

Lebanon Traveler

A publication of Hospitality Services in a joint venture with Beyond Beirut - Issue 10 March - June 2014

Lebanon 8,000 LBP



100

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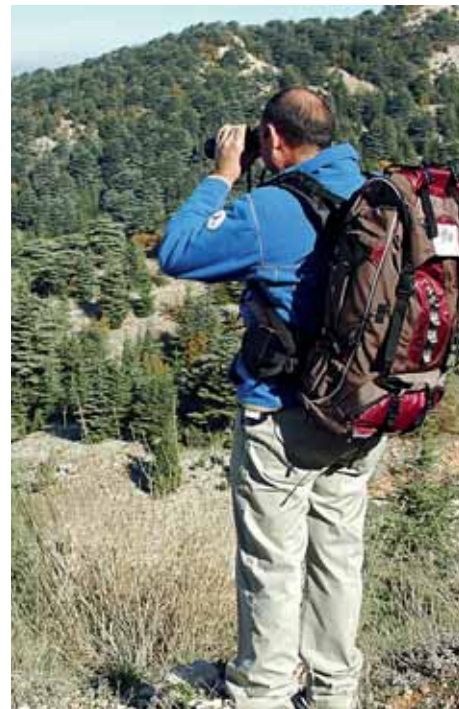
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Lebanon Traveler

unveils the country's hidden treasures

As spring sets in and Lebanon's rural regions come to life, there's no better time to tour the country and explore. Lebanon's rich countryside is vastly diverse, meaning there's plenty awaiting discovery, from traditional villages set within stunning landscapes to natural wonders to take your breath away.

This issue, Lebanon Traveler tours through the country's wild landscapes, starting at Mount Makmel, an animated forest in transition with the seasons, to the Chouf Biosphere Reserve, rich in biodiversity and benefiting from a tourism strategy targeting the Lebanese. Close to Tannourine, we stop by the geological masterpiece that is Baatar gorge, through which the majority of Lebanon's natural water flows.

The concept of sustainable tourism runs throughout, showing how central "going green" is to the industry's future. It's all about slow travel, supporting rural communities, eating local, seasonal produce and treading lightly on the environment. Our eco-expert, Pascal Abdallah shares his tips for a responsible approach to tourism. We also check in with the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association on a mission to protect the 470km mountain trail and speak with the Food Heritage Foundation, who aim to revive local food heritage.

We give city dwellers their culture fix too; from a furniture-focused social enterprise reviving heritage pieces, to an ancient art form finding a new direction. We swing by the new Banque Du Liban Museum and wander around the former aristocratic weekend getaway, Sursock Street.

Essentially this issue of Lebanon Traveler is about building a new future across different sectors, while maintaining the heritage of the past. Now it's up to you to hit the road and see what the country has to offer, enjoy!

Your feedback as a reader is very important to us.

*Enjoy and share your experience at
info@lebanontraveler.com*

THE LEBANON TRAVELER TEAM



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NEWS

New Gemmayzeh-based documentation center

The non-profit documentation space, **Dawawine**, recently opened in the heart of Gemmayzeh, Beirut and is proving to be a success in Beirut's cultural circles. The center which was set up by writer and theater academic Sara Sehnaoui, and involves cultural partners musician Abed Kobeissy and filmmaker Rami Sabbagh, comprises of a library and bookshop dedicated to the academic study of music, theater, dance and cinema. It features an open workspace, a 32-seat cinema for cine-club screenings and a bistro. Avoiding the pressure of the event-driven focus of many of Beirut's cultural spaces, Dawawine takes a more relaxed approach, hoping to fill in the city's gap for cultural research and workspaces.

Dawawine (01 567705, dawawineblog.wordpress.com) Imm Akar, Second Floor, Rue Al Arz, Gemmayzeh



Facades of buildings in Furn el Chebbak neighborhood rejuvenated

A collaboration between **Banque Libano-Française** (BLF) and the **Help Lebanon Association** to renovate Lebanon's streets saw the facades of buildings in Hay El Kanayess, Furn El Chebbak, get a makeover. The new partnership shows a shared commitment to revive dilapidated buildings and build an awareness of heritage preservation in Lebanon. The project answered a community need, targeting the renovation of the facades of 30 buildings, covering a significant area of 35,709m².

"Help Lebanon has rehabilitated 10,000 facades in more than 200 districts in Lebanon and we hope to continue our

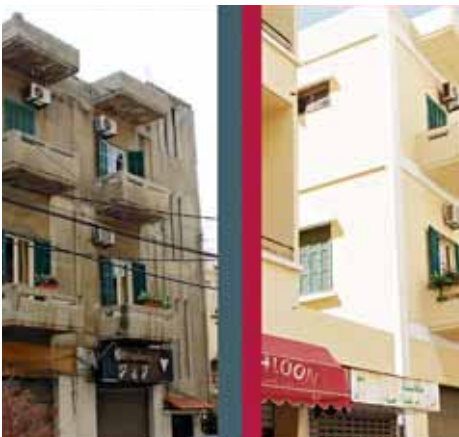
projects in Beirut and other Lebanese regions," says Lilian Tyan, president of Help Lebanon. "The success of this project confirms that Help Lebanon succeeds because of the winning partnerships between the Association, the community where we operate, municipalities and sponsors." BLF also expressed their commitment to supporting community projects and preserving the heritage of the country with Tania Rizk, director of communication for the BLF Group saying, "We have been associated with Help Lebanon since 2005 and have so far rehabilitated more than 470 building facades in different parts of Beirut and its suburbs."



Greening Damascus Road

The city is calling out for greener public spaces and a future collaboration between the Beirut Municipality and the Ile-de-France Municipality of French will make that a reality. Currently, at traffic heavy hours, the commute from one side of the city to the other can be a painful crawl, the project which is planned to commence in around a year, will create a large garden in the heart of the city, along with a bike lane, pedestrian area, road for vehicles, bus lane and cultural facilities. If implemented, it will help to facilitate public transportation, promote safer cycling, and reunite Achrafieh and Ras el Nabeh in a tranquil area for the people of Beirut.

beirut.gov.lb



Boecker talks sustainability

The environment remains a hot topic for companies around the world, and Boecker, the region's largest public health company, are leading in green policy, setting an example for others in the Middle East to follow suit. **Boecker** has repeatedly been commended for its environmental focus – making efforts to reduce their CO₂ emissions and conducting the Greenhouse Auditing Project, using environmental consultancy, V4 Advisors. On Feb 19-20 Boecker was invited to take part in the yearly Lebanon Opportunities Conference to speak on the theme of “Economic sustainability during crisis.”

Boecker's Country Manager, Bana Kalash Kobrosly, presented a case study of the company's carbon management system to the conference. “Boecker [became]

committed to develop and implement a Carbon Management Strategy. Through gathering needed data about our carbon generating assets, we calculated the CO₂ consumption in order to build an effective strategy leading to the reduction of GHG emissions and to a better environment.”

boecker.com



Garden paradise

As summer heads into full bloom, **The Garden Show & Spring Festival** returns to Beirut's iconic hippodrome for its eleventh edition, this time with the theme Jounayne, meaning both garden and little paradise in Arabic. Bringing together over 220 exhibitors, the exhibition is a must-visit for all outdoors and garden lovers. Experts will be on hand to help you design your

own garden, learn about the plants and flowers that work for you and pick out decorative garden pieces and furniture. The Travel Lebanon Festival will be held simultaneously, allowing visitors to discover the country.

the-gardenshow.com, May 27- 31, 5-11pm



Lebanese pavillion at ATM

One of the biggest tourism exhibitions in the region, Dubai's **Arabian Travel Market** will take place between 5-8 May and features over 2400 exhibitors. It's become an essential date in the diary for tourism industry professionals providing opportunities to network and directly meet a huge market of customers – with last year's ATM visitors requesting 15,000 meetings with exhibitors – and also be at the cutting edge of industry debate and training with their series of event-based workshops and seminars. The ATM market is like a whistle-stop tour around the world, with many nations, including Lebanon represented at the fair.

Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Center (arabiantravelmarket.com) 5-8 May 2014



HIKING

LMT Association walk for a cause

The Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT) Association, dedicated to conserving Lebanon's unique cultural and natural heritage that lies along the hiking trail from Al-Qbaiyat in the north to Marjayoun in the south, will hold their sixth annual Thru-Walk this April. Embarking on an epic month-long hike on April 4, the hike will see seven hard-core hiking enthusiasts complete the entire 470km stretch, with over 20 additional walkers expected to join each day.

The trail passes through 75 towns and villages highlighting the natural and cultural beauty of rural Lebanon. It also supports the economies of local communities through socially-responsible tourism. "It's an amazing way to discover Lebanon," says Karim El-Jisr, president of the LMT Association board. "The whole idea of the LMT is to support local communities. It defines the whole dynamic of the hike." Christian Akhrass, field coordinator of the Thru-Walk continues, "The hike really moves the economy inside villages. We pass around 70 villages. Last year we injected around 50 million Lebanese pounds [into the rural communities]."

This year, the association will walk for "trails," hoping to raise awareness on



the damaging effects of neglectful construction, new road routes and littering along the historical LMT trail. "One of the goals of the LMT is to protect ... monuments, sites and landscapes," says El-Jisr. "We're fighting a very tough battle against developers, road builders, hunting and poor urban planning regulations."


Though there is a lot of work to be done to protect the belt of cultural and natural heritage, El-Jisr believes change


is possible. "You need the government to recognize the landmarks and create a well-managed corridor. From the bottom up, you really need to engage people and create a paradigm shift, engaging land owners, mayors and residents to see why its an asset to their community. We are making headway, but in the absence of state and government we're fighting for attention."


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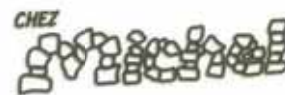


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Documenting the flora of Lebanon

Following an almost half-a-century long career within the environment, ecology and botany field husband and wife, Dr. Georges and Dr. Henriette Tohmé released the second-edition of their flower and wild plant encyclopedia at the beginning of 2014, the pinnacle of a life's work dedicated to documenting Lebanon's rich biodiversity. "Illustrated Flora of Lebanon," is the result of years in the field, researching, gathering specimens, photographing and documenting new wild flower species, of which the Tohmé's



have discovered over two hundred since their last edition in 2007. Among the first ecologists in Lebanon, Georges and Henriette are pioneers in their field and highlight the rich biodiversity of Lebanon, the result of six different eco-systems from the sea to the mountains. Georges is also one of the founders of the online database "Lebanon Flora," digitizing the documentation of the country's plants and flowers.

lebanon-flora.org

Book of the moment: Eco Lebanon

Lebanon Traveler caught up with **Nour Farra-Haddad**, founder of Neos Tourism consultancy and the author of "Eco Lebanon: Nature and Rural Tourism." The guide aims to unveil Lebanon's natural resources and encourage sustainable tourism that supports the environment

Why did you decide to launch the guide now?

We all know that the situation in Lebanon is quite difficult at the moment and we don't have tourists. I launched this guide to give some hope within the tourism field. If you give the tools to the Lebanese [to] create a kind of movement for people to discover their own country, then we can invest in Lebanon ourselves.

What are the most damaging effects of tourism?

In Lebanon people like to take arguileh and BBQs with them to the countryside. We try to give our readers advice on how to respect the environment. In the guide, there is a focus on awareness and we advise readers to do activities with trained professionals in the field, who know how to cause the least impact on the environment. It's about respecting not only the natural environment, but also the local community.

Besides the environmental benefits, does eco-tourism offer a more enriching experience for tourists?

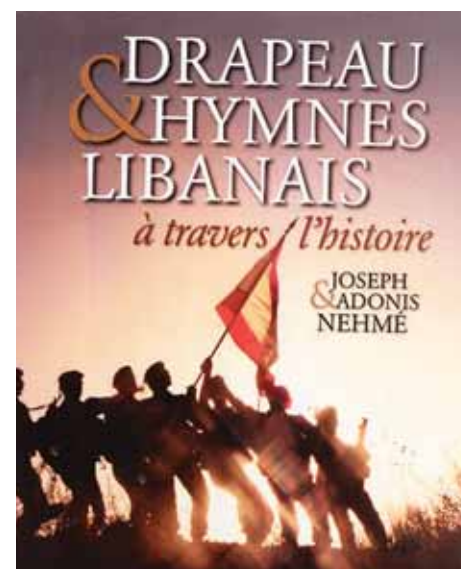
Of course. We don't talk about only cultural and archeological visits and the typical tourist sites, this guide offers the

alternatives. It's all about alternative tourism and visiting areas that are not on the classic touristic map. We look at the possibilities of "off the beaten track" and encourage a variety of activities that cover the whole country, from north to south.

Who is the book targeted at?

We include tourism from the lowest to the highest costs, from hiking on a small budget with a picnic, to visiting a ski resort at much higher costs. Even if you only buy a *manoushe* and water in a village, you're still creating a movement. Local residents will feel involved and feel they have something special in their village [if tourists come to visit].

LL30,000 at local bookshops
Launch at HORECA (horecashow.com)
BIEL, Beirut, Lebanon. April 1-4, 3-9pm



A visual history

Historian Adonis Joseph Nehme's recent book "The History of the Lebanese Flag and National Anthem" (French language, Raidy, 2013) takes a patriotic look at Lebanon's history through the evolution of its flags and songs. Featuring rarely seen photographs from a long forgotten past, the book travels back to the early flags that mark the country's political past, from Phoenicians and the Mamluks to the Ottomans.

The book also takes a philosophical look at the powers metamorphosing the national anthem. After years of research, Nehme has produced a book that looks at the very essence of Lebanese identity.

LL100,000 at antoineonline.com

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Wandering the forests of Mount Makmel



“Forests tell us the story of human history.

They hold the imprints of past and present civilizations and their connection to nature,” says **Elsa J. Sattout**, the biodiversity conservationist behind the new book “Native Trees of Lebanon & Neighboring Countries”

My four-season journey started in Horsh Ehden nature reserve a year ago while chasing native trees for photo shoots for the production of my book. The journey started in coastal forests, before crossing over the highest peaks of the Mount Lebanon mountain range to reach the inland forests of the Anti-Lebanon mountains.

In Ehden, trails forged long ago by farmers, foresters, villagers and nature lovers, lead to wonders in a small forest, located on the foothills of Mount Makmel, Northern Lebanon. Taking the road to Jouit, from the main entrance of the forest, a green island appears amidst the high mountain peaks, longing for

winter, spring, summer, and autumnal visitors. In this forest the diversity of tree communities is enchanting. They represent most Lebanese forest types, forming a mosaic of island forests, spread across nine sub-regions. Explore the forest throughout the four seasons to witness the seasonal transformation of the trees.

Looking over the mosaic patches of vegetation, from the highest peaks of Arid El Moghr or Jouar El Jafie, gives an eternal connection to the beauty and stillness of nature. Over these highest peaks, Bonelli eagles can be seen flying during spring. Jouar El Jafie is covered with an evergreen cedar and juniper



Photos courtesy of Elsa J. Sattout

tapestry where whitish primroses, orchids, and the endemic reddish-purple cyclamen can be seen after the snow melts. On Arid El Moghr discover Cedar oak, maple and other deciduous trees with colors that take your breath away during fall.

The Wadiane El Gamiqa (Deep Valley), with western-south exposure, is home to a mix of hop hornbeam, wild service trees, flowering ash, Calabrian pine, Lebanese cedar, and wild plum. Taking the trail from Jouit, leading to a spot called Ain El Naassa, you can sit in the shade of an ancient oriental plane tree. Shift your path to traverse Dahr Tnoub El Ali (Tnoub meaning cedar or fir in

Arabic) where old cedar trees grow and dominate the patches of Turkey oak (Maqlab El Ezr).

If you decide to explore the foothills of the reserve, you can start with Qornet El Snaoubar from where you can access Qornet El Assi, Wadi El Baq and Wadi El Qiame. The Qornet El Snaoubar (Pine corner) sub-region is home to many orchids during spring and a large population of squirrels, often seen on the dirt road leading to Wadi El Baq (Bugs Valley) or Wadi Jhanam (Valley of Hell). Qornet El Assi is occupied by kermes oak, dogwood tree and buckthorn; you have to be persistent to cross this dense area, which lives up to its name and means

WHERE TO EAT

Al Fardous, Ehdén, 06 560605

La Reserve, Ehdén, 06 561092

 LaReserveHorshEhdén

Pinch, Zgharta in winter, Ehdén

Jul - Sep, 03 823900

WHERE TO SLEEP

Kroum Ehdén

06 561560

kroumehden.com

Ehdén Country Club

06 560651

ehdencountryclubhotel.com

La Reserve (as above)

Master's Hotel

06 561052/3/4

mastershotel-ehden.com

La Mairie

06 560108

GO WITH A GUIDE

Ehdén Adventure

76 556887

ehdenadventures.com

Ehdén Mountain Activities

03 754928

 EhdénMountainActivities

HOW TO GET THERE

A 160km drive from Beirut, take the northern highway from Beirut to Chekka. From there take the road leading to Koura, Kosba, Torza, Arbet Qoshaya, Ejbe'e, and Ehdén. The main entrance of the reserve is in Jouit.

'disobedience' and 'stubbornness' in Arabic. The Wadi El Qiame (Resurrection Valley), of east-northern exposure, is covered most of the year by mist, especially in the afternoons. Cedar trees enjoy a dry summertime in this humid valley, which features terraces recalling past farming systems and agricultural practices.

Looping the nine sub-regions of Horsh Ehdén in a day, while trekking off-trail on short laps, is an enriching adventure; an unforgettable four-season journey in one of the most charming, colorful forests in the country. The forest holds deep contrasts, like Lebanon itself, reflecting the beautiful contradictions found in nature.

Green minded tourism



Local eco-tourism advocate and the founder of tour operator Responsible Mobilities, **Pascal Abdallah** talks us through one of the biggest challenges facing the tourism industry today

GLOBAL WARMING: THE FACTS

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a gas released in the atmosphere in two ways: naturally through volcanic eruptions and forest and land fires but also provoked by daily human activities, such as burning fossil fuels and industrialized agriculture or deforestation.

CO₂ is a dangerous greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere and is considered the main contributor to global warming. Every time we use a car, a plane, electricity and every time we travel, heat our homes, or consume goods we contribute to global warming.

We essentially cannot live a modern lifestyle without generating CO₂, but we can find a way to contribute to decreasing it. This is called carbon offsetting, a responsible way to compensate CO₂ emissions by supporting renewable energy projects, reforestation and responsible tourism programs.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM'S ROLE

Global emissions of CO₂ have increased by more than 46 percent since 1990, and of all developing regions, South America and Africa saw the largest losses of forest area between 2000 and 2010. One of the UN Millennium Development Goals invites countries to “integrate the principles of sustainable development into their policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources.”

Tourism as an industry is one of the biggest emitters of CO₂, from planning to consumption of goods and services. It is based on practices that increase the emissions of CO₂ in the atmosphere: transportation, air conditioning and heating in hotel rooms, swimming pools, spas, water heating and pumping in resorts.

But with a rise in climate change awareness “tourism businesses and destinations can offset travelers’ carbon emissions by calculating their travel-

related emissions and making financial contributions to projects that address climate impact mitigation such as tree planting, reforestation, subsidizing renewable energy, or increasing energy efficiency,” says The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), thereby meeting the standards of sustainable development and responsible tourism.

HOW TO REDUCE CO₂ EMISSIONS

- 1 Use environmentally friendly sources of energy (solar panels, wind turbines, isolating walls)
- 2 Support ecological projects (planting trees)
- 3 Support usage of new technologies that consume less energy, resulting in less pollution
- 4 Opt for eco-friendly means of transportation (bicycle, electric motorcycle, or public transport)

NEWS

Two international tourism companies have made “going green” a priority

Travel responsibly

Responsible Travel, one of the world’s leading tourism websites with an environmental conscious took away the option for customers to offset their carbon emissions through their website in 2009. The decision marked a new outlook on the principles of carbon offsetting, suggesting that tourism should make efforts to reduce its environmental impact, rather than just paying to counter CO₂ emissions created. The company was one of the first to pioneer the introduction of carbon offsets in 2002, and later became one of the first to stop using them for environmental reasons.

A recent Friends of the Earth report holds the same sentiment. “Carbon offsets distract tourists from the need to reduce their emissions. They create a ‘medieval pardon’ for us to carry on behaving in the same way or worse,” the report says.

Taking its lead from Friends of the Earth, Responsible Travel now suggest alternative travel advice to their audience, making suggestions on how tourists can reduce their carbon emissions.

responsibletour.com



WHAT’S YOUR “CARBON FOOTPRINT?”

A carbon footprint is the amount of carbon your lifestyle produces. The average in the US is 17tons per person, per year. A typical American citizen can offset their carbon footprint for about USD216 per year, which can be donated online at ecotourism.org, sustainabletravel.org.

Source: michaelbluejay.com

EcoVentura – Galapagos Islands Carbon Offset Initiative

In the Galapagos Islands, EcoVentura has established itself as a trusted travel company, because of its eco-friendly approach to their holidays. In 2006, it became the first carbon neutral boat operation in the Ecuadorian islands. It purchases carbon offsets from Native Energy Travel Offsets (NETO) to counter the CO₂ emissions produced through boat fleets.

EcoVentura is still continuing its quest to “go green” and in 2007 it partnered with the World Wildlife Fund creating the Galapagos Marine Biodiversity Fund, which contributes to both environmental education and marine conservation, working alongside the local communities to manage natural resources.

ecoventura.com



The rural escape

Take a slow travel approach when visiting rural areas, using cleaner means of transportation and meeting with local communities



Niha Trail - Photo courtesy of Pascal Abdallah

In 2008, Responsible Mobilities, the leading responsible tourism tour operator in Lebanon, began to promote low carbon trips under the brand “Clean Mobility/Slow Travel.” It’s the only initiative that allows you to reduce your green gas emissions in Lebanon. The initiative encourages tourists to reduce their carbon footprint by visiting Lebanese villages peacefully and slowly. They recommend the use of public transportation, engine free boats, mules and donkeys where possible, or even touring by bike or foot.

Responsible Mobilities organizes responsible tourism tours to Niha El-Chouf. You leave your car in Beirut at the Cola roundabout parking and take the public bus to Niha, 65km away. A bus departs every hour from 7am at only \$4 per person. Once you reach the village’s main square you will meet Chafiq Mershed, a local guide responsible for the southern entrance to the Chouf Cedar Nature Reserve. Mershed will lead you on a hiking loop (advanced level) that links the village to the site of the Nabi Ayyoub

mausoleum, for the Druze community, situated at the top of the hill.

From the peak you can admire the panoramic view overlooking the geological disorder of nature. The trail continues winding downwards to reach the cliff where the Cave of Shqif Tayroun or Emir Fekhreddine Cave, is located. After eating a lunch box prepared by the local community, you can try to spot the hyraxes sunbathing on the cliff rocks, before continuing your hike back to the village. There you’ll discover traditional houses and old churches, along with the house of the late great Lebanese singer Wadih El Safi. You can also do the tour by bike. At the end of the day you can retire at the guesthouse of Mershed in Niha, where dinner can also be served.

On the second day you will cross hike from Niha to El-Khreybe village (about 15km, moderate level), where you can have lunch at the local guesthouse of Salim el-Ashqar. After visiting the sacred old oak tree, named Sit Sarah, and touring the local houses with traditional architecture, along with the refurbished

water sources, El-Ashqar will show you the way to the main road on foot, where you can take the bus back to Beirut.

WHERE TO EAT

Shafiq Mershed Guesthouse
Niha El-Shouf 05 330755
Salim El-Ashqar Guesthouse
El-Khreybeh 03 354558

WHERE TO SLEEP

Shafiq Mershed Guesthouse
(as above)

GO WITH A GUIDE

Pascal Abdallah, Responsible Mobilities, organizes the tour
03 218048
Shafiq Mershed (as above)
local guide

HOW TO GET THERE

Public transport from Cola roundabout in Beirut, take the bus to Niha



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10 things to do in **Anfeh & Balamand**

Looking for an out-of-the-ordinary visit to escape the city grind? Then head up to the hills of the north to discover the hidden secrets of Balamand. And, on your return, stop at the coastal village of Anfeh to explore its historical marvels





Anfeh's salt flats - Photo courtesy of Lynn Dagher

1 Ethnography and Historical Museum

Since opening in 1988, the **University of Balamand** (06 930250) has evolved into one of Lebanon's top universities. The vast 454,000m² campus overlooks the Mediterranean, surrounded by luscious olive and oak trees, and encompasses nine faculties and a dozen research centers. Though the aromatic scents of nature might capture your imagination, the achievements of the university are equally overwhelming. The university has developed high caliber programs that are both challenging and competitive, such as the fascinating **Ethnography and Historical Museum** (06 930250/1462 for guided tour with Samer Amhaz and Raya Dagher). Previously home to farm animals, today the "Goat House" documents a narrative of rural life in the region. Founded by the Orthodox Church, this once theological-orientated university has modernized into a renowned center of learning and a hub for the preservation of the area's heritage.

2 Pay a visit to the monks

For 850 years, the **Lady of Balamand Patriarchal Monastery** (06 930311, Al-Kurah, N. Lebanon) has majestically stood atop a 200 meter cliff with a breathtaking view of the Mediterranean. Located 16km southeast of Tripoli, the monastery was built by monks during the Crusader period around 1157. Years later it was abandoned and in ruins, only to be rebuilt again in the 17th century by Greek Orthodox monks. Architecturally, the structure of the monastery is impressive and like all other Cistercian abbeys it features a central courtyard surrounded by a portico. Framed by the breathtaking beauty of the coastal plains, inside the monastery's walls the silence resonates with only the occasional soundtrack of undetected birds in flight. The library is also not to be missed; it features important religious icons and endless manuscripts (special permission required for viewing.) For a guided tour of the monastery, call ahead of time.

3 Ancient frescos

The 900-year-old **Deir El Natour Monastery** stands on the cape of Al Natour. Surrounded by fields of a myrtle plant and endless rows of salt marshes, this small simple church hides within its walls incredible treasures that date back to the Byzantine Empire. The church was recently excavated and renovated by University of Balamand to protect historical finds. Beautiful frescos adorn its walls and ceilings, retelling ancient religious stories in detailed brush strokes. After a tour of the church, climb the stairs for some of the best views in the country: an unobstructed vision of the waves crashing onto the rocky shore. Although you can't call ahead, Sister Catherine is usually on site and will happily guide you through the monastery.



Photo courtesy of Rita Kalindjian

4 Stroll through the port

Small and quaint, **Anfeh Port** is filled with small fishing boats, revealing the main trade of the area. Small blue and white shacks line the rocky beach, and bring to mind images of Greece. Each family in the village owns a hut and their own private fishing abode. Maintaining the hospitable traditions of the past, visitors are likely to be welcomed in with an *"Ahlan wah Sahlan!"*

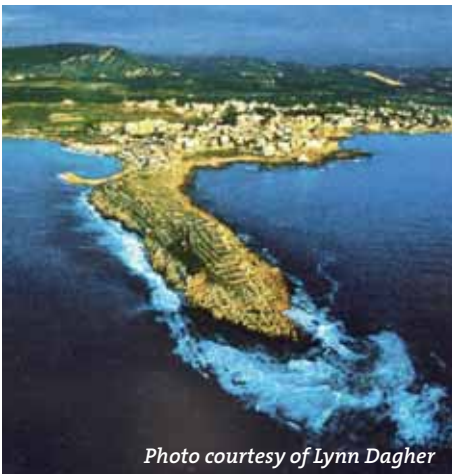


Photo courtesy of Lynn Dagher

5 Anfeh's historic churches

Seemingly untouched by the modern world, the haphazardly built huts in Anfeh village stand next to historically significant houses, passed down from generation to generation. There's nothing like a local to guide you around, and **Hafiz Jreish** (03 540215, 06 541561) is an advocate for the conservation of Anfeh's traditions. Visit the **Church of the Lady of the Wind**, one of the oldest churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Built in the Byzantine era, the building's layers reveal the many civilizations that once called it home. The South wall frescoes show a depiction of the Virgin Mary calming a storm. Sailors from the village originally built the chapel in her honor. Pass by the 12th century **Church of Saint Catherine**, the country's only remaining Romanesque church. Next, go down a few steps and admire the two **Byzantine Churches of Saint Simeon and the Archangel Gabriel**. Don't miss the elementary sound-proofing imbedded jars used to reduce noise in the church.

6 The remains of a once grand fort

Once upon a crusader's time, a majestic fort rested precariously at the edge of a rocky mound on the Anfeh peninsula, now known by locals as Rass Anfeh. **Anfeh Fort and Trench** was considered the greatest and most fortified in the Levant, once featuring twelve towers and two trenches, separating it from the mainland. When the Mamluk army conquered the lords of Tripoli, the castle was destroyed and nothing remained but one solitary rock pillar. The fort had two seawater filled moats that separated the fort from the mainland. Dried up and abandoned, the trenches have lost their imposing purpose as protective measures against invaders; one buried under centuries of rubble and damage, the other named "Al-Khandaq" is still visible, but only a dry shadow of its former role. Civilizations have passed through this land, but only a small imprint of their presence remains. Nevertheless, sitting at the top end of the peninsula, where the citadel once grandiosely stood, you feel the weight of history as the northern winds pass.



Anfeh Port - Photo courtesy of Lynn Dagher

🍴 WHERE TO EAT

George Dayaah, LL120,000 for two, opening hours: Mon-Sat 12.30pm-10pm; Sun 12.30-5pm *03 127693*

Though the fish shack serving seafood and mezze is shabby in appearance, it's well known and visited by the locals.

🏠 WHERE TO SLEEP

Las Salinas Resort, high season startin LL207,000 inc. breakfast, double, *06 540970/971/97*

Rahif Dreik guesthouse *06 541306*

📍 GO WITH A GUIDE

Girgi Sessine *03 695181*

🚗 HOW TO GET THERE

Take the highway north out of Beirut following signs for Tripoli, take a right turn off the highway at Chekka, signposted Anfeh, follow the ascent towards Balamand.





Lady of Balamand Patriarchal Monastery
Photo courtesy of Myriam Shuman

7 Ghost-filled chambers

Hanging over the rocky port of Anfeh's coastline are a series of stone engravings and caves dug into the bedrock. Rocky stairways, tomb-like holes and houses cut into the stones, speak of an abandoned town. Villagers still advise against entering these chambers, as ghosts of the past are thought to haunt its crevices.

8 Salt of the land

Looking for a gold rush? The "white gold" that stretches the length of Anfeh bay should satisfy. Ancient tablets dating from 1400BC describe the superior quality of Anfeh salt, once extracted through salinas, carved ponds in the coastal rocks that filled with salt water. After evaporation by sun and wind, the salt crystals gathered and were transported by caravan. Centuries later, Anfeh's salt marshes remain an economic resource for its residents. In 1995, windmills and terraces received funding for renovations, yet they are still in need of further repair.

9 Dinosaur relics

If you think you've seen it all, think again. **Girgi Sessine** (03 695181) will guide you to the edge of Anfeh where, according to him, the shore reached the highway some 100,000 years ago. When the sea receded, prehistoric caves were discovered. Although we cannot vouch for its scientific validity, the fissure cave still gives you goose bumps while imagining its ancient past. There, Sessine displays various marine fossils, animal skeletons, and even its latest resident's boots. The limestone cave has a fissure in its ceiling letting light sneak through. Adjacent is Layla's Cave, not named after some early cave woman, but its modern-day resident, Layla, who is happy to guide you around. It is near impossible to discover the 50 or so caves in Anfeh without guidance, so call ahead of time for a tour that is certainly out of the ordinary.

10 Arguileh on the seafront

There are few restaurants in Anfeh, so prepare a picnic basket and head for the beach, though no doubt you'll be invited for a BBQ and arguileh from a local or two. The unbelievably clear water, perhaps the cleanest in Lebanon, calls out for a dip.

The local traveler



Guiding in Lebanon since the early '70s, Antonia Kanaan has built up endless narratives on Lebanon's sites and its visitors

Veteran tour guide Antonia Kanaan takes a group around one of Beirut's most iconic tourist sites, the National Museum. With a career that spans over four decades, Kanaan must have guided visitors around the museum's historic collection hundreds of times and yet she still does it with sparks of enthusiasm. Today she arranges a special visit to an unfinished and rarely seen section of the museum, leading the group through a darkened basement to a row of enormous sleeping stone figures, the museum's resident tombs.

Originally from Bulgaria, Kanaan moved to Lebanon in the late '60s and her deep connection to the country is obvious. She was one of the first to take the Ministry of Tourism's two-year tourism course back in 1971, inspired to delve deep into the history and culture of her adopted country. "When I decided to take the course, it was more about my own curiosity to know the Middle East,

because everything was new to me," she says. "I never imagined it would eventually become a job for me."

The course brought in some of the highest caliber teachers, from a University of Sorbonne history of art academic to the renowned Lebanese archeologist and director of the National Museum, Maurice Chehab, head curator of the National Museum for over three decades. Chehab, who passed away in 1994, once guided Kanaan and her colleagues around the museum, and now as she guides visitors around the same collection the room dedicated to mosaics is named in his memory. Kanaan also teaches the next generation, giving "Cultural Heritage of Tourism" courses at Saint Joseph University (USJ) in Beirut.

In the early '70s, Kanaan would give tours by special request to visiting VIPs, before her relatively new career took an

unexpected direction with the advent of the civil war in 1975. "The war started and there were no more tourists. I stopped work as a normal touristic guide but from time to time, during short periods of peace, I would show delegations from abroad around," she says. "I guided a lot of journalists during the war. I had to know what was happening with the fighting and change my way of seeing things."

It wasn't until the '90s that the tourism industry regained some normality, but despite the country's current instability taking its impact on tourism, she's noticed things significantly improve since those early days. "From the mid '90s onwards was a very good period. The hotels, roads and the guides improved. Things got better, we're much better equipped now."

Kanaan remains in love with all of Lebanon's iconic sites and still enjoys guiding around Baalbeck, Byblos, Tyre



and Sidon. “All over Lebanon there is something interesting. It’s a small country but there is a lot of diversity. Even Tripoli has a completely different spirit,” she says.

For Kanaan, the most engaging side to tour guiding is the connection with people. “You give a lot, but you take a lot too. Guiding is interactive, you really meet lots of interesting people,” she says. Later, while sitting in an Achrafieh café, Kanaan brings out a pile of thank you letters from the diverse groups of tourists she’s guided over the years, from the wife of the owner of Bank Audi, to visiting academics. The interests of her tourists are often diverse, from archeology enthusiasts and culture buffs to those on a hunt for theological landmarks. “I couldn’t have a job in a bank working within the same four walls. I’m in the open air with people. It’s a kind of liberation in a way,” she says.

Though Kanaan knows Lebanon’s touristic sites as well as the back of her hand, her thirst for knowledge is endless. For her, it’s essential to “always remember, read something new and be up to date.” Till today, Kanaan continues to discover new sites such as the recently restored 12th and 13th century churches in the mountains above Batroun and their rich intricate frescos.

From tales of guiding during the war, to touring with a group of pilgrims to visit Saint Charbel after the recovery of a woman’s dying husband, Kanaan’s numerous stories are deeply engrained in Lebanon’s rich cultural and historical tapestry. “I have so many interesting stories, maybe I should start to put them on paper.”

Call ahead to organize a tour in Lebanon with Antonia Kanaan (01 201399)

Antonia Kanaan’s address book secrets

Food favorites

For quality Lebanese cuisine I like Mhanna (08 800634, Birdawni, Zahle.) After a visit to the Bekaa in the summer the restaurant’s riverside location is a relief. In the city I enjoy La Centrale (01 575858, Mar Maroun Str, Saifi) its outdoor terrace has a great atmosphere and view and the food is excellent.

In the city

If I’m in Beirut I like to walk along the Corniche and to Downtown. On Saturday mornings I like to wander down to Souk el Tayeb (01 442664, 9am-2pm), where I head straight for a fresh saj with zaatar and vegetables.



Photo courtesy of LMT Association

Cave of the 3 bridges

Head to the valley of the Tannourine mountains to see a geological masterpiece surrounded by beautiful landscapes

The Tannourine mountains in Lebanon’s North are a vast area of largely unspoiled natural beauty, worthy of days of exploration. Though many have heard of the legendary Baatara Pothole, few people have visited, or perhaps even discovered its elusive entrance. Located after the village of Tannourine, in Balaa, down a small dirt track, its entrance is marked by a Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT) information board that now bears the scars of bullet holes from passing hunters. A short winding descent down the steps of a grassy bank reveals a true natural wonder. Named the “Cave of the Three Bridges”, an impressive waterfall, only visible

in spring, drops from a height of 255 meters, behind three precarious natural bridges connecting the two sides of the enormous hollow gorge.

“There are many factors threatening its future”

Back in the early ‘50s, Baatara Pothole was not only a hidden gem but also an undiscovered one, until it was unearthed by French bio-speologist Henri Coiffait (1907-1989) in 1952. Lebanon’s historic Spéléo Club du Liban (SCL) founded back in 1951 by the country’s early caving pioneers Lionel Ghorra, Sami Karkabi, Raymond Khawam, and Albert Anavy – explored the pothole in the same year, eventually reaching the bottom in 1953. They mapped it in the ‘80s, revealing a deep chasm that reaches 250 meters.



Pothole at 100m depth
Photo courtesy of Johnny Tawk

The depth of history on these lands is rather overwhelming. The limestone rocks themselves are ancient, formed around 160 million years ago during the Jurassic period. Water carved this geological masterpiece and the Wadi Baatara stream, which still flows freely in winter and spring from the springs of Ain Daaouq and Ain Arbit, gradually seeped through the limestone until the top bridge was created. Over millions of years, erosion from all sides eventually formed two more natural bridges that give a striking foreground to the flowing waterfall. Back in ‘85, a dye test by the Lebanon SCL revealed that the underground water source re-emerged 13 hours later in the spring of Dalli in the village of Kfarhilda, 6km away.

The Wadi Baatara stream, makes up one of Lebanon’s biggest sources of fresh water from the Tannourine mountains,

eventually emerging through five natural springs, from its journey across the underground source below this very gorge. "It's very important as a geological formation," Johnny Tawk says an active caver and modern member of the SCL. "All the water from the Laklouk river passes through this sinkhole. If it's polluted directly, then the groundwater of Lebanon is polluted. We've found more than 40 sinkholes in the area. They act like a sponge for all the surrounding snow and water." The Tannourine water plant, located further down the valley, has sourced water from these very mountains for over 30 years, selling 120 million liters of water to Lebanon the region, West Africa and Australia every year.

The Baatara Pothole is sadly under threat, from contamination of water flowing into the pothole, to sediment from sand quarries and excavations along with careless sports activities inside the pothole. The Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT) is one of the associations trying to create awareness and help protect it.

"Unfortunately it is being abused," says Karim El-Jisr from LMT. "There are many factors threatening its future. Climbers and cavers create new routes, further damaging the rock formation and underground network. There should only be one fixed route down."

Besides the human interference, as with all rock formations Baatara Pothole is still in a slowed-down process of natural evolution, as yearly freezing and thawing continues to evolve the limestone. It's a kind of metamorphosis in gradual motion, best enjoyed on a clear day with a picnic.

LMT Spring Thru Walk 2014 (05 955302, register at lebanontrail.org) April 4- May 4

Speleo Club du Liban's international caving expedition (03 201509, speleoliban.org) Aug TBC

WHERE TO EAT

Auberge Eco Dalida, Tannourine El Fawqa, USD40 inc. breakfast
71 679055
f Eco Dalida

WHERE TO SLEEP

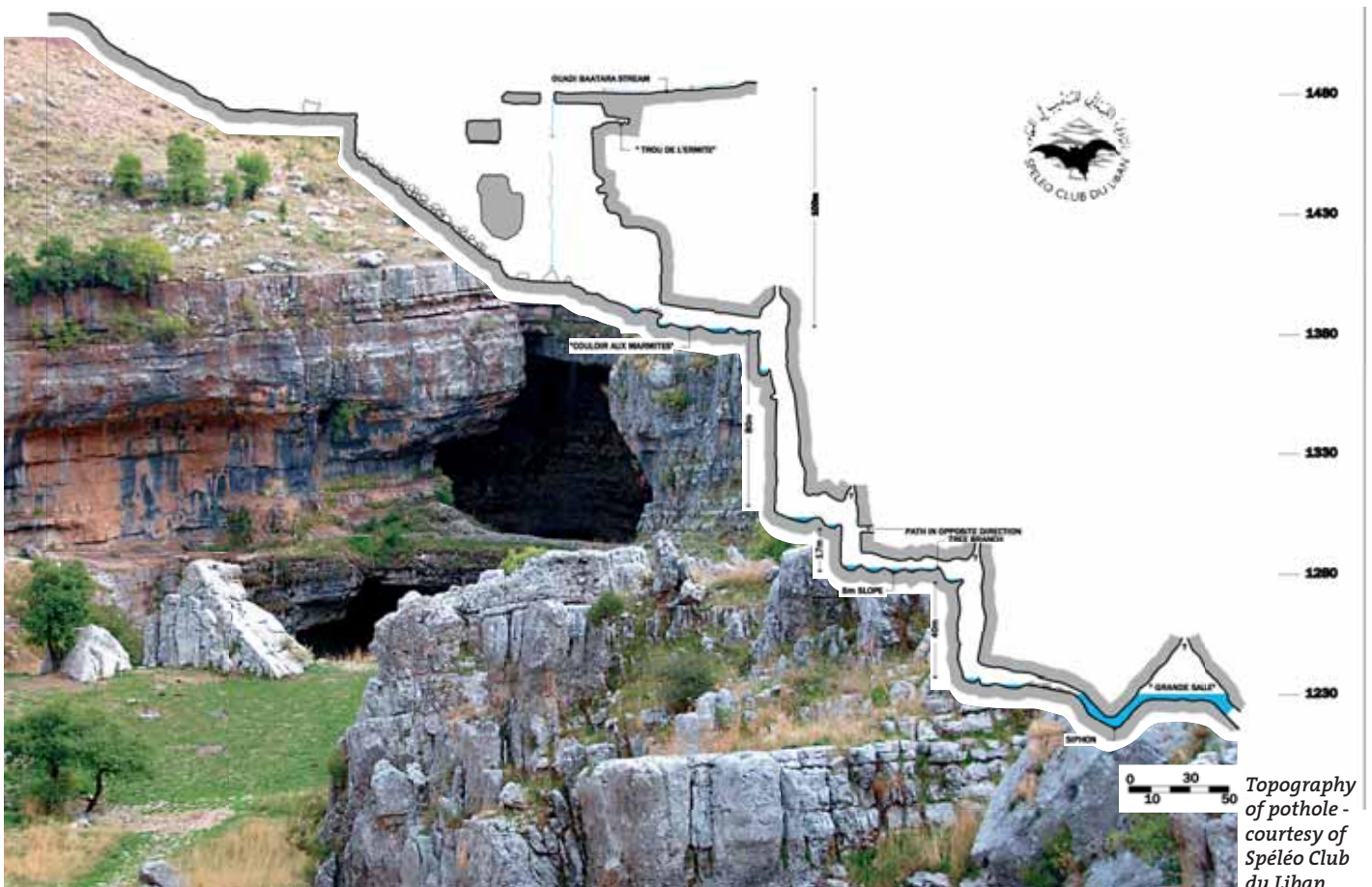
Moultaka al Nahrein, Tannourine Tahta, USD15-35 03 536874

GO WITH A GUIDE

Georges Sarkis 03 679055
Chalita Tanios 03 223428

HOW TO GET THERE

Baatara Pothole is a 72km (1hr24mins) drive from Beirut. Take the highway north from Beirut through Jounieh, until you reach Byblos. Turn right off the highway towards Douma and Tannourine. Pass Tannourine village and continue on the mountain road upwards until you reach Balaa.



Topography of pothole - courtesy of Spéléo Club du Liban

TAKE ME THERE



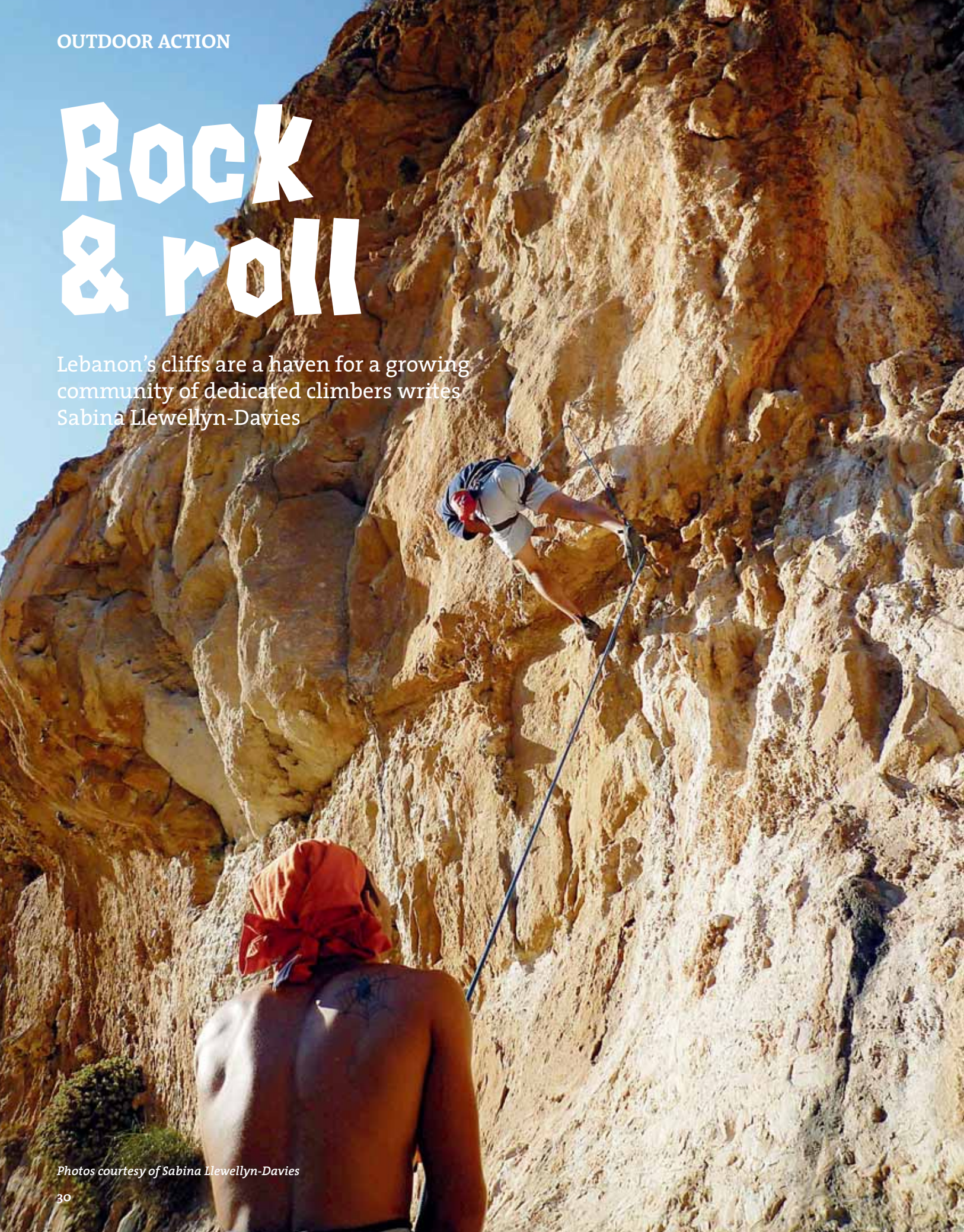


Tyre

Photo courtesy of Shreekanit Somany

Rock & roll

Lebanon's cliffs are a haven for a growing community of dedicated climbers writes Sabina Llewellyn-Davies



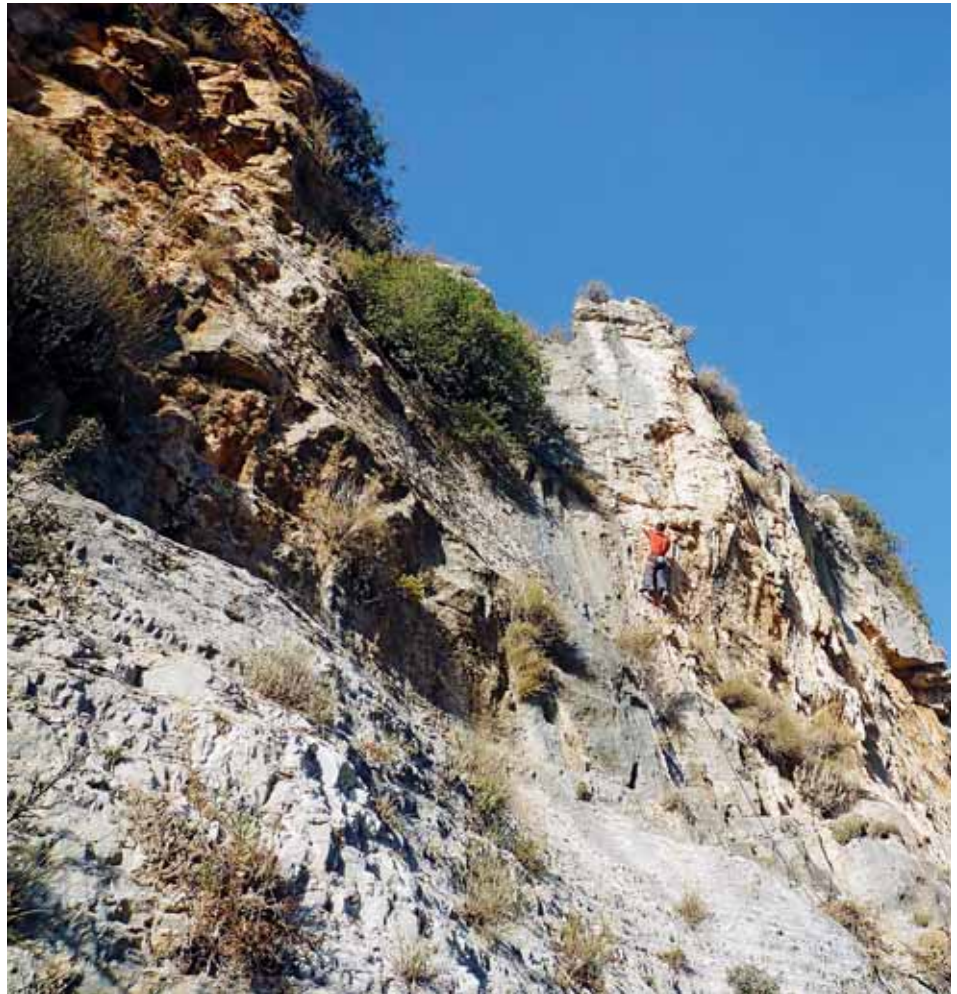
Photos courtesy of Sabina Llewellyn-Davies

It's a warm morning and I am savoring the heat of the sun as I follow Zan Chediac along a rocky trail down a steep descent into the valley of Aamchit, North Lebanon. Dodging thorns he finds the right path and after a half-hour hike the amber cliffs come into view. The Aamchit crag, a majestic beauty dubbed the Dreadrock by local climbers, awaits us. "The climbing routes here range from level 5 to 8," explains Chediac, a 20-year-old biology student and percussionist who spends most of his spare time rock climbing. "And more routes are being added all the time, it's an on-going effort," adds Tony Dagher, a fellow climber.

While they take out their climbing gear, I walk along the steep ridge to see what the other climbers are up to. High up I spot a guy, armed with bolts, climbing up swiftly. Hanging on to a rock with the fingertips of his left hand, he takes out a drill with his right hand and bores a hole to place a bolt to expand the route. Where he finds the energy from is beyond me, but he does, fueled by the voice of singer Peter Tosh sounding out from a phone attached to his belt ... "but if you know what life is worth, then you would look for yours on earth..." The guy is George Emille, a 24-year-old audiovisual student, who lives in Aamchit.

"I cannot really remember when I began climbing," Emille tells me after touchdown. Calm and serene, he just smiles when I compliment his bolting efforts, looking up towards the cliff obviously more focused on his next climb than flattery. "So why is this crag called Dreadrock?" I ask him. "Take a look," he says pointing up to the straggling hanging rocks, "what do they resemble?" Mmm, I get it, dreadlocks. His gaze does not leave the rock and it's clear that he's pondering his new route, "his project" his friends call it. Four years ago Emille

“I wanted to raise awareness for the incredible climbing potentials in our country”



and the guys used to just top rope down into the valley. None of the rocks had been bolted yet. "We used to spend days just looking at the cliffs dreaming about bolting routes." 20 routes later, he is still dreaming and always looking to add new experiences.

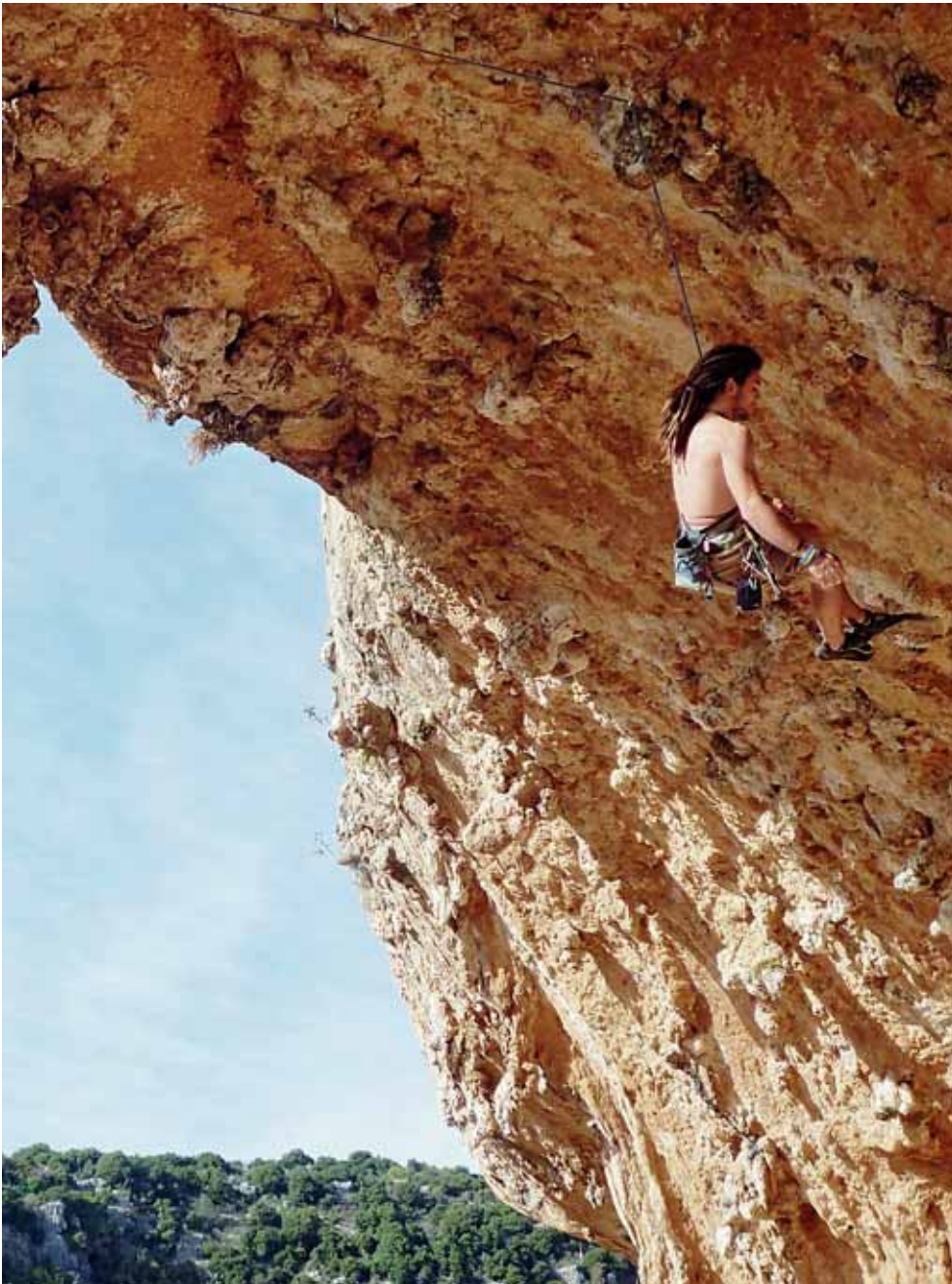
I leave him to it and sit down to watch Dagher dangling above, also determined to finish his own project. A tall blond guy comes to stand next to me. I have to strain my neck to look up at him. He introduces himself as Jad Khoury. "Yalla Tony, hurry up and finish," he jokes while taking out his gear. Khoury and Dagher are obviously very close mates. Khoury explains how as a bunch of friends they began to bolt the bare rocks a few years ago. Last year in November, he organized the first Lebanese Climbing Festival together with Dagher and fellow climbers Emille and Steeve Romanos. It was a huge success and local climbers were joined by many other nationalities, from British, American and Belgian to Italian, Bulgarian and French.

CLIMBING ESSENTIALS

- Chalk Bag & Chalk
- Harness
- Belay Device & Locking Carabiner
- Backpack
- Quickdraws (10-12)
- Rope (10.5mm X 60 M)
- Rope Bag
- 60 cm Nylon or Spectra Slings (1-2)
- 120 cm Nylon or Spectra Slings (1-2)
- Oval or Locking Carabiners (2-3)
- Helmet

BEST CLIMBING SPOTS

- Afqa
- Faqra
- Naher Beirut
- Laqlouq
- Tannourine el Tahta
- Harisa-Tannourine
- Aamchit



CLIMBING GROUPS

Climbing Circle

03 126675

f [climbingcirclelb](#)

Climbing Lebanon

03 112338, 03 211822

[climbinglebanon.com](#)

La Reserve – Afqa

01 498775/6, 03 727484

[lareserve.com.lb](#)

Lebanese Climbing School

03 776705

f [LebanesClimbingSchool](#)

Rock Climbing Lebanon

jad.khoury@gmail.com

f [rockclimbinglebanon](#)

Sports4life

03 574874

[sports4life-lb.com](#)

The Lebanese Climbing Association

[lebaneseclimbingassociation.org](#)

f [Lebanese Climbing Association](#)

U Rock Climbing

03 807854

[urock-climbing.com](#)

“Its great here, I love it,” says Mathias Gen, a French climber who shows off his incredible skills later, on a cliffhanger. “It’s so good to see so many climbers gathered together sharing the same passion.”

“By organizing the festival I wanted to raise awareness for the incredible climbing potentials in our country,” adds Khoury. “Aamchit is just one of the sites. There is great climbing also in Afqa , Tannourine, and many other beautiful spots in the North of Lebanon.” He goes on to explain that the Dreadrock, has 20 routes that range from 13 to 30 meters,

with each named by the local climbers: It’s Finger lickin’, Phoenician Phoenix, Immaculate Elephant and Dead Snake are a few of the little gems. “Dead Snake, do you remember?” says Romanos, another dedicated climber, who comes to join us. “What happened?” I ask. “What do you think?” he replies. “We found a snake in one of the crags.”

“Do you want me to belay you?” asks Khoury, with a broad smile, holding up a long blue rope in front of me. I gladly take him up on his offer and adjust my harness. Climbing up the route, dubbed Sojo, was actually not as easy as it looked.

But, a few climbers gathered down below and encouraged me. “Yalla, you can do it,” shouted Romanos and I made it to the top. “Coming down,” I yelled. “Go for it,” shouted Romanos, as I let go of the rock. Looking out to the Mediterranean the sun was just about to set, turning the sky into a stunning rosy hue. As the day turned to dusk the climbers began to pack up and prepare for the hike back, already discussing the climb of tomorrow.



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09/910520 - 646064

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Ministry of Tourism

The monuments *that speak volumes*

The historical inscriptions of Nahr Al-Kalb
reveal the diverse visitors of the past

Photo courtesy of Myriam Shuman

Filled with both history and natural beauty, Lebanon's mountains give a dramatic setting to some of the country's most striking sites; the Nahr Al-Kalb region is certainly no exception. Shying away from the speeding highway, only a 30-minute drive from Beirut, situated just after the tunnel on the Jounieh highway, the "Dog River" features a Roman bridge and a collection of historical steles, carved onto stone slabs on the mountainside. They commemorate moments in history, documenting special events that took place in the region or passing marching armies. Every major conqueror or general who passed by the area marked this spot at the mouth of Nahr Al-Kalb with a monument. It's the perfect historical stop-off on the way up North, though with its steep staircases it's not ideal for kids.

The marbled pieces blend homogeneously with the mountain's surface, as if time has fused them into one. For the Romans the area held a mystical significance, and they named the river Lycus (River of the Wolf). Their mythology claims a wolf statue that once sat on a rock plinth close to the river's mouth guarded the area and when enemies passed, it would howl in warning. Within the narrow site, there is a fusion of natural green beauty embracing the shadowy gray rocks – the weight of history emanates from the mountain's monuments.

Egyptian pharaoh, Ramses II, placed the first stele inscription here while passing through on mid-journey to Syria. He also marked Nahr Al-Kalb as the border between Egypt and the lands of the Hittites, ancient Anatolian people whose kingdom once spanned the North Levant along with parts of Iraq, Syria and Turkey. In 671 BCE an Assyrian king passing through Lebanon on his way to conquer Egypt also placed a stele on the mountain's wall, right next to its Egyptian counterpart. More contemporary steles include an inscription from Napoleon, English inscriptions from World War I and World War II after Lebanon was liberated from opposition forces, and most recently an inscription for the liberation of South Lebanon from Israeli forces. There is also a monument from the 1920s commemorating the French troops that lost their lives in Lebanon.



It's perhaps the unique richness of Lebanon's natural landscapes, within a region largely dominated by barren desert, which has attracted many foreign invaders and enticed important historical figures to carve a document of their journeys onto the mountains. And, as these figures fade into history, their monuments, stand proudly as a reminder of Lebanon's past.

📍 WHERE TO EAT

Enjoy Lebanese mezze by the river at La Verde Resto, LL67,500 pp Lebanese mezze and open drink; Fri-Sat, 10pm; Sun 2pm. On Saturdays watch the resident bellydancer move to the rhythms of the Orient. 70 166377

☕ CAFÉ STOP

Continue a further five minutes along the highway to Kaslik and stop for an afternoon espresso at local café, Qube. 70 588222
f QubeKaslik

🚗 HOW TO GET THERE

A short 23km drive from Beirut, the journey to Nahr El Kalb takes no more than 30 minutes. Take the highway North, turn to the right just after Jounieh tunnel.

The Breakfast of Kings

The morning staple of the Middle East, the tradition of eating *foul* continues in Lebanon, from the street-cart to the 24-hour back street restaurant



Photo courtesy of Myriam Shuman

An ancient dish, *foul* is both the breakfast of Pharaohs and paupers across the Middle East and North Africa. While thought to have originated in Egypt, with the mashed beans being mentioned as far back as Ramses II, it soon spread to the Levant becoming the staple dish that it is today.

THE DON OF FOUL

Mahmoud Safer stands outside his *foul* restaurant **Al Waleed** (01 735800, Zarif) clad in black, arms folded against his bulging chest. To his right are a line of motorbikes each accompanied by a young man wearing an Al Waleed uniform ready to make a delivery. Safer gives off the air of a Don, and he is, at least in the Beiruti neighbourhood Zarif where his small restaurant is located.

Amongst those who consume *foul* on a regular basis the ancient breakfast dish causes a division. While the recipe is in principal the same, the *foul* connoisseur believes their local restaurant does it 'just so.' Safer agrees there are a number of ways to make *foul*: "Each restaurant has his own way," he says, seemingly philosophical for a second, then adds with a grin, "but mine is best."

Safer first began working in his father's *foul* restaurant in Tariq Jaddieh at the age of eight. Twenty years later, Safer and his two brothers each have their own restaurants. He was only 19 when he took charge of his restaurant in Zarif. Across the brother's three restaurants, the same *foul* recipe is used that first began all those years ago. For them, the length of soaking time is key: the *foul* must be left in water for a total of eight hours, before it is simmered on heat for a further two hours to remove any excess water.

Safer shares his trade recipe secret, a delicate attention to detail in which he adds the ingredients – garlic, lemon, salt and oil – directly in the bowl the customers will eat from. Other *foul* restaurant owners mix the ingredients in a larger bowl, then transfer it to another for serving. He believes that his method keeps the dish fresh and tasty.

HIPSTER FOUL

Abu Hassan (01 266888/01 266880, Bourj Hammoud) set up his *foul* restaurant



40 years ago. Over in the Armenian neighbourhood of Bourj Hammoud, he is almost certainly the *Foul King*. He passed away years ago, but his photo sits as a reminder above the entrance to his restaurant where his daughter Saana sits at the cash register. His sons also work in the family trade. During the day a mix of regulars, mainly old men and families, frequent Abu Hassan's but at night it comes into its own. Unusually, for a *foul* joint, he stays open 24 hours, so by 3am you can find an intriguing mix of customers, from groups of men arriving after a late night shift laboring, or taxi drivers after the night rounds, to hipsters who just stumbled out of a bar in nearby Mar Mikhael. In these early hours of the morning, Abu Hassan's *foul* brings everyone together in their search for a thick lining on an empty stomach.

FOUL AL FRESCO

Pushing her cart along the Corniche, with pots of beans balanced on top, you can find **Ilham Ali Kannan** on most days, wandering up and down the seafront. She has been wheeling her cart of *foul* around for the past six years with her



husband often joining. They serve the *foul* whole rather than mashed, on a tray garnished with lemon, salt, and cumin. People strolling along the Corniche eat it with a toothpick for a quick foul on the go.



Making the best foul Tips from Beirut's local masters

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 kg of dry Fava or Madammes beans or two cans (serves 4-6 people)
- 3 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 2 tablespoons of lemon juice, or to taste
- 3 tablespoons of oil
- 1 pinch of salt
- 1/2 teaspoon of cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon of hot chilli pepper
- 1/4 kg of dry chickpeas or 1/2 can

PREPARATION

1. You can use beans from a can but ideally use dried ones and soak 24 hours in advance.
2. Drain the water.
3. Cook the beans and chickpeas in two separate pans covered by water on a high heat, until soft.
4. Reduce the heat and let the beans simmer for 30 minutes up to an hour. They should be almost disintegrated and the water almost completely evaporated (you can drain any excess water if necessary as they should not be watery).
5. Place the beans into a bowl and mix in the oil, garlic, lemon juice, cumin, salt and hot pepper, mash gently with a fork, and serve.
6. Add the chickpeas on top of the foul dish for variety.



GET YOUR FOUL FIX

Historical Fava Hommos

A mix of hommos with tahinah and foul, induced with chili red sauce and topped with fried almonds.

Falamanki, Sodeco. LL9500

01 323456

Humble perfection

Le Professeur, Mar Elias Str. LL6000

01 703666

Foul with a view

Foul Time, Raouche. LL5500

01 801307

Foul with a history

El Soussé, Mar Elias. LL5500

01 312145

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An ancient art finds a new direction

With her innovative designs, **Joumana Medlej** represents a modern and exciting development in the world of calligraphy. She delves back into calligraphy's roots and pulls them into the future

THE NEW SCHOOL

Medlej spent years studying Kufi, the oldest calligraphic form of Arabic script, in an apprenticeship in Beirut with Samir Sayegh, one of the most famous names in contemporary calligraphy. "He used to say to me 'for the past 800 years nothing new has happened in calligraphy, it's just repeating old stuff' and he has been trying to bring it back to life," says Medlej.

Contrary to popular belief, calligraphy did not begin as the highly regulated

art form that it is today, governed by Islam and strict rules. It was Ibn Muqla, an early notable Persian official of the Abbasid Caliphate dynasty and notable calligrapher circa 900AD, who created the rules that determined calligraphy, as we now know it. "The rules came much later; there were 300 years of just experimenting with the form. The freedom and creativity was incredible," says Medlej.

Sayegh encourages his students to go back to the early principals of the

script and approach the art form with the original freedom that calligraphers once had. Studying under him is a vastly different experience than under more traditional calligraphers that often take a more rule-based approach. The study of calligraphy often translates to following and mastering the traditional method which Medlej describes as "patient imitation...you just repeat old forms forever and ever, there is not room for much creativity in the traditional approach."

Medlej has certainly adopted the contemporary approach of embracing the letter and trying to understand it. She doesn't have a form or style, "in each piece the script invents itself," and while she uses a traditional medium and Arabic letters she attempts to express contemporary concepts. For Medlej, Arabic script offers greater depth than Latin letters, with the form itself designed to appeal to the eye and speak to you on another level, rather than just existing as a functional representation of speech.

MOVING FORWARDS

Yet, despite being one of the brightest names in the Lebanese calligraphy scene, Medlej left Beirut for London a year ago. "There isn't a big market for it in Lebanon," she says. "There is also a lack of resources. I can't find the materials I need [in Beirut], it's just a complete dead end."

Medlej feels there is more potential and appreciation for her work in the West. "There is a real interest for Arabic calligraphy in London," she says, noting the irony and tragedy in the lack of support within the art form's regional origins. In Cairo, the interest in calligraphy is greater than in Lebanon, Islamic calligraphy can be studied at the American University of Cairo, though it's taught through the lens of traditional Islamic calligraphy. For Medlej, who is working on an evolution of the form, this is not an option; "you are breaking a tradition. It is [considered] borderline blasphemous. You run into trouble if you do something new."

Medlej is about to begin teaching a calligraphy course at The Arab British Centre in London, which promotes Arab arts and culture in Britain. In keeping with her work, the course will encourage the participants to look to the roots of calligraphy. Her method is her own, born of years of experience as a calligrapher and her own extensive research. While the interest in Medlej's work is growing in London, there are only a handful of calligraphers working on its contemporary form in Lebanon, leaving the future for this ancient art uncertain.

Purchas Medlej's work at majnouna.com



TYPOGRAPHY: NADINE CHAHINE

As digital culture evolves, along with the field of graphic design, Arabic typography – the art of designing letters to be used in print – has flourished over the last decade. Lebanese type designer, Nadine Chahine is something of a pioneer within Arabic typography. She has had a considerable output in the field, creating the award winning Gebran2005 typeface. It's named after Gebran Tueni, the former editor and publisher of the Lebanese newspaper, An-Nahar. Gebran2005 is a modern version of a classic, newspaper headline style. Chahine described the typeface as having a "distinctive, self-assured presence, just like Gebran."





Re-discover *Lebanon*

Photo courtesy of Shouf Biosphere Reserve

Off the mainstream tourist map, Lebanon offers a diverse array of rich experiences for the local visitor

Think of tourism in Lebanon and many people will reel off a list of the country's most iconic ancient archeological tourist sites. But Lebanon is not only Baalbeck's temples and Jbeil's castle, the country has a vibrant and diverse cultural heritage, the long-held traditions of rural village life that are the very essence of the nation.

In times of a slowed down international tourism industry, there is much we ourselves can do to support local communities and reinvest in the country. Lebanon is full of stunning landscapes, hidden gems and ancient customs, along with a rich food heritage at its strongest in Lebanon's rural regions, all waiting to be discovered.

Locals can re-discover the richness of

their own country by traveling off the beaten track, going to the source of food culture and heritage sampling seasonal food made by locals from Lebanon's villages. From pomegranate molasses, thick syrups made from the ruby red fruit, to honey made by small-scale producers in the Lebanese hills and farming the fruits of the lands with olive oil production, a trade passed down through the generations; visiting Lebanon's rural regions can be an enriching experience for the taste buds.

The Food Heritage Foundation (FHF) is a Lebanese non-profit association that aims to revive local food heritage and as a result achieve sustainable livelihoods. "One of the aims of the Food Heritage Foundation is to promote rural-urban linkages," says Zeinab Jeambey, a

member of FHF with an M.Sc. in Food Heritage Management. "We encourage local tourists to visit the farmers and local producers in their villages, in their [own] environment."

As plants come into bloom in spring, a Lebanese food trail can offer the riches of the season. "The spring is the season for edible wild plants with the mountains abundant with wide varieties that can be eaten raw or cooked, in salads or baked. Seasonal dishes include tabbouleh korsanne, shaashoub bel laban, fatayer zaatar akhdar," says Jeambey. "To taste regional specialties we recommend contacting guesthouses and B&Bs in rural areas and asking them to prepare traditional seasonal dishes."

Lebanon still maintains its rich craft

customs and traditions from the ancient copper trade in North Lebanon's Tripoli, to delicate artisanal needlework and silk production, the history of which can be viewed at The Silk Museum (thesilkmuseum.com) in Bsous. Carpentry made by hand can still be discovered in the winding souks of Saida and basket and straw weaving all across the coastline in Byblos and Batroun.

For some branches of tourism within the country, a shift in target market towards internal tourism has already proved successful. After the 2006 war, the Shouf Biosphere Reserve made some modifications to their marketing and ecotourism strategies. "We decided to focus on the Lebanese," the Shouf Biosphere Reserve Director, Nizar Hani says. "The results speak for themselves. This year, despite the situation, we have an additional 2000 number of visitors compared to last year, totaling to 63,000 visitors. The vast majority were locals, with foreigners only making up 6,000 most of whom are residents in the country."

Hani believes there are numerous rarely visited beautiful landscapes and experiences in Lebanon that just need drawing more awareness to. He points to the Barouk River Valley Trail, a hike trail in a beautiful riverside landscape where history and nature come together. Four ancient bridges are visible on the route, one established as far back as 1507. "You can see an old wheat press on the route, there's a nostalgia for this," he says.



Photos courtesy of Food Heritage Foundation

"Our generation never experienced [this history first hand]. They've maybe only heard about it from their grandparents or learned about it in a history lesson."

The group's Cedars and Faces tour package directly promotes sustainable tourism to local villages, encouraging a dialogue with local rural communities alongside a trip to the cedars. "What we are trying to do is establish a different image and theme for each village, where people can enjoy speaking to the locals and visit hidden attractions. We are working with local municipalities in order to renovate the attractions they have."

"In our opinion, Lebanon needs its citizens to simply move around," FHF's Jeambey says. "Locals should indulge in internal tourism, getting to know areas, villages, towns and cities in Lebanon that they are not acquainted with and [learning about their] customs and habits, their local anecdotes, typical foods and landscapes."

TRAVEL LEBANON FESTIVAL

On May 27-31, the Travel Lebanon festival will launch, inviting visitors to discover Lebanon and highlighting the country's culture and heritage in one vibrant festival. Held simultaneously with the Garden Show and Spring Festival in Beirut's Hippodrome, the Travel Lebanon festival, supported in its first edition by USAID encourages internal and rural tourism at a national level.

With over 60 exhibitors, visitors will have an opportunity to meet face-to-face with the leading figures of the country's tourism industry, along with the people on the ground. Local municipalities, craftsmen and designers, outdoor and cultural activity associations, along with associations, NGOs, rural resorts and reserves and eco-lodges will be present, spanning every corner of the country.

The event will help to build an awareness of what's on offer inside Lebanon, highlighting the country's hidden gems, stunning landscapes, and alternative travel possibilities.

Travel Lebanon - Beirut Hippodrome
May 27-31, 5-11pm
travellebanon@hospitalityservices.com.lb

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY



"Rural Lebanon offers unlimited year-round opportunities for tourism and recreation, for all age groups and pets!

Rural tourism is not a luxury but a way of life and an avenue for economic revival."

Karim El-Jisr, president, Lebanon Mountain Trail Association
lebanontrail.org



"The industry's role is to bring to the attention of locals the hidden gems of our country, to promote regional specialties, local

festivities and eventually channel visitors to the area. On the other hand, by creating a demand for experiencing the rural horizons the industry should assist the communities in building the needed infrastructure for such demand."

Zeinab Jeambey, member of the Food Heritage Foundation
food-heritage.org
f [FoodHeritage](https://www.facebook.com/FoodHeritage)



"We are trying to provide a good example of ecotourism, to enjoy nature, local communities and offer something

different from the ordinary tourist routes."

Nizar Hani, director of Chouf Biosphere Reserve
shoufcedar.org
f [ShoufCedar](https://www.facebook.com/ShoufCedar)

MADE IN LEBANON

Reviving *the past*

Award-winning social enterprise, 2B Design brings life back to Lebanon's dying heritage



Down a Jeitawi side street in Beirut, a traditional Lebanese home houses a small atelier. Past an old iron gate, a garden is filled with the peeling wooden shutters, decorative iron tables and old balconies of Lebanese heritage buildings, giving a hint to what lies within. The atelier belongs to 2B Design, an award-winning Lebanese social enterprise with a mission to “restore the unseen beauty of the broken.”

2B Design’s flagship brand named “Beyt,” a nod to the symbolic meaning of home in both Arabic and Hebrew, highlights the enterprise’s focus on promoting the inclusion of people from diverse religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, a kind of small-scale protest against what is often a divided sectarian region. “We show that diversity can be an element of beauty, unity and strength and is an important factor in building

atelier itself is filled with decorative iron lamp bases with a modern touch, juniper wood candle holders re-salvaged from aristocratic mansions and delicate iron tables. “We source them from all over the country, from the north and south, Basta and scrap yards,” Boueri says. “Most of the pieces are in a very bad state. Some of them still have bullet holes in them. We try to keep them as they are, to leave the character and scars.”

“The philosophy of 2B Design is to give worth to the past and keep it alive”

Based in Beirut for years, French native, Benedicte de Vanssay de Blavous Moubarak, saw Lebanon’s old heritage houses being destroyed around her; the decorative iron pieces that once stood grandly, or the former railings of mountain villages melted down and sent to scrap yards. In 2004, she decided to do something about it and set up the furniture and home decoration social enterprise, 2B Design.

The enterprise works to save architectural salvage from destroyed 18th, 19th and early 20th century houses and revive them into contemporary home design creations. Combining Moubarak’s long career working on social-angled projects, 2B Design places social-responsibility at its core. They have a long-standing collaboration with the Lebanese social organization, Arc En Ciel, whose team of skilled disabled craftsmen works on rejuvenating the pieces. The enterprise also works with women from marginalized backgrounds, training them to hone their artisan skills to make an income to support their families.

They have also built strong collaborations with social-leaning enterprises from a New England-based homeless charity, Pine Street Inn and Habitat for Humanity, an NGO which helps with home refurbishment for its employees, to Tahaddi who fight against poverty, including the Dom (gypsy) community of the Hay el Gharbi slums of West Beirut, and Dream InDeed, an organization that strengthens local social entrepreneur projects.

lasting peace,” says 2B Design’s mission statement. “We also work on building bridges and promoting understanding at [a] grass roots level between [Arabs] and Americans.”

“Benedicte wanted to combine both sides – salvage all these architectural items and at the same time try to do something different and actually employ people that are in need and marginalized in society,” says Katia Boueri a recent addition to the 2B Design team. The

Once the 2B Design team has salvaged the raw material, Moubarak, now based in the States where the organization has recently opened a store in Cambridge, Massachusetts, works on the designs from photographs. The drawings are then sent to the team of blacksmiths at Arc En Ciel, where the salvaged wood of old doors on window shutters might be added to the pieces. Once the basic design has been completed, they’re returned to the atelier, where every morning Nada and Rania work



on the finishing – scrubbing down the iron and removing the years of paint layers, and doing patina work, in natural pigments. Below the atelier is a dark basement filled with finished stock which is shipped to the US once every few months to the enterprise’s largest customer-base. The final products can be found in several outlets, from US-based furniture design fairs to furniture stores across Europe.

While Beirut’s heritage buildings are quickly disappearing from the urban landscape, the philosophy of 2B Design is to give worth to the past and keep it alive. Within a modern-day throwaway culture, the value 2B Design places on the discarded pieces of the past and recycle-philosophy stands out. “Through our pieces you can actually see what the houses used to be like. They’re destroying Beirut, but we’re trying to keep the past alive through new designs. This is the way to not forget,” Boueri says.

In January, 2B Design became the first Lebanese company to receive B Corp certification from bcorporation.net, joining 900 other social and environmentally minded international businesses. And, after receiving a USD15,000 grant from USAID earlier in 2014 to buy raw materials, 2B Design hopes to further expand and be able to employ more people from marginalized communities and extend their reach.

2B Design’s presence in the US is spreading the narratives of Lebanon and the region, helping to break down stigmatizations of the Middle East and build a deeper emotional connection between the two countries.

*2B Design Atelier
(01 572217, 2bdesign.biz)
Shereh el Kazen
Jeitawi
Beirut
www.2bdesign.biz*





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(1330 - www.mea.com.lb)

Money Talks



Some say that money makes the world go round, but in reality it's the World that defines the money we see. Curator and museum expert, Juliana Khalaf pays a trip to the Banque Du Liban Museum

It has been an exciting period of growth for Lebanon's museum scene and recently the Banque Du Liban (BDL) Museum, which opened in November 2013, joined the growing number of new institutions that dot the country's cultural landscape. It documents the varied political history of Lebanon through its many currencies.

Visitors to the BDL Museum, located in the BDL headquarters in Hamra, can view a short documentary created by Philippe Aractingi, a renowned Lebanese director behind films such as "Under the Bombs," and "Bosta." The documentary explores the origins of bank notes in Lebanon along with the early formation of the BDL and its roots. BDL was one of the founding members of the International Monetary Fund in 1947 and by 1964 it became an independent institution.

The museum's resident expert Sonia Harb is on hand to guide visitors through the exhibition halls. "Money is truly the

image of its country's time and people," she says. Exploring the intricately designed paper notes through a sliding magnifying glass reveals Lebanon's colorful political history; the push-and-pull of its previous rulers, displayed through its numerous currencies. Images of Lebanon's heritage icons are depicted in delicate watercolors from historical monuments like the Roman temples of Baalbek to the 2,000-year-old cedar tree.

Only three generations ago Lebanon and Syria were part of the Ottoman Empire, and until 1918 the Ottoman Lira was used as the national currency. When the French Mandate over Syria and Lebanon came in to play, the country switched to the Syrian Piaster, used until as recently as 1937. After that date, a new era was born, as Greater Lebanon appeared alone on printed money for the very first time. The currency of the time reflected the feeling of a growing independent nation. Although it might have been Lebanese in name, essentially the currency of the

time remained a disguised French Franc. By 1943, Lebanon made a monetary agreement with France to separate its national currency from the unstable Franc, asserting the independence of its monetary system, along with its official independence as a nation.

In 1939, a rare 250 Lebanese Lira (LL) was equivalent to USD 50,000. For the following generation, who reached adulthood in the mid '60s, that same amount could easily be spent on a month's rent. By the late '80s, a kid's LL 250 pocket money could buy a bag full of candy to last a week. Now over 20 years later that same amount barely buys a piece of gum.



Photo courtesy of Ralph Mrad

The tour concludes in the coin gallery, where you will be regaled with stories from the long-forgotten past. From the Phoenician era of 5th century BC, when the Persians were governing over the region, to the period of Alexander the Great, who ruled over his vast empire from 333-306 BC up to the time when Islam spread its influence over the Mediterranean lands from the 7th century AD to the early 20th century, the minted coins are an image of exquisite craftsmanship and an exceptionally rich history.

As Lebanon's modern history continues to evolve, the future notes of the country will go on documenting its transformation and eventually reach this very museum.

BDL Headquarters
Sanayeh, Beirut
Tue-Fri 9am-1pm; Sat 9am-12pm
01 750000
groups email sharb@bdl.gov.lb



LL100, 1945

Lebanese bank notes courtesy of BDL



LL100, 1945



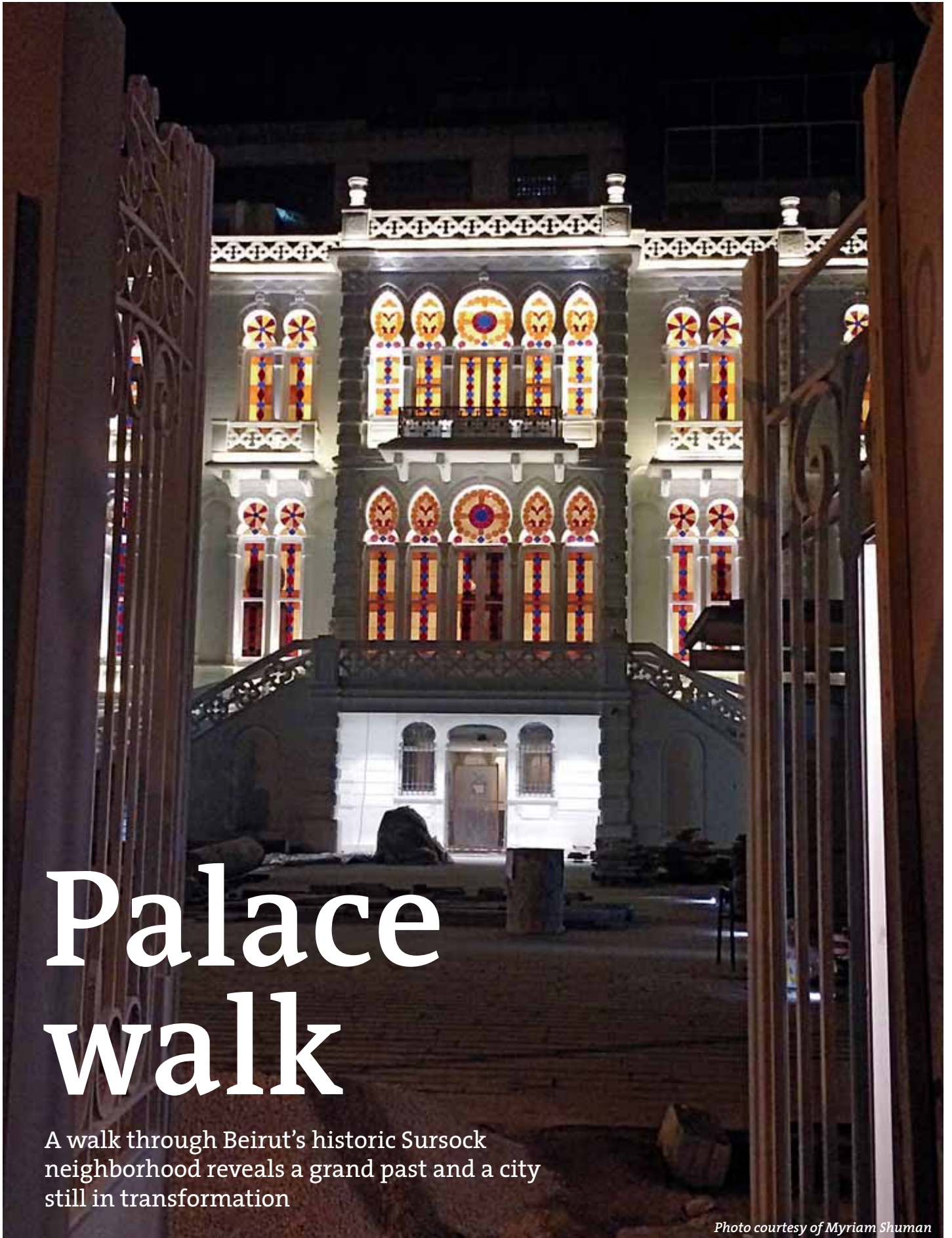
LL1, 1945



LL1, 1945



The present LL50 000 note



Palace walk

A walk through Beirut's historic Sursock neighborhood reveals a grand past and a city still in transformation

Photo courtesy of Myriam Shuman

Located in the Achrafieh district of Beirut, Rue Sursock is one of the city's most historic neighborhoods. Once a "humble" weekend getaway for a few of Beirut's most prominent families, namely the Sursocks, Bustros' and Feghalis, today the 18th and 19th centuries mansions are few and far between. A handful of impressive villas and palaces though still remain, leaving a hint of the glorious past that once dominated the area and one that begs to be discovered with a self-guided tour.

FEGHALI HOUSE

Begin your leisurely stroll at the Feghali House, on the intersection of Sursock and Nicolas Ghosn Street. Peer through the grand iron clad gates to see the newly refurbished private residence, a perfect example of classical Levantine architecture.

VILLA PARADISO

Just a quick walk away, on Mar Antonios Street, parallel to Gemmayzeh's Rue Gouraud, is another beautiful part-crumbing villa, named Villa Paradiso, also owned by the extended Feghali family. The house was built in delayed stages – the ground floor was mostly built in classic 19th century Ottoman-style, some parts date further back. The first floor was an early 20th century addition, built in the 'French Mandate' style. The façade of the house shows the significant influence of art nouveau on traditional Lebanese architecture. Villa Paradiso's elegant colored three-arched window designs, stay true to one of the most characteristic features of Lebanese architecture. Seven years ago, the Feghalis set about restoring the house, replacing the roof and creating new interior space while being careful to maintain its authentic features. British artist Tom Young recently restored the space for his Carousel exhibition with a vision for it to become a cultural and social hub.

GREEK ORTHODOX

ARCHBISHOPRIC

Next stop is the Greek Orthodox Archbishopric of Beirut. Although the original ornate table in the reception area dates back to 1904, the structure itself is said to be much older. Originally



Photo courtesy of Lady Cochrane

part of the Sursock Palace grounds, the house was donated to the bishopric by the Sursock family when a relative was excommunicated from the church. According to Lady Yvonne Cochrane, who was born into the Sursock family, her uncle gave the property to the then Archbishop as a kind of appeasement to be reaccepted into the church. The wall that now separates the grounds of the two residencies was added later on.

SURSOCK PALACE

Originally built in the 1860s, Sursock Palace (sursockpalace.com) is now the residence of its original owner's granddaughter, Lady Cochrane, who inherited it at the age of two. Of all the Sursock residences, it is the largest and the only one to retain its pristine glory, due to the renovation efforts of the family.

The house, designed as one large rectangular structure, was built by master buildings in the traditional Lebanese style of architecture, according to Giorgio Tarraf of the Save Beirut Heritage foundation. A double flight of white marble stairs leads to the main

entrance on the south façade and after passing through the grand doors there is an uninterrupted view of the entire 35-meter length of the great hall.

The doors that open into the grand salon and dining room (along with the entrance) are from the XVII century and were brought from Naples. On the south side of the door leading to the dining room, the walls are lined with collections of Italian paintings from the 16th and 17th centuries originally housed in the Palazzo Serra di Cassano in Naples, the home of Lady Cochrane's maternal grandfather, the Duke of Cassano.

The library is Lady Cochrane's private sitting room and is paneled in mahogany. It features a large portrait of Madame Isabelle Bustros (born Sursock) by French painter Bordes. Madame Bustros was the aunt of Lady Cochrane and having no children of her own, adopted her niece. She died in 1958 at 96 having exercised great influence not only within the Sursock family, but also socially and politically within Lebanon.

In the garden the visitors' kiosk is even older than the main house and was converted into Turkish baths when the house was built in 1860. It was later converted into guest rooms.

Lady Cochrane expresses sadness at the lack of importance placed on Beirut's heritage buildings, among an environment of fast-paced construction and development of which she believes the high rise apartments are destroying the city's identity. "There used to be many beautiful houses in this area, many have disappeared. It's terrible," Lady Cochrane says looking out from the grand salon of her house onto beautiful grounds. Vast gardens which once filled the Sursock area have long disappeared and the Sursock Palace grounds is one of the few, of significant size, that remains across the whole of Beirut, after landowners sold their houses and gardens for speculative building.

Back in 1960, Lady Cochrane co-founded The Association for Protecting Natural Sites and Old Buildings (APSAD) (apsadonline.com). The association has helped to restore and save numerous heritage buildings over the years, from the restoration of the façade of Jounieh's Town Hall in 2003 to the rehabilitation



Photo courtesy of Lady Cochrane

of the Jounieh souk in 2001. Having seen the city change around her though, Lady Cochrane is cynical for the future, "Everything is being destroyed right, left and center. We're not having much success in the protection of heritage in Lebanon. Beirut 1,000 times dead, 1,000 times resuscitated," she sighs.

BUSTROS PALACE

As you cross the street and head towards the main road, to the right you'll find Bustros Palace, built in the 1930s. Today it houses the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants.

SURSOCK MUSEUM

Back on Sursock Street, across from the Archbishopric, is the Sursock Museum, scheduled to reopen after refurbishment in November 2014. The residence of Nicolas Ibrahim Sursock was built as a private villa in 1912. It is a great example of Lebanese architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, mixing features

from both Venetian and Ottoman architectural influences. In this period of history, all residential structures in Beirut followed these architectural elements. Nicolas Sursock, a Lebanese art collector and prominent member of the Sursock family, who died in 1961, bequeathed his villa to the city of Beirut. According to his will, the villa was to be transformed into a museum to house Lebanese artists' works. Since 2007, the museum has been under extensive renovation and expansion.

VILLA LINDA SURSOCK

End your tour at the Villa Linda Sursock, now a temporary location for the Bristol Hotel's (03 500622) catering and events. The restored palace is the ideal location to get a real sense of the pomp and grandeur associated with an aristocratic lifestyle. Every weekday, from 4-6pm, English-style high tea is served here with select finger foods in the luxurious and historic setting of a Sursock palace.

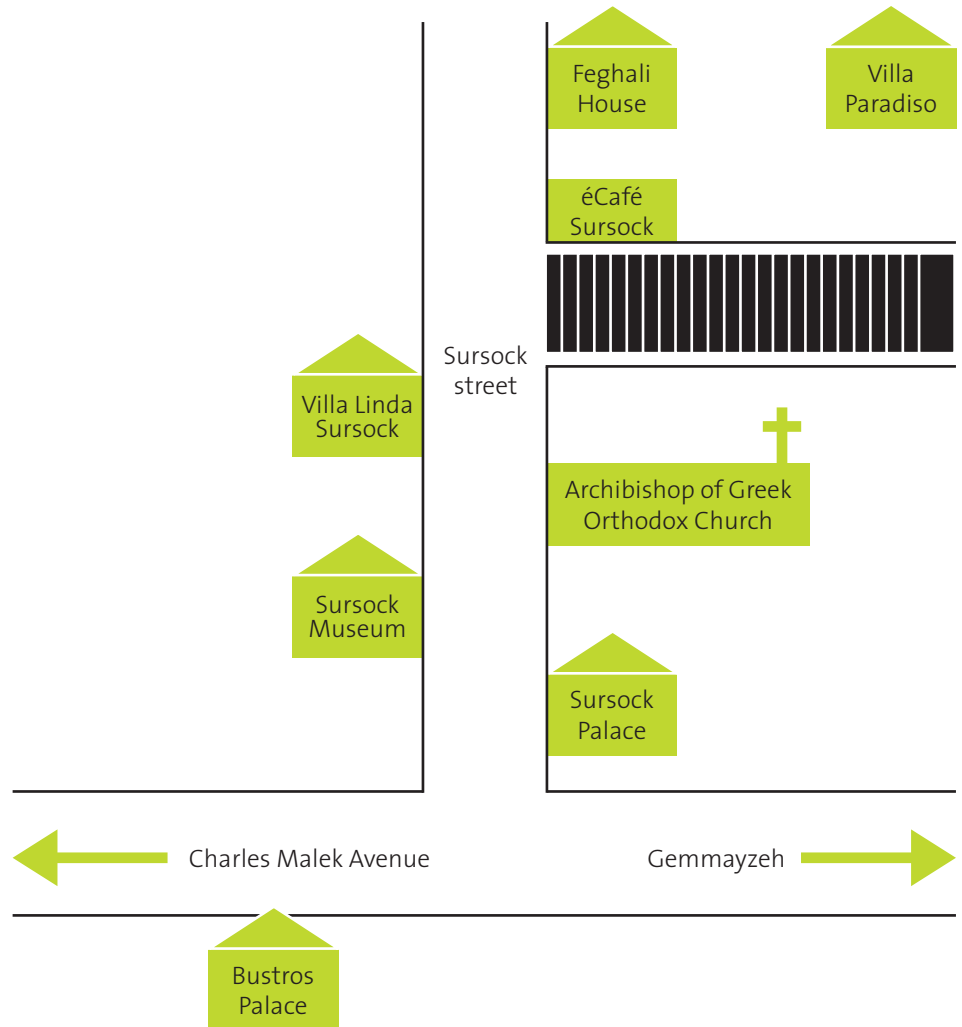




Photo courtesy of Giorgio Tarraf

GETAWAYS

Escape the city and take a weekend road trip around Lebanon



Architectural excursion Tripoli

With construction of Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer's International Fair of Tripoli halting with the advent of the Lebanese civil war, what remains are the haunting modern-ruins of an architectural marvel. The 10,000-hectare expanse on the Southern edge of the city is one of the country's finest examples of architectural modernism and begs for exploration. For in-depth architectural information on the International Fair of Tripoli and the country's modern heritage buildings contact arabcenterforarchitecture@gmail.com.

SLEEP

Stay overnight in the enchanting Château des Oliviers (06 411170, chateau-des-oliviers.com) which looks out over Tripoli and its coastline.

EAT

Traditional Arabic sweets at Abdel Rahman Hallab & Sons 1881 (06 444555).

SEE

Visit Bassam Shaykh El Najareen for wooden craft (06 436720) and Atelier A La Mer (03 086573) for ship models.



Mountain escape Chouf

Spend a weekend getting purposely lost while hiking in the Al Chouf Cedar Reserve, a beautiful nature reserve nestled in the Chouf mountains. As one of the best locations in the country for bird diversity, bring your binoculars, hiking boots and enjoy the endless trails. Stay over at the traditional Beit el Hana guesthouse, in the sleepy village of Maaser al Chouf and watch the sun go down from the leafy terrace.

SLEEP

Beit el Hana (03 454771 auberger@arcenciel.org, USD40 pp.)

EAT

Lebanese mezze at Al Midan (03 763768, *Deir El Qamar*)

SEE

Moussa Palace Museum (05 500106, 03 273750, moussacastle.com.lb) is the result of an ordinary eccentric's dream to build a castle with his own hands.



Tour by the glass Batroun Mountains

Take a spring tour around the vineyards of the Batroun Mountains, where many of the country's new wave of boutique wineries are based. Start with Atibaia (atibaiawine.com), a small-scale boutique winery in a beautiful 17th century house. Next head to Aurora (01 449530, aurorawinery.com) a family run winery with vineyards that stretch over 1.4 acres. Finish the tour at Ixsir (71 631613, ixsir.com.lb) who produce an award-winning wine in a winery named by CNN as one of the "greenest buildings in the world."

SLEEP

Mayouli Bed and Breakfast (71 000516, *Facebook: MayouliBedBreakfast*)

EAT

Seafood at White Beach (06 742404, *Batroun*)

SEE

After a day in the mountains, drop back down to sea level and tour the ancient souks and churches in the peaceful fishing town of Batroun.

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AGENDA

Ongoing weekly events

MON

Jbeil District Visits

A painted crusader chapel, a Phoenician rock carving and the Annaya pilgrimage
Liban Trek

TUE

The Near South Visits

Souks of Saida, Jezzine (handcrafts, palace & waterfall), Phoenician temple
Liban Trek

WED

Batroun District Visits

Rachana sculptures, Smar Jbeil citadel, Crusader chapel, Roman temple
Liban Trek

THU

Chouf District Visits

Deir el-Qamar lanes, Beiteddine Palace, Baaqline mansions
Liban Trek

FRI

The Bekaa Visits: Druze sanctuary, Roman tombs & temple, wine tasting, Ottoman bridge
Liban Trek

SAT

Qadisha Valley & the Cedars Visits: Medieval monasteries on the hiking trail (UNESCO), Gibran Museum, old cedar grove
Liban Trek

SUN

Harissa (1 way by cable car) + Jeita Grotto & Byblos
Saad Tours

Chouf Cedar Reserve - Barouk Forest
Saad Tours

March

SUN 16

Hiking in Maasser El Chouf
Club des Vieux Sentiers

Barouk valley; riverside hike
Liban Trek



Horseback Riding Zeghrine – North Metn
Adventures in Lebanon

Anjar to Kfarzabad Hike
Vamos Todos

SAT 22

Ayoun Samak Hike
Vamos Todos

Personal and Couple Fitness assessments
Promax

SUN 23

Celebrating Mother's Day
Gathering spring flowers (10am-5.30pm)
Neos Kids

Rappel & Escalade in Tannourine
Adventures in Lebanon

Discovery Tour: Douma & Byblos
Byblos & Beyond

Chouwene Hike; lake & gorge.
Liban Trek

Aramta Mleeta Hike
Vamos Todos

Keserwan – Darb El Qamar –
Darb El Sama Hike
Club des Vieux Sentiers

TUE 25

Nahr El Joz Hike
Vamos Todos

SAT 29

Wine Tour
Vamos Todos

Visiting the Museum of Beirut can be fun! (2.30pm-5pm)
Neos Kids

SUN 30

Niha Jezzine Hike
Vamos Todos

Mountain Bike ride in High Metn
Adventures in Lebanon

Wadi Qannoubine Hike
Mar Antonios Qozhaya
Club des Vieux Sentiers

Wadi Al Barouk Hike
Byblos & Beyond

Niha Hike (Zahleh); cherry blossoms
Liban Trek



April

SAT 5

Theatre discovery with Lamia
(10am – 1.30pm)
Neos Kids

Deir el Ahmar Hike
Vamos Todos

SUN 6

Mokhtara Batter Hike
Vamos Todos

Mokhtara to Haret Jandal Hike
Chouf District
Adventures in Lebanon

Earth Day in Tannourine Cedar reserve,
forming a 8km human chain, a symbol of
unity and power
Baldati

Hiking Jabal Moussa
Byblos & Beyond

Hike Torza; cliff fort
Liban Trek

SAT 12

Zawtar Chakif Hike
Vamos Todos

SUN 13

Mazraat Al Tefhah Hike
Vamos Todos

Ain Zhalta Hike
Chouf District
Adventures in Lebanon

Falougha Hike; pinewoods
Liban Trek

SUN 13

Be a Farmer for a Day
Byblos & Beyond

SAT 19

Wadi Annoubine Hike
Vamos Todos

SUN 20

Hiking Kaftoun
Byblos & Beyond

Niha (Chouf) Hike; cliff stronghold.
Liban Trek

Mazraat Al Tefhah Hike
Zgharta District
Adventures in Lebanon

MON 21

Jabal Moussa Hike
Vamos Todos

TUE 22

Egg Hunting in Baabda Forest (2.30pm –
6pm, Easter holidays)
Neos Kids

SAT 26

Smar Jbeil Jrabta Hike
Vamos Todos

Egg Hunting in Baabda Forest
(2.30pm – 6pm)
Neos Kids

SUN 27

Yamouni Hike
Vamos Todos

Wadi Qannoubine in Haouqa- Bcharre
Adventures in Lebanon

Visit our Lady at Ammouaa Kobbayst
Shir el Sanam Forest
Baldati

Orchid Trail
Byblos & Beyond

Hike Tartej; caves & pits
Liban Trek



Nour Farra-Haddad's golden rules for hiking safely

- 1 Always hike with a buddy.
- 2 Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.
- 3 Know exactly where you are going. It's ok to improvise as you hike, but make sure you have a map or guidebook to help you find your way back.
- 4 It is important that there is an experienced group leader who is familiar with the route.
- 5 Bring plenty of water.
- 6 Some common plants in the wilderness are harmful to hikers – wear long sleeves and trousers.
- 7 Dress appropriately. Always carry quality rain gear and don't be afraid to turn back in bad weather.
- 8 Don't over exert yourself. If you need a break, take it.
- 9 Respect the nature and local communities: do not build fires, trespass on private properties or leave trash behind. Leave all the areas in the same way you found them!
- 10 Bring a first-aid kit along. Learn how to treat basic injuries and how to prevent dehydration, heat stroke and hypothermia.

May

THU 1

Bchaleh Douma
Vamos Todos

SUN 4

Ammik Kefraya
Vamos Todos

Tannourine Hike; cliff faults
Liban Trek

Wine tour, Bekaa valley
Byblos & Beyond

Hiking in Imar (Zgharta Caza) & Miziara
Touristic Visit in Zgharta District
Adventures in Lebanon

SAT 10

Abadieh Roueiset Balout
Vamos Todos

SUN 11

Discovery Assia village and pottery
making
Byblos & Beyond

Hiking to Bmahray
Chouf District
Adventures in Lebanon

Karaoun Kawkaba
Vamos Todos

Hike Jabal Moussa; forest reserve
Liban Trek

MON 12

Night Hike to Harissa – Sahel Alma –
Harissa
Adventures in Lebanon

FRI 16

Harissa Full moon
Vamos Todos

SUN 18

Falough Ain dara
Vamos Todos

Chouf Hike; Akhwat Shanay Trail
Byblos & Beyond

Caving Adventure in Rweiss – Akoura
Adventures in Lebanon

ATV Ride Adventure
Faraya to Cedars
Adventures in Lebanon

Hike Qadisha valley; UNESCO
Liban Trek

SAT 24-SUN 25

Hasbaya Ebel Sakeh weekend
Vamos Todos

Cultural weekend
Koura & Batroun districts
Liban Trek

SUN 25

Explore Qadisha Valley
Byblos & Beyond

Destination: Beirut



**Bruno
Chaptini,**
head of the
Phoenicia

Hotel's concierge
department, shares his
top tips for a flying visit
to Beirut

DAY ONE

Start the day with a Lebanese-style breakfast on Bliss Street near the American University of Beirut with a Manousse from popular bakery, Faysal Snack (01 367830). Hours can be spent exploring the lively Hamra Street, packed with locals and tourists alike. Check out the Beirut Earth Market (Every Tue, 9am-2pm, Hamra Street), which brings together 15 small-scale farmers and producers. After getting lost down Hamra's side streets, reach the Corniche for a spot of people watching, enjoying a coffee looking out over the Pigeon Rocks.

DAY TWO

Do breakfast the French way with a croissant and espresso at café's Paul

(01 369123) or Lina's (01 379987, linaslb.com) in the new trendy Zaitunay Bay area. Continue towards Downtown and Beirut Souk for a shopping session around Beirut's designer boutiques. Next check out the work of regional artists in the surrounding art galleries such as Ayyam (01 374450/51, ayyamgallery.com. Zaitunay Str), continuing to the nearby Saifi Village for Espaces Ephemer Gallery (01442265, *Art Space, Al Jamarek Str*) and antique shops. Afterwards, head to the renowned heritage district, Gemmayzeh, stopping for a typical Lebanese lunch in Kahwet Leila (01 561888) or La Tabka (01 579000).

phoeniciabeirut.com



ACTIVITIES UPON REQUEST

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

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

CULTURAL EXCURSIONS

Hiking to cultural sites and nature reserves

WHITE ADVENTURE

Snowboarding, igloo building and cross-country skiing

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

Hiking & lunch at the Beautiful
Waterfalls of Baakline, Chouf District
Adventures in Lebanon

Hike Karm el-Mohr; high springs.
Liban Trek

SAT 31

Mountain Climbing
Vamos Todos

June

SUN 1

Deir Mimas
Vamos Todos

Maasser Hike; Cedar Reserve
Liban Trek

Explore the wetlands of Kfar Zabad
Byblos & Beyond

Bkassine Pine Forest Hike
Jezzine Caza
Adventures in Lebanon

SUN 8

Bsatine al Ossi
Vamos Todos

Cedars to Hasroun Hike
Byblos & Beyond

Kayaking in Litani River
Adventures in Lebanon

Ehmej Hike; iron oaks.
Liban Trek

FRI 13

Saydet Al Qalaa Night Hike
Vamos Todos

SUN 15

Kfarselwan Kneiseh
Vamos Todos

Blaouza Hike; crest hermitage
Liban Trek

Palm Island, Tripoli
Byblos & Beyond

Mar Semaan Aitou to Deir Hamatoura
Hike
Adventures in Lebanon

Discover Lebanon

Half Day trips

- Beirut + National Museum
- Jeita Grottoes + Harissa
- Beiteddine + Deir El Kamar
- Byblos

Full day trips

- Byblos
 - Baalbeck & Anjar
 - Sidon & Tyre
 - Byblos – Jeita
 - Cedars – Bcharreh – Qadisha
 - Byblos – Jeita
 - Beirut – Harissa
 - Beiteddine + Deir El Kamar + Sidon
 - Beirut + Harissa + Byblos
 - Byblos – Tripoli
 - Beirut + Jeita + Harissa
- Rida international

Beyond Lebanon

Apr (Easter period)
Cappadocia, Turkey
Liban Trek

APR 14-20

Morocco
Trekking in the Middle Atlas (Easy/
Medium level) *Liban Trek*

MAY 3-11

Cultural Tour and Imperial cities of
Morocco
Liban Trek

MAR 29

Camping in the middle of the desert
Day 1: Amman/Wadi Rum
Day 2: Wadi Rum/Petra.
Day 3: Petra/Airport
OCLUB

APR 17-21

Easter in Cappadocia
5 Days 4 Nights
Baldati

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vamos-Todos.com

* Call for regular daily trips
to all areas of Lebanon

BEIRUT BASICS



AIRPORT

Rafic Hariri

International Airport

The only international airport in the country, with live online updates every 10 minutes on 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. You should arrive at the airport 2 hours prior to departure.

+961 1 628000

beirutairport.gov.lb



BANKS

Bank cashiers are normally open between 8 am and 2 pm from Monday to Friday, and until noon on Saturday.



BUS ROUTES

Bus 1 Hamra to Khalde

Begins on Sadat St. and passes by Emile Edde St. (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 St. and passes by Radio Lebanon, Sassine Square, Mar Mikhael, Borj Hammoud and Dora before 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 Jdeideh, Bourj al Barajneh and the Airport before ending in Hay As-Saloum.

Bus 6 Cola to Byblos

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

Bus 7 Badaro to Bharssaf

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

Bus 8 Hamra to Ain Saadeh

Begins at AUH and passes

through Mar Elias, Becharra el Khoury, Sassine Square, Karam el Zeitoun, Bourj Hammoud, and Jdeideh before ending in Ain Saadeh.

Bus 9 Barbir to Nahr el Mot

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

Bus 12 Burj Al Barajneh to Hamra

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

Bus 15 Cola to Aley

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

Services (taxis that go along certain routes and take up to 5 people, 2,000 LBP each), street taxis (10,000 – 12,000 LBP), vans (1,000 LBP) and private buses (1,000 LBP).

Prices are correct at time of going to press.



TRANSPORT

Buses from Charles Helou Station will take you to destinations north of Beirut. You can also catch a taxi or service to Damascus.

Cola Intersection

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.



CURRENCY

The national currency is the Lebanese Lira also known as LBP. One US Dollar is equivalent to approximately 1,500 LBP. The US dollar is accepted almost everywhere. International bankcards are accepted in most places. 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 range from 2,000 LBP to 5,000 LBP. Valet services are available at most bars and restaurants at a cost of 5,000 LBP or 7,000 LBP 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 1 USD per piece of luggage and 10% of the bill at restaurants.



BLOGS

Blogging Beirut

bloggingbeirut.com

Destination

lebanondestinationlebanon.gov.lb

David Lebovitz

davidlebovitz.com



USEFUL

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Civil Defense 125

Red Cross 140

Fire Department 175

Directory 120

OGERO Phone Directory 1515

Weather 1718



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