure sea followed by a laid back meal at the charming Jamal restaurant with its Beirut clientele or at Chez Maguy's delightful so called shack. End the day by watching the sunset over the Phoenician wall or from the terrace of the Lady of the Sea Church. Yes, I guess it is true what they say there is nothing to see or do in Lebanon, that is if you don't make the effort to do so...

Where to rent your bike

Cyclo Sport

Bike rental fees: 5,000 LP/hour - 30,000 LP/24 hours
Opening hours: Daily from 10 AM to 9 PM
Contact information: Gemayzeh +961 1 446792
Nahr +961 1 581787

Beirut by Bike

Bike rental fees: 5000 LP/hour - 30,000 LP/12 hours
45,000 LP/24 hours
Opening Hours: Daily from 7 AM to 12 AM
Contact information: Biel and Ain El Mreisseh
+961 3 435524 / +961 71 435524

Where to overnight

In Batroun

Batroun Village Club

+961 6 744333

San Stephano Resort

+961 6 740366

Sawary Resor

+961 6 642100

Restaurants on the way

In Maameltein

Chez Sami

Specializing in seafood, chez Sami is a must visit for fish aficionados.

+961 9 910520

In Jbeil

Locanda a la Granda

Located in the old souk, Locanda a la Granda offers unique fusion dishes such as their strawberry labneh.

+961 9 944333

Pepe Abed

At Pepe Abed you don't come just for the mezze or views, you come to checkout the wall of fame. During Beirut's golden era, Pepe hosted stars from Valentino to Brigitte Bardot.

+961 9 540213

In Batroun

Jammal

Serves grilled fish fresh from the sea along with succulent Lebanese mezze. Setting, music and view are recommended.

+961 6 740095

Limonade Tony Daou

Made the old fashioned way, the lemons are not pressed but rubbed against each other to make this famous lemonade. Add some sugar and a touch of orange blossom water and you get a delicious satisfying drink.

+ 961 6 741564

Maguys

Maguy's doesn't promise to offer you anything more than exactly what it is: a small home on the coast turned restaurant that serves the catch of the day, with no frills or fuss.

+961 3 439147

Pierre and Friends

Pierre and Friends is the ideal place to relax and share a drink with friends, while listening to the soothing sounds of the waves, crashing on the nearby rocks.

+961 3 352930

White Beach

Since 1988 this family owned beach has welcomed visitors from around the world. Located on the untouched shores of Batroun, the White Beach family will see to your every need.

+961 6 742404

Furn el Sabaya



The young ladies bakery is the brainchild of three young women, who found a splendid way to make a living together in their home village

From the very beginning, for Lorenza, one of the two sisters and a cousin who make up the “Sabaya” team, the idea of using the family home as a bakery was apparent. It had a small shop-like space with a front veranda that would be perfect for entertaining. The ladies loved cooking and baking and were good at it. They were creative and very interested in health food. And from watching their mothers bake, they also knew how to prepare specialties of the region. Back in 1993, in Amsheet, a bakery run by women was not a common thing to come by.

At first the ladies served the usual array of delicious Lebanese baked goods, but always with a great deal of care for cleanliness and presentation. Once a week, they offered these same baked goods prepared with whole-wheat flour instead. Once customers had satisfied their curiosity about seeing “ladies” managing a traditional bakery, they came back for the great food. One innovation for the area, according to Lorenza, was the sitting area that allowed people to savor their oven-hot traditional “manakish” in garden-like surroundings.

One of their renowned specialties that customers travel far and wide for is the “mwarrakat”. Initially made to be baked at home on a “saj”, but since the pastry contains sugar, a drawback was that the sugar oozed out of the pastry and caramelized on the hot surface.

So, an ingenious way to prevent this from happening was to start rolling the pastry from the inside outwards instead of from the sides, thus offering no outlet for the melting sugar and ensuring a perfectly browned outer crust. This specialty contains nuts and almonds and is not to be missed!



The ladies never use industrial yeast, instead opting for sourdough, which gives the bread a complex, subtly sweet and nutty flavor. As the ladies are vegetarians themselves, they started using a known home process to extract the gluten from the flour to recreate Lebanese dishes, traditionally prepared with meat. Through this process they obtained a malleable dough that they use, just like you would use meat, to prepare traditional dishes for vegetarians. You will be able to find shawarma, kibbe or shish barak made of gluten.... a vegetarian's paradise!

Getting there

Take the first exit to Amsheet on the highway at the petrol station, cross the bridge over the highway and turn right due north on the sea road until you see a blue sign "Furn el Sabaya" on your left. Turn there, take the second road to the left and you will find the place on your right.

Mouwaraka recipe

Ingredients

The dough: 120g white flour • 3g salt • 3g fast-rising yeast • 6 tbsp water (approx)

The filling: 60g fresh almonds, crushed • 60g fresh walnuts, crushed • 60g white sugar • 1 tbsp rose water • 1 tbsp orange blossom water • 1 tbsp cinnamon • 5g butter • 3 tbsp vegetable oil

Preparation: In a bowl, mix the flour, salt, yeast and adding half the water and then more as you need it. Knead till the dough is elastic. Cover the bowl with a damp cloth and set aside to rest for 3 hours at room temperature. Spread the dough with a rolling pin, very finely (3mm thick). Preheat the oven to 180C. Cut the dough into 3 pieces and shape a circle of 25 cm in diameter. In a bowl, blend the almonds and walnuts and combine with sugar, rose water and orange blossom water. Coat the dough with butter. Spread the mixture. Leave 2 cm from the edge without mixture. Piece a hole in the middle. Roll the dough from the inside to the outside. With a brush, coat it with oil or butter. Bake for 10 minutes.

1. spread the dough



2. put mixture on it



3. place a whole in the middle



4. roll the dough from inside to outside



5. shape the roll like a snail



6. coat it with butter



Zajal, poetry of the people

Lebanese zajal is one of the most popular entertainment forms in Lebanon. The zajal evening is full of song, poetry, beautiful words and laughter!

Lebanese zajal is a semi-improvised, semi sung or orated form of poetry in the colloquial dialect. Zajal came to Lebanon about half a century ago and was first expressed in Syriac, an ancient Aramaic language spoken in Syria from the 3rd to the 13th century that survives as the liturgical language of several Eastern Christian churches. It was privy to the clerics, as they were the educated class at the time. Later zajal shifted to classical Arabic. Little by little, the wording changed and soon the colloquial Lebanese Arabic was used.

"Since day one and for 500 years, Zajal was at the service of the people," explains Moussa Zgheib, poet and prominent

'zajalin'. "It was orated on any occasion, be it an engagement, a wedding, a funeral or any special event. Zajal was also a major part of the life of shepherds and mule drivers, who used it to entertain themselves and stay awake during the long nights. Zajal was used in wars, with lyrics and melodies that would inspire courage and a sense of patriotism in soldiers. Later, it became a major means of entertainment, especially before radio, television and the internet. Today, it remains popular as people still come in hordes to enjoy the skilled improvised and witty poetry."

A typical zajal evening gathers together several poets, separated into two groups, who challenge each other to recite the

Did you know?
All Lebanese songs from Rahbani to Wael Kfoury, from Wadih el Safi to Carole Sakr originated from zajal.



best poetry (the original freestyle rap battle if you wish!). These poets are traditionally seated at two tables facing each other, often with Lebanese mezze and Arak, of course, set in front of them to create a relaxed atmosphere. The evening begins with poetic dialogue, where each member of the team shows off his literary and language talents and skills.

A member from the first team kicks the challenge off by reciting a verse, which is often followed with a chorus, then a member on the second team replies, and so on and so forth. This can last for a number of rounds building to a verbal duel that climaxes with the recitation of love poetry (ghazal).

Percussion instruments (with the occasional wind instrument such as the ney) and the reddadi, a chorus of men and more recently women, who repeat key verses or refrains recited by the poets, usually accompany zajal. The format typically consists of recitation in the qasid form (ode), followed by debates in the maanna and qerradi forms (popular sub-forms that are sometimes called moukhammas mardoud literary meaning a quintet reply or a reply in five verses), leading to ghazal recitations in various forms, such as the muwasshah, which in its Lebanese zajal incarnation is a joyous and flirtatious genre.

"The zajal poet is a poet of the stage; unlike other artists they do not have a lot of time to come up with their lines, as they are improvised reflecting the immediate situation they are in, and that requires a lot of work. I personally write over 5 hours a day to exercise my capacities and enhance my capabilities and I have been doing this since I was 14 years old. We always have to be prepared for any situation and writing is the way to do it," explains Zgheib. He

continues to say that not every person that can write poetry can become a zajalin. It not only requires a certain talent in poetry, but the person should also have a great sense of wit and repartee, as well as a fine voice.

And finally he should also have an amazing memory (zajal poets do not have cue cards) and be able to improvise, given any situation. Quite often, poets are challenged to talk about certain topics following certain metrics. "It happened to me once during the war: I had been away from the scene for some time and the master of ceremonies challenged me to sing in certain verses. I was semi-prepared, yet I was still able to ace it. And that's what being a zajal poet is all about."

"The zajal continues to be greatly valued even today. In its modern version, we have edited it and taken out non-relevant topics like the antariyat (Antar Ibn Shaddad's epic stories), to suit modern tastes. During the Lebanese civil war, I toured the world 7 times and zajal served to create nostalgia in the hearts of the Lebanese diaspora, as well as a sense of belonging and an urgency to return home"

Zajal School

Zajal cannot be taught per se. The person should have a certain talent for improvised poetry and then he can learn the metrics and rules of zajal. If you think you have what it takes, contact Samih at +961 3 352229 for an evaluation. Who knows? Maybe you can be the next Moussa Zgheib!



Where to find?

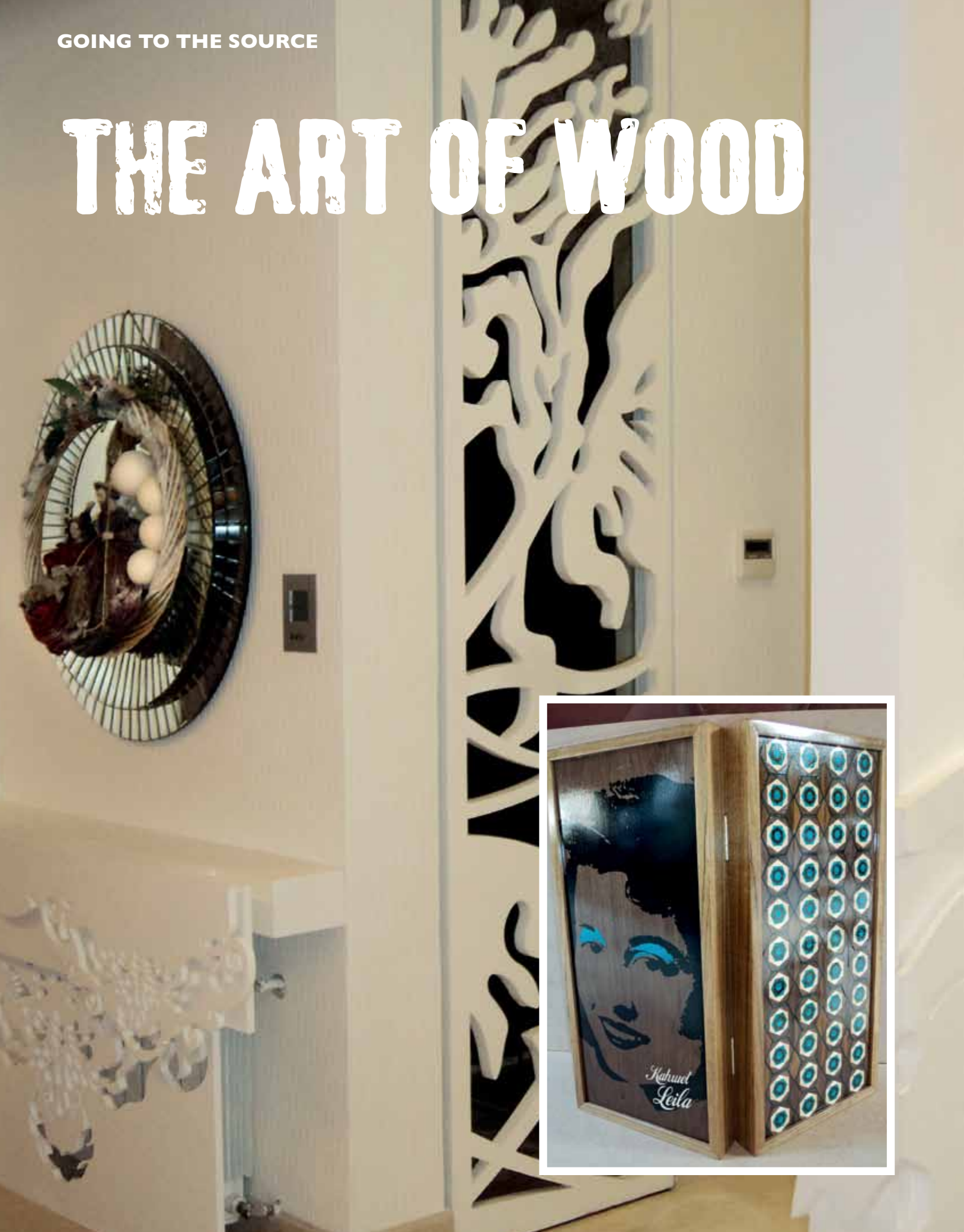
- Zajal is regaining its popularity online, mainly in social media. Several facebook groups and pages are available including "Lebanese Zajal" a very active page, where you can find videos of zajal evenings as well as listings of zajal events taking place throughout Lebanon's villages. [facebook.com/Lebanese.Zajal](https://www.facebook.com/Lebanese.Zajal)
- Should you be interested in publishing your work online, the website alzajal.com offers you a platform where you can share your poetry and read other people's work.
- Look out for advertising in popular newspapers and on the radio. Zajal events begin in spring and grow in number during the summer. Also try contacting your nearest municipality and you are sure to catch an evening in a neighboring village.
- If you live abroad, join your local Lebanese community where you will certainly find listings for such events.

Glossary

- **Antar Ibn Shaddad** was a pre-Islamic Arabian hero and poet (525 - 608) famous for both his poetry and his adventurous life.
- **Aramaic** is a Semitic language originally of the ancient Arameans but widely used by non-Aramean peoples throughout southwest Asia. Also called Aramean or Chaldean it is believed to be the language Jesus used.
- The **ney** is an end-blown flute that figures prominently in Middle Eastern music. In some musical traditions, it is the only wind instrument used. The ney has been played continuously for 4 500 to 5 000 years, making it one of the oldest musical instruments still in use.
- An **ode** is a type of lyrical verse. It is an elaborately structured poem praising or glorifying an event or individual, describing nature intellectually, as well as emotionally.

GOING TO THE SOURCE

THE ART OF WOOD





Have you ever seen a decorative oriental table inlaid with mother of pearl, or perhaps admired the intricate work on oriental chairs? The term for this type of art is marquetry and it is one of the oldest artistic traditions

Traditional marquetry is the art and craft of applying pieces of veneer to a structure to form decorative patterns, designs or pictures. In the case of the oriental inlay, mother of pearl is used instead of veneer. In some cases mother of pearl sheets called laminates are used. These brittle sheets come in a variety of colors. The main source of mother of pearl is a mollusk that goes by the name of Abalone. In Lebanon, there are two different techniques for wood work.

The most common form known as Mosaic is seen mainly on backgammon tables. In order to create this detailed design, several wooden straws are cut in different thickness. After dyeing them, the straws are assembled to create a chosen design. The end result is a well-glued log, which will be cut into very thin layers.

The layer, which shows the design in full, is then glued to the item being made, whether it's a tray, box, coasters etc... A final layer



A family affair

The Tohme family has been passing down this craft for many generations. "I learned marquetry from my father, who was taught by his father and I taught my son. I got into the business when I was quite young because I felt drawn to it. I like working with my hands and I slowly developed my skills and made some amendments to my father's designs," said Joseph Tohme.

Roger Tohme, his son, began his career after graduating with a degree in Business and Finance only to quit and join the family business. "I was involved in a big marquetry project with my father while I was still employed and saw my own potential in addition to the business potential. I quit my job and concentrated my efforts on developing our industry. I took some design classes and got involved with designers, architects and engineers. I did not do the same designs my father did, and my son is developing designs of his own," declares Tohme senior.

"We have to go with the times. Although we are using the same techniques and are still faithful to the traditional methods, we are using our craft in a more modern way. We are currently working with many design companies. We either sell our own design or execute an idea using our techniques. We are working on some interesting projects," reveals Tohme Junior. "Today, I have developed my own brand, Madera Creation, where I use marquetry to design modern furniture and decorative items with a traditional touch."

maderacreation.com

of lacquer is applied and once it is dry, the item is ready. This technique is used for items made in mass numbers. Each designed log can generate up to 200 layers that can be applied to various items.

For those who prefer a less commercial design, the inlaying technique known as Marquetry is the answer. After drawing the design, the craftsman chisels it out. Once this is done, he files the mother of pearl in the cut out shape using a special saw.

Filing the mother of pearl can be tricky since the tool is quite sharp and the designs are rather small. Once all the elements are cut in the right shapes and sizes,

they are all fitted piece by piece and glued in place. A final layer of lacquer and voila!

With this technique, you can customize the design by selecting the color, type of wood and artwork. Of course it will take about a month to finish the work, but it is certainly worth the time.

The type of wood is very essential, especially when it comes to what the item will be used for. Coasters can be done with pine wood, but for a cigar box, it is preferable to use cedar wood, which will not affect the smell of the cigars unlike oak for example. The craftsman can be of help in these cases.

Sarah's Bag

Sarah's Bag gives new meaning to corporate social responsibility by empowering both downtrodden women and their craft



An accessories label that is less known outside of the Middle East, but something of a phenomenon inside it, Sarah's Bag is a favorite among Beirut's trendsetters. Most fashionistas consider buying a Sarah's Bag counts as one of their charity initiatives, while at the same time making a style statement.

The brainchild of Sarah Beydoun, the idea was hatched when she was doing field research for her Masters degree on women prisoners. These women had no means of support and were faced with social stigma once they were out of prison. She took 12 beaded bags made by the prisoners and sold them at a local artisan market. Its success inspired her to take the project even further and start a whole label based on the premise that she'd employ ex-prisoners (and prisoners who were still serving) in order to give them new hope. Beydoun creates and designs the bags while the women do all the handwork.

Today, she works with over 50 inmates and 100 ex-inmates. The company has had great media support, word of mouth and most importantly encouragement from local women, who have felt connected to the cause.

As the market for the product expanded, Beydoun found a way to

increase the productivity of the women she employed and provide them a trade for life after being released from prison. The former prisoners now train and lead groups of women in their villages, focusing on a single technique.

Over the years the most popular items have been bags embroidered with Arabic script and a line of products featuring prints of Middle Eastern celebrities including Lebanese singer



Sabah and the Egyptian icon, Um Kalthoum. Clutches picturing street signs of Beirut's various neighborhoods and handbags in the shape of the street snack "kaak" highlight the local spirit behind the designs. Sarah's Bag also took center stage when Queen Rania of Jordan and Catherine Deneuve were spotted carrying them.

The brand has expanded beyond a defined style and always pushes the boundaries in creativity and the "quirky" factor. They have recently added beautiful calligraphic embroidery and themed limited edition collections, taking inspiration from global influences including Africa and Mexico.

Whether it's experimenting with new styles or collaborating with local charities and NGOs like Dar Al Amal (House of Hope) and the Lebanese Autism Society, Sarah's Bag is expanding its sphere of influence. The mix of social responsibility and business savvy has seen the operation expand from an underground project to an international brand, displayed in exhibitions around the Arab world and elite fashion fairs in Paris.

Although Sarah's Bag has an online shop (www.shop.sarahsbag.com) that ships internationally, no trip to Beirut nowadays is complete without passing by their gorgeous showroom, housed in a French colonial house in the hippest part of town. The bags range in price from 85 to 300 USD, with the limited edition pieces priced at 650 USD.

Address 2nd Floor, Mhanna Bldg, 100 Rue du Liban, Tabaris, Achrafieh, Beirut
+961 1 575585
+961 3 640038
Opening hours Mon-Sat
10am-7pm
sarahsbag.com



GETAWAYS

Take a break for the weekend

We have selected 6 locations throughout Lebanon where you can go away for a couple of days and return rejuvenated



Douma

This isolated village situated 110km from the capital has 30 churches, many in ruins. By going there you can enjoy the simplest pleasures in life

Look for the roman sarcophagus said to be Castor's burial place
Walk around the iconic red-titled houses built in the late 19th century

Visit the old souk, also known as the set for Nadine Labaki's feature film "And now, where?"

Discover the view from the hillside overlooking the village - Douma is shaped like a scorpion

Stay at Douma Hotel +961 6 520202

Eat

- Foie Gras at **La Ferme Saint Jacques** +961 6 520567
- Lebanese at **Douma Hotel restaurant** +961 6 520202

Buy olives and olive oil from locals

Hidden Secret Some locals are convinced treasures are hidden in their mountains and keep looking for gold.

Faraya - Faqra

High above Kesserwen, these two villages have become synonymous with snow, ski and jet-setters. Dry weather, beautiful scenery and local hotspots will ensure a wonderful weekend escape

Walk around the Faqra Ruins

Discover the natural rock bridge

Ski down the many slopes

Snowshoe up the mountain and pose for a picture with the Faraya sign - who needs Hollywood?

Stay at

- **Mzaar InterContinental** +961 9 340100
- **Auberge de Faqra** +961 9 300600
- **Al Badre** +961 3 749999

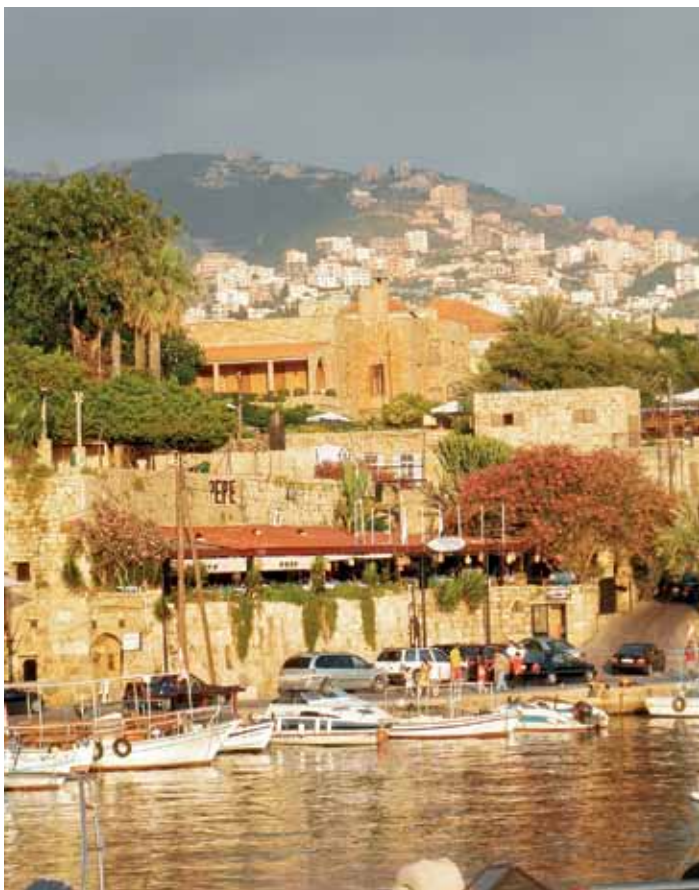
Eat

- Lebanese at **Chez Chaker** +961 9 341800
- French at **Le Montagnou** +961 3 341441
- Mexican at **Pancho Vino** +961 3 517070

Buy cheese and dairy products from **Al Baladi** +961 9333058

Hidden Secret New Year's Eve is celebrated in the chalets and on the streets.





Jbeil

The city that has been continuously inhabited for the last 7000 years, stood out in the past as much as it does in the present. Picturesque day and night, Jbeil is the perfect place to make great memories

Take a stroll down the old port, continue to the old souk

Visit the Crusader's Castle

Check out the open-air baptistery in the Church of St John the Baptist

Take in the night at the pubs and restaurants of the old souk

Stay at

- **Byblos Sur Mer** +961 9 548000
- **Edde Sands Hotel** +961 9 546085
- **Byblos Comfort Hotel** +961 9 942200

Eat

- Lebanese at **Pepe's Fishing Club** +961 9 540213
- Mexican at **El Molino** +961 9 541555
- Fusion at **Locanda a la Granda** +961 9 944333

Buy fossils with certificates of authenticity from **Memoire Du Temps** +961 9 547083

Hidden Secret Tony Hanna performs at his own restaurant **O de Mer** + 961 9544588

Jezzine

Suspended over Wadi Jezzine, Jezzine is a charming little village surrounded by pine forests and refreshed by the water sources around it. The scenery makes for a very laid-back and pleasant place to stay overnight

Walk around Bkassine Pine Forest

Explore Fakreddine Grotto

Drive to Farid Serhal Palace

Enjoy sights and sounds of the 40m high Jezzine Waterfalls

Stay at

- **Auberge Wehbe** +961 7 780217
- **Rizk Plaza Motel** +961 7 781066
- **Iris Flower Hotel** +961 7 781999

Eat

- Lebanese at **Al Shallal Restaurant** +961 7 780067
- Cheese and Wine at **Coin Rouge** +961 3 120856

Buy handmade daggers and cutlery made out of horn and ivory from **Abou Rached** +961 7 780082 or **S&S Haddad Manufacturers** +961 3 683369

Hidden Secret Take a trip to Cloud 9 by visiting **Karam Winnery** +961 3 373703



Maaser El Chouf

Known for its traditional well preserved rural character, the village has been recognized as having 0% pollution by UNESCO.

Hike in the Cedar Natural Reserve, **discover** unique fauna and flora

Walk around the village and **learn about** Lebanese architecture

Sit under Lamartine's cedar and get inspired

Check out "Al Maasara" Maaser's famous distillery

Stay at

• **Auberge St Michael** +961 5 350451

• **Maaser El Chouf Ecolodge** +961 5 350455

• **Hamana Plaza Hotel** +961 532266

Eat

• Lebanese at **Nadim's** Maaser Village restaurant +961 5 350114

• Traditional at **Al Khan Al Makssoud** +961 8 544881

• Organic at **Tawlit Ammiq** +961 3 004481

Drink Wine at **St. Michael's Winery** +961 3 288760

Buy medicinal plants from the gardens of "Umm Boutros" at Auberge St. Michael

Hidden Secret Chakira's cedar at the entrance of the reserve.



Beirut

Lebanon Traveler's editorial team has put together a list of things to do including Sunday brunches, quiz nights and walks in the park. And offers not to miss if you are not leaving the city

Sundays and the City

- Winter Brunch at Coop d'Etat +961 71 134173
- Salsa Night at EM Chill +961 1 565313
- Amy Smack Daddy Live at Zinc +961 3 873333
- Quiz Night at Dany's Underground +961 1 740231
- Jam Nights at Name this Bar +961 3 911417
- Karaoké at Fame +961 3 966965

Gardens and the City

Sannayeh

Oldest public garden in Beirut, Sannayeh garden aka Rene Moawad Garden is a popular meeting place for many Beirutis who are looking for a green getaway. You will find old men playing backgammon, housewives on their power walk and young kids at play.

Sioufi

Sculptures, pools, plants and winding paths make this garden a unique retreat within the city. The views are exceptional and there are many private benches perfect for either a romantic date or to dive into the latest best selling novel.

Roman Baths

In the midst of Beirut Central District, located on the banks street, lies a little jewel of a garden. Calm, clean and historical, Roman baths were excavated in the area and the site was preserved. It is an ideal location to have a quick snack before you continue your walk.

Offers and the City

35Rooms +961 1 345676

Special offer for **Lebanon Traveler** readers, so make sure to bring the magazine along.

- 10% discount on the room charge
- Free wireless internet
- Free Open Buffet breakfast
- Free upgrade to room category

Coral Beach +961 1 859000

Weekend package for 2 at 170 USD includes: 1 night Sat/Sun

- breakfast buffet
- Sunday buffet lunch
- 2 regular drinks at Rocks bar
- wireless internet
- access to health club
- late check out

Radisson Blu +961 1 368111

For online booking: • Weekdays 3 nights save 10% on the published rate • Weekend (Thurs to Sat) 2 nights save 20% on published rate

Phoenicia Spa +961 1 369100

A Christmas Shining Star package at 246 USD includes

- Spa Gold Therapy
- Mini Facial Scrub
- Eye Care Mask
- New Year, New Body package at 196 USD includes
- ILA Detoxifying body Scrub
- Hydar Repair Facial
- Choco Xmas package at 229 USD includes
- Chocolate Scrub
- Firming Caviar Facial
- Feet Massage
- Shub Naya Barras package at 180USD
- Abyangha full body Massage
- Ananda Facial
- Spa Manicure



sohat[®]

Haute Source 1710 m - Falouha Liban

L'eau les yeux fermés



Your Christmas calendar

For those remaining in Lebanon over the festive season, we have discovered a winter wonderland for you to enjoy with you family

Christmas Fairs

5 / 12 - 2 / 01

Christmas Collective Exhibition

Artlab Gallery's Christmas Collective exhibition will feature a series of paintings and sculptures by a group of talented emerging artists mostly from Syria. The works range from realist to expressive abstract in several mediums. Artlab Gallery, 10am - 7pm +961 3 244577

7 - 9 / 12

Armenian Traditional Christmas Bazaar

The AGBU Ladies' Auxiliary presents its annual Christmas bazaar, under the patronage of the Minister of Culture of Lebanon, Gaby Layoun. Enjoy delicious Armenian pastries and food, decorations, ladies' and home accessories, chocolate arrangements, handcrafts and artisanat. AGBU Demirdjian Center, Antelias, 10am - 8pm +961 4 522842

8 - 23 / 12

Christmas at Zaitunay Bay

Head out to a cheerful Christmas celebration located in the stunning location of Zaitunay Bay. Children will enjoy browsing through endless collections of gifts, candy and toys available at Santa's house. If that isn't enough, arts and crafts will also be offered at the Christmas workshop, along with entertaining carols by Christmas carol singers. Beirut Marina, Minet El Hosn, Beirut, Weekdays 2 - 10pm Weekends 12 - 10pm

14 - 15 / 12

Sesobel Christmas Exhibition

The annual fair by Sesobel, the Lebanese NGO that assists disabled children in all aspects of their lives, will feature a large variety of gift baskets, chocolates, household items, linen and authentic mouneh. Grand Hills Hotel, Broumana, 11am - 9pm +961 9 233940

14 - 20 / 12

AFKART

For a full week you can discover the latest creations by Lebanese designers from paintings to handicrafts to home and fashion accessories and hand made jewelry. A perfect way to get to know the creative talents of the country and find that one-of-kind gift! Biel Hall 3, 3:30 - 9:30pm +961 566707 +961 3 891614

21 - 23 / 12

Christmas Mood by le Temps des Fleurs project

No matter the season or the occasion, flowers and plants are a welcome addition. You will find poinsettia in all sizes and colors, gold crest and trendy flower arrangements for the festive season. Saint Jean Monastery, Khenchara, 10am - 7pm

22 / 12

From Heart to Heart

The Lebanese Russian Community is organizing a unique charity festival that will start off with a Christmas Fair and end on a musical note. UNESCO Palace, 10am - 7:30pm +961 71 671275

Christmas for Kids

30 / 11 - 30 / 12

Fantastic Family Show with Gino, Lord of Magic

Christmas is a magical time and what better way to celebrate it than with actual magic? Gino, the Lord of Magic will take you to an enchanted world of fun and beauty. A guaranteed good time for the whole family! Michel El Murr Stadium 5pm +961 3 350820

Every Saturday in December

Nour Mirroir Mirroir et L'Ange de Noel

It's time to celebrate! Bells are ringing, Santa's elves are preparing for a wonderful time and the little drummer boy has started writing his musical notes to sing with you. Join them on their enchanted journey during this festive month. 4pm +961 3 393450

1 / 12 - 12 / 1

Un Noel Extraordinaire

This year Ghinwa and her friends are preparing a surprise for Santa Claus... and each and every one of you can help. Join Ghinwa and her friends to celebrate the festive season! Theatre La Cite, Jounieh 4 pm +961 9 900000 Saturdays and Sunday

14 - 16 & 21 - 23 / 12

Christmas Event

Visit Mr. and Mrs. Claus in the wish garden, make a toy to take home with the help of the elves in their workshop, post your letter to Santa or hear him tell a traditional story, along with many more activities for the little ones. Talent Square Edutainment Studio. Event runs every half hour from 12noon - 6pm +961 70 111096

Christmas Concerts

Throughout December

Beirut Chants

For 5 weeks you will sample the work of performers from all over the world, both established and emerging, within the many beautiful and historic churches in the heart of Beirut. This year's event will feature performances as diverse as recitative, sacred choir music, chamber and a philharmonic orchestra that will thoroughly entertain the audience and all for free. Full program available on lebtivity.com

17 / 12

Ring the Bells of Hope

This traditional fundraising concert by Roteract will feature a selection of Christmas carols sung by angelic voices to raise funds for the Kids First Association, which helps children suffering from cancer or blood disorders by providing them with necessary medical assistance. Place Saint Joseph Church, Monot, Achrafieh, 8pm +961 3 763375 +961 70 25440

Your winter activity calendar

December

Sunday 16

Hike in Chouf Cedars Reserve

Byblos & Beyond

Discover family wineries

Bekaa - Great Escape

Hike in Nahr al-Asfour

(levels 2 & 5)

Liban Trek

Saturday 22 - Sunday 23

Pre-New Year's Eve

Ainata - Great Escape

Sunday 23

Hike and visit

monasteries in Qadisha Valley
Cyclamen

Explore Ibri

(levels 2 & 7) - Liban Trek

Sunday 30

Visit Beiteddine, Deir Al Qamar, Baadaran

have lunch with the locals
Cyclamen

Trek in Bisri

(levels 3 & 6) - Liban Trek

January

Wednesday 2

Visit Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Thursday 3

Drive to Jahlieh Valley

Liban Trek

Friday 4

See Ammiq Reserve

Liban Trek

Saturday 5

Trip to Qadisha Valley

Liban Trek

Sunday 6

Snowshoeing

Chouf Cedars Reserve
Byblos & Beyond

Snowshoeing

Tannourine - Cyclamen

Hike in Habil

(levels 3 & 6) - Liban Trek

Monday 7

Explore Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 8

Travel to Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 9

Visit Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Thursday 10

Trip to Jahlieh Valley

Liban Trek

Friday 11

Explore Ammiq Reserve

Liban Trek

Saturday 12

Snowshoeing

Barouk, Sannine, Laqlouq or
Cedars depending on snowfall
Liban Trek

Trip to Qadisha Valley

Liban Trek

Sunday 13

Hike in Bkassine

Cyclamen

Wine tasting

Bekaa - Byblos & Beyond

Trek in Jahlieh

(levels 3 & 6) - Liban Trek

Monday 14

Trip to Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 15

Discover Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 16

Trip to Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Thursday 17

Visit Jahlieh Valley

Liban Trek

Friday 18

Drive to Ammiq Reserve

Liban Trek

Saturday 19

Trip to Qadisha Valley

Liban Trek

Sunday 20

Hike in Qadisha Valley

Byblos & Beyond

Snowshoeing in Bakish

Cyclamen

Hike in Sfaray

(levels 3 & 6) - Liban Trek

Monday 21

Visit Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 22

Discover Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 23

Explore Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Thursday 24

Drive to Jahlieh Valley

Liban Trek

Friday 25

Trip to Ammiq Reserve

Liban Trek

Saturday 26

Snowshoeing

in Barouk, Sannine, Laqlouq or
Cedars depending on snowfall
Liban Trek

Trip to Qadisha Valley

Liban Trek

Sunday 27

Hike

from Jezzine to Niha and in
the Chouf Nature reserve
Cyclamen

Snowshoeing

Tanourine Cedars Reserve
Byblos & Beyond

Hike in Miziara

(levels 3 & 6) - Liban Trek

Monday 28

Explore Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 29

Trip to Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 30

Trip to Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Thursday 31

Trip to Jahlieh Valley

Liban Trek

February

Friday 1

Trip to Ammiq Reserve

Liban Trek

Saturday 2

Travel to Qadisha Valley

Liban Trek

Sunday 3

Family trip

igloo and snowmen building
competition in Laqlouq
Byblos & Beyond

Skidoo from Faraya to Laqlouq

Cyclamen

Trek in Niha

and discover Arak distillation
with Mawaseem
Saad Tours

Hike in Qteleh

(levels 2 & 5) - Liban Trek

Monday 4

Visit Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 5

Trip to Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 6

Discover Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Thursday 7

Drive to Jahlieh Valley

Liban Trek

Friday 8

Trip to Ammiq Reserve

Liban Trek

Saturday 9

Snowshoeing

Barouk, Sannine, Laqlouq or Cedars depending on snowfall
Liban Trek

Visit Qadisha Valley

Liban Trek

Saturday 9 – Sunday 10

Excursion to southern Lebanon

overnight in Ebl As Saqi
Liban Trek

Sunday 10

Snowshoeing in Ehmej

Cyclamen

Trek in Nahr Ibrahim

Byblos & Beyond

Hike in Sahel Alma

(levels 3 & 4, 5 & 6) - Liban Trek

Monday 11

Visit Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 12

Drive to Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 13

Visit Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Thursday 14

Trip to Jahlieh Valley

Liban Trek

Friday 15

Explore Ammiq Reserve

Liban Trek

Saturday 16

Trip to Qadisha Valley

Liban Trek

Sunday 17

Snowshoeing

Qanat Bakish - Byblos & Beyond

Hike in Hemmana's Lamartine Valley

Cyclamen

Hike in Mtein

(levels 3 & 6) - Liban Trek

Monday 18

Discover Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 19

Trip to Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 20

Trip to Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Saturday 23

Snowshoeing

in Barouk, Sannine, Laqlouq or Cedars depending on snowfall
Liban Trek

Sunday 24

Snowshoeing

Massaer Al Chouf - Cyclamen

Family trip

milking cows and cheese making at a local farm
Byblos & Beyond

Hike in Khirbet Qanafar

(levels 3 & 5) - Liban Trek

Monday 25

Drive to Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 26

Visit Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 27

Trip to Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

March

Sunday 3

Hike in Akkar

Byblos & Beyond

Bike

from Mar Moussa Monastery to the village of Mtein including visit to the village
Cyclamen

Hike in Niha

and discover Arak distillation with Mawaseem
Saad Tours

Trek in Qadisha

(levels 2, 4 & 7) - Liban Trek

Monday 4

Explore Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 5

Discover Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 6

Trip to Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Saturday 9

Snowshoeing

in Barouk, Sannine, Laqlouq or Cedars depending on snowfall
Liban Trek

Visit to sanctuaries

Jbeil district - Liban Trek

Sunday 10

Trek

from Mazraet Al Chouf to Wadi Bisri - Cyclamen

Snowshoeing in Cedars

Byblos & Beyond

Discover Chouf Nature Reserve

Mawassem by Saad Tours

Hike in Bkassine

(levels 2 & 5) - Liban Trek

Monday 11

Trip to Bawali Valley

Liban Trek

Tuesday 12

Explore Adonis Valley

Liban Trek

Wednesday 13

Drive to Ghabour Valley

Liban Trek

Saturday 16

Snowshoeing

in Barouk, Sannine, Laqlouq or Cedars depending on snowfall
Liban Trek

Sunday 17

Family Trip

Fossils excavation
Byblos & Beyond

Discover Tripoli

and have a traditional lunch
Cyclamen

Hike in Nahr El Barouk

(levels 3 & 6) - Liban Trek

Sunday 24

Hike

from Ain Zhalta to Barouk
Cyclamen

Sunday 31

Biking in Baskinta

and a visit to the village including a lunch with the locals
Cyclamen

And more activities upon request

Outdoor Activities

Trekking, rock climbing, caving, mountain biking, paragliding, abseiling and 4x4

Cultural Excursions

Hiking to cultural sites and nature reserves

White Adventure

Snowboarding, igloo building and cross-country skiing e.g. cross-country skiing trip to Jabal El Sheikh start in Rachaya at 1000m and reaching the summit at 2850m to view Lake Tiberias

Paragliding Tandems

Briefing, gearing-up and flight time amount to approximately 1 hour. Reservation is required 48 hours prior to the requested date of flight.

exittonature.com
+961 3 559992

Address book

Byblos & Beyond
byblosandbeyond.com
+961 9 540857

Cyclamen
tlb-destinations.com
+961 4 419848

Great Escape
greatestescape.com.lb
+961 3 360027

Kurban Travel*
kurbantravel.com
+961-01614914

Liban Trek
libantrek.com
+961 1 329975

Mawassem by Saad Tours
saadtours.com
+961 1 393100

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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

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

+961 | 340940 Ministry of
Tourism

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



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