

Lebanon Traveler



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A publication of Hospitality Services in a joint venture with Beyond Beirut | Issue 15 | June-August 2015

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beach clubs*

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Clement Tannouri*

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Cover photo courtesy of Bonita Bay



Every summer has its own story

Summer in Lebanon is full of little pleasures and whether bronzing on the white sandy shores of the country, heading into the cooling mountain air or enjoying the urban outdoors is your thing, we've packed the latest issue full of destinations for every taste.

We round up the must-visit beach clubs and speak to beach-expert Ralph Nader to explore how much the industry has changed since his grandfather opened Saint George, the first beach club in Lebanon, way back in 1936. One reader, Jane Gleason takes us off the beaten track to see the other side of Jezzine and an eccentric's palace. We take a look at the rising trend of agricultural tourism and explore the newly-developed food heritage trail, Darb el Karam, taking visitors into the farms and homes of rural residents. We meet artists with a passion for the Lebanese landscapes, from renowned photographer Clement Tannouri's aerial perspective and painter Chaouki Chamoun's beloved Mount Sannine, to the pottery of Bkerzay. In the city, mapping company Zavarib takes us on an urban trail of Hamra and we sip coffee under the sun drenched skies in the city's best outdoor cafes.

Explore the country's diverse experiences and destinations and find your summer holiday closer to home.

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Contributors

Elie Nohra



Elie Nohra is a Lebanese photographer based in Beirut with a huge passion for photography. He started focusing on his own photography in 2011 after being a finalist in Ayyam photography competition and specializes in fashion and art photography.

Maria Bahous



Following her master's degree in Information Design at the London College of Communication (University of the Arts London), Maria Bahous returned to Lebanon and initiated her Beirut-based design studio Kubik. She is also an adjunct faculty at LAU.

Martine Btaich



Martine Btaich is an independent professional working on community and rural tourism development and was recently appointed vice president of the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association. Her motto is inherited from her father's "Al Ard marja'a" meaning "Earth is the reference!"

Nour Farra-Haddad



Nour Farra-Haddad manages her own travel consultant company, NEOS, specializing in pilgrimages and religious tourism. She is also a founding member of the Association for the Development of Pilgrimages and Religious Tourism and the author of Eco-Lebanon and Wiz Kids guide books.

Zeinab Jeambey



After working on a cultural mapping project of Homs, Syria, Zeinab Jeambey became hooked on the subject of heritage and went on to study food heritage management at the University of Barcelona. Since returning to Lebanon, she has worked at the Food Heritage Foundation in Beirut.

News

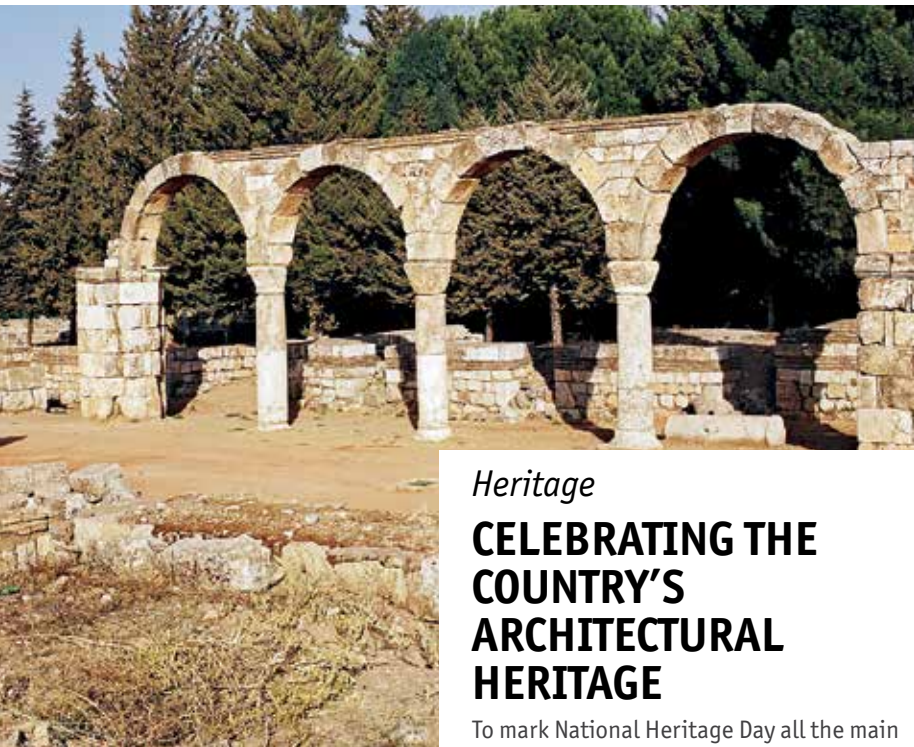


For a cause

KEEP MOVING FORWARD

The Beirut Marathon Association continues their campaign to encourage women to engage in competitive sports with their third women's race, Rise and Run Forward, which will take place on 7 June. The event will see women of Lebanon coming together to take part in six different races from a 1km run with parent and kids to a 10km race exclusively for women, all with a strong social message to "rise to the challenges of everyday life... and run towards a promising future." Many NGOs and charities are expected to take part in the race to raise awareness and funds for humanitarian and women's causes.

05 959262/20, 70 544465, beirutmarathon.org,
registration@beirutmarathon.org





Heritage

CELEBRATING THE COUNTRY'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

To mark National Heritage Day all the main touristic sites of the country, particularly the country's impressive ruins that line the country from Byblos and Tripoli to Batroun, Baalbeck, Saida and Sour, will open their doors to all Lebanese for free. In Byblos, the Municipality of Jbeil-Byblos, the Cultural Center of Byblos and the Office of Ruins in Byblos will be doing a special program to celebrate the day. The American University of Technology (AUT) will take part in the event with a program that includes painting and photography exhibitions, the display of an interior design project linked to Byblos and the broadcasting of films related to the Phoenicians.

Thursday 21 May, 9-6pm, Byblos



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Under the lens

THE Umayyad ROUTE

Ever wondered how the Umayyad's lived? With a new EU-funded tourism project, that connects the countries through which the dynasty once ruled, you'll be able to see firsthand the remnants of their impressive empire that spanned the Mediterranean region from Andalucía, Sicily and the Algarve to Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia. In Lebanon the route links the Umayyad City of Anjar and the city of Baalbeck to Tripoli, Byblos, Beirut, Saida and Tyre. A team of experts are developing touristic packages that follow the Umayyad Route with the first test trips planned for May. The project is expected to boost sustainable tourism in Lebanon and promote a cross-border collaboration. In Anjar, a digital museum is planned, comprising of an information center and library documenting the history of the Umayyad Dynasty.

umayyad.eu



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5 MINUTES WITH... *Zeina Haddad*

Filmmaker Zeina Haddad sits down with LT to talk about her new documentary *Aal Sekke Ya Train* (On The Rails), which rediscovers the long-forgotten Lebanese railway

HOW DID THE IDEA FOR THE DOCUMENTARY COME ABOUT?

The idea of the documentary started some years ago with the syndicate of railways and its president. After writing an article about the railways, I decided to do a documentary on them with the help of the then president of the syndicate, M. Bechara Assi. It was important for me to revive in the Lebanese mind this important cultural heritage that most people have forgotten.

WHO WERE SOME OF THE MOST INTERESTING CHARACTERS YOU MET?

I had the chance to meet three employees in Baalbeck and Batroun stations. There is a glance of hope in their eyes that the train will come back one day and bring back the cultural glory that was left behind. Unfortunately the two employees of Baalbeck passed away recently and the Batroun employee started another job after he retired, in order to survive.

WHICH OLD TRAIN STATION WERE YOU MOST DRAWN TO?

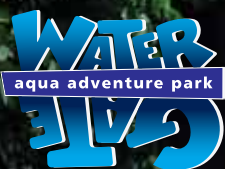
I was drawn most by Araya station, which has conserved whole buildings, of course in [derelict condition], and is surrounded by trees and green scenery. It took me back in time to before I was born but I can redraw the glorious area of the railway's life.

For the full interview visit lebanontraveler.com

INSTA SNAPSHOT *Anfeh*

Our Instagram of the issue was taken by Theodor Bafitos, who took this atmospheric shot of the Anfeh shoreline below his childhood family home. Architect Bafitos is a keen instagramer and unsurprisingly loves to take photos of interesting buildings. Follow his Insta feed on: THEOBAF

Tag @LebanonTraveler in your photos to be the next Insta Snapshot



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1



2

Summer Wishlist

Are you a yoga lover, an obsessive jogger, or a casual snorkeler? Here's our selection of the best active wear and accessories for a sports-driven summer



3



4



5

1. adidas Originals

Rita Ora SS15 Superstar 80s shoes at all [adidas stores](#):
01 801354, Verdun, and all Adidas branches

2. [adidas](#) by Stella McCartney SS15 Yoga Range, [adidas](#)

3. Arena Powerskin Carbon Air

Body Suit Long Leg for women, LL495,000 at [Class Sport](#) 01 680670, [class-sport.com](#), Mansourieh Highway

4. Decathlon squash starter kit

inc. rackets, shuttlecocks, net and carrycase LL135,000, [Decathlon](#) 04 526101, Le Mall, Dbayeh

5. [Artengo](#) rackets and ball LL14,000, [Decathlon](#)

6. [Tribord](#) Mask Snorkel Set and [R'GoMoove](#) Adult Fins LL59,000, [Decathlon](#)

7. [Quechua](#) tent LL140,000, [Decathlon](#)

8. [Salomon](#) Fast Wing tee LL112,000 at all [Sports Experts stores](#) 09 333555, Feytroun Megastore



6



7



8



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A rural passion

Michel Pharaon, the current Lebanese Minister of Tourism, is one of the first government officials to support rural tourism. During his time in office he's visited many regions, promoting the diverse riches of Lebanon. LT met with Minister Pharaon to uncover the plans in motion to further push forward the field



Minister Michel Pharaon enjoying a bicycle ride

WHY IS RURAL TOURISM IMPORTANT FOR YOU AND THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (MOT)?

Rural tourism has an immense potential still untapped. It can revitalize whole regions, stimulate economic development, and most importantly, restore Lebanon's image as a country of great cultural and historical wealth.

WHAT UPCOMING PROJECTS IS THE MOT WORKING ON?

We would like to support the elaboration of a network of guesthouses throughout the country. It is also our plan to launch a global day for Lebanese cuisine, with a website that would feature a fine selection of traditional Lebanese recipes.

WHAT ARE LEBANON'S TOURISTIC APPEALS?

Lebanon seems to be tailored for tourism. It is in our blood, since we have a great sense of hospitality. We speak multiple languages; enjoy brilliant summer nightlife, diverse winter sports and refined culinary traditions. What is more, there are many regions that are still unexplored and unknown to the Lebanese people and the diaspora.

YOU VISITED THE AKKAR REGION RECENTLY; CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT ITS HIDDEN GEMS?

Akkar is one of the most beautiful regions of Lebanon. Switzerland has nothing for us to envy. Akkar encompasses valleys, forests

and mountains as far as the eye can see, and its inhabitants respect the environment. I was struck by the youth's enthusiasm during my hike with the Lebanese Mountain Trail. Last but not least, 'La vallée de la croix' is of indisputable beauty.

YOU LAUNCHED THE CAMPAIGN 'LIVE LOVE LEBANON' LAST YEAR; WHAT IS THE CAMPAIGN'S PROGRESS?

When I joined the Ministry of Tourism, there was a rampant sense of depression. I wanted to infuse new enthusiasm for the country, and rejuvenate the touristic sector. We launched 'Live Love Lebanon' which was more than just a theme; it soon became a social movement. Lebanon represents a critical pillar for the defence of many cultural values in the region, and 'Live Love Lebanon' fuelled an appreciation for this role, and the societal imperative to uphold it.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE LEBANESE DISH?

As you can imagine I am passionate about Lebanese food. It would be easier to ask me what I do not like. Unfortunately, I am allergic to garlic and onions.

Florence Delande



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An aerial photograph of the Mövenpick Hotel Beirut resort. The image shows a large, modern building with a prominent white, dome-shaped structure. In the foreground, there is a large outdoor swimming pool with a blue and white geometric pattern, surrounded by lounge chairs and white umbrellas. To the right, a marina is filled with numerous white yachts. The resort is situated on a coastline with a clear blue sea and a bright blue sky. The text "Beirut + a Swiss welcome." is overlaid in the bottom left corner of the image.

Beirut + a Swiss welcome.



The face of Lebanon's coastline has seen significant changes over the last decade as beach resorts continue to evolve to changing trends. General Manager of Amber Consulting, Ralph Nader, whose grandfather opened the first Lebanese beach club, St George, in 1936, is certainly an expert. He managed both St George and Riviera in the '90s and pioneered the first beach club outside Beirut, Oceana. In 2003 he developed Eddé Sands, before launching Amber Consulting, which has developed beach clubs across the entire MENA region.

"The beach market has evolved a lot in the last 15 years, since 2001 when we opened the first beach club outside Beirut," Nader says. "Everybody thought I was crazy, but it happened to be a huge hit and [has] encouraged more than 35 beach clubs to open outside Beirut." He then talks about the huge evolution in the beach club concept, which used to be concentrated in Beirut and Jounieh and was more of a concrete resort. "Damour now has some very nice beach clubs such as Iris Beach and Damour Beach Resort, which is currently in development to become a full resort managed by an international chain and will completely change the concept of having a resort by the sea in Lebanon."

FROM COAST TO COAST

With over 35 beach clubs in Lebanon, LT rounds up the hottest destinations this summer for every taste. We also speak to consultant **Ralph Nader** on the new trends and developments that are taking the country's coastline by storm



White Beach, Batroun

Nader is quick to pick up on new trends for beach goers. Recently, he's noticed people returning to their roots, drawn to the original beach clubs such as Sporting and Long Beach. "We see a driver [dropping off] a lady wearing a few thousand dollars' worth of clothes and going to a beach club just to pay LL15,000 as an entrance and staying on a sunbed that is not of high quality, on concrete that still shows traces of the war." Beach clubs are now also moving towards creating and managing their own restaurants, rather than renting out the space, which is better for "quality" and to match "concept and vision."

The beach spa is also a growing trend, Nader reports. "There are several resorts in the south with spas, which are really just a few treatment rooms, such as Orchid in Jiyeh, and Byblos Sud. But, Eddé Sands has really pushed the concept, with several indoor and outdoor treatment rooms and a new indoor pool with a special treatment room. I think the concept of the spa was never adapted to the beach and it could be developed to [further] attract people." Nader expects a positive summer for the beach clubs, after a difficult few years for some. And with new openings and renovations upping the game, the Lebanese beach experience is maximizing its impact.



Rest House, Tyre

FAMILY-FRIENDLY

The popular beach **Lazy B** (70 950010, lazyb.me, Jiyeh), a tranquil getaway south of Beirut, has really upped the relaxing element, creating a green idyllic garden with beds and hammocks and featuring a playground area for kids. North of Beirut, the unpretentious **White Beach** (06 742505, whitebeachlebanon.com, Thoum, Batroun) attracts many families and its entrance cost won't break the bank. The pebble beach with a large restaurant is located on some of the cleanest shores of the country and offers activities such as windsurfing and kayaking.

Damour Beach Resort (76 883737, DamourBeach.com, Damour) is the closest option south of Beirut with a large pool area and beach only 20 minutes drive from the capital. Take a trip a bit further south to Tyre and you'll come across the beautiful **Rest House** (07 742000, resthouse-tyr.com.lb) which has a large stretch of sandy beach, shaded by exotic coconut leaf umbrellas.



Lazy B, Jiyeh

BACK TO THE ROOTS

The first beach club on the Jiyeh strip, family-run **Jonas Beach** (07 995000, Jiyeh) is full of old-school charm with retro beach umbrellas, a vast sandy beach and a variety of water sports on offer. **Joining** (03 517492, Seaside Road, Batroun) is simplicity to the extreme; a humble seafood restaurant located on rocks near Batroun with direct access to the sea. **Sporting Club** (01 742482, Beirut) transports beachgoers back to the '50s. Located in Raouche with a view out to Pigeon Rocks, the beach club attracts a wide range of clientele who bronze around its pools on the seafront, sipping on Almaza.



Damour Beach Resort, Damour

PURE LUXURY

Couples should head to **Orchid** (07 996303, orchid-resort.com, Jiyeh), reserved for those aged 21 and above, the luxurious paradise has VIP cabin areas, private jacuzzis, a pool bar and a small spa with treatment rooms. Kaslik has its fair-share of exclusive beach clubs with the four-star **Cyan** (09 223323, CyanBeachLebanon.com) and **Club Senses** (09 213212, clubsenses.com) and the five-star ultimate beach club **VEER Boutique Hotel & Resort** (09 222623, veer.com.lb) which offers nine beach rooms, four villas and four underwater bungalows. **Eddé Sands** (09 546666, eddesands.com, Byblos) is a destination in itself, spread over a vast 110,000m² space it features a stretch of sandy beach, 10 private cabanas with jacuzzis, and an entire wellness spa center.

MOOR YOUR BOAT

If you're one of the owners of the 2,400 plus boats moored along Lebanon's coastline, you're going to want to pick a beach with a mooring spot and a Zodiac facility. There aren't a huge number of beaches that are accessible by boat in Lebanon, but, as can be expected, the ones that have the service, are some of the country's finest. South of Beirut dock at **Orchid** (Details as above) or **Damour Beach Resort** (Details as above), in Beirut at **La Plage** (01 366222, [f la.plage.beirut](https://www.facebook.com/la.plage.beirut), Ain El Mreisseh) and **St George Yacht Club and Marina** (03 958379, stgeorges-yachtclub.com) and in the north **Eddé Sands** (Details as above). Also, a few restaurants along the coastline in Jounieh's Maameltein have started offering the service including **Chez Sami** (09 646064) and **Al Sultan Brahim** (09 853753).



Veer, Kaslik

EASY ACCESS

If you want to avoid the summer traffic congestion heading out of the city, there are plenty of beach club options in Beirut. **St George Yacht Club and Marina** (Details as above) is still going strong after almost 80 years, an urban escape in the heart of Ain El Mreisseh. Two hotels in Beirut with impressive 5 star beach clubs are **Riviera** (01 373210, rivierahotel.com.lb, Manara) which features three outdoor swimming pools, an in-pool bar and jacuzzi and **Mövenpick** (01 869666, moevenpick-hotels.com/beirut, General De Gaulle Avenue) which has private sandy beaches, swimming pools and a 2,000m² spa and health club; both offer water sports.

TALK OF THE TOWN

This summer everyone will be heading to the soon-to-open **Orchid**, as the popular Jiyeh beach club opens a second resort in Kfar Abida in late May. **La Plage** is another essential destination this summer, after a huge refurbishment, that's transformed the entire resort. They'll unveil a new pool and sunbathing area along with three new restaurants; two of which – Boulevard Beirut and Sea Salt – have already opened and a third, the Italian restaurant Popolo, due to open in May.



St George Yacht Club and Marina, Beirut

TO PARTY

If you're looking for a daytime party, **Iris Beach Club** (71 533318, irisbeach.com, Damour) has got you covered. The beach hosts DJs and is open till 2am on weekends. The 18+ resort **C Flow** (09 795977, cflowbeachresort.com, Byblos) is the place to head for a Sunday party with pumped up club music attracting a party-loving crowd. To party by night, head to **Sporting Club** every Friday, where **Decks on the Beach** ([f DecksOnTheBeach](https://www.facebook.com/DecksOnTheBeach)) takes over, bringing renowned international DJs attracting a crowd who dance till the sun rises. Despite the long journey south, **Cloud 59** (03 517996, [f Cloud59](https://www.facebook.com/Cloud59)) in Tyre brings scores of Beirutis and Tyre residents every weekend. At the down-to-earth beach club located on Tyre's sandy nature reserve beach, customers drink cocktails to a laid back soundtrack and stay into the early hours.



La Plage, Beirut

Undiscovered Jezzine



Jane Gleason, chief of party of the Lebanon Industry Value Chain Development Project (LIVCD), explores Jezzine's lesser-known faces from its tranquil villages to a local eccentric's palace

Jezzine's treasures are many; from the dramatic waterfall that drops from a great height, guarding the entrance to the town, to its majestic pine forest that forms a green blanket from the top of a well-defined ridge to the Wadi Jezzine below. And, hidden beyond the main touristic sites of the town of Jezzine and its surrounding region that visitors are most likely to seek, are treasures that require a bit more effort to find.

The Jezzine region has many small villages tucked into valleys and mountainsides, all picturesque with a slow pace of life. One such village, Qaytouli, is located a

few kilometers off the main Saida-Jezzine road. Like most small villages, it is a bubble of tranquil country living. Narrow streets wind through the large stone buildings and the tall steeples of two old churches rise high above the olive trees, competing with the pines. Residents languidly sip coffee and smoke shisha on the quiet street corners. I first visited Qaytouli during my first months in this country with a colleague and was introduced to a side of Lebanon that is so different to the typical touristic destinations of Beirut, Byblos and Baalbek.

The downtown area of the town of Jezzine contains a number of souvenir shops, many

of which sell the famous Jezzine firebird cutlery. Instead of visiting the retailers, I recommend visiting the workshops to see cutlery manufacturing first-hand. Boulos Bou Rached has been making Jezzine cutlery for decades. He has a small workshop on the ground floor of his home, where he welcomes visitors to watch the production. It is surprisingly simple. He requires very few tools – a rasp, electric drill, vise, and polishing machine – to form the distinctive handle for the cutlery. After watching the manufacturing process, visitors are invited to have a coffee or tea.

You will discover a palace, the unfinished dream of a Jezzinite

66



The Dr. Farhid Sarhel Palace (top left) and interior (bottom right). Photos: Jane Gleason

The Dr. Farid Sarhel Palace is another intriguing destination off the beaten track. To get there, take the Farid Sarhel Road north east out of the town of Jezzine. Behind an area of thick vegetation, you will discover a palace, the unfinished dream of a Jezzinite who wished to build a special place in his hometown. The palace entrance is Ottoman style, with a pointed arch and multi-colored stonework. Upon entering, the extent of Dr. Sarhel's ambition is obvious, yet the rubble and dirt-covered floors show a dream not completely realized. The main rooms contain an eclectic mix of cultural images reminiscent of landmarks in Iran, Egypt, Iraq, ancient Greece and, of course, Lebanon. There is a Turkish bath and in another room an image similar to the Tree of Life, embedded with a star. In several locations there are carvings illustrating the production of arak, and

the inevitable consequences of drinking too much. One can only wonder, with this mishmash of images, what message Sarhel hoped to convey. The work on the palace carried on for three decades, until his death. On the ground floor terrace, there is an old battered American car and all the equipment used for the construction of the building. It appears that the moment he passed away, the workers abandoned their jobs, leaving behind an incomplete masterpiece. But with that half realized dream, there remains an intriguing monument to one man's ambition that is forever stuck in the final moments of its construction.

Where to eat

Eat with a view to kill at Al Chalouf restaurant (07 781774), located at the top of the famous waterfall. There's also Jannat al Sanawbar in nearby Bkassine (07 780524, jannatalsanawbar.com), known for its tasty grills and mezze.

Visit Karam Winery (01 370519, karamwinery.com), open during the summer for pre-arranged visits between 10am-5pm, for lunch and wine appreciation and tasting courses.

Where to sleep

Stay overnight eco-style in wooden bungalows or tents within Bkassine's pine forest at *La Maison de la Forêt* (07 800222, lamaisondelaforet.net) or camp without the hassle on a stunning site surrounded by Haitoura's pine forest at Pinea Campus (70 776612, pineacampus.com) and enjoy an early morning ATV ride or hike. There are hotel options such as the modern Iris Flower Hotel (07 781999, I-iris.com) which comes with a great view.

What to see

Jezzine's wonders are many from its well-known waterfall, the highest in Lebanon to the nearby cave, Fakhreddine Grotto which Emir Fakhreddine hid in before the Ottomans captured him.

There are also plenty of important religious sites to take in from the Church of the Lady of Bisri, which dates back to 1252, to the Monastery of the Lady of Machmouche.



Rural tourism development specialist **Martine Btaich** explores the rising trend of agricultural tourism, where visitors get to experience the farm first hand and see rural food harvesting and production in process

Agricultural Escape



Fruits of the land - olive harvesting in the Shouf. Photo: Lara Koussaife



La Vallee Blanche farm, Photo: Roula Koussaife

Travel industry trends have been shifting around the world. Authentic and experiential tourism has gained more attention as travelers are seeking a return to nature, the outdoors, and different leisure opportunities. Travelers have become more concerned about the food they are eating and are looking for healthier produce and fresh air escapades away from an often unhealthy city life. One of those new travel segments to emerge is agritourism.

WHAT IS AGRITOURISM?

Agritourism is a category of rural tourism combined with agriculture, where travelers visit a farm or any agricultural operation to learn about and participate in farming activities. Agritourism activities are diverse and include farm and orchard visits, fruit and vegetable harvesting, and local produce tasting. They could be school tours to farms, hands-on farm experiences, helping farmers in their activities, milking a cow or feeding animals. Other activities include local produce festivals, accommodation and dining.

WHY THE INTEREST?

Agritourism is important for rural and farming communities and is an opportunity for farmers to diversify their activity and complement their income. They can sell their products, educate visitors about their business, invest in developing and conserving their business and landscape, and improve their lifestyles.

Agritourism is a fun leisure activity for families, providing an opportunity for visitors to eat fresh, healthy food and learn about farming and about the importance of preserving local agriculture.

One niche of agritourism is wine tourism. It includes grape harvesting, wine tasting and purchasing, learning about wine making,

sleeping and eating at vineyard sites. It is the most developed form of agritourism in Lebanon. Wine routes, dining at vineyards, wine festivals and events connected to food fairs and trails and eco-tourism are growing.

WHEN CAN YOU EXPERIENCE AGRITOURISM IN LEBANON?

There are no farm stays in Lebanon yet and maybe no real and in-depth farming experience offered. Currently most farmers haven't yet engaged seriously in tourism but activities such as harvesting and farm visits are developing.

Lebanon's climate and landscape diversity allows a great variety of crops and plants to flourish around the year. Most farmers concentrate on farming activities and 50 percent of them don't have a second income. Venturing into agritourism could counterbalance many risks inherent to the sector that they face every year from infrastructural gaps, to climate change, and weather risks.

Following the emerging demand, many places around the country have started offering cherry picking, almonds in May-July, vegetables in summer, apples, grapes and olives in October. Animal farm visits can be done around the year.

Nour Farra-Haddad's Eco-Lebanon guidebook lists wineries, farms and trip organizers

39%



OF LEBANON'S LAND IS CULTIVATED,

out of which around 7% is covered by forests and 57% is left to pasture

30%



OF THE LEBANESE POPULATION IS DEPENDENT ON AGRICULTURE

7%



OF THE GDP IS MADE UP OF ALL MAJOR AGRICULTURE PRODUCTS

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Ministry of Agriculture (MAO)

Experience Agricultural Tourism

Farms

Domaine des Pères Jesuites

08 543102, arcenciel.org, Taanayel, Bekaa

Habbat El Rumman – Sumsum Farm

76 765975, Beino, Akkar

Akoury Organic Farm

03 033209, Raachine, Kessrouan

Honey-making

Naji Rechrach

03 701064, Rachaya

Sheikh Mounir Qadamani

Honey and Debs making

05 550288, Rachaya

Apple harvesting

Auberge Arz Ehmej

Ehmej can organize apple harvesting and fun outdoor activities for kids. 70 227730

Hadath el Jebbeh Auberge

The auberge can organize seasonal apple picking.

71 680222, hadatheljebbeh.com, Hadath el Jebbeh

Olive harvesting and production

Douma Club

03 577864, Douma and Bshaali

Walid Haddara

03 885480, Mar Touma, Akkar

Wine

Wine lovers can follow the wine routes in the Bekaa Valley (the biggest) and in Batroun and Jbeil (the second most important route). Other wineries offering visits and wine tasting are in Kessrouane, Metn, Shouf and Jezzine, including private and monastery wineries.

Club Grappe

Well-known in the wine-tourism world of Lebanon, Club Grappe offers wine tourism activities.

03 611603, clubgrappe.com

Other associations

The Women's Association of Deir El Ahmar

08 320239, Deir El Ahmar

Food Heritage Foundation (FHF)

FHF can facilitate agritourism visits to Ein Zebde (olive and apples), Kherbet Qanafar (tomato, grape and mekti), Saghbine (onion and apple harvest, walking with shepherds), Aitanit (olive picking), Maasser el Shouf (olive, fig and tomato harvest), Mresti, and Khreibe.

71 731437, foodheritage.org



The Sarafand Glass Factory. Photo: Ziad Abichaker

5

things to do in and around Tyre

Lebanon's historic southern city is well known for its impressive ruins and long stretch of sandy beach, but there is so much more to see. **LT** reveals five alternative things to do in the Tyre region this summer

1 Glass blowing heritage

On your way down South, make a stop at the ancient town of Sarafand, located about halfway on the road between Saida and Tyre. Archeological excavations in Sarafand, show the town was once an important center of industry with evidence of glass and porcelain production, and the tradition of glass blowing continuing to this day. And right next to the remains of old pottery kilns and workshops is the Sarafand Glass Factory (03 906091, Sarafand) of the Khalife family – where father, brother, son and daughter still produce blown-glass items today.

Only a few years ago the workshop was at risk of closing, with the competition of cheap China-made glass imports and declining numbers of foreign tourists to Lebanon taking a hit on the business. But after the Green Glass

Recycling Initiative ([f ggrilebanon](#)) partnered up with them to recycle the waste beer bottles that usually end their life in landfills, business is now booming.

“Just two years ago we would only open for work a few days a month. But after getting a contract with Almaza a few months ago we became so busy, working almost 24 hours a day,” says Rima Khalife, a member of the family business. “They make seven million bottles of rubbish a year and we recycle the glass and make glasses from it. For every eight bottles of waste, we make one recycled glass.” At the workshop you can see firsthand the glass-blowing tradition in process. Afterwards stop by the small shop, where they sell their artisan products – from bowls, vases and glasses to chandeliers and lamps.

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Tyre's fishermen prepare for the catch. Photos: Myriam Shuman

② The olive mill of Maarakeh

In the village of Maarakeh, 7km north of Tyre, stands the 50-year-old olive mill where Daoud Roumieh (03 355990) still presses the family olive oil; a tradition passed on from his father. The olive press is a part of the cultural heritage of the area – each olive season locals from Maarakeh and the surrounding villages make their pilgrimage to the Roumieh mill, bringing their harvests to press the traditional way. Stop by in harvesting and pressing season, which usually begins mid-October, to see the mill in action or call in advance to have a tour of the mill and press and meet owner Roumieh, who will explain the process.



Alleyways of color - Tyre's Harat el Masihiyeh

③ The Christian Quarter

Head to the end of the Port and you'll enter Harat el Masihiyeh, the quaint Christian Quarter of Tyre that is home to some of the city's fishing community and moves to its own slowed-down pace of life. Narrow cobble streets twist and turn, passing by century-old sandstone houses, serene courtyards with flowing fountains and small gardens with flowers in full bloom. In this old community, daily life spills out onto the streets – washing hangs outside, families grill on the pavement and scooters speed by, carrying the morning's catch of fish. Here you can always feel the close proximity of the sea. Wander down the area's charming alleyways and you'll come across a catholic church, the oldest in the area. Here too you'll find the center of Tyre's nightlife scene where pubs are hidden within its narrow streets. Start with dinner at the charming Al Fanar (07 741111, 03 665016, alfanarresort.com) for a seafood dinner on the seafront. Then head to cozy pub Tavolino (07 740135, *Al Fanar Street*) for fresh cocktails made with the season's ingredients. There's also the relaxed pub-restaurant Diver's Inn (03 059052) with arched stone ceilings and tons of atmosphere and Blue Line (71 504094) which occasionally features live music.



Two Tyre residents play cards next to the port



Harvest of the sea

④ Meet Tyre's fishermen

Tyre's picturesque port area is an essential stop for any trip to the city. For a more immersive experience, stop to talk to the fishermen who you'll find fixing their nets, bringing in the morning's catch or grilling fish in front of their fishing boats, and hear the stories of the city directly through them. For a unique eating experience, buy fresh fish from one of the fishermen or one of the nearby fish shops, rent a fisherman's flouca (*fishing boat*) and have a BBQ on the small rocky island, Zireh, facing the port.

5 Swim in Naqoura

At the southern-most tip of Lebanon's coastline is Naqoura; a small city perhaps best known as the headquarters of the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL), but also characterized by its rich green valleys, agricultural fields and orchards of banana trees. Few know about its stunning rocky coastal scenery and clear waters, but as the last point to swim within Lebanese waters, every summer families from the city gather to picnic on its cliffs and rocks that drop away into the sea, smoke narguileh and bathe in its shallow turquoise blue shores. Bring a picnic and BBQ and buy some fish from one of the local fishermen, then find a secluded spot on the pebble beach or rocks and settle in for a tranquil afternoon.

Low-key seafront dining at Al Jamal, Tyre



The white cliffs of Naqoura

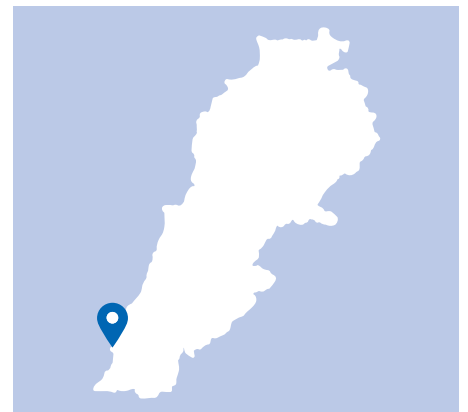


Where to eat

Meat for breakfast might seem odd, but trying one of Mahfouz's (07 740131) famous *fatayel* sandwiches – made from fried meat, wrapped in paper-thin bread with tomatoes and tarator sauce – is a must. Customers gather from 7am every morning outside the sandwich shop, located in the old souk. Foul Baroud (03 949652) is the most popular *foul* stop in town, serving the traditional Lebanese breakfast every morning from 5-10am. A stay in Tyre also has to include fresh fish – head for a long lunch at any of the charming restaurants on Tyre's rocky beach Al Jamal, after a scuba dive to see the underwater ruins.

Where to sleep

Located right on the water's edge Al Fanar Restaurant & Auberge (*Details as above*) makes for an atmospheric place to spend the night. Take some time to speak to the hotel's characterful owners who transformed it from the family home and are full of stories on the area. The larger hotel Rest House (07 742000, 03 356663, resthouse-tyr.com.lb) offers luxurious rooms and its own golden-sanded beach. For a countryside escape just south of Tyre stay in Al Yasmine (03 372888, alyasmineguesthouse.com), a boutique guesthouse in Maaliye amongst grounds where deer run wild and swans and flamingos wander through the grounds.





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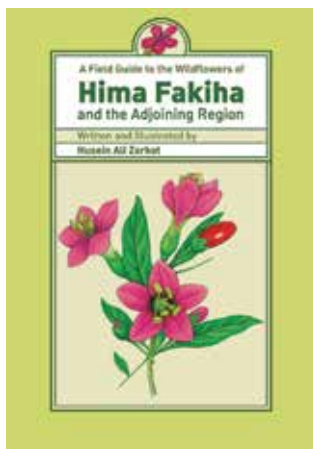
Hima Fakiha Wildflower Guide:

Get a Spring in your step while outdoors

When one thinks of Lebanon, one does not usually think of desert. 'A Field Guide to the Wildflowers of Hima Fakiha and the Adjoining Region' is a text on the plants found in the semi-arid part of the country. This region has been little studied biologically, especially from a botanical point of view. The guide is designed for graduate students, professional botanists, and conservation biologists, as well as herbalists, amateur naturalists, and laypeople alike.

Written and illustrated by Husein Ali Zorkot, a biologist and researcher, this guide covers nearly 1,650 species of plants across 104 families and more than 580 genera. Although focusing on the wildflowers that have been documented as growing in the region, this indispensable guide also covers quillworts, ferns, shrubs, trees, grasses, sedges, and fungi. This guide features more than 300 endemic species, over 500 species intrinsic to the Eastern Mediterranean phytogeographic region, as well as about 360 medicinal and edible plants. This book is perhaps the first of its kind to treat the flora of this region, which includes Hima Fakiha as well as much of the Bekaa plain, the Orontes river valley, as well as the eastern slopes of the Lebanon mountains and the western side of the Antilebanon range. Many of these plants are well-adapted to xeric habitats and are not found anywhere else in Lebanon. This book will be a definite resource to those with an interest in arid and semi-arid environments and desert plants.

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About SPNL

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) was established in 1984 under the Lebanese laws, and licensed by the Ministry of Interior under Decree No.6/AD 8/1/1986. As a national environmental NGO in Lebanon, SPNL has widely contributed to both raising awareness on environmental issues and concretely protecting natural areas in Lebanon. Being Lebanon's BirdLife International partner it considers birds as entry points for the conservation of wider natural resources. In addition SPNL is a member of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), hence, it has helped develop the first biodiversity project in Lebanon, known as the Protected Areas Project.

SPNL bases its work on sound science and passionate commitment, which through transparent and democratic processes, leads to a well-informed public. SPNL strives to advocate a better quality of life for people and nature, through conserving sites, protecting species, and assuring sustainability. SPNL works in a cooperative manner to fulfil its mission statement, i.e., in cooperation with its partners, government institutions, municipalities, local communities, other NGOs, associates and the private sector. SPNL strives to trigger advances in strengthening capacities and influence. Its strategy revolves around four fundamental building blocks for promoting sustainable development.



Bird's eye view

Zahle-born photographer **Clement Tannouri** shows the richness of Lebanese landscapes through his images. He speaks to LT on taking photos from above, his love of the West Bekaa and why he returned to his homeland

Clement Tannouri's photography is like a love letter to the landscapes of Lebanon. His work follows the changing light and seasons, showing flocks of sheep as the rising morning sun hits the green fields, blankets of wheat that stretch as far as the eye can see during harvest time in the West Bekaa, and pines that delicately stand on spindly trunks. He also shows Lebanon's rich lands from an aerial view, which, after being inspired by renowned photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand, has become his trademark. In a helicopter, with the Lebanese army in tow, he captures views from above of vast green forests that still cover much of the country; the patchwork of agricultural fields of the Akkar region and traditional red-roofed houses in villages that perch on the mountainside. His photographs offer a different perspective, showing scenes that are easily missed while driving along highways.



Photos taken from
above are so sacred

“





Tannouri catches Jounieh Bay at the golden hour

PHOTOGRAPHY RUNS IN THE BLOOD.

“At two years old running around with a camera was a casual act. When flipping the pages of a photography album in France and seeing these beautiful photos of Lebanon, a sensation overwhelmed me. This sensation urged me to capture beautiful moments when I visited Lebanon with my parents. Capturing Lebanon’s beautiful scenery gave me that satisfaction and pushed me to fall in love again and again with photography.”

TANNOURI WAS DRAWN BACK TO LEBANON BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE OF THE COUNTRY.

“I feel that I have a lot of potential that I need to exploit on Lebanese soil. I wanted to contribute to spreading Lebanon’s beautiful image to the outside world. I know that it may be hard to believe, but, in France I felt too ordinary; a boiling energy kept drawing me back to Lebanon. I think it was the cry of help that I heard [from] Lebanon, a cry that I couldn’t ignore knowing that I had the adequate tools to help in spreading Lebanon’s breathtaking beauty.”

HE FINDS LANDSCAPES AND WILDLIFE REJUVENATING.

“As you can imagine, it’s God’s most exquisite painting. When talking about nature, it’s pure and ever changing. You never have the same scene; nature changes within seconds. Every minute is precious, every scenery is special and every photograph you take is unique.”

HIS FIRST PHOTOGRAPHY TRIP IN A HELICOPTER WAS IN 2006. IT PRODUCED THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PHOTOS HE’D EVER TAKEN.

“It was a difficult task since a specific authorization was needed and [there were] many complicated procedures to follow. I took many photographs that I thought were not good enough. You could say that for me the whole trip was disappointing; I was passing

through a difficult time and couldn’t see things clearly. I was mistaken [though] because after a while, and when examining the photographs again, I realized that they were some of the most beautiful photos I had ever taken in my life. They remind me of very intimate moments and revive many emotions.”

IN THE SKY EACH SECOND IS PRECIOUS.

“Photos taken from above are so sacred. There’s collaboration between [me] and the Lebanese army that needs to be highlighted and a lot of mental concentration. The margin of errors should be null. You can never pass through the same scene and shoot at the same angle twice noting that the landscape changes within minutes depending on the weather and wind’s speed. Many natural factors come into play. In addition to the mental concentration there is a physical endurance [involved] since the wind’s speed and intensity are relatively high.”


FOR TANNOURI, CHOOSING A SHOT IS NOT ABOUT THE BEAUTY, IT’S ABOUT FEELINGS.

“98 percent of the time the intensity of the scenery is what motivates me to take the photograph. This may sound odd, but it’s the secret dialogue that I have with the scene. [It’s the] secret story that it holds, the secrets that need to be revealed.”

THE WEST BEKAA HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS HEART.

“It is by far the most magical place to take photos. It has an extraordinary beauty and the nature is just breathtaking. Mount Lebanon is pleasant as well but every time I go and shoot in the West Bekaa I get carried away by its allure.”

clementtannouri.com

 *Clément Tannouri - Chasseur d’instant*



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The potters of Bkerzay

Shouf conservation project Bkerzay preserves the cultural and natural heritage of the region. Its founder **Ramzi Salman** shares his vision for the future of artisan work in Lebanon



Potter and architect Maha Nasrallah



Located in the heart of the Shouf, within lush green lands covered with old olive trees, wild pine forests and endangered flora indigenous to Lebanon that stretch over 200,000m², is Bkerzay. Founded by Ramzi Salman, the conservation project is helping to revive the tradition of pottery and also preserve the area's rich natural habitat. After acquiring the land in 2009, Bkerzay began producing pottery in 2011 with two artists who produce ceramics on site – Egyptian master potter Ahmad Deif and Lebanese architect and potter Maha Nasrallah.

"[Bkerzay has] evolved into a preservation project. We wanted to preserve not only the nature, but also [support] people; encouraging the rural [residents] and craftsmen," says Salman. "There are artisans in the vicinity but unfortunately they were vanishing. In order to reinstate [pottery] we introduced art. So [we make] not just the traditional pottery, but [also] artistic pottery."

The ceramic bowls – contemporary colorful designs of minimal trees, peacocks and various patterns all made with traditional techniques – have become a Bkerzay trademark and are sold around Beirut from the shop at the American University of Beirut's archeological museum (01 350000/2660) to Mar Mikhael's Zawal (01 444110). Visitors can see Bkerzay's two resident potters working on site and even take workshops themselves.

Salman is passionate about preserving the country's artisan traditions, but Bkerzay artisans work on their evolution by marrying

it with art, rather than keeping it in a static state. "We believe that we should network together and give new life [to the craft], not only to preserve what's old but to renew it and give it new blood," he says. "This is not a project just limited to a specific geographical location, it's a concept. We have plans for a big outlet in Beirut. We hope to network with other projects of this sort." In May 23-24, Bkerzay held an event to showcase their new pottery collection and their commitment to pushing forward the craft in Lebanon is also clear from the yearly pottery festival they hold each fall that gathers potters from all over Lebanon. With numerous initiatives in the works, Bkerzay is fast-becoming a springboard for developing the country's artisan crafts and promoting the products of the Shouf region.

Bkerzay are also dedicated to preserving their natural surroundings, producing the fruits of their lands, such as honey, olive oil, soap and herbs, thus giving locals the opportunity to work in their region. They are also currently developing bio plantations to produce organic fruit and vegetables. And with guesthouses, an artist's house and an exhibition center designed by Nasrallah, soon to be built, they are further transforming Bkerzay into a destination, from which visitors can enjoy the natural environment and local crafts.

 Bkerzay, 03 512020

Where to eat

Each weekend, Bkerzay's simple restaurant is open for brunch and *manoushe* served on their outdoor terrace, shaded by trees with a stunning view over the mountains. To max out on atmosphere (and budget) eat at the nearby Mir Amin Palace (05 501315 miraminpalace.com).

Where to sleep

Once you've got into the slower pace of life of the Shouf, you'll want to make a weekend of it. Stay overnight in the stunning nearby guesthouse Bouyouti (03 310200, bouyouti.com), located between Deir El Qamar and Beiteddine.

Go with a guide

Make a day of it and go on a hike with a local guide organized by Bkerzay. Enjoy the local landscapes along one of the many trails in the area – a joint network between the land of Bkerzay and the neighboring Horsh Baakline.





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Darb el Karam

Trail of Generosity

Darb el Karam (The Trail of Generosity) is a new food trail that promotes food and agricultural heritage in rural areas in the Higher Shouf and West Bekaa. The Food Heritage Foundation's **Zeinab Jeambey**, involved at the core of the project, explains the concept and the purpose behind the rural tourism initiative

Darb el Karam is a network of nine villages in Higher Shouf and West Bekaa promoting food heritage and tourism where visitors can participate in agro-food activities and taste local culinary specialties. The touristic packages aim to highlight the seasonality and locality of foods and crops, the traditional processing methods and most importantly, the generosity of the hosts. By putting visitors in contact with farmers, shepherds, food producers; all preservers of rural food culture, Darb el Karam raises awareness among tourists about the origin of an ingredient or a traditional dish and its cultural and emotional ties to the destination, while diversifying the income of the hosts through tourism.

The project is currently in the soft launch phase with full launch due to take place in summer 2015. Take the trail any time of year and enjoy local dishes, harvest activities are seasonal; from spring till early winter.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ON DARB EL KARAM?

The food trail sheds light on the food processing, agricultural, pastoral, and culinary activities of small farmers, shepherds, food producers, family restaurants and bed and breakfasts that form part of the network.

- *Walk with a shepherd*
- *Visit an olive press or bulgur mill and learn the production process*
- *Collect wild edible plants with villagers and learn about their health properties*
- *Participate in honey collection with a beekeeper*
- *Participate in harvesting activities*
- *Taste local specialties at tables d'hôte along the trail*

WHO WILL YOU MEET?

Darb el Karam brings visitors into the lands and homes of local farmers and food producers to experience their way of life and get an insight into their values and beliefs around food and agriculture. There are 23 hosts on the trail such as:

Boutros Bou Maroun – Shepherd, Saghbine

In his '70s, Boutros Bou Maroun is a descendent of an old family of shepherds and has herded local goats all his life. Like all experienced shepherds, he knows every nook and cranny between Kherbet Qanafar and Aitanit. A walk with *Aammo* Boutros is simply a delight: he has endless stories to share about his goats; their names, what they graze on and the best way to tend for them.

Philippe Risha – Olive farmer, Aitanit

A young man from Aitanit, Phillippe Risha holds his olive orchards, inherited from his family, dear to his heart. In November and December, he welcomes visitors in his land to participate and learn about olive harvesting and accompanies them to visit the nearby olive mill in Aitanit and watch both old and new techniques of olive oil extraction.



Boutros Bou Maroun is a descendent of a long family of shepherds



Photos Denise ho

WHERE CAN YOU EAT?

On Darb el Karam, food producers host tables d'hôte and prepare local specialties using their own *mouneh* and harvests. there are six tables d'hôte and four B&Bs adhered to the trail which have developed seasonal menus highlighting typical dishes from their villages. A family restaurant and a traditional ice cream maker also form part of the trail.

Lina Haddad's table d'hôte – Kherbet Qanafar

Lina has been making *mouneh* and selling in neighboring villages for more than 10 years now. Her first *mouneh* product was mulberry syrup and she later became famous for her pumpkin jam, flavored with orange zest. Lina's table d'hôte specializes in dishes from Kherbet Qanafar where pumpkin and *keshek* come back as star ingredients. In winter, make sure to ask for the Pumpkin *kebbeh* stuffed with *labneh* and *kawarma* and boiled in *keshek* and participate with her in making another of her specialties: holiday cookies baked on a wood fire.

Bassima Zeidan's table d'hôte – Mresti

Distinguished by her passion for preserving traditional processing methods, Bassima Zeidan prepares all her *mouneh* products from her own harvest, and cooks them on

the wood fire. In spring, she makes for a vibrant guide, knowledgeable in wild edible plant collection and in late summer, her orchards are open for tomato and apple harvest. Her table d'hôte serves up culinary specialties from Mresti. Her *akkoub kebbeh*, made of the famous wild edible plant, stuffed with potato and *kawarma*, is not to be missed.

May Kanaan's table d'hôte – Mresti

Known for her saj making in Mresti and the surrounding area, May Kanaan is a passionate host on the trail, who renovated her house to receive visitors for breakfast and lunch, all year round. Knowledgeable in wild edible plant collection, her dishes are made with her own produce and freshly collected plants and her meals are accompanied by freshly baked saj bread.

WHERE CAN YOU SLEEP?

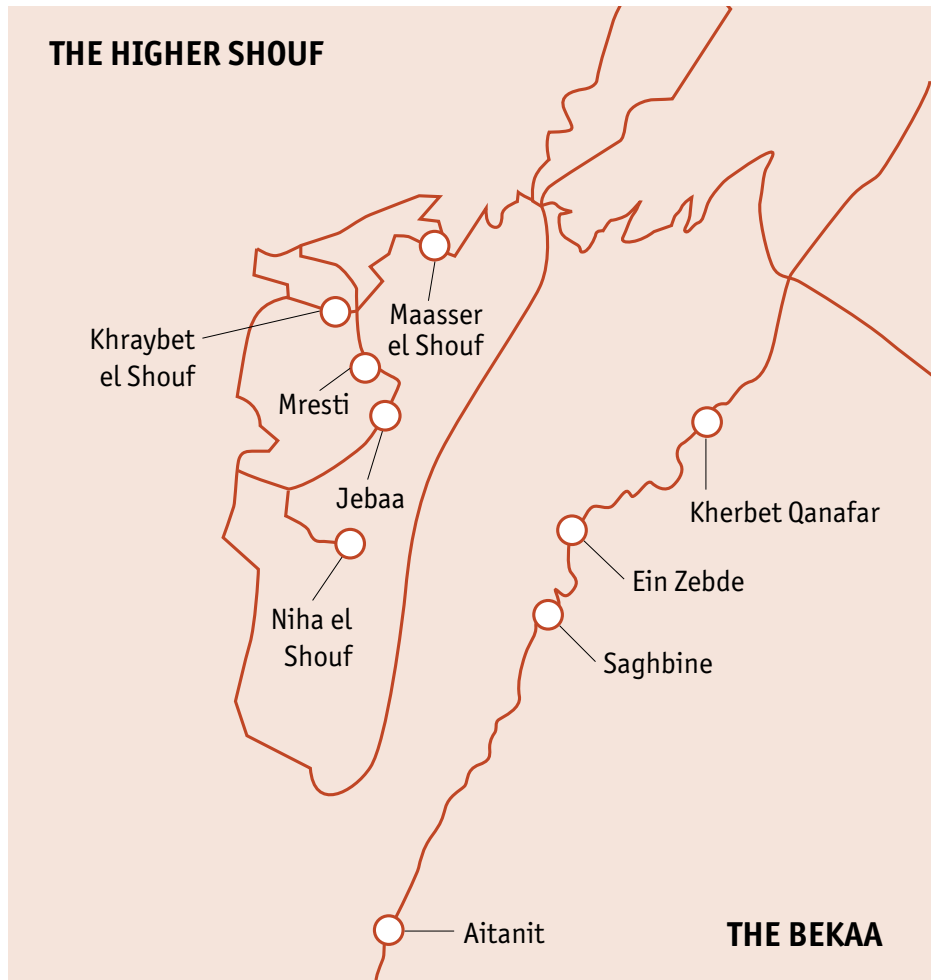
four B&Bs form part of darb el karam network, with owners that are dedicated to optimizing their visitors food experience. These are: Ein Zebde B&B, Aitanit B&B, Salim Al Ashkar's guesthouse in Khraybet el Shouf and Chafiq and Samia Mershad's guesthouse in Niha el Shouf.

Chafik and Samia Merchad's Guesthouse and Table d'Hôte - Niha el Shouf

This well-established B&B has developed a seasonal menu showcasing local specialities with Darb el Karam, with a special highlight on *sirdele labneh*, made from goat milk fermented in earthenware jars. Nearby the B&B, visitors can see the *sirdele* processing unit and buy this traditional dairy product.

WHERE CAN YOU HIKE?

Darb el Karam villages in the Higher Shouf area are part of the hiking trails promoted by the Shouf Biosphere Reserve. In the West Bekaa local guides lead visitors along trails in the highlands and plains between the villages of Kherbet Qanafar and Aitanit.



For more details on the Darb el Karam go to food-heritage.org

To visit contact:

Zeinab Jeambey - 03 804553, Mabelle Chedid - 03 357495 or the Shouf Biosphere Reserve - 05 350150/250, shoufcedar.org
info@food-heritage.org

The project is funded by USAID in the framework of the Lebanon Industry Value Chain Development program and is being implemented by the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit at AUB and the Food Heritage Foundation in collaboration with the Shouf Cedar Biosphere Reserve.



May Kanaan's table d'hôte, Mresti

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At sunset a kite boarder takes a few moment to watch the sunset

Photo by Elie Nohra

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BLINDING THE EVIL EYE

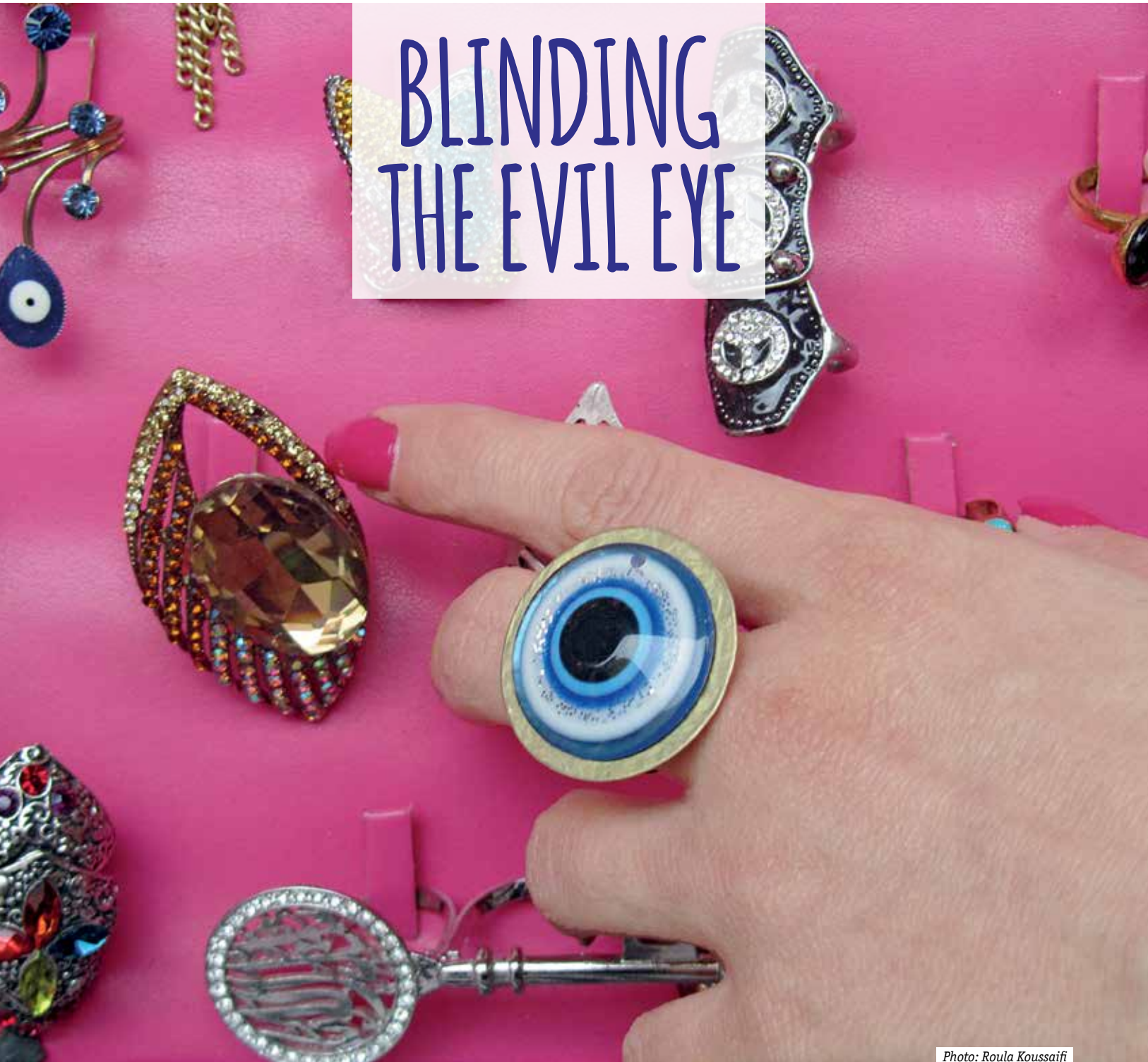


Photo: Roula Koussaifi

Founder of the design studio Kubik, in Mar Mikhael, Beirut, designer **Maria Bahous** explores the symbolism behind the tradition of the evil eye

In Lebanon, you can see evil eyes hanging in cars, on walls or doors, pinned on newborn babies, or even worn as jewelry pieces. Though for some they could be just a beautiful artistic piece, to others they represent a strong belief. Regardless to which category you belong, the evil eye's intrinsic meaning is undeniable and goes back to strong historical beliefs still embedded in our culture today.

The evil eye, a type of magical curse that long ago was used to justify why bad things happen to people, is thought to be the source of envy (*ayn al-hasūd* in Arabic, means the envious eye). It is the "look" that someone gives to a particular object or person that infects it with jealousy, thus harming it and causing its misfortune. The evil eye is a boundless belief in countries such as Turkey, Greece, Albania, Iran and Afghanistan, as well as the Levant.

DO YOU HAVE BLUE EYES?

It is a widespread belief that people with blue eyes and a space between their teeth envy the most, consciously or unconsciously. If you have such physical traits, do not

despair yet; consider the story behind it. It is thought that the roots of the evil eye started in ancient Egypt; it was then passed on to Mediterranean cultures. In this region bright colors are pretty rare and so people with blue eyes were considered outsiders. If they stared at a newborn baby or a pregnant woman to acclaim and admire their beauty they were considered guilty if any misfortune happened to them. So, if you are superstitious, don't overcompliment, especially if you have blue eyes.

BEWARE OF THE EVIL EYE

Such superstitions resulted in the creation of talismans to turn away harm. These "good luck charms" and decorations, when worn, carried or hung up in a home are supposed to deflect evil and thus guard the beholder and his/her possessions against any misfortune.

Such charms come in different shapes and sizes but the most common ones are:

- Disks or balls, known as nazars (of Turkish origin), with concentric blue and white circles in the shape of an eye that reflect the evil back to the onlooker.

- The *hamsa/khamsa* hand, meaning "five" as a reference to the fingers of a hand, also known as the hand of Fatima. It is a palm-shaped amulet and sometimes contains the shape of an eye in the middle.

If you have such an amulet and it cracks or breaks, this is a good sign. It has protected you from a coming evil and you should replace it with a new one.

Colors of protection

The most common and traditional color for good luck charm amulets is blue, symbolizing heaven and holiness. However, other colors are also used to offer specific protection from the evil eye, symbolizing the following:

GREEN

hope and personal growth

YELLOW

health, strength and healing

ORANGE

happiness and determination

RED

energy, strength, power, passion and desire

PURPLE

power, luxury, wealth and ambition

PINK

love of self and others, friendship, affection, harmony and inner peace

BROWN

fertility, stability and balance

BLACK

Prosperity, wealth, strength and power

WHITE

safety, goodness, innocence and purity. It cleans negative energies and turns them into positive energies

5 places to buy your evil eye

1. S.Dilsizian Jewellery

Find delicate handmade bracelets featuring the evil eye charm, at this renowned conceptual jeweler's Bourj Hammoud store (01 259339, *Mimosa Street, Bourj Hammoud*).

2 L'Artisan Du Liban

At L'Artisan Du Liban find the evil eye in all its forms from colorful cushions to keychains with the fatima hand and delicate shell home furnishings (01 580618, *alyad.com, Saint Antoine Center, Accaoui Street*. Other branches: 01 374031, *Clemenceau*; 06 204334, *Tripoli*).

3 Old Handmade Accessories

In Jbeil's old souk this boutique stands out for its colorful display of evil eye jewelry – earrings, necklaces and bracelets – along with charms for the home to ward off evil spirits (03 587898, *Old Souk, Jbeil*).

4 Mouawad Artisans

In the center of Hamra, stop by this old-school artisan shop to pick up a variety of evil eye accessories (71 113023, [Facebook: Mouawad.artisans](https://www.facebook.com/Mouawad.artisans), *Antoun Gemayel Street, Hamra*).

5 Mouftah El Shark

This Kaslik-based artisan sells embroidered home furnishings and decorations featuring the evil eye (09 222846, 76 310810, *mouftahelchark.com, Kaslik*).

Inside Bokja



Bokja produces pieces that blur the lines between functionality and art, rooted in the region's heritage. The two talents behind the design studio, **Hoda Baroudi** and **Maria Hibri**, sat down with LT to share their reflections on their work and the design industry

Hoda Baroudi and Maria Hibri's exuberant designs have toured the world. Since they created Bokja Design Studio in 2000, the Beirut-based designers have been transforming objects into functional pieces of art. Brought together by their passion for antique and ancient tapestries, the two women made a name for themselves by sourcing retro furniture found in Beirut's antique markets and covering them with patchworks of colorful textiles and embroideries from the Middle East and the mythic Silk Road countries of Central Asia. The duo's unconventional furniture even caught the eyes of some of the biggest names in the entertainment and fashion industry such as Julia Roberts and French footwear designer Christian Louboutin, who purchased a Bokja sofa for each of his stores. More than just a brand, Bokja, a Turkish word used to describe the heavily embroidered fabric that covers a bride's dowry, is the story of ancestral traditions meeting with contemporary art and lifestyle.



HOW DOES YOUR LEBANESE HERITAGE INSPIRE YOU?

The influence of our environment is reflected almost directly in everything Bokja. The layering of fabrics from different parts of the country and the world reminds us of the multilayered nature of our city, which is chaotic and harmonious at the same time. There is also a sensibility to both the East and the West that is so distinctive to being here. Basing ourselves in Beirut for the last 15 years was a conscious decision and has allowed us to not only be inspired by our heritage but to positively contribute to it and give back in the long term.

HOW DO YOU COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER AS A DESIGN TEAM?

We always found that working together brought more ideas, passion and knowledge to the table. The two of us coming together brings unexpected results that we feel could not happen if we worked alone. It makes our work stronger.

HOW AND WHY DID YOU GET INTO DESIGN AND WHAT NEW PROJECTS ARE YOU WORKING ON?

We have always been passionate about art and design, with a strong background in

antiques and textiles. It was a serendipitous meeting that brought us together and led us to take the jump into working in that realm. At the moment we just launched our latest collection "Goods," as well as a limited edition collection of coats with Lebanese designer Milia M.

WHAT IS YOUR DESIGN PROCESS?

Our design and work process is an all-encompassing one, with our focus divided on different parts of the practice. We spend half of our time working closely with our artisans in our atelier houses, while the other half is spent brainstorming and strategizing with our creative team at the Bokja studio.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE DESIGN SCENE IN LEBANON IS EVOLVING?

Design has never been more visible in Lebanon, and it is exciting to know that Beirut is now establishing itself as a design capital in its own right, with its own set of world class designers. During the Civil War, the ephemeral nature of time has turned Beirut into a wonderful incubator that led to tremendous experimentation. The boom that followed the conflict has been even more incredible; with exciting opportunities appearing as international interest for Beirut was growing.

WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU CAN GIVE TO NEW DESIGNERS?

To be humble, to be rebellious, and to be persistent. And, not to look too far for inspiration. Their own culture and

experiences can be the best and most unexpected starting point.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PIECE AND WHY?

Every collection brings with it a new favorite piece, but my current favorite is our Masharabiya wall hanging. It is a beautiful tapestry made of interconnecting pillows that represents a re-imagination of a classic Islamic architectural feature. Like all our projects, this resonates deeply with us on a personal level as it not only reflects on a rich history and artistic culture that we appreciate, but also speaks of shifts in our contemporary attitudes of globalization and modern technology. The cushion that can only exist when hand in hand with another cushion sends a simple message: to be human is to be present, and together we are stronger.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO COLLABORATE WITH MILIA M?

We have been actively working to take Bokja into new domains so when the opportunity to work with Milia M came up we grabbed it immediately. It required us to step out of our comfort zone, but it was a wonderful experience to work with a brand that has a similar ethos, and the results were better than we could have ever imagined. It opened up new possibilities and collaborations that we will continue to explore in the future.

Annie Keropian-Dilsizian

01 975576, bokjadesign.com

Mukhallassiya Street, Bldg 332, Saifi Village



BOKJA's furniture line (far left and right); new Milia M collaboration (center)

THE HOUSE OF MANY IMAGES



In the coastal town of Amchit, photographer **Bassam Lahoud's** Lebanese House of Photography documents the country's intimate narratives by photograph, in a house that reveals the ages of history

When Bassam Lahoud's uncle Nazih handed him his Leica III 1939 camera, complete with an undeveloped Kodachrome film, Lahoud's first question was, "why did you never bother to develop the photos?" Aged 95, his uncle's answer was charmingly simple. They were, he explained, of his girlfriend and as "she was in front of me, why did I need the picture?" Lahoud, a photographer, LAU lecturer and one-man-show behind the ongoing project that is the Lebanese House of Photography, laughs as he recounts the tale. It's the

little details, the stories behind the cameras and the photos that bring them meaning, he says.

Lahoud's photography museum in Amchit has been a massive personal undertaking. The idea began in 1998, sparked by a conversation between Lahoud and Henri Chapier, the then president of the European House of Photography. "The first thing I thought of is the protection of photographic heritage," he says. "For people a photo is nothing, but for me photography is history." He wanted to

create a foundation that would encourage both Lebanese photographers and Lebanese photography. Flash-forward and his archives contain over 150,000 negatives and slides with a digital archive, he says, numbering in the millions.

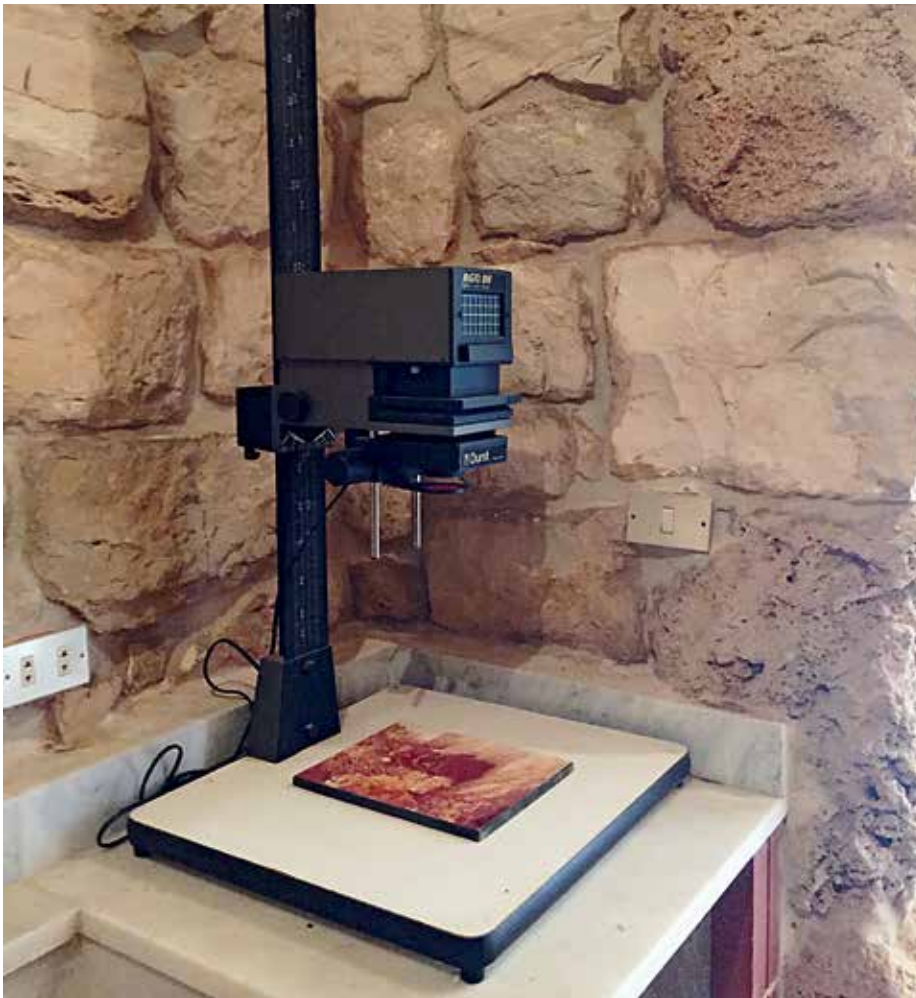
The Lahoud residence, where the photography museum resides, has at times played host to exhibitions and concerts, and houses his collection of equipment, cameras and photographs currently stored for safety as he navigates a humidity problem. The Ministry of Culture classified



This is why it is one of the most interesting houses in Lebanon

“





Looking to the future, Lahoud hopes to continue hosting exhibitions and concerts while he works on setting up the permanent space. The museum has become multifaceted; first to display the photographic equipment he has, second to display the photos related to the house, and, finally, as an architectural space, to visit in its own right.

Susan Wilson

To visit the Lebanese House of Photography, outside of organized events and exhibitions, call and arrange an appointment a week in advance on 03 788889

Where to eat

"Food wise you have the specialties of Amchit, for example the ras abyad (egg pizza). It's inexpensive and traditional," says Lahoud. Stop by Furn el Sabaya (09 624466), a macrobiotic but traditional bakery for breakfast and Samket Amchit (09 622767) for lunch, known for its fish sandwiches.

Where to sleep

The main attraction in Amchit is the camping, Camping Amchit (09 622401) – the only place where you can camp all year round.

What to see

A nice place to visit is the garden of lawyer Abdallah Zakhia, on the port of Amchit. It features all kinds of plants, from tropical to Nordic. He really is a defender of the environment.



the building in the early '90s and walking through the caves you are greeted by stages of history. The entranceway, he says, dates back to the 3rd Century. "[There is] a bolt hole inside the rock, where the first Christians used to hide [from the Romans]," he explains. "The church [across the street] was built on the ruins of the Roman temple." Turn the corner and you have the remaining structure of a synagogue, where the rabbis of a Jewish settlement, that came in 760 and lived in Amchit for 200 years, were buried. Through the hall into the main chamber is the stable area of the Hamadiyeh Shiite family, built in the 15th Century.

His own family's roots trace back to 970, when the church was first built, and following a war between the Hamadiyehs and Prince Yusef Chebab in 1730-1760, the Lahouds gained possession of the residence and the surrounding 2,000m². "This is why it is one of the most interesting houses in Lebanon ... [it] has

different civilizations, different periods of construction."

The museum is also intrinsically linked to its surroundings. While he works on digitizing his archive to make it available to the public, Lahoud has put together a book from his own photos and those collected from his neighbors. Under the working title "100 years of Amchit: 1860 – 1960" he hopes the book will be released later this year.

"Of the father and the son," was the title of one of the museum's previous exhibitions featuring photos taken by Lahoud's father in the '30s, '40s and '50s, and then by himself in the '60s and '70s with the same camera. "People like to see the past. 'This is me' – [said one 85-year-old Amchit resident who came to the exhibition] – 'this was me when I was 12,' 'oh I know, this was my grandfather' ... it's part of showing people their history," says Lahoud.

The great urban outdoors

Beirut's café culture has strong roots, from the high society Downtown gatherings of Ottoman times to late night coffee and conversation in Hamra's legendary sidewalk cafés of the '60s... And the tradition lives on. **LT** rounds up some of the best cafés in the capital with outdoor spaces – tranquil urban escapes in the heart of the city

1 *A view to sea:* **Al Rawda Café and Restaurant**

Said to be a favorite haunt of the city's intellectual crowd, this bastion of the café scene is old school in style – think waiters in formal attire, traditional Lebanese cuisine and groups of men playing backgammon. The spectacular seafront location and vast leafy terrace also make Café al Rawda the perfect place to while away the hours.

*01 743348, Chouran Street
Behind Luna Park, Manara*

2 *Soak up tradition:* **Grand Café**

Located in the thick of Downtown, a tarboush wearing waiter, narguileh smokers galore, and traditional Lebanese cuisine make for a crowded café around the clock. Enjoy a Lebanese breakfast in the shadow of Ottoman-era architecture while soaking up Beirut's history and watch firsthand as the city goes about its daily business.

01 995995, Waygand Street , Next to Beirut Municipality, Downtown,

3 *Le chic:* **Zaitunay Bay**

Kickback on one of the many large terraces of the 17+ cafés and restaurants at Beirut's latest entertainment offering. Watch fashionistas strut their stuff along the boardwalk where the occupants of million-dollar cruise yachts sail in to dine. But more importantly, don't forget to "dress to impress."

01 371945, zaitunaybay.com, Marina Towers

Zaitunay Bay





Café Younes

4 Street-side revolution: Café Younes

The coasters and artwork hark back to days of yore – the 1930s to be precise, when it all began. The aroma of freshly roasted coffee characterizes the inside while the street-side tables buzz with the sound of students and intellectuals in their quest to change the world, starting with dessert.

01 347531, cafeyounes.com
Neemat Yafet Street, Hamra

5 Far from the madding crowd: Dar Bistro & Books

Good things come in threes. Dar Bistro – a bistro, bookshop and large tree-shaded garden – is situated on the ground floor of an old Lebanese-style house in Hamra's Clemenceau district. Difficult to find but once you do, you may never want to leave this tranquil hideaway.

01 373348, darbistroandbooks.com
Roma Street, Clemenceau



Urbanista

6 Espresso & apple macs: Urbanista

Bringing the values of the London and Manhattan café scene to Beirut, Urbanista is frequented by everyone from office types and freelancers quietly working away to hipsters and creatives meeting from morning to night, filling up the popular backyard. After indulging in their extensive menu, from coffee anyway-you-like-it to an in-house salad bar and tempting desserts, browse their shop for office items and kitsch bits.

01 567811, weare-urbanista.com
Gouraud Street, Gemmayzeh



éCafé Sursock

8 Ladies who lunch: Gordon's Café & Terrace

Located in the heart of the city, adjacent to Martyr's Square, this bright, brassiere-style eatery is on the street level of Le Gray hotel and extends to the cosmopolitan thoroughfare of Weygand Street. Attracting the great and the good of Beirut, from ladies who lunch to the city's powerbrokers, it's an excellent spot for people watching.

01 962862, campbellgrayhotels.com
Weygand Street, facing An Nahar
Building Downtown

10 A step back in time: Al Falamanki

A much-needed green lung in the city, this traditional Lebanese garden café-restaurant is set within a time-honored single-story house. While inside pays homage to globetrotter Khalil Al Falamanki, head outdoors where parasols shade from the intense sun and share Lebanese specialties.

01 323456, alfalamanki.com, Damascus Road

11 New kid on the block: Roy's Public House

Once the epicenter of Beirut's swinging '60s, Badaro is firmly back on the nightlife map. One of the first drinking holes to open in the area was Roy's, a café by day and bar by night with a chilled-out reasonably sized interior and good music. And its *pièce de résistance*, ample room for outdoor seating.

01 390308, KfouryStreet.com, Badaro

7 Oh là là: éCafé Sursock

If former French President Charles de Gaulle came back from the dead and wandered around modern day Beirut, he'd probably find his way to éCafé Sursock to sample the classic French inspired dishes. Atop St. Nicolas' Stairs, its elongated terrace screams art deco and looks over historic, tree-lined Sursock.

01 333240, eddeyard.com
198 Sursock Street, Achrafieh

9 A class act: Albergo Rooftop

Step back into Beirut's golden age in this charming hotel with decor rich in art and antiques and refined architecture. Head skywards to the roof where inviting cool breezes await and sip on a refreshing glass of Lebanese wine or even better take a dip in the pool and forget the hustle of the city far below.

01 339797, albergobeirut.com
Albergo Hotel, Relais et Châteaux
137 Abdel Wahab el Inglizi Street



Al Falamanki

12 The village square: Balima

Boutique sidewalk café Balima is located in the perfectly serene setting of Saifi Village's main square. Surrounded by pristine buildings, in typical Levantine architecture and at the center of Beirut's artistic hub, Balima is the perfect location to sip on an iced coffee and enjoy the rays.

01 985295, [Saifi Village](http://SaifiVillage.com)

Stories of pride



Moved by the Mountain

From the riverbeds at its foothills to the heights of its snowy summit, Mount Sannine has fascinated Lebanese painter **Chaouki Chamoun** since childhood



Born in the village of Sariine, in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, facing the east side of the majestic Mount Sannine, Chaouki Chamoun is one of Lebanon's most renowned living artists. Although he left his birthplace decades ago, it lives on in both his heart and his work. Though no written records exist, Chamoun estimates that his family's history in the village dates back at least a few hundred years.

A smile crinkles the corners of Chamoun's mouth when he reminisces about his childhood. "When I lived in Sariine as a child I always felt that it was where the world ends... That sense of astonishment has left its mark on me in many different ways. Being the son of an army man and a peasant family, I felt I was always part of that hardworking landscape of the town. It was an incredible, lively life that I lived as a child."

When Chamoun was just 11, the owner of a boarding school came to Sariine and noticed his artistic talent. His parents were only able to send him to school by paying the fees in crops rather than cash. Chamoun went on to study art at the Lebanese University, graduating in 1972 at the top of his class. He was granted a scholarship to attend

graduate school in the U.S., where he worked and exhibited for the next six years.

"[Back then] I was moving back and forth between Lebanon and the U.S. until 2004... but the scholarship was granted with the intention that I come back and teach, and that was always on my conscience," Chamoun says, who has taught at the Lebanese American University since 1997. "Although I excelled and exhibited in the U.S., I always felt a sense of belonging to the culture of this country. This is the land of my ancestry, and the Lebanese have a special attachment to their land, to the people. Lebanon is where I feel I'm [painting] a subject matter that has meaning to me."

Chamoun's attachment to the land shines through in his breakout Riverbed series. "I spent a lot of time at Nahr el Kelb and did many landscapes there. I climbed up the mountain and looked down [at the riverbed] from the top, to see it from a new angle. That was the time when I started to experience abstract art, modernism. I went to the U.S. and became aware of the achievements of American abstract expressionists such as Frankenthaler, Pollock, Newman. I felt very attached to their work. It was then that the Riverbed series came to fruition, and I

created many paintings between 1974 and 1977. Even when I moved to other things, the Riverbed concept remained part of my painting landscape."

While Chamoun no longer visits Sariine often, he stays connected to his mountain through his summerhouse in Dhour Choueir. "I see Sannine from the other side, from a distance. Our house is on the top of a hill, and we have a beautiful view of the west side of Sannine. It brings back memories, and I still feel the connection with my childhood. When I look at and draw Sannine, it's still the mountain from my childhood."

Mount Sannine featured in Chamoun's 2014 exhibition, *Peace in Waiting*, at the Mark Hachem Gallery in Beirut; the mountain's imposing size is accentuated by a line of small figures at its base, a detail repeated in his paintings of the Arabian Desert.

"Up to this moment I feel that I haven't even scratched the surface of Lebanon's landscape. It has touched my heart in so many ways," he says, adding, "When the snow covers Sannine it makes me forget sadness in the eyes of earth."

Amy E. Robertson, chaoukichamoun.com

“

I always felt that Sannine was where the world ends...



“Spring in Akkar” – acrylic on canvas

Where to eat

Al Nahr restaurant (04 288197), on the Baskinta-Kfarzebiane main road, and Kasr al Bouhaira in Zaarour (04 296200) offer traditional Lebanese cuisine and exceptional views. Also in Baskinta, Aammo Krikor has been baking his famous *manoushe* for over 50 years.

Where to sleep

The historical Grand Hotel Bois De Boulogne (04 295100), not far from Dhour Choueir, takes its name from the pine forests it overlooks. The Mar Sassine Convent (04 288030) in Baskinta hosts guests in simple but reasonably priced rooms.

What to see

In warm weather, Chamoun suggests visiting Baskinta, to have lunch at one of the beautiful restaurants at the foot of the mountain. Baskinta is renowned for its poets and novelists, and the Literary Mountain Trail is popular for hiking (see lebanontrail.org for a map, guides, recommended reading and more). In the winter Chamoun recommends heading to the ski slopes at Zaarour.



“Peace is imprisoned in my yearnings for it” – acrylic on canvas



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Founder of NEOS Tourism consultancy and author of *Eco Lebanon: Nature and Rural Tourism*, **Nour Farra-Haddad** gives her eco-friendly tourism tips for getaways around Lebanon

1. HALF DAY *Niha and Fourzol*



At Wadi Al Habis (*The Valley of the Hermit*) funerary caves, rock chapels and an ancient quarry can still be observed and visited here and the view overlooks the valley where cherry trees and vineyards grow side by side. Then, continue to Niha, which lies around 8km northeast of Zahle, to visit the Roman temples; they are worth the detour. At the far end of the village you'll find two well-preserved temples dedicated to the god Hadaranis. The two other imposing temples, known as Hosn Niha (*Fortress of Niha*) are located high above the village, a ten-minute car drive away in the rugged hills, which surround Mount Sannine.

EAT Enjoy a Lebanese *mezze* at Fourzol restaurant or plan for a picnic under the beautiful cypress trees in front of Niha's temples.

SEE Take in the Roman temples of Niha and Wadi Al Habis (*The Valley of the Hermit*) with a number of tombs, and shrines cut into the rock from the Roman and Byzantine period.



2. FULL DAY *Kaftoun and Nahr El Joz*



Enjoy a hike by Nahr El Joz river discovering old watermills and bridges, with guide Mitri Sarkis (03 695181). Also, don't miss the exceptional Orthodox monastery, Our Lady of Kaftoun, carved into rocks amidst olive and orange trees. The Theotokos Monastery houses a miraculous Byzantine icon from the 11th Century. A church in front of the monastery features 13th Century mural paintings, discovered during a 2003 renovation.

EAT Enjoy Lebanese *mezze* by the river at either Nahr el Joz Restaurant (03 840376), Spring Hills (01 681242, 03 388140) or Mountazah Nahr el Joz (03 675064). If you'd prefer to pack a picnic there is also a picnic area situated close to an old water mill where you can rent chairs and tables and even order a few *mezze* dishes and drinks.

SEE Hike in the natural reserve of Farid and Daad Karam (*Guide Ali Maarouf*, 70 239561), which extends over almost 60,000m².



3. OVERNIGHT STOP *Jisr el Qadi and Bsous*

Jisr el Qadi, a village on the Damour river between Beiteddine and Souk el-Gharb, is definitely worth a visit. Here, local craftsmen have made pottery for hundreds of years. Walk along the Damour river to discover beautiful canyons, before driving to the convent of the Saint Coeurs Congregation of Sisters (SSCC) Ainab in the midst of pine trees. The next day take the road to Aley and stop for lunch before continuing to Bsous to visit the silk museum (05 940767, thesilkmuseum.com).

SLEEP Stay overnight in the convent of the Saint Coeur Ainab (05 410746).

EAT Enjoy a picnic by the river in Jisr el Qadi. In the evening don't miss a delicious meal cooked by the nuns of the convent of Ainab or stop at an Aley restaurant.

SEE Visit the pottery workshops in Jisr el Qadi and the historic bridge from which the village takes its name, built during the Mamluk period over the Damour River by Emir Zayn ad-Dine at-Tannoukhi. In Aley see the open-air international art exhibition and visit the small zoo at Animal Encounter to discover different native animals and plants (05 558724, animalencounter.org).



4. LONG WEEKEND *Zahlé and its surroundings*



Zahlé is notable for its traditional red-roofed houses, old souk and decorated facades typical of local 19th Century architecture. It has 38 churches and 7 mosques. On the first day, take a walk in the old city and extend the promenade to the Berdaoui river where you can enjoy a Lebanese Zahlawi *mezze*. Later visit the Maqâm of Karak Nouh shrine and at the end of the day watch the sun setting over the Bekaa Valley from the shrine of Our Lady of Zahlé. On the second day visit Wadi El Habis in Fourzol, the temples of Niha and finish the day with the Maqâm of Nabi Ayla in Nabi Ayla. The following day, take a long stop at Ksara winery for a morning wine tasting, followed by lunch, before heading home.

SLEEP Make the lodge Rassemblement des Jeunes (08 545200) your base for the weekend.

EAT Enjoy a *mezze* with old school Lebanese charm by the Berdaoui River in Zahlé, a delicious sandwich at Massaad Barbecue (08 807677), or have a picnic under the trees in front of Niha temples. Stop on the way home for cheese and wine at Ksara winery (08 813495).





Stay with the locals

The **DHIAFEE Association** profiles four new guesthouses located in different regions around the country, each offering a local rural experience



Beit El Hana *Maaser El Chouf*

Located in the heart of Maaser El Chouf, Beit El Hana is designed as an ultimate get-away destination. Set just a few kilometers away from the Cedars Nature Reserve, this boutique guesthouse features charming minimalist architecture and is simply decorated with retro furniture. Every corner in this house has a story written with authenticity. It is the ideal setting to spend a peaceful weekend, relaxing on an outdoor hammock, surrounded by breathtaking landscapes.

03 454771



Hobeika Guesthouse *Baskinta*

All roads lead to Baskinta, and to the Hobeika Guesthouse. If you love hiking and biking or are interested in cultural heritage, literature, and authentic foods, then the Hobeika Guesthouse is the place for you. Georges Hobeika and Baskinta are the very definition of warm Lebanese hospitality. Come during winter to sit by the fireplace, or in summer to play board games, or just relax with a good book and settle in for a feast of Hobeika's best dishes.

03 451113



Diwan El Beik *Douma*

The guesthouse of Joseph Chalboub, originally built by his grandfather, is set in a traditional Lebanese house with a colorful garden and natural surroundings. The 170-year-old house is located in the historical village of Douma and offers a home-away-from-home. The generous organic breakfast of fresh milk, eggs, and homemade jams is a great way to start the day. And, after you can enjoy walking through the narrow streets, past lovely traditional houses nestled under beautiful old trees.

06 520319, 70 412898



Raghida Eid Guesthouse *Aana*

Nestled in the west of the Bekaa Valley, the modest home of Raghida Eid welcomes you to the heart of the village of Aana. At this guesthouse you will experience the inspiring tastes of traditional Lebanese food, cooked with love in a welcoming homely atmosphere. The house's location on the eastern slopes of Mount Lebanon, is ideal for enjoying the valley below. One of Lebanon's most fertile areas, it is near the wetlands; the pride of the Bekaa. The guesthouse is the perfect base for relaxation, meditation, hiking and biking.

71 621429

What is DHIAFEE?

The DHIAFEE Association, initiated by American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), arranges training and workshops for the owners and staff of guesthouses as part of the Lebanon Industry Value Chain Development (LIVCD) Project, implemented by DAI and funded by USAID. 01 382590, website soon to be launched.



Best eats



Looking to dine outside of Beirut this summer? Who better to ask than the godfather of hospitality and longtime mentor of today's many Middle East culinary talents, **Nouhad Dammous**? He shares five of his favorite restaurants for you to enjoy.

Al Sultan Brahim

This upmarket fish restaurant has built up a solid reputation after over 40 years in the business, with many considering Al Sultan Brahim the best in town for fish. Dammous likes its "extraordinary location," which, gives diners stunning views over the bay. And, of course, for those arriving by yacht, Al Sultan Brahim has the benefit of offering mooring facilities. He also enjoys the atmosphere – always bustling with activity, though retaining the calmness of a seaside location – and loves their tabbouleh.

09 853753, al-sultanbrahim.com
Jounieh Bay, below Casino du Liban

Chez Michel

Many know Faqra's Chez Michel as a winter retreat after a day's skiing, but the restaurant is perfect for a cooling mountain lunch during summer. "I love Chez Michel because of its beautiful mountain location and delicious food," says Dammous, "I particularly love their hummus." Chez Michel is well known for serving up some of the finest Lebanese cuisine on offer, and makes home-made-style dishes with a lot of love and attention to detail.

09 300615, terrebrunehotel.com
Faqra, Kfardebian



Al Sultan Brahim

Le Phenicien

Perhaps the most well known and one of the only high-end fish restaurants in the south, Le Phenicien is a favorite for many. Located right on Tyre's fishing port, it reflects the relaxing atmosphere of the area. As you can expect, for a restaurant that looks out on fishermen bringing in their daily catch, Le Phenicien's fish is as fresh as you can get, which is the pulling factor for Dammous, along with its quality.

07 740564, Tyre

Monte Alberto

Dammous' Bekaa valley favorite, Monte Alberto is down to the restaurant's stunning views of Zahlé, perched at the top of a hill above the city and the renowned Berdawni River. If you're the type to get table-envy, its rotating outdoor terrace should suffice – offering ever-changing panoramic views. Dammous recommends the kebbeh nayyeh, and of course a full spread of Lebanese mezze.

08 810912, monte-alberto-hotel.beirut-hotel.net, Zahlé

L'Azrak

Located on a promenade that juts into the sea in the picturesque Byblos port area, L'Azrak has bags of atmosphere and sea views from every side. Dammous is a regular customer because of their "delicious mezze" and they also serve up high quality, fresh and locally caught seafood and fish. Though the prices aren't cheap, taking into consideration their five-star service and un-comparable location, they are fair. Make sure to book in advance, as most weekends every table fills up.

09 737379, Byblos



L'Azrak

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1 BARJIS DESIGN | 5 BAGATELLE |
| 2 PARTICULIER CHOCOLATIER | 6 CAFÉ YOUNES |
| 3 FERDINAND | 7 CRU WINE BAR |
| 4 AUB ART GALLERY | 8 T-MARBOUTA |
| | 9 ARTSCAPE |



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HAMRA

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LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY



Urban trail

Hamra

During the '50s and '60s, Hamra was the Middle East's commercial hotspot and today it still brims with activity. From local design to the district's street culture, Lebanese mapping company **Zawarib** has chosen the prime places to experience Hamra at its best

Begin your day at Café Younes (01 750975, cafeyounes.com) with a locally brewed cup of coffee – find yourself a seat outside on their sidewalk terrace where you can people-watch and see first hand the neighborhood's dynamism. The nearby fruit and vegetable markets begin to get busy around 10am, and cars and pedestrians fill the streets. Before leaving, take a look at the Café Younes coffee roaster (01 347531), on the adjacent street, where a wide selection of coffee beans is on sale.

Around the corner, the well-known Sadat Street will entertain with its many antique shops. Here you can see tailors, patisseries, bakeries and chocolate shops that date back to the '50s, many of which feature art deco and Bauhaus-styled shop signs.

Continue to Barjis Design (01 350933, 03 210348, barjisdesign.com), an eclectic furniture gallery located at the very beginning of Sadat Street. If you're lucky, you might catch the designer herself, Hala Habib, getting creative at the back of the shop where cascading fabrics and materials await to be transformed into beautiful home pieces.

A new collaboration between Lebanon Traveler and Zawarib - guiding you around the city

Quench your thirst for art on Sidani Street where an abundance of graffiti decorates the city's walls. Inside the Mayfair Dorms building, enter AUB's art gallery (01 350000 /4345, *Sidani Street*) and explore a collection of fine and contemporary art from the region. Should your creative juices start flowing, enter the hidden world of Artscape (70 037367, [f artscapebeirut](https://www.facebook.com/artscapebeirut)), a space dedicated to those who wish to express themselves via the wonderful world of painting and drawing.

Expect to be seduced with the aromas of baked goods and fresh sandwiches on your Hamra stroll, though hold off for a gourmet lunch of European fusion cuisine at Bagatelle (01 342842, bagatellebeirut.com). Enter Jabre Doumit Street, off Jean D'Arc Street and you'll find the romantically designed restaurant inside a restored 1930s house.

If you're feeling adventurous, make your way to Abdel Aziz Street to discover a house dating back to the beginning of the 20th Century. Push open a red door and walk into a beautiful secret garden with a fishpond.

Afterwards, a trip to the nearby Manara is always fun, especially when the local fishermen are around for a chat. Learn how the fishermen use dough to get their

daily catch and create jewelry from the items they reel in, such as necklaces from tiny seahorses. Take a stroll along the picturesque Manara and pop by the old black and white striped lighthouse, also known as the Manara Lighthouse, where the friendly lighthouse keeper Victor, might be kind enough to take you on a trip to the top!

After climbing the steep incline back to Hamra, reward yourself with a sweet treat from Particulier Chocolatier (01 740611, [f Particulier](https://www.facebook.com/Particulier)), where homemade chocolate and delicious desserts await. Nearer to sunset, rest your feet over a game of backgammon at the wonderfully Lebanese T-Marbouta restaurant (01 350274). Sit on the terrace amongst a crowd of journalists, students and locals where you can cool off with a delicious lemonade or *jellab*. They also offer an extensive and delicious menu of Lebanese cuisine.

By nightfall, slowly make your way to CRU wine bar (71 130351) where the owners will welcome you with a wonderful selection of wine, including a range of local boutique wines, such as Domaine Wardy, Domaine de Baal and Chateau Khoury. Complete the evening at Ferdinand (01 355955), a friendly lounge-style pub with an art-deco interior and settle in for some cocktails.

AGENDA

June

Sun 7

Ehmej hike

A day's hike among the beautiful green forests of Ehmej, Mount Lebanon. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL36,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

Rafting in Assi

Take a wild day out, water rafting along the Bekaa's Assi River. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL75,000. Footprints Club*

Hasroun hike

Join this hike within the stunning landscapes of the Qadisha Valley. Level 3 hikers (7km, 1700-2000m altitude) take the LMT trail to the Tannourine Reserve; level 6 hikers (12km, 1700-2400m) will pass high ridges and springs. **Liban Trek**

Sun 14

Old city tour, Tripoli

See the old city of Tripoli with a visit to mosques, khans, hammams, Madrassas (Quaranic schools) and souks that go back to the 14th Century. *LL45,000. Mira Minkara*

Camping in Andaket-Qobayyat

Venture into the wild for a weekend camping within nature. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL75,000. Footprints Club*

Cherry Picking

A wholesome family activity for the early summer, try a day of cherry picking at harvesting time in the mountains and find yourself revived. *Adults LL60,000; kids LL37,5000 (under 2s free) including lunch and transportation. NEOS Kids*

July

Sat 20

Fossil picking

Take the kids for an "edu-taining" activity fossil picking in the mountains, along with discoveing Qanat Bakish. *Adults LL60,000; kids LL37,5000 (under 2s free) including lunch and transportation. NEOS Kids*

Wine tasting

Spend a day tasting Lebanon's Bekaa Valley wine treats at Cave Kouroum, Chateau Kefraya and Cheateau Ksara, including a lunch stop in Zahle. *Meeting point Wild Discovery Furn el Chebbak. LL112,500 including lunch and transport. Wild Discovery LB*

Sun 21

LMT section 4 hike

A hike along the Lebanon Mountain Trail, from Kfarbne to Sir Dennyi in north Lebanon. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL36,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

Sun 28

Wine tasting

Take a tour around Lebanon's relatively new boutique wineries in Batroun, stopping at Atibaia Winery in Smar Jbeil and Aurora Winery in Rachkiddeh, finishing at the new hip microbrewery Colonel for lunch and beer tasting. *Meeting point Sagesse School parking, Jdeideh, LL82,500 including lunch and transport. Club Grappe*

Sun 5

Qammouaa hike

A hike in the great outdoors, around the area of Qammouaa, at around 1,100m altitude. *Meeting point Furn el Chebbak, Facing Sagesse University, 8am. LL45,000 including breakfast, lunch, transport. ProMax*

Sun 12

Tannourine hike

See the impressive natural wonder, the Balaa sinkhole in Tannourine, with a hike in the area. *Meeting point Furn el Chebbak, facing Sagesse University, 8am. LL45,000 including breakfast, lunch, transport. ProMax*

Sun 19

Jezzine hike

Hike through the beautiful cooling Bkassine pine forest in South Lebanon's Jezzine. *Meeting point Furn el Chebbak, facing Sagesse University, 8am. LL45,000 including breakfast, lunch, transport. ProMax*

Sun 26

Shouf Cedar Reserve hike

Hike in the Cedar Reserve above the town of Barouk, to see Lebanon's majestic Cedars. *Meeting point Furn el Chebbak, Facing Sagesse University, 8am. LL45,000 including breakfast, lunch, transport. ProMax*



Château Kefraya



August

Sun 2

Old city tour, Tripoli

See the old city of Tripoli with a visit to mosques, khans, hammams, Madrassas (Quaranic schools) and souks that go back to the 14th Century. *LL45,000. Mira Minkara*



Hannibal Race

A challenging race for the fittest fanatics in Zaarour – including a 7km speed race, a 13km endurance race and a 3km junior Hannibal race for ages 12-15, all with obstacles and mud runs. After testing your physical strength and mental resolve finish the journey with a catered meal and live music. *Speed LL52,500; Endurance LL67,500; Junior LL30,000. Hannibalrace.com*

ADDRESS BOOK

Club Grappe

03 611603, clubgrappe.com

Footprints Club

03 876112, footprintsclub.com

Liban Trek

01 329975, 03 291616, libantrek.com

Mira Minkara

70 126764, miracoqui34@gmail.com

📱 Mira's guided tours

NEOS Kids

03 733818, neoslb.com

ProMax

03 955642, promaxsports.com

Vamos Todos

79 115001, 03 917190, vamos-todos.com

Wild Discovery

71 202727, wilddiscovery.com.lb

Canyoning in Hammana

Try your hand at something new, an active day canyoning in Hammana River. *LL60,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

Sun 9

Sunset and night hike

There's nothing like a hike in Jabal Kneiseh as the sun sets and the light begins to change. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL36,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

Sun 16

Climbing and caving

Spend a day along protected climbing routes and caving at the low level of Rouiss. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL45,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

Sun 30

Wet hiking

Enjoy an unusual hiking experience along the river of Reshamaya. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL36,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

2 minutes with... Kanj Hamade

Senior Consultant of the Lebanon Industry Value Chain Development (LIVCD) project, **Kanj Hamade**, fills LT in on the newly launched regional calendars of events

WHAT IS THE CONCEPT OF THE REGIONAL CALENDARS?

The regional calendars are for two purposes. First, during the preparation of the calendar, they allow all actors (private and public) to meet, discuss, exchange experience and cooperate. It is increasingly known that cooperation and common action is a key factor of success in rural tourism. Then, after they are ready, they are a great marketing and information tool that target domestic tourists looking for rural escapes.

WHICH AREAS DO THEY COVER?

This year they will cover the districts of Jezzine, Rashaya Al-Wadi, and Zahlé, as well as the Ehmej-Tannourine-Hadath

El-Jebbeh region. We hope to be able to cover additional regions in the future.

WHERE CAN TOURISTS GET HOLD OF THEM?

Paper copies of the agenda will be distributed during the second edition of the Travel Lebanon show [at this year's Garden Show & Spring Festival], they will also be distributed through Lebanon Traveler and Agenda Culturel. Copies will also be available at the Ministry of Tourism, at municipalities and main tourism attractions in the region. Tourists can also check the calendars and follow-up on the activities of the region through the [soon to be launched] Facebook page.

FESTIVALS



14 Jul - The Script at Byblos International Festival

Summer Misk Festival

4 - 7 June

The festivities kick off with multi-Grammy Award-winning artist Wyclef Jean (4 June). Lebanese musician, composer and pianist Guy Manoukian (5 June) is next in line. One of the most in demand composers in the industry, he's worked with everyone from 50 Cent to Mario Reyes of the Gipsy Kings. Next up is the Beirut International Comedy Showcase (6 June) - a glittering stand-up comedy program from around the world. Closing up the festival is Australian superstar Natalie Imbruglia (7 June), touring with her first album in eight years.

BeitMisk. Beitmisk.com, Tickets available at Virgin, 01 999666 ticketingboxoffice.com



Summer Misk Festival

The International Theater Festival of Tyre

6 - 9 June

Now into its second edition, the International Theater Festival of Tyre, is hosted by Al Hamra Cinema this year; the legendary old cinema, reopened after 30 years last year. This year the festival offers a dedicated platform for emerging Lebanese theater voices.

70 903846

[f Tyre International Theater Festival](#)

The Shoreline Sessions

13 June, 11 July, 8 August

Mar Mikhael's Radio Beirut and Batroun-based microbrewery Colonel come together to present the outdoor summer concert series, The Shoreline Sessions, showcasing an eclectic line up with three acts each night at Colonel. Kicking off with Acid Arab from France, Egyptian musician Maurice Louca and Lebanese tarapop singer Aziza all on 13 June. The festival highlights the latest sounds coming out of the Arab world and beyond.

Colonel Brewery, Batroun. Radiobeirut.net, colonelbeer.com, Tickets available at Virgin, Radio Beirut 01 570277 and Colonel 06 743543

Fete de la Musique

21 June

In celebration of World Music Day, as music fills the streets all around the world, Fete de la Musique returns to Beirut, to take over the city on 21 June. Giving the chance for amateur musicians to take to the stage and established musicians to perform in outdoor urban locations around the city, Fete de la Musique is a real celebration of music at street-level. Head outdoors and enjoy.

Beirut. 01 420234, [f Fete Musique Beyrouth](#)



Jounieh International Festival

2 - 15 July

A short drive from Beirut, the Jounieh International Festival impresses with Lebanese diva Magida El Roumi (4 July) and legendary French singer Johnny Hallyday (9 July). They'll also be holding their usual Kids & Family Day (10-12 July) and end the festival with a bang, bringing British singer-songwriter Jessie J (15 July) known for her hit songs such as Price Tag and Bang Bang.

Fouad Chehab Stadium, Jounieh. jouniehinternationalfestival.com Tickets available at Virgin and Boueri Press, Kaslik, 09 210660

Byblos International Festival 13 July – 18 August

Over more than a decade the Byblos International Festival has built a reputation as one of the most important and relevant festivals in the country, each time bringing an impeccable line-up of some of the biggest acts around. This year doesn't disappoint with acts such as John Legend (13 July), The Script (14 July), Gregory Porter (28 July), Hiba Tawaji (7 August), Sacre-Profane (12-13 August, Saint John Marcus Church, Byblos) and Alt-J (18 August).

Byblos Port, Byblos. byblosfestival.org, Tickets available at Virgin



29 July – Juan Diego Florez will sing with the Filarmonica Gioachino Rossini Orchestra at Beiteddine Art Festival



29 Aug – The Earth Wind & Fire Experience at Baalbeck International Festival

Beirut Holidays Festival 18 July – 6 August

If Arabic pop music is your thing, the relatively new festival Beirut Holidays impresses with Lebanese singers Wael Kfoury (18 July) and Najwa Karam (25 July) who is the best-selling recording artist in the Middle East. Their lineup also includes Australian brother-and-sister folk group Angus and Julia Stone (28 July) and the brilliant Lebanese alternative rock band Mashrou3 Leila (6 August).

BIEL Waterfront, Beirut. [f Beirut Holidays](https://www.facebook.com/BeirutHolidays), Tickets available at Virgin

Beiteddine Art Festival 29 July – 27 August

Held in the regal 200-year-old Beiteddine Palace, the Beiteddine Art Festival has a 30-year record for bringing together music and art. This year the program includes world-renowned tenor Juan Diego Florez (29 July), critically-acclaimed singer, composer and oudist Marcel Khalife (5 August), a concert dedicated to the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, Requiem by Tigran Mansuria (8 August), plus the return of legendary singer Kadim Al Sahir (14 August).

Beiteddine Palace, Beiteddine. beiteddine.org, Tickets available at Virgin



7 Aug – Hiba Tawaji at Byblos International Festival

The Baalbeck International Festival 31 July – 30 August

The big-boy of the festivals, with the longest history, is Baalbeck. Concerts take place within the city's Roman temples, making an impressive setting. Franco-Moroccan singer Hindi Zahra (9 August) is on this year's bill; fusing North African, Brazilian, jazz and funk. Of course it wouldn't be Baalbeck Festival without jazz, and the brilliant Cameroon-born bassist Richard Bona (16 August) and his quintet fills the role perfectly. The legendary Syrian diva, Mayada EL-Hennawy (21 August) comes to a Lebanese festival for the first time and there's also disco-funk outfit, The Earth Wind and Fire Experience feat. Al McKay and the Allstars (29 August).

Baalbeck temples, Baalbeck. baalbeck.org.lb, Tickets available at Virgin and at the Acropolis entrance from July, 08 376912, 03 891695

Batroun Festival 1 – 29 August

Batroun Festival secures its place among the big festivals of the country bringing legendary French singer Charles Aznavour (1 August) as its opening act.

Batroun. BatrounFestival.org, Tickets available at Virgin and Festival office, 71 440071



May El Khalil

As founder and president of the Beirut Marathon Association **May El Khalil** is often on the run. But that doesn't stop her from taking the time to enjoy the natural beauty of Lebanon. She shares with LT some of her favorite spots

WHERE WOULD YOU CONSIDER THE MOST BEAUTIFUL STRIP TO RUN IN LEBANON AND WHY?

By the seaside or on any of the beautiful mountains of Lebanon are for me the most inspirational places to run. We have such natural beauties in our country that we should appreciate and relish.

IF SOMEONE WERE VISITING LEBANON FOR ONLY 24 HOURS WHERE WOULD YOU TAKE THEM?

I would try my best to take them to all the main landmarks of Lebanon starting with the National Museum, then head up North to visit the Jeita Grotto and then Byblos to visit the ancient ruins, with a stop at the old port for lunch. Following this, continue north for a hike through the small roads of Wadi Qannoubine.

TELL US ABOUT ONE DESTINATION IN LEBANON THAT NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT – YOUR HIDDEN GEM AWAITING DISCOVERY?

There is no specific place I can choose; to me, every single corner of Lebanon is a precious gem. Although this is not a secret [destination], I would highly recommend a visit to the Barouk Cedar Reserve to experience the positive energy and organic ambience.

WHERE IS YOUR IDEAL SUMMER GETAWAY IN LEBANON AND WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING THERE?

Nowadays, my personal favorite is in Monsef, Batroun, because of my summerhouse on the seaside – it has a stunning shoreline. I love spending time there with my family and grandchildren by the breathtaking Mediterranean Sea.

WHERE IS THE OLIVE OIL IN YOUR KITCHEN FROM?

Definitely my preference is olive oil from Hasbaya, my husband's hometown, and I am loyal [to it] because it is from our land.

WHERE IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE TO ENJOY A TYPICAL SUNDAY LUNCH OUTSIDE BEIRUT?

Any place that serves organic traditional Lebanese food. Whether it is enjoyed at a small restaurant with three or four tables in the mountains or on a picnic by the river, our native cuisine is the way to go.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OUTDOOR ACTIVITY IN LEBANON AND WHERE DO YOU DO IT?

Well, of course, my favorite outdoor activity is running, but the occasional hike in Baskinta, renowned for its natural beauty, is definitely high on my list. You can visit, you can run, you can walk the one million steps between the north and the south, but in the end it is only truly meaningful when we are doing it all together, side-by-side.

beirutmarathon.org

CORAL

Beirut Al Hamra Hotel 








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