

Lebanon Traveler



Lebanon 8,000 LBP

A publication of Hospitality Services in a joint venture with Beyond Beirut | Issue 12 | September - December 2014

Raymond Audi

*On a mission to
preserve Sidon's
heritage*

100

FALL DESTINATIONS
FROM AKKAR
TO JEZZINE

Yafta

*Visual language
of the streets*

MEET

*the country's
beekeepers*

Steel lines

*Touring Lebanon's
historic rail network*



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Autumn explorations



As the heat and crowds of the summer season slowly disappear, fall is one of the most pleasurable times to explore the countryside. This issue Lebanon Traveler takes you to some of the country's lesser-visited regions full of hidden beauty, from water-rich Akkar in the far north, to Lebanon's rural south success story, Jezzine, where a tourist re-development strategy has brought an influx of visitors to its endless pine forests and eco-orientated activities.



Lebanon Traveler is positively bursting with genuine experiences within Lebanon's rich nature, from an autumnal hike along the ancient Barouk River Valley Trail where history and nature come together, to meeting the beekeepers who keep a long-held tradition alive and collect the honey of the country, nature's defense against winter flu.



As always, sustainability continues to be the key issue for a strong future in the tourism sector. Elsa Sattout's vision of pastoral tourism could be the answer to boosting rural economies and prompt a re-connection with the natural world.

We also look at the traditions still alive and well in Lebanon, from the traditional hand-painted calligraphic *yaftat*, banners that dangle between electrical wires in the streets of the city to fond memories of leefeh – the fruit still grown on a small scale in the home gardens of Lebanon, that later fill the washrooms of the country.

We also delve deep into the rich cultural fabric of Lebanon from the artistic heritage of the family of Basbous sculptors and their deep connection to the village of Rachana to the Audi Foundation's commitment to preserving the architectural heritage and memories of the southern city, Sidon and the intimate museum of an Ain El Mreisseh fisherman which gives a nostalgic insight into Beirut's past.

The season of colors is almost upon us, it's time to get into our great outdoors and explore.

CONTRIBUTORS



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Elsa Sattout, PhD, is an interdisciplinary professional, teacher and scholar with more than 15 years experience in Mediterranean flora and Eastern Mediterranean ecosystems. She serves global communities through government agencies, international environmental governance and NGOs on the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development.



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Log on to our online platform, lebanontraveler.com, and find tips to explore the country.





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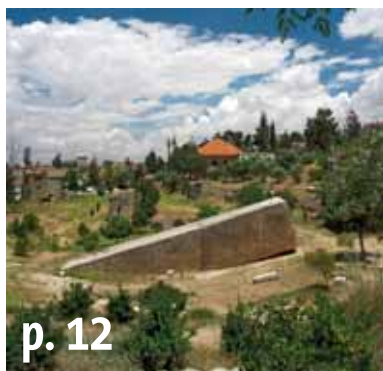
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Rural tourism

The Lebanon Industry Value Chain Development (LIVCD) Project's road map for rural tourism in Lebanon – prepared by Development Alternatives Inc. and Beyond Beirut, and funded by USAID – has been adopted by the Ministry of Tourism's Michel Pharaon as a national strategy. Unique in its inclusive approach, the strategy is the collective result of consultation with the direct input of rural tourism actors in Lebanon. The strategy is currently awaiting review and expects to launch this fall.



Lebanon's villages unite

A partnership between the Ministry of Tourism and the American University of Beirut (AUB) Nature Conservation Center brings the launch of the Baldati Bia'ati Awards Ceremony on the 11 October at AUB. The event will reward villages that have made biodiversity a main focus. The gathering further strengthens the ties

between organizations and individuals working on local development and rural tourism in Lebanon. During the ceremony, there will also be the launch of the Villages Tourism Maps, and a smartphone application encouraging tourism to rural regions.



Byblos launches "Office of Resilience"

This summer, Byblos became the first city in the region to create an "Office of Resilience," joining a growing network of what will become 100 Resilient Cities (100RC), with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation. The organization aims to protect a city's urban fabric against daily stresses such as high unemployment, endemic violence, and lack of public transport or water

shortages. "In a region full of uncertainty, it is time to re-adapt ourselves to a new interconnected world that is rapidly changing," says Tony Sfeir, member of the municipal council, who was appointed chief resilience office.

100resilientcities.org

Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace is celebrated every year around the world on 21 September. Lebanon joined the international celebrations three years ago when Bee Events & PR CEO, Nabil J. Tabet launched its first edition at Casino du Liban. This year's edition, which will focus on photography and fashion, was announced at a press conference held in the MIM museum. Lebanese heritage will also be promoted in the run-up to the day with an exhibition at MIM Museum and Zaitunay Bay, featuring the work of five notable Lebanese photographers.





Photo courtesy of Roland Ragi

Microbrewery of the north

In June 2014 Jamil Haddad launched Colonel craft beer in his microbrewery, tucked away in the coastal town of Batroun. He is setting himself apart within Lebanon's beer world, driven more by idealism rather than huge profits, as he follows what's been a life long passion.

Haddad's family has lived in Batroun for generations. Growing up he brewed liquor and beer with his dad and years later fine-tuned the process by attending brewery courses in the UK and Germany. After a decade working within marketing, he packed it all in for the love of beer and created the North's first microbrewery.

On walking into the brewery yard there's no industry noise, no loud machines, just calm accompanied by the breeze of the sea. At only 31, Haddad is something of a young entrepreneur and his attention to detail is obvious in the unique structure of the brewery, designed by interior architect Nadim Sioufi. The building is made from recycled wood planks, eco board panels and recycled plastic bags.

The production of Colonel is a small-scale operation and Haddad wears many hats. Not only in charge of brewing, he also oversaw the development of the building which rose from the ground in just five months. Brewing days start at dawn and end at sunset. And, since the brewery doubles as a beer garden with a canteen he takes care of customers into the evening.

"I realized that to be efficient I have to do many things at once," says Haddad, with a smile. Brewing is a labor-intensive product that requires patience, which Haddad certainly seems to have lots of. The Colonel lager pours light, with a soft head and makes a very welcome addition to the local beer market. And his brewery is well on its way to becoming the hub of Batroun.

*Open daily from 6pm.
Bayadir Street, Batroun, 06 743543
Facebook: ColonelBeer; colonelbeer.com*

One Million Trees

Diageo, the premium drinks company, has shown its commitment to the Lebanese environment with their pledge to donate one million trees to be planted across the country. As part of its seven-year environmental leadership program, they launched the One Million Trees initiative this summer, with one million pine and oak seedlings due to be planted around the country. Head of Asia Pacific at Diageo, Gilbert Ghostine, said, "Deforestation is a serious issue in Lebanon and Diageo's initiative will go a long way towards combating its detrimental effects on the environment."

Donate to the initiative at justgiving.com/diageo-gtme



Digitizing history

Beirut's National Museum gets a digital upgrade to its historical collection with the launch of a new free smartphone app which doubles as an audio guide to the museum, available in Arabic, French and English. The move is a step towards modernization that will no doubt make the country's heritage more accessible to a tech-savvy generation. The project was made possible with the donation of Antoine and Samia Meguerdiche who

wanted the memory of their son Basil to have a place in history. Now visitors can download the app and explore the museum's treasures through their smartphone, tablet or one of the in-house iPads.

Download the app "Beirut Museum" on Apple Store (IOS) or "National Museum of Beirut" on Play Store (Android)



NEW OPENINGS

Zenotel

With its grand opening in mid-September, the opening of Zenotel was something of a labor of love for the three Lebanese Gemayel sisters. Having long lived abroad, they opened Zenotel out of a love for their village, Bhersaf. Though hotels dubbed "wellness retreats" usually come with high price tags, their belief is that the concept should be accessible and affordable to all. Located in Bhersaf, Metn, the wellness retreat and spa has stunning views and offer holistic body therapies, nutritional detox programs and energy rebalancing. Local tourism is encouraged and their menu's are built around local organic suppliers.

04 984281, zenotel.me



Dar Haneen

The recently opened Dar Haneen, a cozy guesthouse in the mountains, is filled to the brim with antiques from around the world, from religious iconography to the first printing machine for Arabic typography in the world. The guest house's owners built their collection over 20 years with a dream that one day they would fill their future guesthouse, which has now become a reality. Dar Haneen is located in a traditional Lebanese home with tiled floors and Oriental pieces and its peaceful location offers the authenticity of the Lebanese village.

Main road Bhersâf, Mount Lebanon
03 743316, Facebook: Dar-Haneen



Lebanese cuisine with a view

Located in the Chouf's ancient town Deir al Qamar, Deir al Oumara is a charming hotel retreat in the mountains just a short drive from Beirut. Within the perfect atmospheric settings, they have just launched the new Lebanese restaurant, Soufrat al Oumara. With a focus on local produce, and as self-proclaimed "fervent disciples of the culinary arts," Soufrat al Oumara is sure to impress.

deiraloumara.com

L'Auberge de la Mer

Boutique hotel, L'Auberge de la Mer opened in Batroun in August with its nine bedrooms boasting a view on the old fishing port. In a building that dates back to the 19th Century, stunning interiors of stoned arched ceilings and contemporary furniture bring together tradition and modernity. Guests can enjoy the onsite bar and a dip in the jacuzzi and two restaurants are soon to open. With outdoor terraces that look out on the sea, L'Auberge de la Mer is the perfect location to soak up the atmosphere of the sleepy fishing town.

06 740824, laubergedelamer.com

The Train Station

Mar Mikhael's beautiful train station has long sat static, a remnant of the "golden age" of Lebanon when the country had a fully running rail network. This summer, Bo18 and Alain Hadife teamed up to bring life back to the train station once again, though this time in the form of an outdoor nightlight venue. It's become a popular trend-spot for Beirutis to sip on cocktails, while remembering the former transport hub, which we hope will one day again see trains passing through.

Open daily, 6pm. Mar Mikhael, 78 907090,
Facebook: [trainstationmarmikhael](https://www.facebook.com/trainstationmarmikhael)

CHEZ SAMI

Restaurant

Maameltein 03/910520 - 242428

09/910520 - 646064

Fax: 09/646164





The Food Guide: Beirut on a Plate

Sisters Leonore and Olivia Dicker brought together their love of food and travel to deliver a food guide that goes beyond the standard. Rather than a roundup of the city's best restaurants, "Beirut on a Plate" goes deeper; exploring street food culture, open air markets and food shops hidden away in the city. The guide also offers up an insight into the country's local history and culinary customs – a journey to the heart of Beirut, led by taste buds alone. "Beirut on a Plate" offers travelers a direct connection to the local experience and there are plenty of new discoveries for locals to re-discover the city's off-the-beaten-track food trail.

£30,000 at antoineonline.com

Food Wars

Authors Shadi Hamadeh and Mairi McClellan look at food security in their new book which tackles serious issues, though with a lighthearted fictional approach. It's a successful teaming between American University of Beirut director of the environmental and sustainable development unit, Hamadeh and UK-based children's books author, McClellan.

secretfoodwars.com

A Lebanese Archive

A new book by Ania Dabrowska sheds light on a long-forgotten archive from photojournalist Diab Alkarssifi that covers Lebanese and Arab photography. The 27,000 strong collection of photographs documents 100 years of Arab history. The unlikely meeting between Dabrowska and Alkarssifi happened in the UK in the early '90s when they met at a homeless hostel where he was staying and Dabrowska was running a photography workshop. He later came to her studio with part of his life-long collection, two carrier bags full of photographic prints and negatives covering everything from day-to-day life in his home city of Baalbeck along with found images from the photography studios of Baalbeck, Beirut, Damascus and Cairo – offering a rare insight into the cultural, political and everyday life of the Arab world, with the earliest photo dating back to 1889. In collaboration with Book Works and the Arab Image Foundation, Dabrowska and Alkarssifi hope to preserve the photographs of this fascinating collection and share with the world in the form of a book. They have launched

a campaign on crowdfunding platform Kickstarter to raise the USD 20,000 funds to cover the costs of producing a beautiful 1000 copy limited run.

Donate at kickstarter.com



ON THE NET

BEST OF THE BLOGS

No Garlic, No Onions

Prominent Lebanese food blogger, Anthony Rahayel, blogs about his main passions in life – food, travel and photography at No Garlic, No Onions. He offers an extensive guide to Lebanese food culture through restaurant reviews, recipes and opinion. *nogarlicnoonions.com*

Mashallah News

Regional platform, Mashallah, offers a new outlook on countries from Lebanon to Morocco and Iran, featuring diverse perspectives on intimate stories that cover everything from urban planning to identity. *mashallahnews.com*

Blog Baladi

A collective blogging site, Blog Baladi covers everything from new guesthouse openings to restaurant

reviews and reports of animal cruelty. Their only focus: keep it local. *blogbaladi.com*

WHO TO FOLLOW

@GateThirtySeven A publishing house and digital journal crafted by third culture kids.

@SOILSLebanon Encouraging sustainable development and environmental responsibility.

@hotelibanais The country's bed and breakfasts discovered.

@MarMikhael Tweeting on new openings in the Achrafieh district.

@theBIMProject Site specific theatre collective performing in public spaces across Lebanon.



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The weight of history

For first time visitors to Lebanon iconic tourism sites are a must. Indian tourist **Shreekant Somany** discovers the country's ancient history still has a presence

Sometime in July last year, very dear friends of my wife and I asked if we would join them on a trip to Lebanon. We were excited, but the obvious question of safety crossed our thoughts. But then, with who we were going and staying with was more than a reassurance so we agreed, and had no regrets.

The next few weeks went by, researching on the sites we planned to visit and making notes. The research itself was an eye opener, as my only recollection was from my parents' description of Beirut as the Paris of the East with extravagant stage shows, the famous grotto and so on. Little did I realize that Lebanon was a treasure trove of 7,000 years of history, starting with the settling of the Neolithic fishing community along the coastline, and later occupied by Babylonians,


Phoenicians, Greeks, Egyptians, Romans, Byzantine and Ottomans.

Remnants of Lebanon's past as a trade hub for precious metals, stone, silk and biblical cedar wood can still be seen today, with cedars dating back over 1000 years in the protected Qadisha Valley. Every former empire that once ruled over the country left an indelible mark, which today stands as a testimony of their greatness.

Two important cities in Lebanon, Tyre and Sidon, are mentioned within the Old and New Testaments. Though now a shadow of their former selves, they maintain impressive ancient ruins. Sidon's coastal castle, originally built as a crusader fort, now stands in stark contrast to a modern harbor. It is believed the port of ancient Sidon was in this area and, against a

distant backdrop of modern Beirut, the castle is a beautiful sight.

Further down the coast, Tyre, once an island city of the Phoenicians, is today dominated by a bustling, colorful souk in the heart of the old city, and has an unprecedented splendor. Exquisite purple textiles, dyed from murex shells fished from the Mediterranean, caught the fancy of both Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great. The resilient city fell to the Romans in 64BC and they built colonnades, public baths, mosaic streets, an arena and a hippodrome. Remnants of these massive structures stand as a reminder of the glory of the Roman Empire that once ruled the region.



“ Little did I realize that Lebanon was a treasure trove of 7,000 years of history ”

In the North Bekaa there is another stunning example of one of the best preserved and largest Roman treasures in the world, Baalbeck's Roman temples. They are counted amongst the wonders of the ancient world. Towering above the Bekaa plains, the monumental proportions of the temples of Venus, Jupiter, and Bacchus established the wealth and power of Imperial Rome. Visiting Baalbeck, the enormity and engineering of their architectural accomplishment is overwhelming.

Amongst the many historical sites across Lebanon, must visits include Beiteddine Palace, Jeitta Grotto and Ksara winery, to taste some of Lebanon's finest wines and see its unique natural cave cellar.

Steeped in an array of ruins from an ancient past, Beirut's history beautifully blends with modernity. The country's capital city offers moderate to luxury hotels and a diverse fine dining scene to suit every pallet. The recently restored

Downtown district makes for a very beautiful stroll dotted with great shopping opportunities from famous clothing brands, jewelry, watches and locally made items.

At night, the Corniche, the seaside promenade, shimmers in the light of the city, as people, young and old, enjoy the fresh sea air. It's a treat to the eyes, and a reflection of the beautiful folk who make the city proud.

VISIT LEBANON DIFFERENTLY

The **DHIAFEE Program** (dhiafeeprogram.org) offers the local experience with an extensive directory of guesthouses spread across the country and **L'Hote Libanais** (hotelibanais.com) also focuses on the human experience with their accommodation network of B&Bs, guesthouses and family stays. For package tours **Live Love Lebanon's** website (livelovelebanon.com) is a must visit, offering a variety of experiences for everything from adventure and nature to wine and culture. For the latest destination tips, getaways and hidden gems log on to lebanontraveler.com

A herd of sheep is grazing on a rocky, mountainous landscape. The sheep are scattered across a wide, rocky valley floor, with some standing and others grazing. The background shows steep, rocky hillsides under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is a typical pastoral landscape in a mountainous region.

Re-stitching fragmented ecosystems

Biodiversity conservationist **Elsa Sattout** talks of the importance of connecting Lebanese mountain chain settlements through pastoral tourism, and reveals the hidden beauty of their landscapes



Would the paths of shepherds bring a new connectivity across villages and towns settled on the low and high lands of Lebanese mountain chains? Could they draw sketches of green labyrinths linking humans to nature and tracing mosaics of cultural landscapes? In the paths of shepherds lies the potential to encourage city dwellers to reconnect with nature and they could become one of the driving forces mainstreaming mountain ecosystems within national conservation policies.

Cultural landscapes embrace both natural and built-up environments including everything from the topography of lands, climate conditions and plants to buildings and roads. They encompass the visual properties of the environment, reflecting human knowledge, religions, heritage values, social interactions and linked amenity services (Panagopoulos 2009; De Groot and Ramakrishnan 2005).

Stitching mosaics of man-made landscapes through transhumance tourism [the seasonal movement of human communities between regions] can rewire social-ecological networks.

Transhumance tourism can also work to alleviate poverty in rural areas while bringing new social and economic dynamics to marginalized communities and unfolding the beauty of the lesser-travelled landscapes of Lebanon.

Mediterranean coastlines and mountains were among the world's earliest regions to develop complex systems of societies and urbanism. Agriculture, forestry and grazing practices have dominated the Mediterranean region for centuries. More than 9,000 years ago in the Middle East, Neolithic societies left the first imprints of cultural landscapes (Naveh 2010, Vogiatzakis et al. 2005, Quézel et al. 1990). The diverse range of agriculture terraces, forests and rangelands has transformed Mediterranean countries into a melting pot of ecological and cultural landscapes.

Based on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment "Over the past 50 years humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history." As a result there has been an extensive decline in the quality of natural resources and changes in physical and ecological landscapes. Lately, with the pull of migration towards the urban

“ Over the past 50 years humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly ”

center, agricultural areas are being abandoned in favor of city life (Quézel et al. 1990, Panagopoulos 2009, Conrad et al. 2011). Cultural landscapes, formed over thousands of years of human interaction with nature, have been altered to an extent that our ancient relationship with nature has been forgotten.

In Lebanon pastoralism has long been an integral part of communal livelihoods in rural and remote areas. With new sedentary farming systems established in the mountains and the Bekaa plain – where livestock are confined to the farm – it is at risk of fading away altogether (Sattout 2014, Pastoralism - Forthcoming). Bringing back these traditional practices can have benefits on ecological, social and economic levels. Pastoralism plays a role in the conservation of old varieties of crops (wheat, barley, lentils, almonds,

“Traditional systems can certainly play an important role in the conservation of nature”

pistachio.) Lebanon, recognized as a hotspot for Eastern Mediterranean plants of various origins (Mittermeier et al. 2004), is located at the heart of a mega-diverse area for wild relative species, important food crops and pasture species, and landraces of high genetic diversity (Heywood 2008). As in many other countries, transhumance creates social interactions and connections that would not have been possible without these pastoral movements. So what about reconciliation between divided societies in war torn countries?

The social and ecological characteristics of landscapes, where livestock are moved from lowland to upland, in turn shape the ecosystem services (such as food and climate regulation) they provide. “Livestock drove roads [route’s for driving livestock on foot] are a special case of ecological corridors,” says Oteros-Rozas et al. Fragmented forest ecosystems – the consequence of woodcutting, expansion of agro-pastoral activities and urbanization – can be rewired through pastoral tourism, while greening the paths of shepherds. Pastoral tourism can revive the landscapes of social-ecological networks, shaped over centuries through pastoral activities, through the adaptation of herder management practices to a harsh and highly fluctuating environment. These are essential in delivering ecosystem services that are important for human livelihoods and societal development (Herzag, 2012.)

Traditional systems can certainly play an important role in the conservation of nature. It also can seed some innovative thoughts on changing the ethical behavior of people and align it with the existing values of the natural world. Walking the paths of shepherds can reconnect us with nature and reveal a new sense of self as well as help encourage agro-biodiversity and the best practices of conservation.



EXPERIENCE PASTORAL TOURISM

Alternative Tour Operator, **33 North** (71 331138, 03 454996, 33-north.com) organize two-day journeys with the shepherds, providing a real opportunity to experience the nomadic lifestyle within Lebanon’s stunning scenery. Andre Bechara, founder of tour operator **Great Escape** (03 360027, greatescape.com.lb) works closely with shepherd communities and can organize unique trips.

Nawaf El Radi tent (03 122676), located in Warde during the summer, they sell homemade dairy products and can even organize you a dinner. **Rony and Ghinwa bedouin tent** (03 530624) is located in Ainata. They own a butchery in Deir el Ahmar and make great overnight hosts.

Photos courtesy of Elsa Sattout

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10 things to do Akkar

Gilbert Moukheiber, tourism consultant and managing director of tour operator 33 North, shares his top ten in North Lebanon's Akkar region, where ancient history and rich rural landscapes fuse together

1 Biking through Akkar

Discover Akkar's beautiful coastal strip by bike, on flat internal roads that stretch over a distance of 41km. Visit sites off-the-beaten-track, meet local **Bedouins**, visit salt extraction sites and horse farms, and pass by the **Ostwane** and **Arka rivers**, lined with old bridges along the Lebanese-Syrian border.



2 Qobayat

Qobayat, located 140km north of Beirut, is the biggest Christian village in the Akkar region and worth a visit. **Qobayat's Scientific Permanent Museum for Animals, Birds and Butterflies** (*Couvent St. Doumit, Des Pères Carmes, Qobayat, 06 350004, kobayat.org*) has amassed an impressive collection of 161 bird and 23 animal species from Lebanon, along with an encyclopedic 4,000-strong butterfly collection, from all over the world. The town's long-abandoned silk factory, which closed its doors 1958, and the mansion of the Daher Family are fine testaments to the traditional architecture of the area. The welcoming **Jabalna Ecolodge** (*Georges Karam, 03 542935*) is located in a picturesque pine forest. It's a tranquil escape away from the dust and grind of the city, offering some respite for nature lovers. In the area a wide range of outdoor activities are available from hiking and biking to winter snowshoeing when the snow sets in. For delicious food and generous hospitality stop by Hatbe wa Nar restaurant (*Tony Antoun, 03 758798*.)



Photo courtesy of Antoine Daher



Photo courtesy of Antoine Daher



3 Discover hiking trails delineated by students

J'aime ma Forêt was launched by Mada Association (*mada.org.lb*) and 33 North to bring students from Meshmesh public school on board to delineate hiking trails that highlight the natural capital of the area. More than six trails of different levels and distances await exploration through the rich scenery, with the help of guides from local environmental association, Baldati Blaati. *Local guide, Nazih Qamaredine, 03 335 538*





4 Aarqa

If it's an adrenaline rush you're after, white water rafting while canyoning in Aarqa river, will deliver. Guided canyoning allows exploration of **Aarqa's canyons** by walking, scrambling, climbing, jumping, abseiling (rappelling), and swimming through the refreshingly cool water. After an afternoon of action, explore **Aarqa's archeological site**. Situated on a hill, just above the main road to **Halba**, it was once the site of an elevated city,

Acropole, spread over an area of 12 hectares. Ruins of a Roman fortress were discovered here, including columns, large stones, human skulls, clay pots, ruins of old houses, granite columns, and to the left a cemetery. The fortress once covered the edge of the entire hill and a temple overlooked both the fortress and the deep Aarqa river valley.

5 Andket

In Aandket, four ancient **water mills** situated along the riverbed were once used to grind wheat into flour for bread. Now owned by the Khoury, Nassim, Fakhr and Naffah families, some are thought to date back to before the 19th Century. The nearby silk factory was built in 1898 by Youssef Rahmeh Al Bcharrani, and lies next to a river bed south of Aandeket. Though the factory closed at the beginning of the French mandate, its history still lives in the memories of local villagers, many who worked in the silk factories and share fascinating tales about those early days. Ancient churches that reveal the heritage of the area can also be found in Andket. **St. Challita church** was built way back in 1538 and is classified by the Ministry of Tourism as an archeological site; the **St. Joseph Monastery** was built in 1887 under the guidance of Father Barnier and the **Church of our Lady the Poor** was built in 1852.





6 Iron oak forest

The Qamouaa plain and the iron oak forest is one of the most stunning areas to explore in the region. The biggest forest reserve in Lebanon has some 10 million trees of 46 different species, as well as hundreds of shrubs and thousands of flowers. The forest in Fanidiq is considered unique in its beauty and diversity, with over 400,000 trees made up of iron oaks, junipers and cedars, at an altitude of 1,600m above sea level. The trees were heavily logged, especially during World War II, when the British army purchased wood to make logs to build the Orient Express Railway.

For nature enthusiasts, 33 North offers two days of advance trekking in the areas of Akkar el Aatiqa, Qobayat and Qamouaa. During the journey, discover Lebanon's rich forests, filled with cedars, juniper and iron oak and follow trails stamped with history, first delineated by the British during the world war.

7 Akkar el Atiqa

Situated 24km from Halba, the **Akkar el Atiqa Fortress**, sits atop a hill between the two dramatically deep valleys of Akkar and the two Ostwan creeks, though it is difficult to access due to the lack of roads in the region. Following the attacks of Prince Fakhreddine in the 17th Century the fortress was destroyed and only a few passages, arcades, rooms, canals and rock-engraved graveyards remain. On the outskirts of Akkar el Atiqa is **Ghazarta Church**; stone inscriptions and a Byzantine cross, date it back to the Byzantine Empire.

Close by, the church **Deir Hilsban** (Mar Sarkis w Bakhos) was built on a medieval site, on the top of a hill in the Hilsban valley. Once a temple, it later became a church used by early Christians and Crusaders as a linkage point between the Hussein Room in Akroum and the fortress of Akkar el Atiqa. The old temple walls still exist and are made from large stones and adjoining arches, though its roof has completely collapsed and the building has returned to nature, with an oak tree now growing inside. Now, large scattered stones surround the temple and a well sits next to a large dome-shaped *kabou* with stone arches.



8 Akroum

The **Akroum Mountain** is rich with historical monuments, from Babylon times to the Islamic era and many more from Roman and Byzantine times. In addition to the cemeteries of Al Salha, the ruins of the **Akroum Roman temple** still stand on a hill next to the village.



9 Al Borj

Built in 1227 the old Serail in al Borj, features a majestic wooden door entrance, which the Bacha used to enter through on his horse. The serail is divided into two sections; the *samaslak* included within a reception area, meeting rooms and the *haramlak*, living quarters of the Bacha's harem. It was damaged, historically, when it was carelessly repaired with cement. Only the entrance and lowest level where horse stables and grain storage rooms are situated still reflect the old architectural style.



10 Ouyoun el Samak

Between the Dennyeh and Akkar mountain lies the valley and plain of Ouyoun el Samak. This barely-known beauty spot is abundant with water with numerous small lakes, a dam and the River Nahr Moussa. A falling cascade of water from the mountain gushes plentifully into the valley with the melting of the snows. It's the perfect setting to take a gentle stroll or more ambitious hike and there are plenty of routes. A few restaurants and cafés have wisely set up in the area, where Lebanese cuisine can be enjoyed looking out on one of the most enviable views in the country.

Photo courtesy of Charbel Boueiz

33 NORTH

Alternative tourism operator 33 North (71 331138, 03 454996, 33-north.com) are specialists in the Akkar region and can arrange a variety of tours to suit every taste.



Raymond Audi

Prominent Lebanese banker, Raymond Audi, has made cultural heritage a priority in the coastal-city of Sidon



For many, Raymond Audi is known as the financier and businessman who presides over Lebanon's largest bank as chairman of Bank Audi. Originally a family business, the bank's roots stretch back to 1830. So, it was perhaps always expected that Audi would join the family trade. In the atrium of the Bank Audi Plaza – the bank's headquarters set inside an impressive glass-fronted building in Beirut's Central District – breaking the spotless modernist interior is a large colorful sculpture, Jean Dubuffet's *Tour Dentellière*. Contemporary artwork lines the walls of the entire interior with works by European artists such as Édouard Vuillard and Paul Delvaux and Lebanese notables Lamia Joreige and Chaouki Chamoun. It's just part of the bank's extensive art collection, revealing an alternate side to the Lebanese banker, as one of the country's most prominent art collectors.

Audi sits in his pristine office on the top floor of the Bank Audi Plaza, surrounded by framed photos of his family. When he speaks, he's warm and approachable and appears much younger than his 81 years. "[The collection] started when we re-located to Switzerland during the war and understood we could spare part of our income collecting European art pieces," he says. "In the 1980s when we started seeing [the country] coming back to normal we wanted to help the Lebanese who had suffered a lot during the war and so thought why not collect Lebanese art pieces."

Following Lebanon's civil war, when the Audi family returned to their home in Sidon, they discovered a heritage building in a sad state of destruction. Seven families had moved into the basement and the upper residence had been turned into a public school.

Not wanting to let the building go into disarray, Audi initiated the building's restoration in the early '80s. "I wanted to try to do something for our area, which I started discovering again," he says. "It was a pleasure for me."

The residence was built above an ancient soap factory dating back to the 17th Century, further extended at the end of the 19th Century. With a team of advisors – including local archeologist and director of the American University of Beirut's Archeological Museum, Dr. Leila Badr – excavation began. "We discovered a lot of things inside," Audi says. "It was [used as] a place to meet and smoke. We found around 300 pipes, very nicely designed and preserved."

It was Badr who made the suggestion to Audi to document the building's distant past and create a soap museum. And, after donating lands for the school to be relocated, work started to bring the house and soap factory back to its original state. "I had all the family against me. No-one wanted to help," Audi says. "They thought that it wouldn't work." As everything was cleaned, Audi discovered the house of his past, where he once lived with his entire family until the age of eight. "It started to come back to me. I was very excited about it."

The museum, which opened to the public in 2000, shows the significance

of soap history in the region and has become something of a touristic pull in the southern city. Within its arched stone interior, the process of soap making is demonstrated, with soaps themselves forming brick-like walls around the museum. There's also an impressive and extensive collection of Oriental pipes on display, found during excavation.

The former residence above is now the office of the Audi Foundation, committed to raising awareness on the importance of preserving Sidon's cultural heritage. Audi has also led the renovation of numerous other residences and traditional shops within the area, now known as Haret Audi (Audi District). "Old Sidon was in bad shape. I tried to recondition the whole area," Audi says.

The Audi Foundation's focus on heritage preservation has acted as a kind of springboard for restoration projects all across the city, and has underlined the importance of preserving the wealth of architectural heritage that ancient Sidon has to offer. Currently a regional museum and a public archaeological site are in the works and with a donation of USD 25 million from Saudi Arabia, Saida could become one of Lebanon's success stories for cultural heritage preservation.

foundationaudi.org



VILLA AUDI

Located on Achrafieh's historic St Nicholas' Street, Villa Audi was the bank's head office during the days of the civil war, when Downtown Beirut was flattened. The heritage building was caught in the crossfires of war, but survived and though the bank's headquarters relocated, Audi has pushed to preserve it. It's been an occasional art gallery in the past, once highlighting the work of French modernist painter Georges Cyr, but a permanency will soon be secured with plans to transform it into a mosaic museum open to the public.

WHERE TO EAT

The ancient Saida Rest House (07 722469, 07 751854), renovated with Ottoman features, has an impressive view of the sea and makes an atmospheric lunch stop. Every Saturday evening it pulls in the crowds who come for the open buffet and live entertainment.

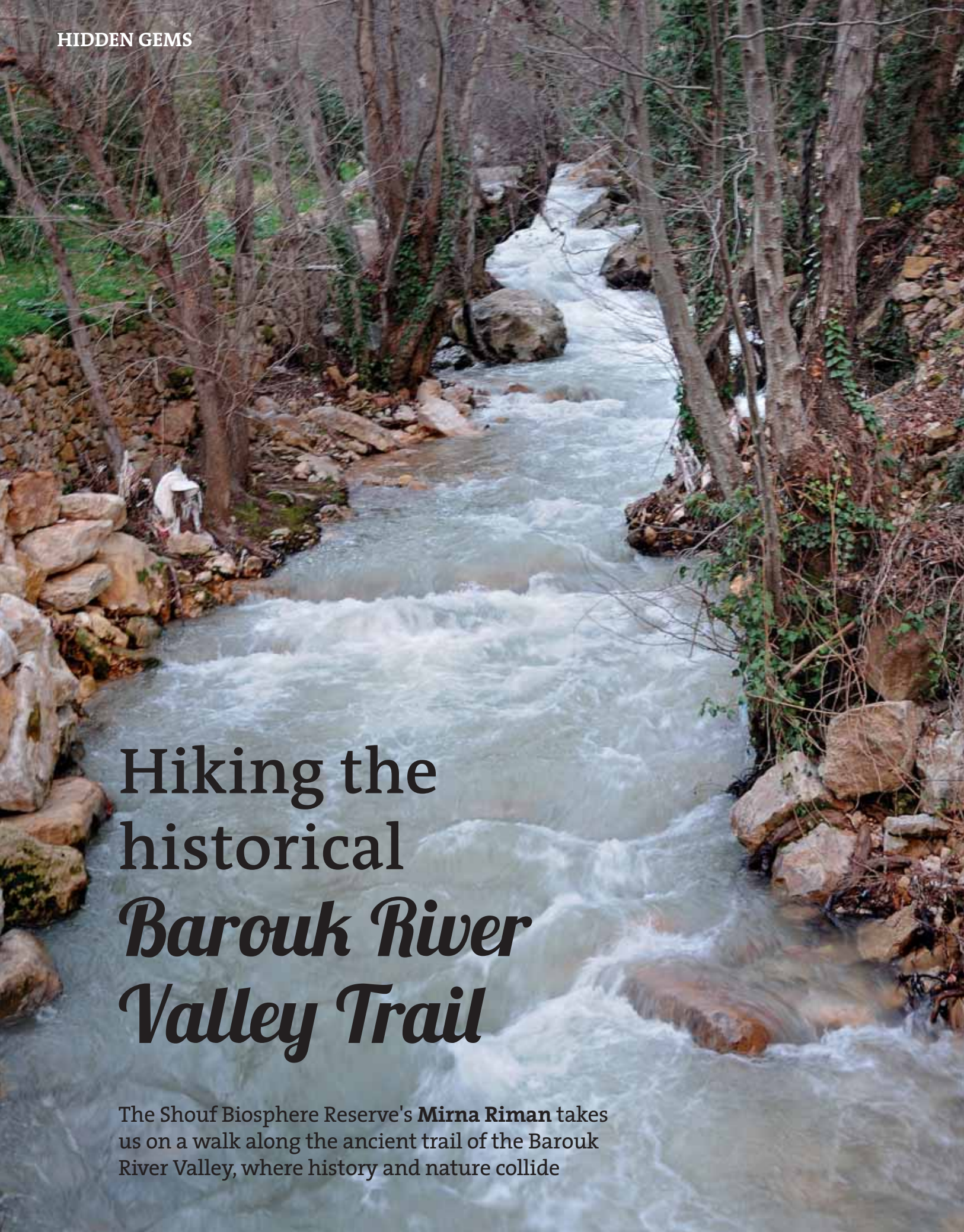
WHERE TO SLEEP

Hidden within Saida's Souk in the city's old district Yacoub Hotel (07 737733, 03 327034, LL75,000 single; LL84,000 double) is basic but charming.



WHAT TO SEE

Once full of Hammams only a few now remain in Sidon, but they are still the perfect place to while away the hours relaxingly, after an exploration of the bustling souk. The carefully restored Hammam el-Sheikh features an impressive high dome ceiling, while 18th Century Al Ward Hammam is Mediterranean in style. One of the finest examples of 13th Century architecture, Omari Mosque, set within Sidon's Souk, is definitely worth a visit. And don't miss Khan el Franj (Caravanserai of the French), an impressive 17th Century structure built by Emir Fakhreddine for French merchants.



Hiking the historical *Barouk River Valley Trail*

The Shouf Biosphere Reserve's **Mirna Riman** takes us on a walk along the ancient trail of the Barouk River Valley, where history and nature collide

With the transformation of the season, as landscapes are touched by that autumnal glow, fall can be the best season to explore Lebanon's rich outdoors. Hiking an ancient trail under red and yellow leafed trees by the flowing waters of the Barouk River is an experience not to be missed.

The unique trail is suitable for hikers of all levels and is also easy to reach. Located near the village of Mokhtara, just a few kilometres away from the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, the trail is a rare beauty and features historical monuments from the Hellenistic and Roman eras to the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. Hiking in the Shouf offers a unique journey through time.

The trail was inaugurated back in the spring of 2011 after months of hard work to rehabilitate it, and restore the old bridges. A team of volunteers explored the Barouk River Valley and discovered traces of an old road network that used to link the narrow valley to Jezzine and Nahr el-Awwali. They managed to open 8km of paths, parts of which retrace the old Mamluk and Ottoman roads.

The bridges located at the bottom of the valley used to link the different parts of the valley, allowing people to cross from one side to another, and opening up trading connections. After removing dense vegetation archaeologists rehabilitated four of these bridges, creating a complete trail for visitors to explore.

One of the oldest and most spectacular bridges in the area is Birket el-Arouss, an impressive stone bridge built at the end of the Mamluk period between 913 AH to 1507 AD. Also on the trail are four water mills constructed during the Ottoman era. Using only hydrologic energy, they produced olive oil and flour until the middle of the 20th Century. Visitors can still observe the remaining structures of these well-engineered mills.

In addition to visiting the ancient bridges and mills, hikers can explore the Hellenistic fort of Qasr Swayjani in the village of Kahlouniye, which is an hour-long walk from the Cheikh Houssein stone bridge. There is also an option to leave the river trail and hike along an old Roman road linking the Barouk Valley and



the Marj Bisri Valley to the Mazraat el-Shouf village, which is rich in Roman antiquities. Archaeology enthusiasts can also visit a Roman temple located on the intersection of the Nahr Aray and Nahr el-Barouk, today buried beneath meters of fluvial deposits. Four columns of black granite and the temenos wall are visible, protruding from meters of fluvial deposits.

THE TRAIL

One of the trails entry points begins at the Church of Our Lady in Mokhtara and passes under the Mamluk bridge of Birket el-Arouss, along the Barouk River and over the Badde bridge, before heading into the western slope of the river valley. The trail continues south on a recently renovated footpath, along the Barouk River on the left of which is the Badde Water Mill.

The trail then proceeds to the Bou Matar bridge and Water Mill, up the eastern slopes below the village of AinQanye. After crossing the AinQanye stream it then begins a slight descent to the valley passing over an aqueduct belonging to an old water mill before arriving to the bridge of Sheikh Hossein. From this bridge hikers can reach the Hellenistic fort of Qasr Swayjani.

Below the village of Amatour the trail points south towards the village of Haret Jandal, and crosses the Salman River before reaching the bottom of the Barouk valley. It then runs along the Barouk River, crosses over a small stone bridge at the Ain el-Zaitoun stream and arrives at Marj Bisri, where the four columns of a Roman temple can be found.

Shouf Biosphere Reserve
05 350250/150, shoufcedar.org
f shoufcedar.org



HOW TO GET THERE

Head south of Beirut, on the coastal highway towards Sidon. After 17km, take the Beiteddine/Deir el-Qamar exit to the right. The road heads towards Nahr ed-Damour before climbing into the mountains. You can reach Mokhtara from Baakline or Beiteddine. From either direction head towards Semqaniyye then Beqaata. From Beqaata, follow the Mokhtara village signs.

GO WITH A GUIDE

Shouf Biosphere Reserve office
05 350250/150
Mazen Qanso (Mokhtara) 03 084929
MonzerBouwadi 71 486874
Marwan Khodor 70 252762

WHERE TO SLEEP

Salim Ashkar Guest House 03 354558,
Khreibeh
Chafik Mershad Guest House,
05 330755, Niha
Akram Mahmoud Guest House,
03 829102, Barouk



Chasing *the wind*

Owner of event management company Ciel et Vent and a passionate kite flyer, **Sami Sayegh** is committed to keeping the ancient tradition alive and flying

There's certainly something liberating about the pastime of kite flying – as flashes of color dive back and forth high above the dust of the city. It's not a surprise then that kite flying peaked in popularity in the seventies in Lebanon. During the darker days of the civil war when people were stranded in their villages, kite making was a welcome distraction while people were house bound, avoiding relentless fighting. It was a simple way to pass the hours. On calmer days people ventured out of their homes to fly their kites, almost the perfect expression of a craving for freedom.

After the gunfire ceased the tradition continued, as kite flyers flocked to Beirut's sandy stretch of beach, Ramlet el Baida, and forgot their political differences, even if momentarily. Every September, kite enthusiasts still gather together on the same day to fly kites. "The day [has] developed into a kite festival," says Sami Sayegh.

Where most countries organize large annual international kite festivals, in Lebanon it's more a case of just showing up and flying your kite, says Sayegh. But what makes kite-flying appeal to so many? "It's the feeling of the wind, the nature," Sayegh says, as his face lights up. Sayegh owned his first kite at eight years old. "I built it with my uncle while we were on holiday in Turkey, he was a kite freak. It was a hexagon-shaped paper kite," says Sayegh. "The kite was made out of paper and it got ruined when it fell in the sea, so I just made another using nylon instead of paper."

In the past, kites were traditionally homemade in what was a laborious process, but now factories in China churn out tens of thousands of spools of machine-made nylon which swamped the market. "Depending on where you live in the world, each country has their own specific tradition," says Sayegh. Within the Mediterranean region it's the hexagonal kite, which is most popular. Sayegh has participated in international kite flying events since the early '90s when he lived in France. He travels abroad five to six times a year to represent Lebanon in kiting events. His most recent one was the Satun International Kite festival in Southern Thailand. One kite flyer that

Sayegh really admires is New Zealand's Peter Lynn, a leader in the international kiting industry since 1971. Lynn developed the first commercial kite buggy in the late 1980s and also founded his own kite factory.

"Unfortunately, kite flying is losing foot all over the world, and becoming a lost tradition. There is less space for people to fly, plus kids are more into technology rather than outdoor activities," says Sayegh.

"The places to fly a kite in Beirut are dwindling as public spaces [have been] reduced," says Tarek Khoury, another kite enthusiast who still flies his kite from time to time. He used to go to a stretch near Pigeon Rock, named Dalieh. Once the perfect spot for kite flying, it's since become a construction site. "Any flat space is good actually. [You] just need to look for spaces that have no obstructions such as electric poles. That's why beaches are perfect," says Sayegh. He recommends Ramlet el Baida, along with the beaches of Tyre and Tripoli.

“ It's the feeling of the wind, the nature ”

Kite flying depends on a combination of factors: the flexibility and balance of the kite, the quality of the string, the evenness of the spool and, of course, the skill of the fliers and their ability to adjust to the wind. "People often tell me they tried to fly a kite and it didn't work. Usually it's the fault of the spot and the conditions," Sayegh says.

Head to the beach on a breezy day and you'll be sure to come across other kite enthusiasts who will happily pass on a few tips. As the saying goes, may there be wind on your back, a smile on your face and a kite in the sky.

Sabina Llewellyn-Davies



Photos courtesy of Tobia Kmeid, Lebanon By Kite

WHO TO FLY WITH

Sami Sayegh (03 702422) has been kite-flying for years and makes the perfect guide for first timers.

On windy days the skies of Batroun are swarming with the kites of surfers, a sign of the rise in popularity of kite flying in Lebanon recently. Tobia Kmeid, founder of Lebanon by Kite (lebanon-by-kite.com, 03 253624), has been kite surfing since 2001, founding

his club in 2012. According to Kmeid, the sport is continuing to grow in Lebanon. He recommends "8 to 10 hours of instruction and then a lot of safe practice." The best spots to practice are Colonel (Batroun), Canaria Beach (Tripoli), Palm Island, (off Tripoli) and Tyre public beach.





WHERE TO FLY

Ramlet el Baida
Talet el Khayat
Dalieh, near Pigeon Rock
Tyre beach
Rameileh beach
Mina Tripoli

BEST FLYING CONDITIONS

Large open spaces

You need enough room to lay out your kite and flying line as well as space to fly, while not crowding other people or kite flyers.

Steady smooth winds

Beaches have the best winds. Around 8-40km/h – when the leaves of trees begin to move, is ideal for most kites.

No obstructions

The further you are from buildings

and trees, the better, to help smooth out the winds and reduce turbulence. Avoid flying near power lines and trees.

GO WITH A GUIDE

Sami Sayegh
03 702422

WHAT YOU NEED

Types of kites:

- One liner
- Two liner
- Four liner stunt kites for more control

WHERE TO BUY

Decathlon
04 526101
f DecathlonLebanon. Dbayeh

Photo courtesy of Sami Sayegh





Le Blanc Bleu A divine venue

Overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, Le Blanc Bleu is the ultimate location for ceremonies and memorable receptions. Located along the coast only 50 minutes from the Lebanese capital in Halat, Keserwan, the venue is divided across two levels with a large terrace situated so close to the sea you can hear the waves break, and a rooftop with an atmosphere-setting view that takes in the sea and the sky. Le Blanc Bleu can comfortably seat up to 300 guests, with each seat offering the best view in the house. Surrounded by trees and greenery, you can enjoy the heavenly surroundings while walking along the seafront, where grandeur combines with the most natural simplicity. Le Blanc Bleu offers multiple facilities and first-rate service to host your receptions, events and parties in our memorable location.

The venue benefits from offering four private bungalows that can be rented even in winter, so your relaxing experience can extend over

a night or two. Spread over 50sqm, each bungalow suite is a calming reflection of the colors of the beach; furnished in contemporary style with bare stonewalls adding an element of tradition. Each bungalow includes a reception area, double bedroom and bathroom and facilities including a minibar, microwave and kettle. Their private terraces provide the perfect viewpoint to watch the sun set over the sea with a glass of champagne in hand. The venue also has the comfort of free secured parking. Le Blanc Bleu is both easily accessible from Beirut and offers a natural escape from the city. It's the perfect location for events of every occasion and scale from intimate dinners and romantic getaways to memorable weddings or birthday parties.

Halat, Seaside road
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TAKE ME THERE



Meshmesh, Akkar







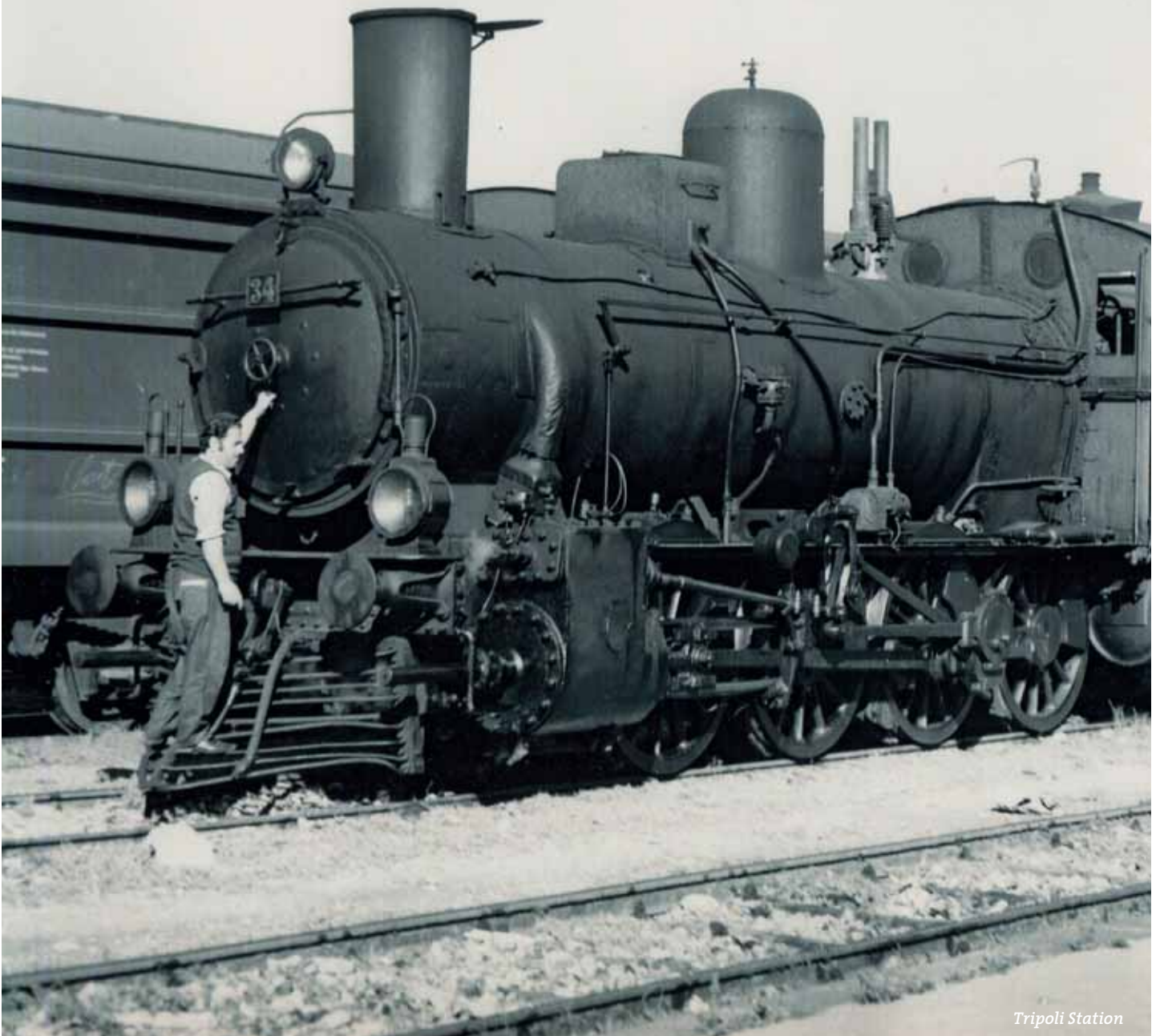
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Off the rails

Lebanon's long abandoned rail network gives an insight into another era. Founder of NGO Train Train, **Elias Maalouf**, shares his collected memories and vision for its revitalization



Tripoli Station

It might take a stretch of the imagination to envisage a fully-functional rail network in Lebanon, but for the older generation the railway – active from the late nineteenth century until the civil war – is a nostalgic memory of Lebanon’s golden past. The extensive rail network, first built when Lebanon was under Ottoman rule, once connected Beirut to Haifa and Damascus, Tripoli to Homs and Rayak in the Bekaa Valley to Aleppo. In fact, the whole region was within reach by rail, opening up borders with the surrounding countries for travel and trade. Though the country’s rail network hasn’t been active since the beginning of the civil war (besides the Peace Train project which opened the Beirut-Chekka line in 1991) many of the country’s 50 train stations still remain intact and long-rusted rails can still be seen across the country, everywhere from Batroun to Beirut.

Elias Maalouf is the passionate figure behind NGO Train Train, founded in 2010 with the aim to preserve the heritage of the Lebanese railway and work on building new models for its eventual revitalization. The walls of his Jbeil office are filled with black and white photos of the railway’s colorful past and he’s documented the memories of the few remaining former railway workers in his upcoming documentary “Ya Train.”

Having been an advocate for Lebanon’s railways for almost a decade, Maalouf

knows every train station across the country intimately. “We had four major train stations in Lebanon; Tripoli, Beirut, Malaka and Rayak. Malaka was built to be the principal train station in the Bekaa but when they built the line between Rayak and Aleppo, it became the biggest in the region,” he says. Besides being the transport hub that connected Lebanon to the Arab world, Europe and Africa, Rayak also became one of the most important train factories of its time. They would take apart, melt down, design and reassemble old steam trains, then given the plaque “Made in Rayak.”

The now abandoned train station of Rayak seems almost frozen in time. Rusted locomotives have become one with nature, steel rails still cut through overgrown fields and platforms once filled with passengers, remain empty. Its dilapidated faded orange buildings are monuments to another time, but the sheer size of the abandoned station and factory still impresses. “We lost 18 buildings in World War One and several buildings in World War Two, and until now there are still 70 buildings. That’s how big it was and still is,” Maalouf says. “We wish that train stations like the one in Rayak, Tripoli and Mar Mikhael could be turned into museums, but by experts, as restoration needs expertise.”

Tripoli Train Station, built in 1911, was once connected to Homs via a single

track, and was the final stop of the Orient Express during the early-mid 20th Century. Located close to El Mina, Tripoli’s once grand station with Oriental arches can still be seen, though it was damaged by fighting in the ‘80s after the Syrian army claimed it in 1977. “For me they are all beautiful,” Maalouf says. “You have a train station in the middle of the forest in Arayah, next to Aley, which is amazing. The Mar Mikhael train station is also very beautiful.”

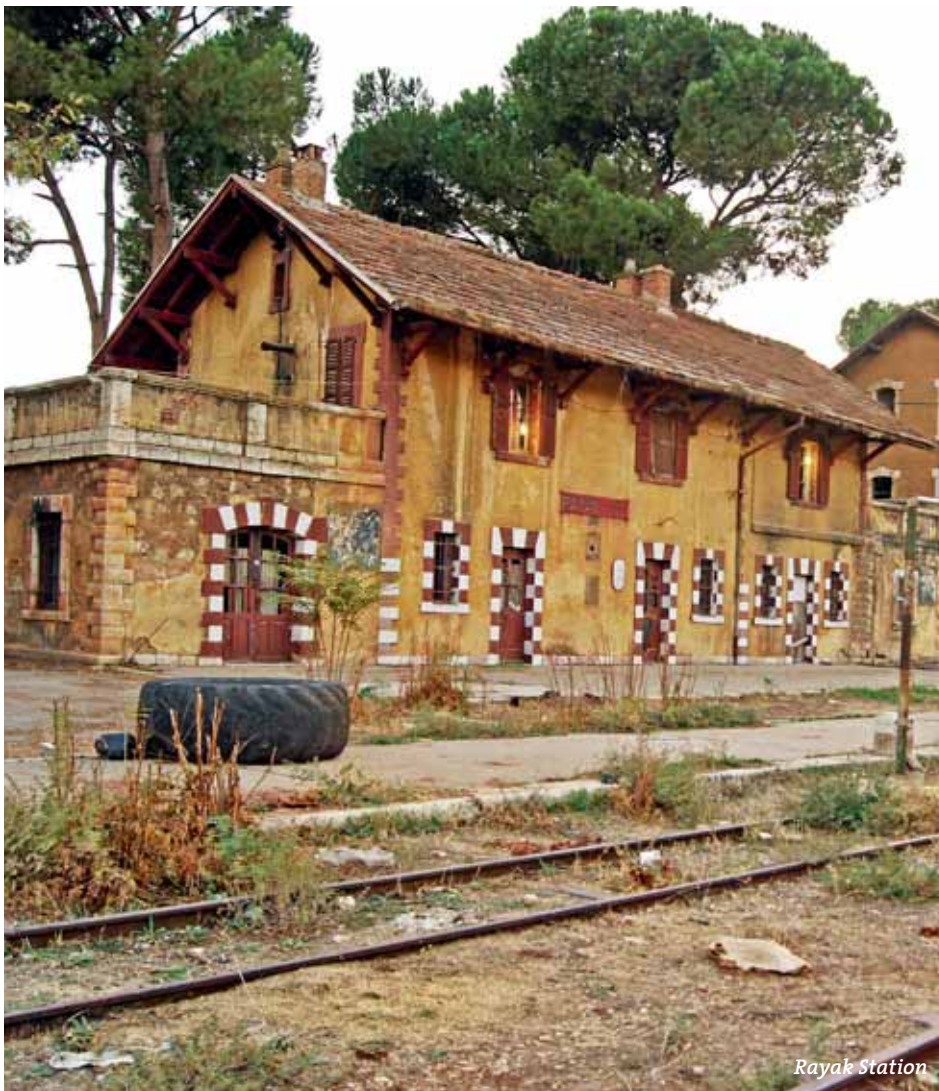


For Maalouf, bringing back the railway to Lebanon will not only ease transport issues but also help reunify the country. "Many people in Lebanon work on sectarian ideas, sectarian visions, we are working on a project that could unite people," he said. "The main vision is to bring back a working transportation network." Though the revitalization of the country's railway seems a distant possibility, Train Train has worked hard to raise awareness of Lebanon's railway and its importance for the future. Their exhibition of photographic archives – which toured the country from Beirut Airport to Beiteddine and Beirut Souks – has been seen by thousands of people. They've also toured schools and universities with a portable exhibition. "When we started talking about this project it was like science fiction, people didn't believe it could happen. That's why we went back into history and showed that 130 years ago we were able to do this."

Next on Train Train's agenda is a plan to clean and restore the rails between Batroun and Jbeil; a symbolic project that Maalouf predicts will take just three months to make a reality. "It's proof to show that it's not impossible for the rail lines to be refurbished. It will be a success story to push for more." There are also hopes to transform some of the country's remaining train stations into museums and create one central archive and research center in Beirut dedicated to the Lebanese railway.

"Everyone always asks 'do we still have rails?' But really it's the simplest part of the railway; all you need for the return of the railway is the land," Maalouf says. "And we still have all 402km of old land preserved. Whenever we [are ready] we can have the railway back."

traintrainlebanon.com



Rayak Station

Aal Sekke Ya Train (On the rail train)

Filmmaker Zeina Haddad's documentary "Aal Sekke Ya Train," is due for release this fall. For four years Haddad made a yearly calendar for her friends with photos she'd shot from Lebanon's train stations and when she got in touch with Railroad Workers Syndicate President, Bechara Assi, he suggested she make a documentary. Filmed over four years, also working closely with Elias Maalouf, the documentary focuses on the status of Lebanon's mountain and coastal line, taking in the remaining stations and rails and interviewing people she found nearby, many who had a deep emotional attachment to the railway.

"I think the Lebanese have a right to the return of the railway with no borders, crossing all villages and cities," Haddad says. "The Syndicate calls the railway the 'veins of Lebanon.' It used to connect and unify the entire country. We need to get back to the trains and preserve what remains of the country's heritage."

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Honey's long history continues

Honey, one of nature's natural delicacies, has been a part of our diet for centuries. The Food Heritage Foundation's **Zeinab Jeambey** traces its early uses and explores the varieties that can be found in Lebanon today

Mentioned in religious texts as a celestial food and praised for its health and medicinal properties, honey collection from natural beehives can be traced back to the late Stone Age. In the ancient Middle Eastern region, honey was used as a sweetener for food and wine. In the Sumerian and Egyptian civilizations it was a main ingredient in medical prescriptions to treat ailments such as eye and skin diseases, coughs, ulcers and stomach diseases. Egyptians also used it as a preservative agent in the process of mummifying the dead (*"Honey and healing through the ages," Richard Jones, International Bee Research Association.*)

HONEY: PRODUCTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Honey is produced by honeybees mainly from the nectar of flowers and honeydew, a product of sap-sucking insects left on the plant for bees to collect, like the honeydew found on oak, cedar and juniper trees in Lebanon. Honeybees extract these sugary

substances and bring them back to the beehive where they process them by adding enzymes and extracting water in order to slowly transform the nectar, sap and honeydew into honey. Honey is then stored in wax cells, and sealed as storage food for the bees in times of nectar shortage. It comes in different colors, depending on the source of nectar or honeydew the bees collect.

Honey is considered a nutritious food, mainly constituted of sugars such as glucose, fructose and sucrose, water and small amounts of amino acids, minerals, aromas and enzymes. Though only found in traces, the enzymes bees add to honey are of important nutritional value because they produce the antibacterial agent, hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂), that inhibits the growth of certain food-borne bacteria such as E. coli. These enzymes are heat sensitive. A temperature of 40 degrees and above destroys them, thus causing the loss of their health benefits.

Many consumers, and unfortunately, unknowledgeable beekeepers, believe

and vehemently argue that honey crystallization is a sign of honey adulteration with sugar and corn syrup. This misbelief has become widespread in our society. In fact, honey adulteration can only be detected by laboratory tests. Honey crystallization on the other hand, is a natural process that occurs due to many factors such as the nectar source, the ratio of different sugars found in honey and the presence of sediments that might stay in honey after honey extraction which helps initiate the process.

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Photo courtesy of Gaby Nehme

Here and there: beekeepers and their stories

Jeambey speaks to beekeepers across the country, to discover their connection with beekeeping, their stories and the types of honey they produce

FADY DAW – FATRI, MOUNT LEBANON

Fady Daw remembers his grandfather's beehives in clay jars; the trade skipped a generation and was taken up again in the family by him. He's now been a beekeeper for 24 years. Owner of Adonis Valley, a company producing and selling organic foods, Daw began beekeeping in his second year of university as an agricultural engineer.



He specializes in black oak honey, explaining that Lebanese consumers favor it because of its mild sweetness and low crystallization. Daw places his beehives around his village Fatri in Adonis Valley and rarely moves them during the year. For him, the geographical location of Fatri endows it with a natural wealth of oak trees and wild medicinal plants such as thyme, sage and oregano that make the perfect pasture for his bees.

Number of Beehives 80

Types of honey produced Black oak honey
Honey talk Having completed his diploma thesis on black oak honey, Daw's

something of an expert on its properties. "It is one of the most nutritious kinds of honey because of its exceptionally high mineral content, almost double the amounts found in lighter coloured honey," he says. "What's more, it's richer in pollen, meaning richer in amino acids, as well as enzymes and flavonoids, which are the antibacterial, and antioxidant agents found in honey."

Daw's recipe To treat a sore throat, heat a tablespoon of honey with apple vinegar or lemon juice for 20-30 seconds, gargle and swallow. Follow twice a day for two days.

Fady Daw, Adonis Valley, 09 420910, 03 456336

RAED ZEIDAN – MRESTI, THE CHOUF

Raed Zeidan never originally thought of becoming a beekeeper, but after his father suffered an accident, he found himself assisting with the family beekeeping business. In 1992, Zeidan discovered and gathered a naturally occurring beehive, motivating him



to start his own beekeeping business. Twenty years on and Zeidan now teaches beekeeping in the technical agricultural school of Baakline - the Chouf, passing on the trade to new generations. He moves his bees several times a year, allowing them to forage on the flowers from which he wants to produce honey; from orange blossom located east of Tyre to wild flowers and thistle blossoms found at mid and higher altitudes. Towards the end of September, Zeidan places his beehives in areas where inula blossoms, so that his bees collect their winter reserves from the nectar of this nutritious plant for the harshest days of winter.

Number of Beehives 80

Types of honey produced Spring honey and wild flower and thistle blossom honey; which he names jurdi honey.

Honey talk Diabetic patients often choose jurdi honey because of its low sucrose content and milder sweetness. It is also commonly used to treat stomach ailments such as food poisoning.

Zeidan's recipe A daily intake of one teaspoon of honey in the morning and at bedtime treats asthma and allergy problems as well as colds and influenza.

Raed Zeidan, 70 309439

JOHNY ABOUT RJEILY - BROUMANA - MOUNT LEBANON



Johnny Abou Rjeily's love for agriculture, wildlife and bees in particular naturally brought him to begin a beekeeping business in 2007 when he bought his first three beehives. What began as a hobby, rapidly evolved into a professional business. For orange blossom honey Abou Rjeily places his hives around the region of Tyre, for oak honey, in Broumana, Ennaya and Aley and for wild flower and thistle blossom honey, in Dhour el Shweir and Akoura.

Number of Beehives 400

Types of honey produced Orange blossom, oak and wild flower and thistle blossom honey.

Honey talk Abou Rjeily encourages consumption of all types of honey since each has its own health benefits.

Abou Rjeily's recipe Mix honey with ginger and lemon to treat colds and with cinnamon for all kinds of ailments.

Johnny Abou Rjeily, 03 140898

NAYEF AL RASSI - AITANIT, WEST BEKAA



Since the '80s, beekeeping was Al

Rassi's main source of income until changes in Lebanon's agricultural landscape started affecting his levels of honey production. He currently places his hives around Tyre to collect orange blossom honey and in the highlands of Saghbine and Aitanit to collect wild flower and thistle blossom honey. Al

Rassi explains that when in season, the highlands of his village are abundant with eryngo as well as wild mint, wild berries and globe thistle blossoms which make a rich-tasting summer honey.

Number of Beehives 300

Types of honey produced Orange blossom and wild flower and thistle blossom honey

Honey talk Al Rassi believes that honey is a very nutritious food and makes sure his grandchildren eat a spoonful every morning before school.

Nayef el Rassi Shop, Aitanit main road. 08 650597

MAURICE HABIB - JDAYDET EL METN, MOUNT LEBANON



A beekeeper for 36 years, Habib's first connection with beekeeping was in his teen years with his father. Since, then it's the only trade he has known. He moves his bees several times a year, so they forage on a variety of blossoms such as loquat, inula, apple, orange and eucalyptus. He places some of his beehives in regions with many oaks and cedars to benefit from the honeydews that form. He also places other beehives in the highlands so that the bees forage on thistle blossoms such as eryngo and globe thistle.

Number of beehives 450

Types of honey produced Orange blossom, oak, wild flower and thistle blossom, thyme, juniper, lavender, cedar and eucalyptus honey.

Honey talk "Wild flower and thistle blossom honey is rich in pollen and thus highly nutritious," says Habib. "Cedar honey has health benefits for the arteries and is prescribed for people with high blood pressure. It also provides a protective coat for sensitive stomachs. Orange blossom honey is beneficial for rheumatism and eucalyptus honey for allergies and asthmas."

Habib's recipe For an anti-aging facial

mask, mix one gram of Royal jelly, one teaspoon of oak honey and two drops of lemon juice.

Habib Honey Shop, Jdaydet el Metn, 100 meters from Palais de Justice, 03 512446



Photos courtesy of Food Heritage Foundation

LEBANON'S HONEY

In Lebanon, honey production follows the flower blooming and honeydew seasons of different herbs, flowers and trees ("Your guide to beekeeping," Ollaik R. 2010.)

Main blossoming crops, flowers, plants and herbs:

February Citrus

March Citrus

April Apple, Sage and Echinops species or Globe Thistles

May Oak, Echinops species or Globe Thistles, Sage, Clover, Eucalyptus, Pine, Thyme and Eryngo

June Oak, Clover, Chicory and Eryngo

July Eryngo

August Multiple summer flowers

September Cedar, Fir and Juniper

October Cedar, Fir, Juniper and Inula Species

November Loquat and Erica Species

December Loquat and Erica Species



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Language of the streets



Despite the digitization of design, the tradition of hand-painted banners, known as *yaftat*, show no signs of disappearing. Kubik Design Studio director and adjunct graphic design lecturer at LAU, **Maria Bahous** explores the public messages that mark Lebanon’s streets

In Lebanon, we have come to appreciate those familiar public banners dangling between electrical wires across the city and marking our streets. These hand-painted calligraphic messages painted on large white cloth banners are known as a *yafta* in the Arabic language (*yaftat*, plural), which translates to “banner” in English. *Yaftat* are characterized by their simplicity and direct communication, as much as for their traditional value dating back to the early decades of the 20th Century. They are indeed one of the oldest practices in the Arab world to spread public opinion, expression and announcements, long before printed posters were mass-produced. Today they are considered as a cheap but very efficient way to put out a message to the public.

The *yafta* has become a major component of Lebanon’s visual street language, whether fixed within a street or carried by hand during demonstrations. They reveal deeper

meanings alluding to style, belief systems, geographic region and cultural direction, with their own stylistic and type treatments.

USE OF YAFTAT

Yaftat are not used for one specific purpose. They serve a vast variety of messages but are all a reflection of communities, their lifestyles, thinking processes and relationships with each other through the simple use of text.

Lately people are resorting to using *yaftat* to express or advertise messages with personal interest.

Despite their ephemeral nature these messages are part of the Lebanese scenery. Though the content varies from one city to the other, since they are circumstantial, they exist all over the country.

DESIGN

While posters are commissioned out to graphic designers, illustrators or visual artists leaving room for self-expression through visuals and words, public banners are more of a simple direct message of paint or ink on a canvas that somehow



4



5



preserves the typographic practice of street painters.

Though these public banners are not considered exquisite pieces of design or art, they keep us connected with an important aspect of Lebanese artistic heritage, calligraphy. The painted letters in most cases follow the principles of calligraphic gestures and structure.

Even though the real value of the *yafta* is in what they say, not how they present it, when creating the banner there is a choice of calligraphic style – Ruq’ah, Naskh or Diwani – to express thoughts. Of course, as with all traditions, *yaftat* have been influenced by the digitization of modern times, nowadays it’s often printed using digital typography. The cost to commission a *yafta* is mainly defined by the number of colors used and whether in hand-painted calligraphy or a printed digital font. The price goes up if you include hand drawn illustrations or images, but of course in the case of many, it’s a DIY job.

CONTENT

These public banners are an expression of identity, underlining the intrinsic values of a certain community, through which society’s thoughts, emotions and wishes are expressed. They could be a positive and peaceful note addressed to one individual or to a group, or an expression of melancholy or hostility,

voicing public opinion towards an opposing party.

Though differently used, *yaftat* are rarely anonymous and always hold a signature as a personal letter addressed in the name of a single person or a whole community. They also have an underlining structure with a clear hierarchy. They could be formulated in simple Lebanese jargon or take the form of lyrical praise, sometimes quoting well know poetic or religious verses.

YAFTAT TRANSLATIONS:

- 1 From 12 August... and for some days... and because I am tired and hysteric because of you... Me and the shop will be on vacation... so don't nag, backbite or curse us! And I will murder the ones who will buy from my competitors.
- 2 The population wants the election of the president.
- 3 The right to own a house is more important than the gain of banks and real estate companies.
- 4 Blessed are our Lebanese army; heroes, leaders, generals and soldiers.
- 5 Anniversary of the Virgin Mary's Festival - Prayers, exhibition, karaoke & BBQ nights

THE MANY FORMS OF YAFTAT

REBELLION

These banners express the tension between the individual and the community or the community and the state. They reflect a dynamism and overall atmosphere within an area. They are mostly loaded with political messages and express hostility or disagreement with an action or political leader.

SOLIDARITY/ ACCLAIM

Opposite messages of rebellion, these banners express appreciation or solidarity for a political party, a leader, the army or even a citizen from the region. They are mainly lyrical and show pride.

WELCOMING OR FAREWELL NOTE

This category could address a citizen returning or leaving his village or on a more generic tone it could be a means to honor important religious or political figures.

A NOTE TO EXPRESS SORROW

Mostly used at funerals. These are messages to express love, gratitude and sadness towards a loved one.

CELEBRATION

Used to congratulate someone on an achievement or a successful event such as a marriage or graduation.

ADVERTISING

Cheaper than a billboard or flyers, banners are also used to advertise a menu, a promotion or sales.

MUNICIPALITY MESSAGE

Yaftat are also a way to deliver official messages addressed to the public. It's a practical tool that helps to announce a message to the community at once.



Leefeh in life & after-life

For many in Lebanon, leefeh is a nostalgic tradition that brings back vivid memories of a simpler time. Head of the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik's agricultural sciences department, **Marc Beyrouthy**, describes the life of the plant

Leefeh is an annually flowering vine belonging to the cucurbitaceae family, the relation of cucumbers, watermelons and pumpkins. Even though it was once cultivated on a small-scale in Lebanon, it's not an indigenous plant, but thought to originate from India. Scientifically speaking the leefeh is the fruit of either *luffa acutangula* or *luffa aegyptiaca*. However the latter is more cultivated in Lebanon.

Leefeh is a plant that loves continuous sun (though it can tolerate partial shade) and is not frost enduring. It is quite a vigorous vine that can reach up to 10 meters. The leefeh fruit can be incredibly heavy, so it is best grown on a trellis or fence. The plants are grown from seeds and require between four to six months to achieve full maturity. Then the dry fruit is fibrous with a sponge-like structure. The plant only

requires irrigation in the first stages of cultivation.

In many countries such as China and Vietnam the fruits and leaves are eaten as vegetables, when harvested young. In some countries they are also used as a medicinal plant to treat many ailments. The crushed dried leaves are also used as an insect repellent due to their odor. However, in order to create the loofah

sponge, the fruits should be fully ripened when harvested. At this stage, the fruits are very fibrous and make a perfect sponge. To obtain the sponge, the gourds should be picked as they start to turn yellow and when they become light in weight. They should be peeled as soon as possible in order to obtain light-colored sponges.

The sponge of the leefeh plant is a common sight around Lebanon. After an illustrative life, of fast-growing vines birthing enormous weighty marrow-like vegetables, its final resting place is the mini-markets of every street corner

of the country, where they hang from the ceiling for sale in their skeletal-like sponge form. The cultivation of leefeh exists in Lebanon, though only on a small scale, with many families still growing the plant in home gardens, which they dry, cut and share with the family. But the plants themselves have never been grown on a large scale in the country, preferring the fertile lands of the Nile region. Traders from South Lebanon bring leefeh from Egypt and sell to one of the country's 12 factories where it's dried and cut into various forms ready to supply the washrooms and kitchens of the entire country.



“WHEN I WAS YOUNG I HAD MY VERY OWN LEEFEH”



Journalist and director of Agenda Culturel, **Emile Nasr** shares his childhood memories of leefeh

The leefeh is a magnificent plant.

Annually, it grows one, even two floors high to spread itself over the rooftop. The leefeh is children's delight and happiness. Imagine my joy when planting a seed in March, only to play with its big leaves on the terrace by September. The leefeh is a gift from nature, covering any cracked or badly painted walls as it snakes over them. To my child's eyes it climbs at the speed of the toy racing car that Santa Clause offered me that winter.

The leefeh doesn't need water to grow beautifully. It only needs good soil; it

refuses to grow in a pot. The sun and the sea are its allies. Plant it in Beit Meri and it will refuse to grow. Any child can offer these simple conditions and grow their leefeh. Nothing compares to the childhood happiness of counting the yellowed leaves to tell my mother that my leefeh had kept its promise.

One summer, an uncle of mine recommended that I hack my leefeh at its base to insert a clove of garlic. That summer, my leefeh grew wonderfully and all of my neighbors admired it. I was so proud of my uncle but most importantly of my leefeh. To see it blossom so rapidly, whilst children take years to grow, the leefeh creates a sort of complicity with a child that no other plant can provide.

But the leefeh is not a kid's plant alone; parents also love it. To get a glimpse of the interest that grownups have towards the leefeh, you should have seen my mother taking her morning coffee with the neighbors under my leefeh's leaves. Its death entails the painful task of ripping the leefeh that clings onto every facet of the wall.

I don't share the artist's point of view of turning the leefeh into a lampshade despite how pleasant it might be, for the simple reason that it is not the leefeh's proper function. Let it be known once and for all that the leefeh is children's summer joy and the only way to stay clean throughout the year.

Design for a *new frontier*

A true pioneer of Lebanese design, **Nada Debs** has paved the way for a new generation of talent and has redefined Arab style at a time when homegrown design was a relatively new concept



Blending rich Middle-Eastern craft with Far-Eastern ideals of purity, Nada Debs is the creator of the East & East concept, designing and manufacturing her own furniture line. The concept represents the cool minimalism and restraint of Japan where she grew up, combined with the lavish warmth of Arab expression, where she returned to Lebanon after a forty-year absence. She studied interior architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design in the United States and started her own custom furniture company in the UK.

Returning to her roots in Lebanon, Debs found modern Middle Eastern furniture almost non-existent and discovered unwillingness among Lebanese galleries and shops to feature local furniture. This motivated her to combine her multi-cultural background to create a furniture line, that would appeal to a global market.

The company has a retail outlet based in Beirut, which displays furniture and home accessories. Her products are sold around the world in New York, Paris, Dubai, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Nada Debs shares with Lebanon Traveler the inspiration for her furniture, which couples nostalgic references to the past with modern techniques and materials

How does your Lebanese heritage inspire you?

It's about craft – something that I feel is undervalued. Contemporary craft takes an old idea and gives it a new perspective. What we are trying to do is to give people pride in their traditional handicrafts because a product that is made by hand is very different than one made by a machine. When a craftsman works with love, the energy seeps into the product. That human element and positive energy is what Lebanon is all about. It is that unexplainable factor that draws you into this country: the multiculturalism, the old and new... We are a nation of contrasts and my work is a mirror of that.

What is your design process?

I continuously experiment with contrasting materials. I create samples using different techniques and live with them for a while. I mostly use geometric

patterns because everyone can relate to them. It draws people together combining worlds and collective understanding. When clients purchase my products to give as gifts abroad, someone in Europe might say it is exotic, someone in the States might call it functional, and someone in Japan might refer to it as minimalist. These are all contrasting opinions brought together by a single design process.

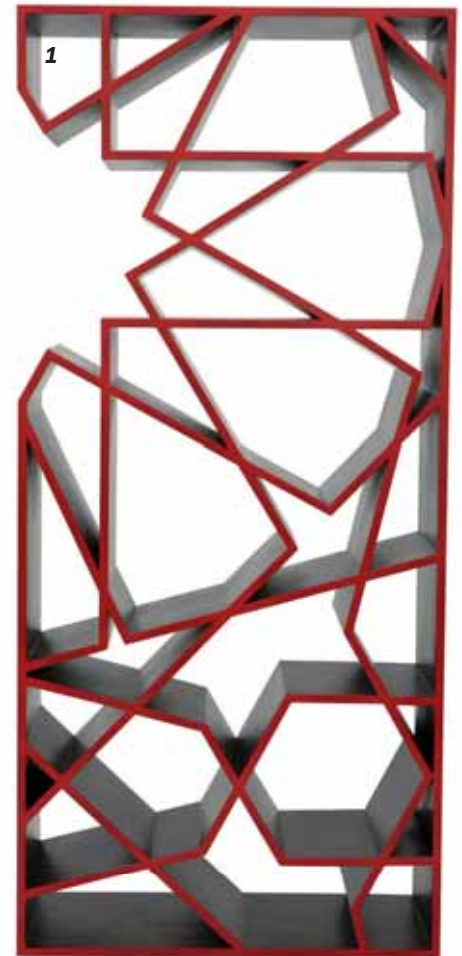
How do you think the design scene in Lebanon is evolving?

When I first moved here from London due to personal circumstances, the design scene was very different from what it is today. Storeowners would tell me that they only like imported furniture or that they didn't believe in local production. So, I decided to meet the challenge head on by being persistent, focusing on export and creating products that would best represent Lebanon abroad. The Lebanese are now very proud to buy local products and give them as gifts and I think in some way, I was able to pave the way for upcoming designers to do that.

What's the best piece of advice you can give to new designers?

Be inspired but don't copy. Each designer has something unique inside them that should be expressed. Don't give up when things take a turn for the worse because your persistence is what will grab people's attention. Talk to people, find out what they're looking for and then put your personal touch on it.

1 Shelving Star. **2** E&E Benches, Diwan Lifestyle. **3** Contemporary Low Table, CoffeeBean Lifestyle. **4** Draw The Line Collection.



Annie Dilsizian



The museum of *extravagances*

Explore the region's past at the **Robert Mouawad Private Museum** through the impressive collection of obsessive collector, Henri Pharaon



The adhaan [call to prayer] sounding from a nearby mosque fills the Robert Mouawad Private Museum, a former private residence in Beirut's Zokak El Blat district. With eyes closed, a pungent aroma of ancient cherry and cedar wood evokes the layered eras. The dark, cool, ornate interior of this museum is deeply immersed in regional history.

If it wasn't for the late Lebanese politician and art collector Henri Philippe Pharaon's love of horses, it's possible the Robert Mouawad Private Museum would never have come into existence. According to literature found in the museum and articles written by academics, Pharaon, who died in 1993, at the age of 92, was a gentle soul who had a great attachment to the animal world, with both dogs and horses being a great love of his. "Neighbors would see him in his garden with his huge dog," says Nasser Abu Khalil, one of the museum's curators and guides.

Yet it was Pharaon's love of horses that led to his infatuation with oriental interiors and fueled his collection of antiquities that can be seen today. His obsession for pure Arabian bloodstock [horses] – a collection itself, with over 300 horses making his the world's biggest racing stable during the '50s and '60s – frequently took him to Syria, where he discovered the painted interiors of traditional Syrian houses. Following his father's death, he began the seemingly arduous task of transplanting complete rooms of his Italian neo-gothic style house, now the museum, with painted woodwork, carved stone and marble from his travels in Syria.

The in-house collection of the villa, built in 1891 by Henry's father, Philippe, is vast and diverse and includes everything from rare books, jewels, ceramics and architectural elements to pottery, ancient weapons, carpets and rare precious stones. They are the culmination of years of accumulation by "obsessive" collector Henri Philippe Pharaon and, of course, the jeweler and collector, Robert Mouawad himself.

According to an obituary in the UK newspaper, *The Independent* (August 10, 1993) by John Carswell, who at the time was a research associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, the house termed a "gothic folly," was inherited from his father and furnished entirely from British silversmiths, Mappin and Webb. "[Pharaon] was fortunate to have the assistance of French mandate architect, Lucien Cavro. The result was spectacular," states Carswell.

In the obituary Carswell goes on to say that "The next step was to furnish it. This led to [Pharaon's] continuous acquisition of the finest classical, Byzantine and early Christian antiquities available on the local market; and then to the formation of important collections of Islamic art and, perhaps surprisingly, Chinese porcelain from Syria. He was, without doubt, the greatest collector in the Arab world, and far ahead of his time."

Carswell continued describing Pharaon's house as "the constant rendezvous for every Lebanese politician, of whatever persuasion. He was exceedingly and traditionally rich; he virtually owned the port of Beirut and a leading bank. He was

childishly amused that his postal address in Beirut was BP 1, appropriate for both these business enterprises."

FROM VILLA TO MUSEUM

In 1990, according to Abu Khalil, diamond collector Robert Mouawad, inheritor of the multinational jewelry company, Mouawad, purchased the villa and transformed it into a museum to house his own and Pharaon's collection, both on display today. To all intents and purpose, the house remains as it once was. The

“Pharaon was, without doubt, the greatest collector in the Arab world and far ahead of his time”



intricately painted, carved wooden panels depicting Islamic scenes still adorn the walls and ceilings and the two floors are punctuated with stone and marble carvings, which include numerous ancient funerary steles, roman pillars, clocks, carpets, metal work, Chinese pottery and Islamic pottery, as well as Mouawad's own collection of jewelry and precious stones. Altogether they create a magnificent time capsule of the distant past. "There is so much to see from different eras," says Abu Khalil.

The museum's vast collection of books, possibly the oldest and rarest in the capital, are particularly captivating, along with the decorative 19th century *narguileh* that line the dividing wall of the central, first floor landing. A grand exterior, set in expansive and beautiful gardens, also matches the ornate interior. Standing in the villa's garden today, with the noise of thundering traffic rising from the nearby General Fouad Chehab highway, its former tranquility is hard to imagine. Yet, like the contents of this imposing villa, an air of mystery prevails.

A LIFE OF DRAMA

A search on the Internet reveals a myriad of stories pertaining to Pharaon's colorful life. The former foreign minister played a significant role in the formation of modern Lebanon, contributing to the fight for the country's independence from France, and designed its flag of red and white with the cedar in center place. He was also a keen sportsman and Lebanon's tennis champion of the 1920s.

In 1993, he met a grisly end at the grand age of 92, reportedly found stabbed to death in Beirut's Carlton Hotel where he was then residing. His bodyguard and driver, Youssef Sorour met the same fate. Mystery still surrounds the death of the characterful Pharaon, with the identity of the attacker, who stabbed him multiple times, never being discovered.

01 980970 - rmpm.info
 Army road, Zokak El Blat, Beirut
 Daily, 9am-5pm
 A guide can be hired for LL30,000

Derek A. Issacs



HOW TO GET THERE

By car Drive in a westerly direction from Tabaris along the General Fouad Chehab highway towards Hamra, taking the first exit right. The museum is set on the highest point in front of the British Embassy.
On foot From Riad El Sohl Square, walk away from Downtown and up the hill, keeping the Grand Serail to your right. At the top, bear right and right again.

WHAT TO SEE

Soak up the atmosphere of the area where a number of churches and traditional houses can be seen. Cross the General Fouad Chehab highway into Zokak El Blat's maze of streets to see, to some degree, how the area once looked during Pharaon's time, with old palaces, a hamman, and former ambassador villas.

WHERE TO EAT

Al Bohsali

The well-known sweet shop, Al Bohsali first opened in 1870 in Martyrs' Square by Saaddine Al Bohsali, along with his father Salim. The sweet shop has stood in Riad El Solh Square for 40 years, and is run by Amer M. Al Bohsali, serving a wide selection of Arabic sweets. It's the perfect place to refuel on Arabic coffee and cakes.

01 980211 - 03 898298
 Riad el Sohl Square, Downtown Beirut

Ashghalouna

After browsing the artisanal embroidery pieces for sale made by the workforce of widows, savor a homemade, Lebanese lunch of epic proportions. The villa's pièce de résistance occurs each Friday in the form of a buffet consisting of the finest Lebanese cuisine.

01 366 758 - 01 366758
 Faris Nemr Street, Zarif Beirut.

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Art of the land

The Lebanese **Basbous brothers**, a family of prolific sculptors, paved the way for modern sculpture in Lebanon. Their outdoor sculpture park in Rachana reveals a deep connection to the nature of the region, and it's one that's been passed on to the next generation



Set in a luscious landscape of rolling hills, the winding country road to Rachana is marked by large sculptures that have become part of the landscape alongside almond and olive trees – organic forms made from stone, wood and metal. Set in the Batroun region, the village of Rachana is a kind of open-air art museum for the work of Michel, Alfred and Youssef Basbous, sculptors whose legacy remains deeply intertwined with the identity of the area.

Though the three Basbous brothers who brought fame to the sleepy village have long since passed away, their imprint on the identity of Rachana remains. But the village isn't a sterile museum to the past; their sons have inherited that artistic heritage, along with a deep connection to the area, and continue to create sculptures from their studios in the village.

Nabil Basbous, the son of Youssef, appears from his studio with clay-covered hands and wild wiry grey hair. He's in the process of sculpting molds for three religious icons, to be cast in bronze or marble. It's no surprise his work is inspired by the landscape; his studio is located below a quirky stone house perched on the edge of a valley with an incredible view. The colorful interior of his home is filled with mini studies of his life-size sculptures, wooden trees and nature-inspired forms.

The Basbous family connection to the area can be traced back four generations,

when three brothers, originating from the nearby village, Maad, moved across the hill, then the uninhabited Rachana. Sculptor Michel, Nabil's uncle, was the first in the family whose work gained recognition, encouraged by then president's wife Zelpha Chamoun. In 1958, during the cultural golden age of Beirut, he decided to return to Rachana with the dream of creating an art village. "There was a bad political situation before the civil war," Nabil says. "He decided to come

to Rachana and bring the people of Beirut to the village. Michel believed that art and Rachana was connected."

Michel transformed the village creating open-air sculptures with a backdrop of the surrounding landscape, which his brothers continued to add to. "[The brothers] were inspired from the trees, the clouds, nature," Nabil says. "They made art to integrate into the landscape." Rachana became a hub of activity for the arts when Michel created



the first modern theater in Lebanon, with the help of local villagers, where plays such as an adaptation of Kleist's "Broken Jug" by Edouard Bustany debuted.

After Michel's death in 1981, cultural activities slowed for a few years until in 1994, the two brothers organized the Rachana International Symposium of Sculpture, inviting sculptors from around the world to exhibit in the village. Alfred led the exhibition for eleven successful years until 2004, passing away in 2006.

Nabil, his brother Samir, and cousin Anashar – his name an inversion of the village – all now work as fulltime artists, inheriting their parents' deep connection with the nature of the region. "I can't live without this area. It's inspired me and I feel I have a responsibility to keep it going," Nabil says. For him, the landscape is the perfect working environment for an artist. "Here we have the space for sculpture and light," he adds.

Nabil heads outside passing through his garden and pausing at a tree. "These are my sculptures. I know every part of them, every leaf, every branch," he says. "It's a very beautiful landscape. I go everywhere in the world but something always attracts me back to here." Stones protrude from every grassy bank, natural sculptures that seem in harmony with the artworks dotted across the land.

The road to Michel's old house is lined with Basbous sculptures, including

Michel's impressive sculpture of a ship is dedicated to Lebanese Emigrants, an abstract ship with five large rusted prongs that point towards the continents. Anashar's sculptures are notably contemporary; works such as a rusted steel half sphere exposing hundreds of delicate prongs like the tentacles of anemone. The house of Michel, once a workshop for the three brothers, has since become a museum to their work. A nearby sculpture house, with curved roof and walls, is a living art piece, and the home of Michel's wife, which looks out over the garden of sculptures.

"I lived with the three brothers and saw how they worked. They created the story, the myth, now there is the challenge to keep their spirit alive." For Nabil, Rachana's future rests on its return to being an active center for the arts and there are hopes to open an extended museum to house and re-launch a regular sculpture exhibition in the near future. "Now we are all working in our workshops which is also important but we want to invite other artists to exhibit too," he says.

Hidden behind the main road, through a small passageway, the back entrance to the Basbous Museum is marked by a small sign from the '60s carved with the words "Galerie Basbous." It's an area Nabil calls "the hidden face of Rachana." A canopy of overgrown grapevines and

fig trees by the roadside shades a tall, slim concrete sculpture of an anonymous man. The overgrown orchard, intertwined with grape-filled vines and plants, mostly hides it and as nature reclaims it, it's perhaps the most powerful symbol for the Basbous story – art that reflects the landscape and then becomes a part of it.



The hidden face of Rachana



Abstract ship sculpture for the Emigrants

HOW TO GET THERE

A 51km drive from Beirut, take the highway north towards Batroun. Just before Madfoon army checkpoint exit the highway on the right and take the mountain road climbing upwards. Follow signs for Saint Rafqa. After around 3km you'll see signs to Rachana, situated on the left.

WHERE TO EAT

The nearby Ixsir Winery (71 631613) has won awards both for its exceptional wine and its green-orientated design. Their recently opened restaurant serves up Lebanese cuisine looking out over a vineyard. If you're looking for a quick snack with a view stop by

L'Olivier (03 828242) a small mini-market in Rachana that makes delicious manoushe, which can be enjoyed on their terrace overlooking the valley.

WHAT TO SEE

Nearby Maad is full of historical religious riches including the Saint Rafqa shrine, the 1788 AD Mar Abda Monastery (09 750132) and Saint Charbel Church in Byzantine style with medieval frescos. While in the area, see traditional Lebanese houses with frescos (Naouma Hajj, 09 750063, 09 750001) and the residence of famous Lebanese singer Tony Hanna (03 630150) featuring a snail farm and gardens.

Memories of old Beirut

Hidden behind the Corniche, close to the highest concentration of luxury hotels and towers in Beirut are the remnants of a once thriving fishing community and the home of a man who harbors its memories, **Ibrahim Najem**



While walking along Ain El Mreisseh's Corniche today, it's hard to imagine that the area used to be a rich agricultural landscape. But according to the Najem family, who still remember a time when the tallest building in the area was a three-story "tower," it was. High-rises might have sprung up around them, but Ibrahim Najem still spends his days, sitting on the terrace of his family home, which incidentally doubles as a humble museum filled with perhaps Lebanon's largest collection of random objects from the past.

Souffleur, the makeshift museum on the top floor of his home, began as a place where Najem displayed the seashells he collected while diving. A freak accident in 1982 left him partially paralyzed, which only fueled his collecting obsession for fishing memorabilia and anything else that was either gifted or sold to him from friends and visitors.

The organized chaos that makes up the museum is Najem's life's work, therefore he's more than willing to open his doors to anyone interested enough to find out more about the objects he's collected

over the years, estimated at over 30,000 pieces. Divided across three rooms, artifacts fill every corner from a collection of antique rifles, vintage cameras and telephones to typewriters, radios and sunken ships – every piece treasured, proudly on display, and never sold. The mass of Oriental items could recreate the city's past.

Finding funding to maintain the museum or move it to a larger location is a dream that Najem hopes will one day become a reality. For now, the community that still exists in Ain El Mreisseh holds on to a hope to keep their traditions alive and one way or another, a hope that Najem's museum has become a kind of symbol for.

The handful of fishing families in the neighborhood still have access to a private harbor, but just like the museum, it serves as a place that holds memories of days past that have now fallen into shadow.

Souffleur, Sinno Street, Ain El Mreisseh 01 365 313. Call for private visits.

Annie Dilsizian



WHERE TO EAT

Casablanca

Ali Al Hout Building, Graham Street, Ain El Mreisseh 01 369334

Spaghetteria

Graham Street, Ain El Mreisseh 01 363487

Dardachat

Ain Mreisseh: 01 372005

Jezzine

A tourism development strategy in Jezzine is beginning to show results by rejuvenating the area and bringing visitors back to re-discover the beauty of the south

Set within Bkassine's pine forest, the communal eco-touristic site La Maison de la Forêt (lamaisondelaforet.net) has acted as a kind of springboard for tourism in the region. With wooden bungalows and tents in the midst of the forest, the site has become a center for eco-tourism and contributed to reviving the local economy. It offers visitors a peaceful escape in the heart of nature, though with the luxury of a restaurant run by popular Mar Mikhael institution Tawlet and a range of outdoor activities.

"People used to come to eat, drink and leave," says Khalil Harfouche, President of the Union of Jezzine Municipalities. "Now people have realized they can stay for the weekend. La Maison de la Forêt has given us a big boost in the region and is attracting new clientele that didn't used to come to Jezzine." The project represents the first public-private partnership in the area, the results of a sustainable development tourism plan put together by the Union of Jezzine Municipalities and the EU with input from local residents, and it's proved successful.

Marwan Ammoun set up Pinea Campus (pineacampus.com) – a campground surrounded by Haitoura's pine forest – three years ago and reports the same influx of tourists to the area. After working outside Lebanon for years he wanted to encourage outsiders to get to know the area. "When we started it was still unvisited, nobody considered the area a destination," he says. "Now we see the growth potential and the real numbers growing year on year. People have become accustomed to the idea that they can visit South Lebanon," he says. And Pinea Campus is certainly a celebration of the area; with tents set up on location, a comfortable camping experience within a stunning landscape awaits. Onsite activities are available from cricket to clay disc shooting and ATVs and mountain bikes allow for further exploration.

The nearby Dr. Serhal Palace is also due to open soon as a museum. It's the vision of Lebanese surgeon, Farid Serhal, who demolished his house in the '60s to create an impressively intricate palace. Though he passed away in the '70s, his impressive dedication to the region and extensive collection of antiques lives on.

Jezzine is still growing as a destination, with the increasing number of tourists encouraging further development in the area. As the region continues to establish itself and build upon its success for a solid sustainable future, it's becoming a leading example for regeneration of the rural south.

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FAMILY GETAWAYS

Founder of NEOS Tourism consultancy and the author of “Eco Lebanon: Nature and rural tourism,” **Nour Farra-Haddad** gives her eco-friendly tourism tips around Lebanon



Fun with friends: Alita, Machnaqa

Take the road toward Artaba and stop in Alita at the Modern And Contemporary Art Museum (MACAM) which features four halls of contemporary art, before continuing to Machnaqa’s Roman ruins site on a plateau above the Adonis river, Nahr Ibrahim.

SLEEP A short drive from Adonis, the lodge of Beit El Mahabba (09 420493) is known as a great place for retreats, but also has a stunning view over the valley.

EAT The choice is yours: either head further into the mountains to enjoy a lunch of fresh local produce or head back towards the coast for fresh seafood at one of many Batroun seafront food spots. Local guide Randa Zaarour (71 883738) can also organize a meal in a village house in Machnaqa.

SEE Take a sunset walk around the remains of Machnaqa’s Roman site with local guide Zaarour for an insider’s knowledge. You’ll see everything from a temple’s ruins to steles, a church and an ancient necropolis.



Family escape: Koura & Bnachaii Lake

The artificial lake, Bnachaii, is located close to Zgharta. It’s a charming tranquil location where you can rent paddleboats to spot the ducks, geese and swans.

SLEEP The beautiful Olive Gardens Resort (70 159901, www.oliveresort.com) is nestled in the middle of the Koura region.

EAT Enjoy Lebanese mezze at Bnachii Lake Restaurant (06 550550, 03 979759, bnachiilakerestaurant.com.)

SEE The Wildlife Taxidermy Museum (06 550500, wtmuseum.com) contains over 3,000 sea and land animals as well as a huge collection of birds.



Rural retreat: Mtein village

In the heart of Metn, Mtein village dates back to the 15th Century. The Lebanese government recognized the importance of the village’s heritage, issuing a decree in 1957 that placed its historic sites under protection. Mtein village is notable for its feudal architecture. The Abillama Emirs, who moved here at the start of the 16th Century, left behind many of their grand buildings.

SLEEP Stay overnight in the Qontar Guesthouse (04 295043, 03 236062), a grand palace that was once the

residence of Emir Qabalan Abillamah.

EAT In summertime Kheirallah restaurant's (03 312288) wonderful terrace can host hundreds of guests, and in winter the restaurant moves to cozy indoor surroundings.

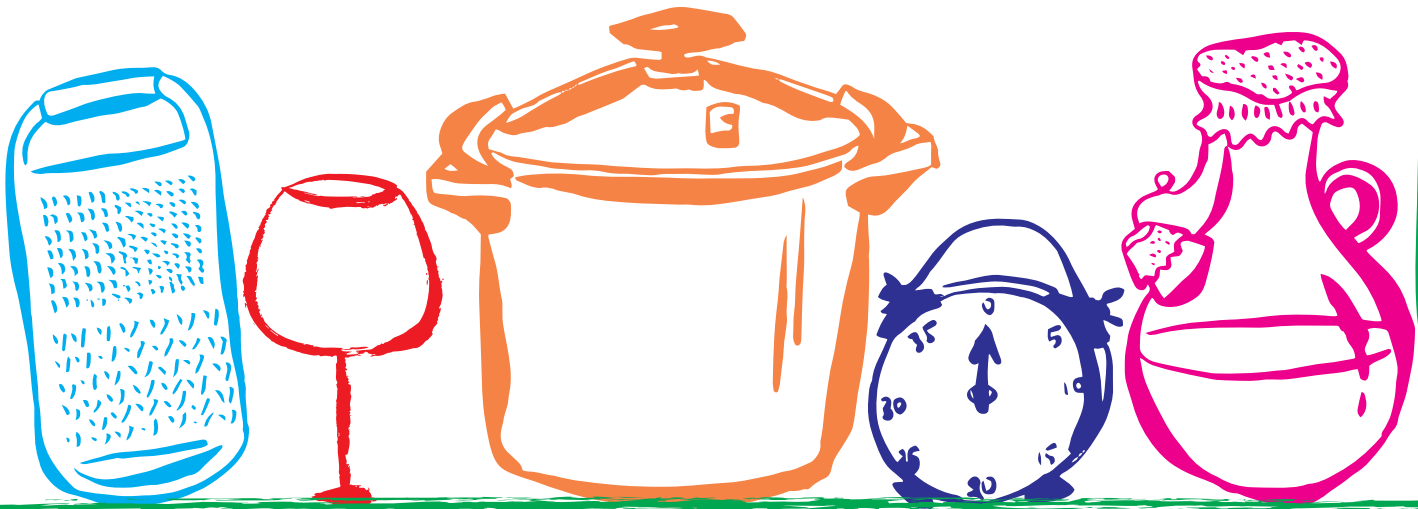
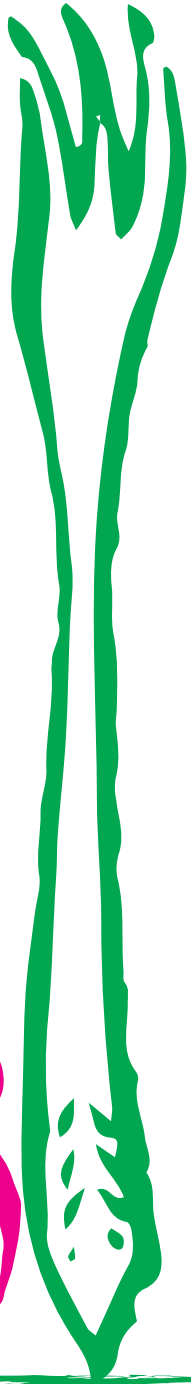
SEE Visit the central square, the ancient silk factory, winery, olive oil press, and Mir Abi Lamaa tomb. The West Palace is notable for its enclosed window balcony and the South Palace for its doorway.

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AGENDA

SEPTEMBER

Mon
15



Lebanon Water Festival 2014

Stretching the month of September, from the 5-30, the annual Lebanon Water Festival celebrates water sports from kite boarding and diving to underwater photography and sailing all along the Lebanese coast. *Every Fri-Sun in Sept, 3-8pm. lebanonwaterfestival.com*



Wed
17



Beirut Energy Forum

The fifth edition of this yearly energy forum which offers a platform for professionals, policymakers, businesses and academics to meet and discuss updates in the Lebanese energy sector. *Le Royal Hotel, Dbayeh. 01 565108*

Thu
18

Beirut Art Fair

Between Thu 18 – Sun 21, BIEL hosts one of the most anticipated events of the annual arts agenda. The Beirut Art Fair is the leading showcase for artists from the regional and international scene and a must visit for networking. *Beirut-art-fair.com*

Fri
19



Beirut Bike Festival 2014

Held between Fri 19 and Sun 21 September, bike enthusiasts are invited to join this 3-day motorcycle extravaganza. The festivities include bike challenges, stunt shows, live music, a motorcycle contest and the massive "Thunder Parade." Rev up! 4-10pm. *Facebook: BBF14. Beirut Waterfront*

FOR DAILY EVENT
UPDATES VISIT
LEBANONTRAVELER.COM

Sat
20



Beirut Yoga Festival

The first annual yoga festival in Lebanon offers a full day of activities with yoga professors and healers leading a variety of sessions. *Pleine Nature, Mansourieh. LL20,000, 71 214795*

Tour of Tyre

A trip around the ancient coastal city of Tyre. Discover the city's ruins and important sites that reveal layers of civilizations. *Minimum 5 people. Vamos Todos*

Atayeb Cheghel El Beit

Fine tune the world foodie in you - two women from two different countries will cook on location and sell special dishes from their homeland, at this weekly market. *Every Sat until October 11. Souk el Tayeb Market, Beirut Souks.*

Flight tours over Lebanon

Ever tried sightseeing with a birds eye view? Open Sky Aviation are offering unique flight tours of Lebanon to give a different perspective on Beirut, Dora, Jel El Dib, Antelias and Harissa. Donations go

to the Children Cancer Center of Lebanon. *Every Sat until Sat 28. Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport - General Aviation & VIP Terminal. LL270,000. gosawa.com/deals/cccl*

Elle Fiesta - Women's Empowerment

A day of workshops with a focus on education, empowerment and support for women from pediatric first aid to marketing tips and parenting ethics. *Sagesse University. Furn el Chebbak. Free entrance. supermommybeirut.com*

Weekend Open Buffet

Spend a weekend in Arnaoon Village and enjoy seasonal food and activities within stunning scenery. *Every Sat & Sun until Sun 5 Oct. Arnaoon Village. 03 342502, 06 642111*

Souk El Tayeb

A weekly Saturday food market with a local produce focus. *Every Sat until 27 Dec. Beirut Souks, Downtown*

Sun
21



Aaymar hike, Zgharta

A hike through the northern region steeped in history. Two levels are offered, level 3 (7km) passes by large oaks and the Douraya water spring, level 5 (10km) through forests of pines and oaks and water springs. *Liban Trek*

Ayto

Discover the mountainous village of the Zgharta region and its important religious sites. *Minimum 5 people. Vamos Todos*

Hiking in Ammouaa

After meeting next to the National Museum, Beirut, you'll journey to the far north Akkar region, for an easy-medium level hike through arguably one of the most beautiful landscapes of Lebanon. *LL35,000. FootPrints Nature Club*

Bkassine pine forest hike

An exploration of the south, including a journey through the rich pine forest of Bkassine and Jezzine Caza. *Adventures in Lebanon*

Sat
27



Rafting

Join Vamos Todos for a wild-water rafting adventure. *Minimum 5 people. Vamos Todos*

Sun
28



Jbaa hike, Chouf

A journey through Lebanon's mountainous region; the Chouf. Level 4 (8km) passes along the Lebanon Mountain Trail and through old oaks; level 6 (11km) passes over high ridges and the long prairie. With both hikes reaching heights of 1200m expect stunning views. *Liban Trek*

Hiking in Ouyoun Samak

After meeting next to Beirut's National Museum and heading north, the hike begins from the renowned lake of Ouyoun Samak, right through to the valley of Jahannam. Three walking levels offered: level 4-5(7km, 300-500m); level 6 (10-12 km, 250-500m); level 8 (10-15km, 500-950m). *LL35,000, FootPrints Nature Club*

Tannourine

A hike around the beautiful Tannourine region taking in the 3-Bridges Sinkhole. *Minimum 5 people. Vamos Todos*

Hike from Aitou to Deir Hamatoura

Starting at the beautiful village of Aitou, divided over four hills to Kousba's Monastery, Deir Hamatoura. *Adventures in Lebanon*

Leisure & history: Goodbye summer

No-one likes goodbyes, but the end of the summer in Lebanon is the most pleasurable. Let it bow out in style with a boat trip to the nature reserve, Palm Island, just off the coast of Tripoli. *Byblos & Beyond*



OCTOBER

Wed
01



Beirut International Film Festival 2014

The 14th edition of this important local film festival takes place between Wed 1 and Thu 9 October. It's become a platform for freedom of expression and human rights and for young filmmakers from the region to screen their work. *beirutfilmfestival.org*



Thu
02



Fall Trek

Between 2-12 October the Lebanon Mountain Trail launches on their epic Fall Trek from Andqet to Tannourine, raising funds to support community development and guesthouse renovation and restoration. *LL300,000, Lebanon Mountain Trail*

Sat
04



Continuous hike, Tannourine

Enjoy a weekend of hiking over Adha, along with a stay in a charming guesthouse facing the cedar reserve. Wake to a hike to the high springs and panoramic ridges. *LL200,000 inc. food, accommodation, transfers and reserve entrance. Liban Trek*

Ultra Cycling Challenge

A cycling challenge to cover Lebanon in its entirety in just two days. 550km – we dare you. *October 4th meeting point at 4.30am in Martyr's Square. 03 240170*

Sun
12



Zaarour hike

Two hikes offered at different levels in Mount Lebanon. Level 3 (6km, 1700-1900-1600m) offers a panoramic plateau; level 5 (10km, 1300-2000-1300m) a Roman temple and a gigantic ancient stone version of the coffin, a sarcophagi. *Liban Trek*

Olive picking & pressing

A day out in Douma that takes you back to nature and tradition. Learn the process

Sun
05



Chatine hike, Batroun

Two hikes offered at different levels. Level 2 (5km, 1200-900m) in the green valley of Tannourine and level 6 (11km, 1200-1000-1700-1100m), a view on the famous sinkhole and passing through picturesque Douma. *Lunch in a local restaurant offered for LL40,000 (optional). Liban Trek*

Apple picking season

There's nothing like getting back to nature, and harvesting nature's fruits. Try the simple life and join a day of apple picking. *Byblos & Beyond*

Thu
08



Vinifest 2014

If wine's your tipples, there's no other place to be than this annual wine festival that takes place between Wed 8 and Sat 11 October. 6.30pm-11.30pm. *Hippodrome Beirut. Tickets LL25,000 Librairie Antoine.*

of harvesting olives and pressing into oil, firsthand. *Adventures in Lebanon*

Hiking in Remhala

This village in Aley is situated on a sandy hill at the shoulder of a valley, surrounded by four mountains. A picturesque landscape to explore. *Pick up spot Alfa bridge, Furn el Chebbak. Baldati*

Sun
19



Jaj hike, Jbeil

Enjoy an old cedar grove hike for hiking level 3 (6km, 1600-1700-1300m) or cedars and snow pits for hiking level 6 (11km, 1200-1800-1300m). *Liban Trek*

Sun
26



Qadisha hike

A hike through the stunning Qadisha Valley; level 2 (5km, 1000-900m); for level 4 (9km, 1200-800-900m) take in the garden of the patriarchs and for advanced level 7 (13km, 550-1100-900m) visit the cave monasteries. LL3000 for shuttle transport. *Liban Trek*

Cultural tour: Enfeh

Explore the northern coastal town, known as "White Gold" for its glistening salt flats, where salt is still produced. *Byblos & Beyond*



Fri
31



Salon du Livre Francophone Beyrouth 2014

Until 9 November, BIEL is the place to be for all Francophone book lovers. Daily 10am-9pm. salondulivrebeyrouth.org

NOVEMBER

Sat
01

Cultural tour Jbeil & Batroun

Visit the northern fishing towns for an all-action weekend tour including a boat trip along the Byblos shore, swimming in isolated creeks, visits to religious sites, a local sculptor in Jaj and an overnight stay in Laqlouq complete with dinner by the bonfire. The final day takes in the 3-bridges sinkhole of Tannourine and the Houb Monastery. *Single days optional LL105,000/LL90,000, weekend LL345,000, Liban Trek*

Thu
06



4th Beirut Cooking Festival

A weekend of culinary delights with visiting chefs, delicious produce and live cooking demonstrations. BIEL. beirutcookingfestival.com

Sun
09



Tartej hike, Jbeil

A mountainous hike on two levels. Level 4 (8km, 1100-1500-1100m) passes along a Roman path to Douma; level 7 (13km, 1100-1800-1100m) visits a labyrinth in karstic rocks. *Liban Trek*

Sun
16



Ehden hike

A hike in the heart of the northern mountain of Lebanon. Experience Autumn colors on level 3 (6km, 1400-1600-1300m) and panoramic ridges on level 5 (10km, 1300-1700-1300m). *Liban Trek*

Cultural tour: Rachaya Al Wadi

Explore the traditional Lebanese village of red roofed-houses that is Rachaya in south-east Lebanon and sample local Lebanese wine with a winery visit. *Byblos & Beyond*

Sun
02



Bkassine hike

A hike around the peaceful village of Bkassine, in south Lebanon's Jezzine. Level 3 (5km, 1100-800-900m) takes you through impressive pinewoods; level 5 (10km, 1100-600-1100m) also reaches a watermill. *Liban Trek*

Olive picking festival

Harvest the fruits of the season, in a one-day-long festival of tradition and then taste the results... there's nothing like the first press. *Byblos & Beyond*

Salon du Chocolat Beirut

In the same venue as Beirut Cooking Festival, the world's largest event dedicated to chocolate comes to Beirut for the first time. salonduchocolatbeirut.com

Wed
12

Cultural Resistance

Prominent filmmaker Jocelyne Saab first established the Cultural Resistance International Film Festival of Lebanon in Tripoli last year. This year the festival will be held across five cities, including Tripoli, Zahlé, Beirut, Saïda, Tyr and Aïnata from 12-17 November. culturalresistance.org

Sat
22



Cultural tour, Metn & Baabda

A two-day exploration that covers everything from Jdeideh's Marine Museum to bell and silk-making in Beit Chabab, visits to medieval mansions in Mtein and a short walk to Falougha, a young cedar grove and the site where the first Lebanese flag was raised. The tour ends in the Bekaa with a visit to Niha temples and wine tasting in Ksara. Single days optional LL105,000/LL90,000; weekend LL345,000 (if two sharing bungalow). *Liban Trek*

Sun
23



Jabal Moussa hike, Ftouh

Hike around the stunning mountainous landscapes in Ftouh. Level 4 passes through old silk settlements (7km, 1400-1600-1000m); level 7 (13km, 1000-1600-1000-1400-1000m) enjoy Autumn colors. *Liban Trek*

History trip

Discover Faqra's roman temples and the Chabrouh Dam. *Byblos & Beyond*

Thu
27

The Handmade Expo

Between Thur 27-Sun 30 November, 12-10pm LiQaa – the International Center for Dialogue of Civilizations, Ar Rabiya, showcases the work of over 45 local artists and craft workers. *04 521907/8*

Sun
30



Jwar Al Hawz hike, Baabda

Visit the water basins and pine forests of Jwar Al Hawz, level 3 (6km, 1250-1500-1200m) and a small Roman temple, Level 5 (11km, 700-1400-1200m). *Liban Trek*

Hiking Bkassine Pine forest

A hike through the enchanting pine forest of Bkassine in south Lebanon's Jezzine. *Byblos & Beyond*

ONGOING ACTIVITIES



Rural escape

A two-day tour in the Chouf, passing through Niha to visit the tomb of Nabi Ayoub, the village of Baadarane and an overnight stay in St Michel guesthouse, Maaser El Chouf, before visiting historical Deir El Qamar. *Minimum 4 people. LL540,000. Wild Discovery*

Baalbeck-Ksara-Anjar

A tour of the rich Bekaa region taking in historic Baalbeck, Ksara winery and the town of Anjar. *Minimum 2 people. LL120,000 including lunch. Kurban Tours*

Tannourine & Balaa sink hole

A tour of the impressive natural sinkhole, "Cave of the 3-bridges," and the surrounding area. *Mon-Sat. Minimum 20 people. LL87,000. Wild Discovery*

Jeita and Harissa

A half day tour to two of Lebanon's most well-known touristic sites, Jeita Grotto and the heights of Harissa. *Minimum 2 people. LL87,000. Kurban Tours*

Beirut, Beiteddine & Deir El Kamar

Take in the tourism icons of Beirut with a visit to the National Museum of Beirut and Pigeon Rocks tour and Downtown, before heading to the heritage sites of the Chouf. *Tue-Sat. Minimum 20 people. LL102,000 inc. lunch & transport. Wild Discovery*

Hiking in the Holy Valley of Qadisha

A two-day hike package exploring Lebanon's stunning Holy Valley with an overnight stay in the monastery of Lady Qannoubine. *Minimum 7 people. LL75,000. Sports4Life*

Hiking & Speleo

Get active at the weekend with a day of hiking and speleo activities in Jounieh. *Every Sat. LL30,000. Sports4Life*

Sundays hike

Join the Sports4Life group for their weekly hike escape on Sundays covering everywhere from Tannourine to Chouf, Jezzine, Jabal Moussa and Ehden. *Every Sun. LL49,500. Sports4Life*

Mountain wine trip

Tour by the glass taking in Chateau Musar, Trappist Convent St Saviour and St Andrew Castle. *LL67,500. Club Grappe*

Bhamdoun wine trip

Discover the wineries of Bhamdoun: Chateau Bellevue, Clos de Cana and Iris Domain. *LL67,500. Club Grappe*

Paragliding

Take a memorable adventure in the sky, paragliding over Ghosta, Mount Lebanon. *LL180,000. Club Thermique*

Family Escort in North Lebanon

A two-day trip for the family starting in Quammouaa, staying in a local guesthouse in Fnaydek and ending in Tripoli with a boat tour to Aranib Island Nature Reserve. *LL330,000. FootPrints Nature Club*

Rafting in Hermel

A two-day trip to Hermel visiting Baalbeck's ancient ruins and souks, before an overnight camp near Assi River for rafting the following day. *LL420,000 including lunch & transport. FootPrints Nature Club*

Night hike in Darb Al Sama

Enjoy a hike under the full moon through the pine trees surrounding Harissa, ending at the statue of our Lady of Lebanon. *LL25,500 including transport from Sassine. WalkLeb*



Picnic & hike Wede Al Salib

Escape to nature for a hike around Wede Al Salib, a beautiful trail that stretches from Kleiat to Kefarzebyan with a picnic lunch stop. *LL67,500 including transport from Sassine. WalkLeb*

Al Chouf Cedar Reserve

A trip to the national natural treasure, the Chouf Cedar Reserve of Barouk Forest. Every Sunday. *Minimum 7 people. LL142,500 including lunch & transport. Saad Tours*

Grape harvesting weekend

Between August and September its grape harvesting season, a collective festival of grape picking in rural parts. Join the festivities and see the wine-making process. *Club Grappe*

Jobbeh; Hadchit-Qadicha

A level 2 hike that takes in medieval chapels and ancient frescoes and a visit inside the Tannourine Reserve (entrance +LL9,000). Every Sat. 7.45am pickup from Beirut hotels. *LL75,000 including guide & transport, lunch LL37,500 (optional). Libran Trek*

Jeep Safari

Take an adventurous tour through the landscapes of the Chouf. *Minimum 4 people. LL180,000 including lunch & transport. Safari Lebanon*

Visit Harissa, Jeita Grotto & Byblos

A cultural tour of Lebanon taking in the heights of Harissa, the famous Jeita Grotto and picturesque Byblos. *Minimum 7 people. LL162,000 including lunch & transport. Saad Tours*

Visit Saida & Tyre

A trip to the south taking in the two important coastal fishing towns and heritage cities, Saida & Tyre. Every Tue-Sun. *Minimum 20 people. LL72,000. Lunch LL49,500. Rida International*

Visit the Shia shrine of Nabi Younes

Head just south of Beirut, to Jiyeh for a religious tour of the important shrine of Nabi Younes. Every Sat & Sun. *Minimum 15 people. Adults LL75,000, kids LL45,000 including lunch & transport. Neos Tourism*

Visit the maqâm of Sitt Shaawaneh

A cultural trip to the Bekaa, to visit the ancient maqâm of Sitt Shaawaneh. Every Sat & Sun. *Minimum 15 people. Adults LL75,000, kids LL45,000 including lunch & transport. Neos Tourism*

Spotlight: Cycling

Touring the country by bike not only has the benefit of being green on the environment, it offers a slow-travel approach, exploring the country's rural regions at a slower and more intimate pace. CyclingCircle is the largest active cycling group in Lebanon and provides a platform for cycling enthusiasts to come together and plenty of riding opportunities for the lesser experienced.

When CyclingCircle isn't organizing their regular awareness rides with

various NGOs and civil movements and raising money to contribute to a stronger society, the group also have a packed agenda of weekly cycling tours to Lebanon's rural regions. Organized in collaboration with the shop Bike Generation, each weekend they organize trips either by road or mountain bike everywhere from Zandouka and Barouk Reserve to Tabarja and Batroun.

cycling-circle.com, outdoorgeneration-me.com, 03 108833



ADDRESS BOOK

Byblos & Beyond

09 540857 - byblosandbeyond.com

Cyclamen

04 419848 - tlb-destinations.com

Kurban Travel

01 614914 - kurbantravel.com

LibanTrek

01 32997 - libantrek.com

Saad Tours

01 393100 - libantrek.com

R. Rida International

04 718790 - ridaint.ae

Wild Discovery

01 565646 - wilddiscovery.com.lb

Baldati

04 922999 - baldati.com

Adventures in Lebanon

71 443323 - adventuresinlebanon.com

Vamos Todos

03 561174 - vamos-todos.com

Promax Adventures

03 955642 - promaxsports.com

Neos Kids

03 733818 - neoslb.com

33 North

70 331138 - 33-north.com

Club Grappe

03 611603 - clubgrappe.com

Club Thermique

09 237193 - clubthermique.org

Dale Corazon

70 986118 - dalecorazon.com

Safari Lebanon

03 954052 - safarilebanon.com

Sports4life

03 574874 - sports4life-lb.com

Exit to Nature

03 270592 - facebook.com/exittonature

Footprints Nature Club

03 876112 - footprintsclub.com

Walkleb

70 353738 - walkleb.com

Nakhal

01 389389 - nakhal.com

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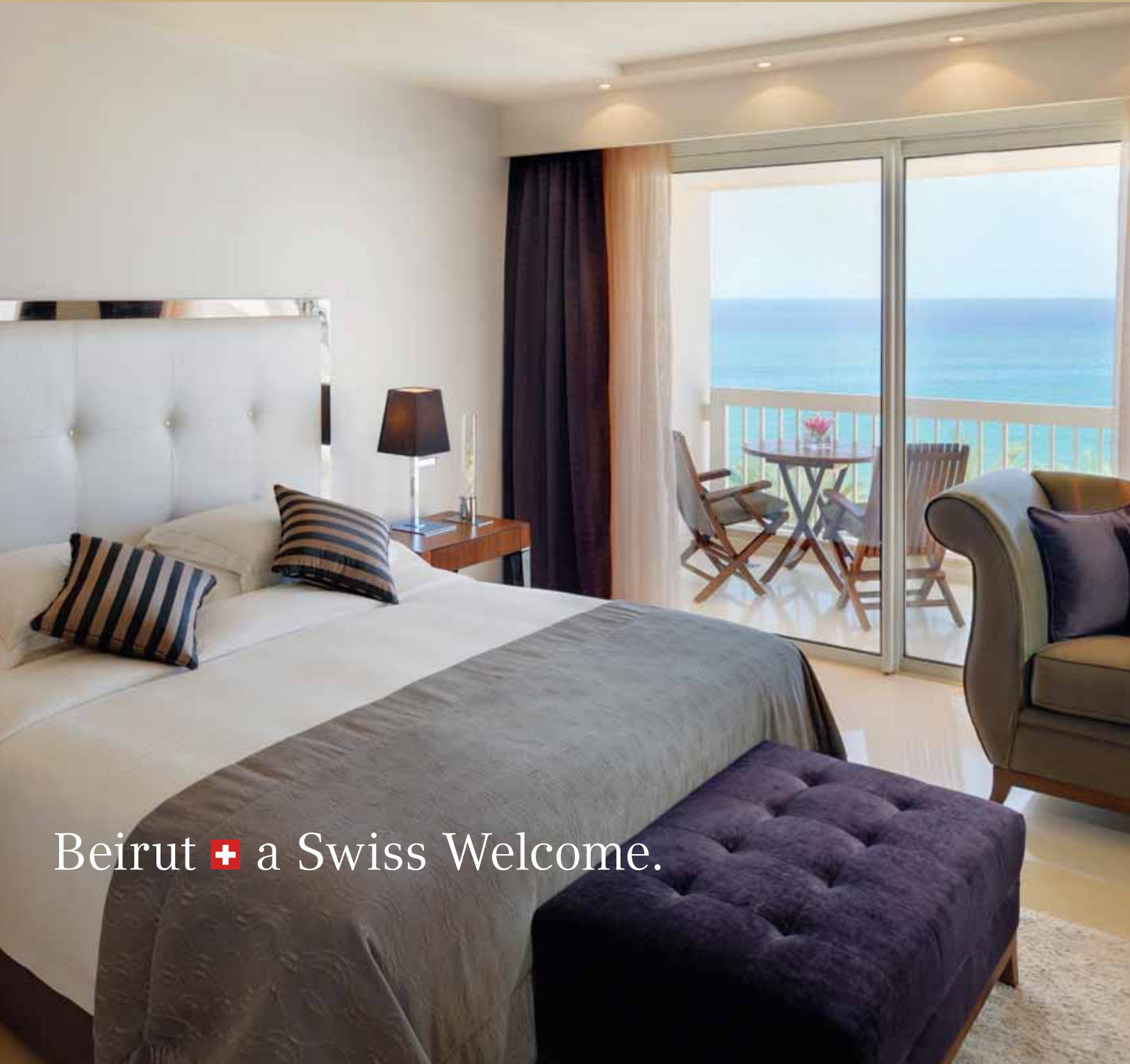


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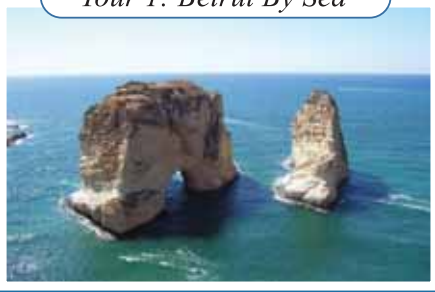
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Beirut  a Swiss Welcome.

Tour 1: Beirut By Sea



See the Beirut Coastline and discover its beautiful landmarks along the shoreline from Beirut harbor till its international airport. Enjoy a delicious seafood lunch in one of its seaside restaurants and stroll in its new/old downtown shopping area.

The excursion can last up to 8 hrs, inclusive of 4 hrs of cruising and 4 hrs of lunch and leisure time at downtown Beirut.

Departure from Dbayeh Marina every morning at 10:00 AM.

Tour 2: Jounieh Bay Tour

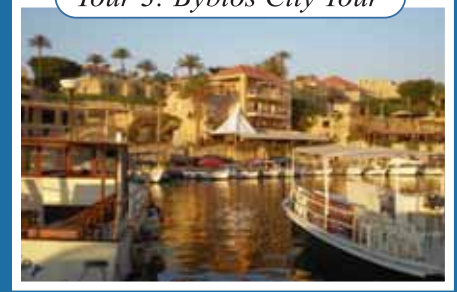


Enjoy a cruise along one of the most beautiful bays in Lebanon with its historic houses, beautiful green hill sides and important land marks of Cathedrals, Telefrigue (cable car) to Virgin Mary's statue at Harisa, Casino du Liban, etc... Seafood lunch can be served in one of its many seaside restaurants while swimming and water sports can be enjoyed within the protected waters of the bay.

Optional Add-ons: Visit Casino du Liban, stroll along Jounieh's historical shopping areas. Inclusive of 3 hrs cruising and 5 hrs of lunch and leisure time.

Departure from Dbayeh Marina every morning at 10:00 AM.

Tour 3: Byblos City Tour



Cruise to Byblos' historical harbor that was built by the crusaders, embark on a guided tour of its historical castle, the wax museum and its old souk. Enjoy all the historical quarters, Churches, and alley ways, and enjoy a seafood lunch at one of its seaside restaurants overlooking the ancient harbor.

Cruise inclusive of 3 hrs cruising time and 5 hrs of lunch and leisure time.

Departure from Dbayeh Marina every morning at 10:00 AM.

Tour 4: Amchit Harbour Tour



Enjoy a cruise along the coast line extending from Dbayeh Marina passing by Kaslik, Jounieh bay, Tabarja, Safra, Edde Sands, Byblos and other seaside picturesque scenes. Dock at the "Le Cap" restaurant and enjoy a superb seafood lunch and experience a swim in crystal clear waters at the adjacent bay.

Cruise includes 4 hrs of cruising and 4 hrs for lunch and leisure.

Departure from Dbayeh Marina every morning at 10:00 AM.

Optional Add-Ons:

- ♦ Water sports (Banana, Jet-Ski, Donuts, etc...)
- ♦ Hotel pick up.
- ♦ Premium bar.
- ♦ Lunch at selected seafood restaurants.

*Price is inclusive of Fuel, Crew, Soft Drinks & Tid-bits.



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