



BEIRUT

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Bordered on one side by the Mediterranean and on the other by two parallel mountain ranges, Lebanon seems a country suspended between the sky and the sea.

Despite its small area (10,452 square km), this is a land, resplendent in its diverse geography, landscape, culture and history.

From the white-capped mountains and blue sea, to the countryside, from arid hills to lush forests, the visitor discovers a series of contrasts. Bare rocky mountains are followed by luxuriant valleys watered by rivers and waterfalls. Views change quickly from pine covered hills to dramatic rocky landscapes, to fertile plains laid out with farms and vineyards.

Lebanon is also a country of multiple origins, shaped by 10,000 years of history. From earliest times, its natural beauty and privileged geographical position attracted conquerors and occupiers who left behind traces of their civilizations. Each added an indelible imprint to the makeup of what would become modern Lebanon.

The legacy of the past is clear from the extraordinary variety of archaeological sites in every corner of the country. From phoenician sarcophagi to Roman temples, to Crusader castles and Mamlouk mosques, wherever you go, evidence of this country's rich and tormented past comes to light.

The cuisine of Lebanon, like its culture is surprising in its diversity. It is known above all for its mezze, countless dishes of savory hors-d'oeuvres which are endlessly replenished and served in a warm and congenial setting.

Any attempt to describe Lebanon is a task carried out in vain. It cannot be confined by words ; it must be lived. So we invite you to visit our marvelous country, where roads lead from town to village and from site to city, from one epoque to another.



Many times destroyed and rebuilt, Beirut is a city of many facets - all accented by a charming mix of East and West. Dynamic, congested, elegant and ostentatious, it shows a different aspect at every turn.



Star's Square

Beirut never leaves a visitor indifferent; its contrasts are too overwhelming. Luxurious air-conditioned shops sell elegant international brands. Old villas, freshly repainted, are reflected in modern glass buildings, mirroring a pastiche of past and present.

More city contrasts appear in its remaining ruined and abandoned neighborhoods, a last testimony of the war. But just around the corner you'll find animated side streets full of restaurants, cafes and shops.



Beirut is epitomized by its downtown, you will see restored buildings painted in beautiful pastel colors in a scene that might have come from «A Thousand and One Nights.» Narrow pedestrian streets with their perfect geometry, are often enlivened by nighttime spectacles, fairs and parties - all carried out against the backdrop of the finely carved masonry facades.



Pigeon Rocks

Turning off one of these streets you come to the Roman Baths, now harmoniously integrated into the urban landscape. This quarter is dominated by the Grand Serail, a huge building constructed by the Ottomans in 1849. You will also be tempted to walk along the famous corniche of Raouche. This two-kilometer seaside promenade attracts a wide variety of joggers, sports walkers, strollers, food vendors, and coffee drinkers. At sunset couples walk arm in arm watching the sun sink into the sea behind the landmark **Pigeon Rocks**, just offshore.

Beirut is a busy, bustling capital with a major port serving the nation's business and commercial interests. But when offices and shops close, Beirutis often go out on the town to enjoy the many restaurants and nightclubs of this cosmopolitan city.

A cultural center as well as the capital city, Beirut is known for its many universities and schools. The National Museum documents the great archaeological past of Lebanon, while musical, artistic and dramatic activities take place year round.



Inaugurated in 1942, the National Museum is home to an extraordinary collection of important archaeological objects.

Recently reopened after extensive renovation, the ground floor displays about seventy large objects. The undoubted star of the collection is the sarcophagus of Ahiaram, King of Byblos, which is inscribed with the earliest known example of the Phoenician alphabet.

On this floor as well, is a colossal statue in the Egyptian style, discovered at Byblos. Also look for statues of children used as ex-voto offerings to the healing god of Eshmoun. These were found at the temple of Eshmoun near Sidon. Other outstanding objects include a capital of bulls' heads and various mosaics representing scenes from mythology.

The first floor of the museum holds about a thousand smaller objects from prehistory, the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods and from the Arab conquest to Mamluke times.
(open daily except Mondays - Hours : 9am - 5pm.)



Fashioned by millions of years of erosion, the Jeita Grotto is a spectacle that defies description. Its stone sculptures, both elegant and tormented, are seen to their best advantage thanks to the ingenious lighting system that reveals their mysterious depths. Discovered in 1836, between 1874 and 1940 expeditions by English, American and French explorers penetrated the Jeita Grotto to a depth of 1,750 meters.



Since 1946, Lebanese speleologists continued investigating this great underground system, which is now known to be at least 9 kilometers in length.

Jeita is composed of a dry upper gallery and a lower gallery with an underground lake that is seen by boat.

A visit to these caves is an emotional experience, for their variety lends them an air of almost supernatural mystery. Stalagmites and stalactites meet one another in a fantastic décor where mirages of the rocks are reflected in the clear water of the subterranean basin.

The caves are very well managed and are easily accessible to children and older people. A small train carries visitors between the levels of the two galleries and there is a restaurant, snack bar and projection room at the site.





Byblos is a must-see for every visitor to Lebanon. This town whose history goes back 7,000 years, is home to a major archaeological site that reveals one impressive ruin after another – traces of all the civilizations that have occupied Byblos over the millennia.

Facing the sea, the archaeological site includes several Canaanite and Phoenician temples, the foundations of Stone Age houses, ancient city walls and several Roman remains. Most imposing is the Crusader castle, built in the 13th century. The whole faces a Roman theater and is bordered by Phoenician sarcophagi scattered at the foot of a Roman colonnade.

Byblos is celebrated as the birthplace of the alphabet. In fact, the sarcophagus of the Phoenician King Ahiiram, discovered on the site and now on display at the National Museum, bears the oldest known inscription of the Phoenician linear alphabet.



Byblos crusader castle



Byblos Harbor

Byblos is also known for its picturesque medieval port, where small fishing boats rock gently on the waves.

At the church of Saint John, built by the Crusaders in the 13th century, notice the bell tower (20th century) with its finely carved crown and its beautiful triple-arched baptistery.

Near the Castle entrance is a lovely little mosque from the Ottoman period.

Nearby is a wax museum that presents scenes of Lebanese customs and traditions. Another interesting stop in old Byblos is the Fossil Museum where you can see fascinating prehistoric flora and fauna preserved in rock.



Taynal Mosque



Khan Al Khayateen

Capital of the North and second largest city in Lebanon, Tripoli is always on the move. Yet it preserves its past more beautifully than any other of the country's ancient towns. A wonderful oriental perfume comes from its famous souks, where you can lose yourself among the maze of tiny streets. Investigate the tailor shops, soapmakers, potters and other traditional crafts and enjoy the smell of freshly ground coffee mixed in with the fragrance of spices. A visit to Tripoli's souks is indeed a sensual experience.

The oriental atmosphere of old Tripoli is also seen in its mosques, especially at the hour of prayer when the call of the muezzins echo over the town.

These mosques date mostly to the time of Mamlouks, who occupied the country at the end of the 13th century. Like the other medieval buildings in the city they are architectural masterpieces and well worth a visit. Be sure to see the Grand Mosque with its huge courtyard surrounded by arcades, the Taynal mosque whose majestic portal is decorated in striped marble, and the Burtasya mosque, which has a finely carved minaret.

Tripoli is dominated by an imposing castle originally built by Raymond de Saint-Gilles, founder of the County of Tripoli during the Crusader period. Largely destroyed by the Mamlouks, the castle was modified and rebuilt over the centuries by succeeding rulers. This magnificent citadel, 140 meters long and 70 meters wide, is one of the most impressive in the Middle East.

Also see the celebrated hammams or baths, some of which date from the 13th century. Their domes with pierced glass-covered openings, bring light into the interior. At the Hammam el-Abed, the only bath still functioning, it's still possible to enjoy an authentic Turkish bath. The old city also has a number of Mamlouk and Ottoman period khans (caravansaries) and madrasahs (Quranic schools).



At more than 1,800 meters above sea level, the Cedars of Lebanon fascinate with their majesty and great age. Known for their long lasting wood resistant to temperature, humidity and decay, the trees were widely exploited in antiquity. In the Phoenician era, cedar wood was exported in bulk, mainly to Egypt and the Phoenician colonies of the Mediterranean.

King Solomon ordered large quantities of cedar wood from King Hiram of Tyre to build his temple in Jerusalem. The Egyptians used the wood for shipbuilding and in making sarcophagi, while they employed the cedar oil for mummification.

Intensive exploitation of the Cedars continued through the centuries until their numbers were seriously diminished. Of the immense forests that once covered Mount Lebanon, only a few isolated reserves remain today in **Jaj, Tannourine, Ehden, Barouk and Maasser el-Chouf.**

The most famous cedars are undoubtedly those of **Bsharreh**, many of which are hundreds of years old. Four of these trees, estimated at between 1,500 and 2,000 years old, have reached a height of 35 meters and their trunks are between 12 and 14 meters around.

With branches positioned like arms at prayer, the so-called Cedars of the Lord are at their most impressive when seen under layers of white snow.

The resort of the Cedars near Bsharreh is also known for its excellent skiing and the exceptional view of the Qadisha valley seen from the highest slopes.

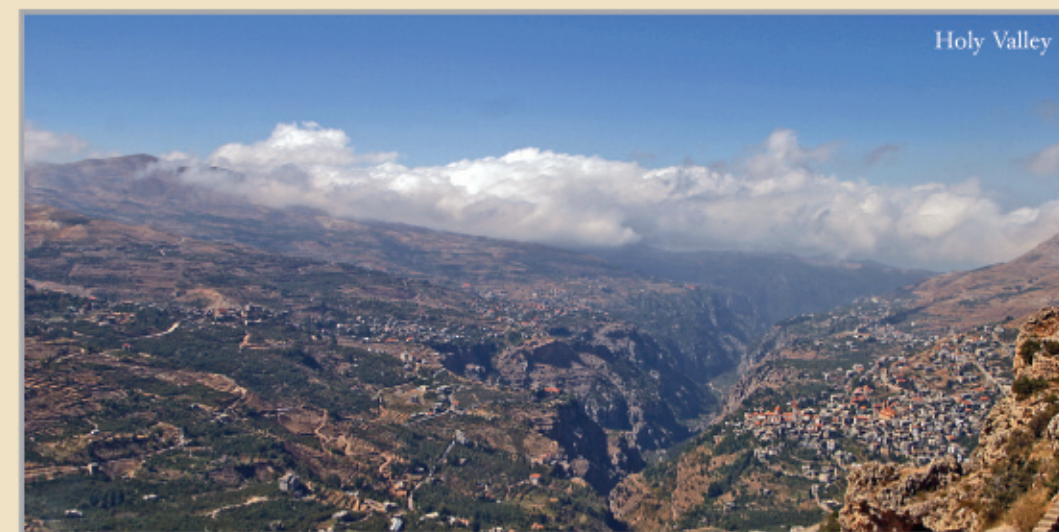


The holy valley of Qadisha, the refuge of hermits and patriarchs in the early centuries of this era, lies at the foot of the picturesque village of Bsharreh and within easy reach of the famous Cedars of Lebanon.

Classified as a world Heritage Site by UNESCO, this deep gorge is like a primeval paradise. Above are cliffs where trees dig their roots into the limestone. The precipitous rock is riddled with caves and water-carved formations. Water, in fact, is everywhere, rushing down in falls or coming up at roadside springs. Ancient monasteries carved into these cliffs have become part of this site's natural beauty.

The serenity of Qadisha, fragrant with wild flowers and aromatic plants, makes it a peaceful haven that even today deserves the name « holy valley ». Here, you'll find nearly inaccessible hermitages, caves and cave monasteries that were used by various religious communities fleeing persecution.

At the monastery of Qozhaya is a printing press dating from 1871, a reminder that this was the site of Lebanon's first printing press, imported in the 16th century.



Located in the Beqaa valley, Aanjar is one of the rare Ommayad vestiges in Lebanon. The first hereditary dynasty of Islam, the Ommayads held sway in the region during the 7th and 8th centuries.

In contrast to other archaeological sites in the country, Aanjar knew only a short period of prosperity. Built at the start of the 8th century under the reign of Caliph Walid Ibn Abdel-Malik, it became a center for rest and recreation. And, thanks to its geographical position, it was also an important commercial center.

Surrounded by a wall seven meters high, Aanjar extends over more than 100,000 square meters. The city is perfectly symmetrical, divided into four quarters of equal size, separated by one street running East and West and another North and South. The two streets meet in the center of the city where a tetrapylon was built of four imposing columns supported by a pedestal. Across from the palace stands a mosque whose mihrab facing Mecca and the wells that provided for the worshippers' ablutions, can still be seen.

Aanjar has been classified as a world Heritage site by UNESCO.



The Great Palace



Bacchus Temple

Baalbeck, one of the world's most amazing archaeological sites, can be found in the east of Lebanon, where the Beqaa plain lies enclosed between two mountain ranges.

A very ancient site, Baalbeck came into its glory after the invasion of Alexander the Great, who elevated it to the rank of Heliopolis, City of the Sun. With the Roman conquest and the construction of major temples, the town developed into an important religious site.

This monumental sanctuary is made up of three main temples. A visit begins with the temple of Jupiter, certainly the largest, but not the best preserved. Built during the reign of the Emperor Augustus towards the beginning of the Christian era, it was finished a half century later under the rule of Nero.

This temple, 88 meters long and 48 meters wide, was originally supported by 54 columns. Today only six remain, but their size - 22 meters high and 2 meters in diameter - is impressive indeed.



Jupiter Temple



BAALBECK CITY OF THE GODS

The masterpiece of Baalbeck is undoubtedly the Bacchus temple. Extremely well preserved thanks to Arab fortifications built around it, the temple was protected for centuries from the elements and from looting. Built in the 2nd century AD and linked to the temple of Jupiter, access to the temple was by an imposing staircase and a colossal door finely decorated with nymphs and mythological deities.

A short distance away stands the temple of Venus, built in the third century. A true jewel of Roman architecture, this temple was designed in an unusual circular form.

In Baalbeck one should also see the 8th century *Ommayad mosque* built with elements borrowed from the Byzantine church that formerly stood on the same site. Baalbeck has been named a world Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Roman temple buffs will enjoy visiting the remains of other temples in the Beqaa, including those at Majdel Anjar, Niha and Dekweh.



SIDON A LONG AND GLORIOUS HISTORY

An ancient city mentioned in the famous « El-Amarna » letters of the 14th century BC, Sidon has known many upheavals in the course of its 6,000-year history. Like other Phoenician cities, Sidon submitted to the domination of Persia, as well as of Greece and Rome before the Arab conquests. These were followed by the Crusaders and then the Mamlouks.

Standing proudly in the sea facing the assault of the wind and weather, the sea castle dates from the time of Crusaders, when Sidon was elevated to the rank of the Seignior of Sagette.

After visiting the castle, stop at the nearby *Government Resthouse* with its landscaped grounds overlooking the sea – a pleasant place for a cup of coffee or a meal.

Sidon retains a number of remains from the Mamlouk and Ottoman periods, notably the Grand Mosque and the Khan el Franj. The impressive *Khan* or caravansary, now under restoration, was built in the 17th century to provide shelter for caravans and foreign merchants passing through the town.

The Grand Mosque is notable for its imposing structure, which resembles a fortress from the outside. Actually the building owes its high walls to the fact that it was built during the Crusader era by the Hospitalers of Saint John. Later it was transformed into a mosque by the Mamlouks.

Don't miss a tour around Sidon's medieval souks where you can find old mosques, Quranic schools (*Madrassas*) and bathhouses, in addition to fascinating old shops.

Outside Sidon on the road leading from Beirut is the famous Phoenician temple dedicated to the healing god of *Eshmoun*. This temple has several basins that were used for ablutions by the sick. Carved figures of children which were used during the healing rituals were discovered here, and can be seen today at the National Museum. This fascinating site also has remains from Roman and Byzantine times.



Arch of Triumph

Mentioned often in the Bible, Tyre was probably founded at the start of the third millennium BC. It was originally made up of two parts: the coastal city and some small islands.

The city was celebrated in antiquity for the merchant fleet that plied the Mediterranean, trading in glass, purple dye and cedar wood, and bringing prosperity to its people.

Tyre's most glorious period was in the 10th century BC, when King Hiram enlarged the city. According to legend it was from here that the Princess Europa was abducted by the god Zeus to what is now Europe, and it was she who gave her name to the continent. She was followed by her brother, Cadmos who carried the alphabet to the Greeks.

The glory of Tyre spread far beyond its borders, extending to the various colonies founded on the shores of the Mediterranean.

But it soon attracted the envy of the world's great conquerors including Nabuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who besieged the city for thirteen years. In 332 BC it was the turn of Alexander the Great, who sacked and burned Tyre after seven months of siege. This he achieved by building a causeway linking the land city to the island.

Gradually, over the course of history, the causeway filled with sand and the city became a peninsula.



Antepater Sarcophagus

Today Tyre holds many traces of its rich past. On what was originally the island is a Roman city with streets paved in mosaics and bordered by columned porticos that seem to march directly into the sea. A short distance away are the remains of an imposing cathedral built by the Crusaders and in which the kings of Jerusalem were crowned.

In another part of the town extends a huge necropolis with many impressive sarcophagi dating to the first centuries AD. This exceptional site continues along a Roman road dominated by a triumphal arch that guards the entrance to an immense Roman hippodrome nearly 475 meters long. Because of its invaluable archaeological remains, in 1979 UNESCO made Tyre a World Heritage City.

Visitors to Tyre are welcome to the **Government Resthouse** which offers accommodation, a restaurant and other facilities.

Qana: Some ten kilometers southeast of Tyre, Qana is where the biblical wedding of Qana took place and it has long been venerated by Christians as a holy site.

Here one can see reliefs of thirteen figures carved in the rock, said to represent Christ and his twelve disciples.





BEITEDDINE THE PALACE OF THE EMIRS

Just a few kilometers from the fascinating village of Deir el Qamar is the Palace of Beiteddine, a masterpiece of 19th century Lebanese architecture. The Palace, with its vast courtyard and beautiful fountains, ochre stone and perfectly geometrical arcades, is a wonderful sight to behold.

Built during the reign of Emir Bechir II Chehab, today the palace is one of Lebanon's most loved attractions. The imposing doors of inlaid marble, the typical « mandaloun » balconies closed in by intricate woodwork, and the richly colored windows are all typical of the period.

Being the summer residence of the President of the Republic, won't disturb the casual visitor. On the contrary there is just a chance you might meet the Lebanese head of state, or even have a talk with him.

The palace is also the venue for an annual cultural festival presenting performers of international renown.



VARIETIES

FESTIVALS AND FAIRS

One of the main cultural centers of the Middle East, Lebanon is returning to its pre-war tradition of the summer festival.

Throughout the summer months the Lebanese enjoy performances by an array of international stars who appear at archaeological sites such as Baalbeck, Anjar ruins, the palace of Beiteddine, the Roman hippodrome in Tyre, or the Khan el Franj in Sidon.

From early July to the end of August, musical concerts, ballets, operas and modern dance troupes bring life back to these ancient stones.

To discover the magic of such sites, beautifully illuminated and enhanced by the voices of famous performers, is an unforgettable experience. Besides large number of local summer festivals are organized in the different Lebanese villages and towns.

Winter has its share with al Bustan Festival held in February at Beit-Mery village.

For more information
visit the sites below:

- www.destinationlebanon.gov.lb
- www.tyrefestival.com
- www.baalbeck.org.lb
- www.byblosfestival.org
- www.beiteddine.com
- www.albustanfestival.com
- www.mousaleranjar.com





OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Although Lebanon is famous for the beauty of its archaeological sites, the country's mountains and picturesque villages should not be missed. Red tile roofs, stone houses clinging to the mountain, these villages blend together in the imagination to become a single face of Lebanon.

So let us get off the beaten path and discover some typical villages. Try Beit Chabab, where they cast church bells, Rashaya with its traditional houses, or Baskinta at the foot of snow-covered Sanine. There is also Jezzine and its famous waterfalls, Douma with its magnificent natural setting, as well as Deir al Qamar and the palace of the Emirs. Bsharreh village is known for its venerated poet, Gibran Khalil Gibran, and his masterwork, « The Prophet ».

Near the coast you can visit Amchit and its beautiful early 20th century villas which are richly decorated with wood and frescos. Or stop in Batroun to visit its sumptuous cathedral, old churches and streets.

In the picturesque souks of Zouk village look at the interesting handicrafts for sale or board the cable car to ascend to Harissa where a statue of the Virgin Mary overlooks the bay of Jounieh.



Bsharreh



Rashaya



Our Lady of Lebanon



SPORTS AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

At Lebanon's many sports and health clubs you can play golf, tennis or squash, swim, or participate in team sports. Fitness training is very popular and hotels and clubs will usually allow foreign visitors access to their facilities.

Thanks to Lebanon's varied geography, opportunities for outdoor activities abound. It takes little more than an hour to reach the snow-covered mountains (early January to the end of March) where our Mediterranean climate means ideal ski conditions and sunny skies on most days. For an unusual sports combination, try skiing in the morning and spending the afternoon swimming on the coast.

There are six ski stations in Lebanon: the Cedars, Faraya, Laqlouq, Faqra, Qanat Bakish and Zaarour.

Water sports of all kinds are available most of the year. Relax at a sandy beach at Jiyeh, Tyre, Byblos or Enfe or try one of the many resorts along the shore.

Scuba diving is popular too. You can explore through scuba diving clubs a variety of fascinating natural sites and shipwrecks all along the Lebanese coast.

If you want even more adventure, there are clubs that can send you paragliding at the Cedars or paddling down the Awwali river in a canoe or kayak. You can also climb the steep slopes of mount Sannine in an all terrain vehicle, or explore deep caves with one of Lebanon's speleo clubs. Organized trekking or rock climbing is a wonderful way to experience Lebanon's natural beauty at first hand. But even more possibilities await, so come prepared to indulge in your favorite sports.



LEBANANESE CUISINE

Lebanon is much appreciated for its cuisine, which is among the most varied and savory in the world.

Above all, Lebanese food is associated with the mezza, a spread of innumerable small dishes that form the traditional opener to a meal. Carefully decorated, wisely seasoned, these delicacies are a pleasure to the eye as well as to the palate.

Among the most essential mezza dishes are **homos** (purée of chick peas and sesame paste), **moutabal** (eggplant and sesame paste dip), **tabbouleh** (a salad of parsley, tomatoes and crushed wheat), **warak arish** (stuffed vine leaves), **labne** (strained yogurt seasoned with olive oil and garlic), **fattoush** (green salad with dried bread), **samboussek** (hot cheese pastries), **kebbi** (finely ground meat with crushed wheat and flavorings), and many more.

Next comes the seafood or grills – lamb kababs, chicken brochettes or **kafta** (ground meat with parsley).

The diversity of the cuisine knows no limits. It also includes many complex dishes with a sophisticated blend of flavors such as **kebbi b'labneh** (meat balls in a sauce of yogurt) and **moujaddara** (purée of lentils with rice and onion), **sayyadiéh** (slices of fish accompanied by rice and an onion sauce) and much else.



Saj bread



Tabbouleh



Kebbi



Fattayer



The meal is traditionally accompanied by arak, the national drink of distilled grape juice flavored with anis. Or you can select one of the excellent local wines.

For dessert the choice extends to exotic fruit such as dates, sweet lemons, mangos, pineapple or persimmon. Or try some local pastries with pistachios or white cheese, or perhaps oriental ice cream with its own special perfume.

You can also try white coffee (an infusion of orange-flower water) or a cup of strong Turkish coffee.

If you are in a hurry, stop at one of the many sandwich shops scattered in every Lebanese village and town. Typical Lebanese fast food includes **mankouché** (pizza with thyme and olive oil) and **lahme bi aji** (pizza with lightly spiced ground meat and tomato), or perhaps a sandwich of **falafle** (purée of breaded beans) or **shawarma** (thin slices of marinated meat usually garnished with fresh vegetables, pickles and a sesame oil sauce).



HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

Lebanon has many luxury hotels, well equipped to make your stay pleasant and comfortable. Numerous quality restaurants offer international cuisines (Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, etc.), while restaurants serving delicious Lebanese food are too numerous to count. The Ministry of Tourism publishes a **Hotel Guide** and a **Guide to Restaurants, Night clubs and Cafés** available at the Office of Tourism. The Ministry also has brochures for each region of Lebanon and many archaeological sites.

SHOPPING

Most international brands are available in Lebanon, but the visitor will be more interested in the local products, especially handicrafts. Embroidery, cutlery, brass, caftans and pottery of all kinds are among the attractive choices. Talented Lebanese jewelers are another source of original souvenirs at a good price.

CLIMATE

Lebanon enjoys a mild Mediterranean climate with an average of 300 sunny days a year. It almost never rains between June and September, but July and August are often hot and humid, with temperatures around 30° Celsius. Winters are generally cool with heavy rain on the coast and snow in the mountains. Nevertheless, winter brings many pleasant days, making Lebanon ideal for winter sports.

VISAS

Travelers wishing to enter Lebanon must possess a valid passport with a visa obtained from a Lebanese embassy or consulate abroad. Residents of 33 countries including the USA, members of the European Union, and countries of the Arabian Gulf and Malaysia can obtain visas at the airport in Beirut. A valid passport is all that is required.

for more details visit: www.generality.gov.lb

CUSTOMS

Personal effects are exempt from customs. Alcohol is limited to two bottles per person and tobacco to 500 grams, 400 cigarettes or 20 cigars. **VAT:** 10% on the purchases you make. Tourists departing from Lebanon are entitled to a **VAT** refund on goods purchased during their stay which should not exceed three continuous months. A VAT refund is not applicable to services, food and beverage, fuel or tobacco.



LOCAL TIME

Lebanese time is GMT + 2 hours in winter and + 3 hours in summer.

LANGUAGES

Arabic is the official language of the country. A distinction should be made between spoken Arabic, which is a regional dialect, and written Arabic which is common to all Arab countries. The use of French has been widespread since the French Mandate period. English, is the language of business and is spoken by an increasing number of Lebanese. You'll certainly have few problems expressing yourself, since most Lebanese are at least bi-lingual. Many international newspapers and magazines are available at newsstands and bookstores.

CURRENCY

Currency is the Lebanese pound whose rate of exchange is approximately 1,500 L.L. to the US dollar. You won't have any difficulties exchanging money in Lebanon, which enjoys numerous licenced exchange shops. The banking system, one of the most developed in the Middle East, employs modern systems of payment and most banks have automatic tellers which accept international credit cards.

WORKING HOURS

The official day off is Sunday, although some shops and supermarkets open on Sunday morning. Working hours during the week are generally as follows :

Government : Monday to Thursday: 8 am. to 2 pm. Friday: 8 am. to 11 am. and Saturday, 8 to 1 pm.

Private sector : 8 am. to 6 pm., Monday through Friday.

Banks : 8.30 am. to 4 pm. Monday to Friday - Saturdays until 1 pm.

Shops : 9.30 am. to 6 pm. Monday through Saturday. In Summer Saturdays until 1 pm.

Supermarkets : 8.30 am to 8 pm - 12 pm.

Note : Hours may vary in Summer. Shops, banks and offices may have slightly different schedules so it's best to check.

HOLIDAYS

Holidays with Fixed Dates

- New years' Day / **January 1**
- Christmas / **Armenian Orthodox January 6**
- St. Maroun's Day / **February 9**
- Labor Day / **May 1**
- Assumption Day / **August 15**
- Independence Day / **November 22**
- Christmas / **December 25**



Religious Holidays with Moveable Dates

- Catholic Good Friday
- Orthodox Good Friday
- Catholic Easter
- Orthodox Easter
- Moslem New Year
- Al-Fitr (two days, after the Holy Month of Ramadan)
- Al-Adha (two days, after the pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca and Madina)
- Ashoura
- The Prophet Mohammed's Birthday
- Ramadan is the Holy Month of fasting and charity celebrated by Moslems. Its starting date moves backwards through the year, at about 12 days each time. Those who observe Ramadan refrain from eating, drinking and smoking during daylight hours. The fast is broken by an « iftar » meal at sunset.

TOURIST POLICE

In the event of problems, tourists may call the Tourist Police Office at the Ministry of Tourism (Central Bank Street, Hamra) **Tel: (01) 35 09 01 – (01) 34 32 86**

Hotline: 1735

INFORMATION OFFICE AT THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Tel: (01) 343 073

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