

Lebanon Traveler



Lebanon 8,000 IBP

A publication of Hospitality Services in a joint venture with Beyond Beirut | Issue 14 | March 2015 - May 2015

100+
SPRING
DESTINATIONS

The women
of Deir Al Ahmar

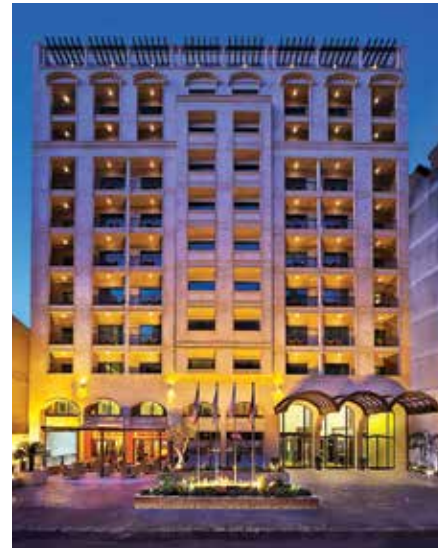
Rudy
Rahme's
Vision
of Bcharre

MEET
The bell-makers
of Beit Shabab

+ YOUR HANDS-ON
GUIDE TO LEBANON

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RURAL LIFE

As color slowly spreads across the landscape, the country's rural regions come to life. Clear blue skies and crisp mountain air mark the beginning of spring and what looks set to be a positive year for the tourism industry. The country's Rural Tourism Strategy was launched at The Grand Serail on 11 February; an iconic shift to the country's approach to tourism which aims to kickstart local economies in rural areas, highlight the wealth of the country's natural, cultural and agricultural heritage and create a more sustainable future. It's this philosophy that's at the very core of Lebanon Traveler magazine.

For this issue we look at Lebanon's significance as a stop along the route of migratory birds and underline the importance of their preservation. We focus on the West Bekaa and explore its numerous destinations from the Ammiq Wetland to important religious sites and ancient trails through nature. The Food Heritage Foundation takes us on a tour of the country through Wild Edible Plants and meets the villagers continuing this old tradition and we also stop by Batroun and speak to the growing community of Lebanese surfers who live for the waves.

We meet the people dedicated to their regions from Dunia El Khoury, the founder of the Women's Association of Deir Al Ahmar in North East Bekaa dedicated to empowering local women and preserving the village's surrounding environment, to renowned artist Rudy Rahme, who's grand wooden sculptors are a direct reflection of the nature of his hometown of Bcharre and intertwined with Lebanon's rich cultural heritage.

We focus in on culture, from the ancient bell-making village of Beit Shabab, where craftsman Naffah Naffah continues the family heritage that stretches back three centuries to a spotlight on the brutalist buildings of Beirut through the Arab Center for Architecture and we interview Gemmayzeh-based designer Sibylle Tamer Albilama.

We've also extended the magazine to give you a hands-on guide to restaurants and rural guesthouses, along with a food trail around Bourj Hammoud and insider tips from passionate foodie Kamal Mouzawak, the founder of Souk el Tayeb and Mar Mikhael's Tawlet. And we want Lebanon Traveler to be your guide. Grab your copy and head outdoors and let it lead you to the highlights our country has to offer.

Lebanon Traveler Editorial Team



CONTRIBUTORS



Arpi Mangassarian

A graduate of the architectural school of the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA) in 1985, Arpi Mangassarian has worked for the Bourj Hammoud Municipality since 1993, as the head of the Architectural and Urban Department. She achieved the DESSU degree in Urban Planning from the Lebanese University in 2001. Attracted by the lively Armenian culture, manifested especially by crafts and culinary heritage, she established the cultural and heritage house Badguèr, for the creators and artisans of Bourj Hammoud.



Elsa Sattout

Elsa Sattout, PhD, is a Miriam Rothschild Scholar following a conservation leadership program at the University of Cambridge, UK. She is an interdisciplinary professional and researcher with more than 15 years experience working on eastern Mediterranean ecosystems, socio-cultural aspects of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. She has served global communities through international organizations to support government agencies in the Northern Arabian Peninsula in the implementation of the convention on biological diversity.



Mirna Riman

Mirna Riman is a banking and finance graduate; she was hired as an environmental awareness coordinator at the Shouf Biosphere Reserve with a vision to introduce the population to the importance of conserving the ecosystem and to create an environmental awareness. In addition, she is responsible for the micro credit program Cedar Loan, supporting the management of conservation and monitoring, rural development, ecotourism, capacity building and international projects management.



Nour Farra-Haddad

Nour Farra-Haddad is a senior researcher and professor who manages her own travel consultant company, NEOS, specializing in pilgrimages and religious tourism. She holds a tourist guide diploma from the Ministry of Tourism and was appointed vice president of the Lebanese Tour Guides syndicate. 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.



Petra Chedid

Petra Chedid started her career in event organizing, before moving on to complete a degree in "Aménagement Touristique et Culturel" from Saint Joseph University in Beirut. Afterwards she discovered her love for traditions and food heritage, and is a strong advocate for the important role of agritourism and going back to the roots in the West Bekaa area. Chedid is now an active member of the Food Heritage Foundation and a local guide on the Food Trail project funded by USAID.



Till Heene

Till Heene is Lufthansa's General Manager in Lebanon. Holding a Master in French Linguistics from the University of Toulouse, over the past six years he has lived in Asia and Africa and now resides in Lebanon. Before joining the airline industry, he was working as a tour guide in Europe and taught German at a private school in Spain. His hobbies include reading, photography and trekking.



Zeinab Jeambey

Food heritage management specialist, Zeinab Jeambey first trained as a dietician. After working on a cultural mapping project of Homs, Syria, she became hooked on the subject of heritage. Searching for a link to bring together her experience and interests Jeambey went on to study food heritage management at the University of Barcelona where she graduated in September 2013. Since returning to Lebanon, she has worked at the Food Heritage Foundation in Beirut.



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Lebanon Traveler

Official Partner



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

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We welcome views on any relevant subject. The editor reserves the right to select and edit letters. Please e-mail your comments to info@lebanontraveler.com

Published by Hospitality Services s.a.r.l. Burghol Building, Dekwaneh, Lebanon P.O.Box 90 155 Jdeidet el Metn 1202 2020 To advertise contact our office at 01 480081 Fax: 01 482876



Cover photo courtesy of W.A.D.A. Association, taken at Deir Al Ahmar - Farmer, Akoury organic farm.



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The Phoenicians' Route

In a ceremony held at BIEL – headed by the Minister of Tourism Michel Pharaon and concurrently with the visit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations' World Tourism Organization, Dr. Taleb D. Rifai, to Lebanon – the international tourism project "The Phoenicians' Route" was launched, connecting the Lebanese diaspora, which makes up 14 million Lebanese who live abroad, to their home country. The cultural tourism programs that make up the project will make the Phoenicians' Route and the remaining monuments of this ancient civilization, a globally renowned touristic experience, generate numerous jobs and create collaborative ties in tourism development between the 18 countries along the Phoenicians' Route.



Left Dr. Taleb D. Rifai, right Minister Michel Pharaon

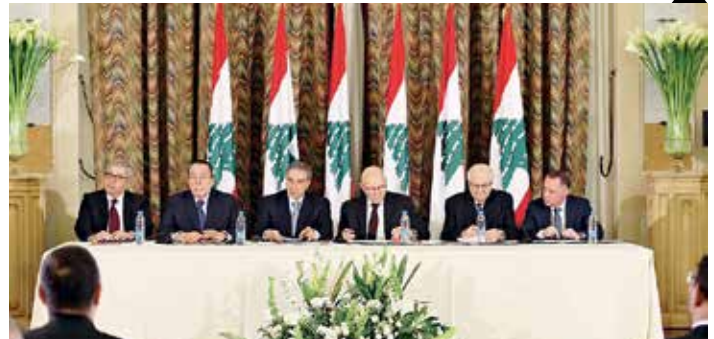
Rural Tourism Strategy launch

On 11 February 2015 Prime Minister Tamam Salam and the Ministry of Tourism launched the new initiative, "Rural Tourism Strategy for Lebanon," in the Grand Serail. The move marked a transformative change of approach to tourism in Lebanon with hopes to secure a more sustainable future and boost rural economies around the country. At the conference Salam said "I would like to thank Minister Pharaon for initiating this national strategy, and we really hope that this project prospers and lives up to our aspirations and expectations," adding, "Tourism was, and is still one of our greatest national concerns, for God has bestowed this natural bliss upon Lebanon, and it is our duty to preserve it."

Minister of Tourism, Michel Pharaon elaborated on the strategy plan, drawing on the success of the Live Love Lebanon campaign which has already achieved a growth of 15 percent in tourism since launching. "Even though rural tourism at the moment does not constitute more than five percent of the overall tourism in Lebanon, we are confident that in five years rural tourism will

grow between 15 to 20 percent, creating job opportunities and safeguarding our heritage in all regions," Pharaon said.

The launch of the Rural Tourism Strategy gives hope to the tourism field and if successful will decentralize the tourist economy from the major cities and help to preserve the country's natural, religious, and agricultural heritage.



Women of the wild

To celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March, the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) launched the project "Greening the Ancient Terraces" (GREAT) at St. John Monastery, El Khenshara with the help of around 200 volunteers who came from all over Lebanon to participate in the planting campaign. GREAT, a collaboration between the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) and the Save Energy Plant Trees NGO (SEPT), aims to restore the green cover on religious endowment lands. On the site, which is made up of old terraces, up to 5000 native tree seedlings are to be planted in March 2015. The LRI, funded by USAID and implemented by the United States Forest Service has a full program of activities through Lebanon to reforest the country, working closely with grassroots organizations and local communities.

Rally Paper by Bike

This yearly event targets environmental awareness issues through the form of a bike rally, aiming to promote and preserve the natural environment. For the next three years O Club group have chosen the issue of water to focus on, taking the theme "A World without Water?!" This year the rally, which takes place on 17 May, focuses on raising awareness among the public, following in 2016 with a focus on one problem of water in Lebanon and in 2017 trying to solve the problem. Those taking part in the rally will follow a map, stopping at stations along the way that focus on

the water theme, or include competitive sports games, general knowledge quizzes or missions to accomplish.

Info 01 870344, 03 854038, oclub-lb.com



Walking for heritage

For the seventh year, the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association organizes its annual Thru-Walk, a trek along the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT), which raises awareness on the importance of preserving the natural, cultural and

historical heritage which lies along it. The LMT is the first long-distance hiking trail in Lebanon and extends 470km from Andqet in the north to Marjayoun in the south, passing through 75 towns and villages. This year the Thru-Walk takes the theme of cultural and archaeological heritage, advocating for the conservation of the ancient trail and the cultural and archeological remains of past civilizations found along its route, which are often neglected. Hikers can join the group at different points throughout the trail.

Fri 3 Apr-Sun 3 May.
Register at lebanontrail.org



The Garden Show & Spring Festival

One of Lebanon's most anticipated yearly events, The Garden Show & Spring Festival returns this May for another celebration of the Lebanese outdoors. Now into its 12th year, the Garden Show & Spring Festival grows in strength and size each year, welcoming over 24,000 visitors. This year the festival takes the theme "Jounaynate Bayt el Jabal," celebrating a return to our roots, our villages, the family home and a slowed down pace of life. Held in conjunction with Travel Lebanon, the first event promoting rural tourism in the country, The Garden Show & Spring Festival is an essential visit for garden and nature lovers and families looking to enjoy a festival experience in the iconic setting of Beirut's Hippodrome.

May 26-30, 5-11pm
Beirut Hippodrome
the-gardenshow.com



NEWS IN BRIEF

New activities in Kfardebian

Under the patronage of Minister Michel Pharaon, new winter and outdoor activities were launched in Kfardebian on Saturday 7 February 2015, unveiling new cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails, designed and created through a collaboration between the USAID-funded LIVCD project, Auberge Beity and Kfardebian Municipality. beity.org

Mechanical Olive Oil Harvesting

The Lebanon Industry Value Chain Development (LIVCD) project, funded by USAID, organized a closing workshop of the Mechanical Harvesting Program

within the Olive Oil Value Chain, which has improved olive oil productivity and decreased production costs for 1,000 olive oil producers across Lebanon, along with creating 73 jobs in rural areas.

f LebanonValueChain

Beaufort Castle

The 10th Century crusader fortress, Beaufort Castle, in Nabatieh has completed its restoration process and will soon be open to visitors. The result of a five-year restoration project, that worked to maintain its authenticity, the castle looks set to become one of the most important touristic sites in South Lebanon.

Conserving migrating birds

The world's largest wildlife event, Birdfair UK has announced its 2015 fundraising project "Hope for migratory birds in the Eastern Mediterranean: action against illegal killing." This year, the focus of their project will be on reducing the scale and impact of illegal killing of migratory birds, for which Lebanon and Egypt were highlighted as the worst in the region. Birdfair co-organizer, Tim Appleton said, "I am delighted that through Birdfair we can highlight the major issues for migrating birds in this region of the Eastern Mediterranean.

birdfair.org.uk

SHOPPING

This spring we've hunted out the best new products on the market for an active lifestyle. Be sporty and stay stylish at the same time with LT's picks of the season



1 Spring style

This white leather basket weave **Day To Night Bag** with a coral napper leather trim from the Alice Eddé Spring Summer Collection 2015 is perfect for a weekend away, when traveling light. Team it with one of the matching pouches and head outdoors in a spring outfit.

LL930,000; Matching Riviera pouches: large LL240,000, small LL187,500

Info 70 737972

Alice Eddé Boutique

09 943023

eddeyard.com, **f** Alice Edde Concept Store

2 Shine a light

This luminous **Jack Wolfskin high density t-shirt** is made from organic cotton with added stretch, meaning maximum comfort for outdoor activities and you certainly won't get lost on a forest hike.

LL75,000

Class Sport

Mansourieh Highway 01 680670; Baabda

05 958989; Jounieh 09 911766

class-sport.com, **f** Class Sport

3 Snap happy

If you're an adventurer you need an adventurous camera to match, enter the **GoPro Hero4 Silver**; the first GoPro to feature a built-in touch display. Capturing video in lifelike definition plus 12MP photos at 30 frames per second and waterproof to 40m depth, it's the perfect camera to capture all your wild outdoor activities.

LL787,000

Mike Sport

01 888855

Mikesport.com, **f** Mike Sport

4 Foot steady

These **Salomon Cosmic 4 D2 GTX** boots are perfect for outdoor explorers. Once you've got on a pair of these beauties you'll be hiking through Lebanon's stunning scenery every chance you get.

LL487,000

All Sports Experts branches

ABC Achrafieh 01 202555; Citymall Dora

01 890777; Dbayeh Highway 04 546550;

sportsexpertsco.com, **f** Sports Experts Co.

5 Smart wrist

A digital friend to guide you through an active life, the **Suunto Ambit3 Peak (HR)**, has it all. With 50 hours of battery life with GPS, a compass, altitude reader and route navigation, this intelligent watch is the perfect aid for all sporting activities. It can tell you the temperature, sunrise/sunset times, read your heart rate while swimming, track speed, pace and distance and offer bike power support.

LL1,200,000

All Sports Experts branches

6 Pedal power

This entry-level **Allez brand road bike** (Aluminum frame, Shimano Claris 8sp) is ideal for those looking to take cycling more seriously and for cruising past Lebanon's impressive landscapes by road.

LL1,648,500

Bike Generation Sal

01 398442

Tahwita, near Beit Al Tabib

bikegeneration-me.com

f Bike Generation



Beautifully strong



Walking through Beirut

Till Heene, general manager of Lufthansa German Airlines in Lebanon, takes us on his reflective daily walk to work, through the backstreets of Beirut

The dashboard computer of my car speaks the neutral, objective language of a doctor. During my stay of almost two years in Lebanon, I have driven 10,764km with an average speed of 17km/h. That is, I have spent 616 hours and 46 minutes and some uncounted seconds in the car and in traffic. What could I have done instead with this *temps perdu*?

These days, weather permitting, I leave the car at home and walk to the office, from Sioufi to Hamra, 5km and back. During my daily walk it seems to me like I am traveling into the history of Beirut. It is a travel back in time, and through my own history.

“Beirut,” started the serious voice of a German newspeaker in the ‘80s, the news on my favorite teenage radio station, interrupting Michael Jackson or Genesis or finishing the commercials. “Bei einem Anschlag...,” it continued.

Beirut: “During an attack...”

News from a country in a civil war, broadcast in a country where the cold war was warming and finally led to the reunification and to the appointment of chancellor Angela Merkel.

Walking to the office, I see and smell the old cars. I could stop them, negotiate, take them as a taxi, and drive into my own past in a Peugeot 505, Mercedes 300E or a Honda Accord.

Walking to the office, I see old shops: their names speak the language of a glamorous past when Beirut was called the “Paris of the Orient.” The Salon Champs Elysées is in a backyard in Fassouh. I continue my walk to Geitawi and Gemmayzeh. I cross the former “Green Line,” hit the souks, cross Bab Idriss and arrive in Hamra. I soak in everything I see and everyone I cross.

Sometimes, the calls from home reach me when I’m walking. Friends and family: both concerned about the situation in the region, the civil war in Syria, incidents in Tripoli. What should I say on the phone? I calm down the worries and I defend Lebanon. The country is more than the fugitive content of a



news headline watched thousands of kilometers away on CNN. The country is more than virtual worries.

Or, should I tell them that in August in certain neighborhoods where there is still some greenery left, you can sense the shy smell of fig trees? Beirut is a permanent training in sharpening your senses and your imagination. Discover the side streets and the hidden steps of Gemmayzeh and Geitawi. Remember: there used to be ... and there is not anymore. A city in transition.

Beirut is like the over-ground cables that you can see everywhere: an incredibly creative mess. Any chaos theoretician would tell you that by all means of mathematical probability calculation, the traffic congestion at an intersection cannot be solved. Yalla! In this other medium called reality, that Lebanese seem to have invented, there is always at least one solution. Just don’t ask how. This is my favorite: somehow, it works. Don’t ask how.

Despair and hope, I think while walking: they are not following one another, but they happen simultaneously in time and space.

Fear and laughter, war and happiness: they come together as uneven twins.

You have to decide which one you believe in. From hour to hour, minute to minute, second to second.

Live Lebanese.

WHERE TO EAT

Bab Sharki (78 823366, 01 218550) is a **tiny restaurant with excellent cuisine, two minutes walk from Sassine in Sioufi Garden.**

WHERE TO STOP FOR A DRINK

I like Cargo (03 480299, Bedawi Street, Nahr) and its **cozy atmosphere. It was our favorite viewing place for the Soccer Championship in Brazil in 2014.**

WHAT TO SEE

Jesuit Garden (Jardin des Jesuites) is one of the few parks in the area of Geitawi and a popular place for older local residents to gather. There are also some Roman ruins, along with a futuristic fountain.





The journey south

As an essential stop on the route of migrating birds, Lebanon has an important role in their conservation. Environmental Awareness Coordinator at the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, **Mirna Riman** explores

Throughout the year Lebanon has a diverse population of visiting and endemic birds. The country lies on one of the highest diversity zones in the world, meaning its importance can't be underestimated. It is a huge bottleneck for migratory birds between Europe and Africa and classified as the second most important migratory corridor after Cuba, the major path between Latin and North America. Knowledge and information gleaned from neighboring countries also stresses the importance of this country in the soaring birds' migration systems.

The Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve was designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA), by Birdlife International in 1994, among the world's key sites for the conservation of biodiversity. It's considered a major flyway route for thousands of birds twice a year, where migration takes place between Europe and Asia to Africa in autumn and the reverse route for breeding during the spring season. Birds depend on resting, feeding and roosting hotspots during their migration in order to secure food, water and habitat. This is why protecting

these important habitats and conserving them is so important.

Although soaring birds may seem large in number when passing along bottlenecks, these might actually be the only group of these birds worldwide, so hunting them might cause their extinction, as Bassima Khatib, assistant manager in the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), states.

The Reserve hosts 290 species of birds, 32 species of wild mammals and 532



“ Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve is located in one of the world’s most important corridors for bird migration, yet every year recreational hunters kill many birds along the route ”

species of plants. 19 out of the 290 bird species are considered rare at national level and more than 22 species have been confirmed as resident; the remaining are migratory or rare visitors, which designate it as a significant staging, resting or feeding post for migrating birds. There are around six globally threatened species recorded in the site.

Many species of birds have been documented as breeding in Lebanon and some are high elevation species such as the Chukar Partridge, Eurasian Jay, Coal Tit, Horned Lark and Rock Bunting. Other birds nesting might include the Great Tit, Woodlark, Eastern Orphean Warbler and Eurasian Blackbird. The migratory birds in the reserve include the Greater Spotted Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Saker Falcon, Egyptian Vulture and Lesser Kestrel.

Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve is located in one of the world’s most important corridors for bird migration, yet every year recreational hunters, who are either unaware of or indifferent to the country’s poorly enforced hunting ban, kill many birds along the route.

“Most of the hunters don’t know the species very well,” says Nizar Hani, manager of the Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve. “And here in Lebanon there’s no monitoring, except at the reserve, which is [only] five percent of the country’s landmass. It’s big, but it’s not big enough.”

He considers that most people in Lebanon do believe that wildlife should be preserved, but with contradiction as “they still hunt.”

Bird migration is globally considered as one of the wonders of the natural world in which over 600 million birds pass over Lebanon twice a year. “Hunting in Lebanon is destructive, especially under a long-term ban with no application of decrees or enforcement of laws. Many birds are in decline in Lebanon. These are not limited to threatened species but also cover many common bird species,” says Ghassan Jaradi, professor of ornithology at the Lebanese University, who began studying Lebanon’s bird populations in the early 1990s. He adds that migratory birds also benefit the country as when the birds rest on land they eat rodents that feed on the local plants and seeds, acting as a natural pesticide to protect crops.

Environmentalists, hunters and even gun sellers – who sell hunting rifles legally despite the hunting ban, are all in favor of implementing the law to regulate hunting. A 2004 law introduced hunting regulations, including permitting the hunting of game species, but was never activated after being ratified by Parliament. “We are privileged to be in Lebanon, [a country] that is considered to be a bottleneck for migrating birds that pass over it,” Dalia Jawhari says, a passionate bird expert and the program director in SPNL, “that’s why we should conserve and protect these birds, not hunt them.”

The Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve is working on raising awareness for hunters and the younger generation, about the hunting law (2004) to regulate hunting in close cooperation with the Ministry of Environment (MOE) and the Migratory Soaring Birds Project (MSB). In addition, the reserve will soon launch a bird watching program as an ecotourism

activity with guided bird tours to generate business. In the USA, the annual economic value generated by bird watchers is about USD32 billion per year and around USD5.45 million in Jordan and Lebanon; though it has the potential to yield USD 14.3 million per year for bird watching of migratory soaring birds.

In 2014, “HAPPY BIRDDAY” organized by JABALNA Association in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and the Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve traveled all around Lebanon to various traditional festivals to promote awareness for the wild birds of Lebanon and create a friendly interaction between birds and visitors.

Annually, the World Migratory Bird Day is held on 9 May, highlighting the need to protect migratory birds and their habitats. It is a global awareness-raising campaign highlighting the importance of protecting migratory birds and their habitats. In Lebanon SPNL will celebrate the day in different locations.



Photos courtesy of Shouf Cedar Reserve

WHERE TO BIRDWATCH

The Shouf Biosphere Reserve offers bird enthusiasts bird watching tours to see migrating birds across numerous spots:

- The lake at Ain Zhalta Cedar Forest
- The lake and Ain El Lejee of the Barouk Cedar Forest
- Maaser El Shouf Cedar Forest and the eastern side of the mountain in West Bekaa Valley
- Niha Fortess
- Ammiq wetland

A field guide specialized in birds will take you on a tour. Bring a pair of binoculars and camera to catch memorable scenes.

Shouf Cedar Reserve, 05 350150/250
shoufcedar.org,  *Shouf Cedar Reserve*

SPNL, 01 343740
spnl.org,  *Spnlorg*


WHERE TO SLEEP

Stay overnight in one of the atmospheric rooms of Arc En Ciel’s Beit el Hana, a beautifully refurbished traditional building or stay in the neighboring St. Michel hostel, both in the village of Maaser El Shouf.

05 350451/2, auberge-arcenciel.org

WHERE TO EAT

Eat a big spread of Lebanese cuisine at Shallalat Barouk Restaurant

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10 things to do in the West Bekaa

With stunning fertile lands that stretch as far as the eye can see the West Bekaa is a great destination that offers everything from an important natural reserve to ancient villages. **Petra Chedid**, an active member of the Food Heritage Foundation and a local guide in the West Bekaa on the USAID funded food tourism project Food Trail shares ten must visits in the region

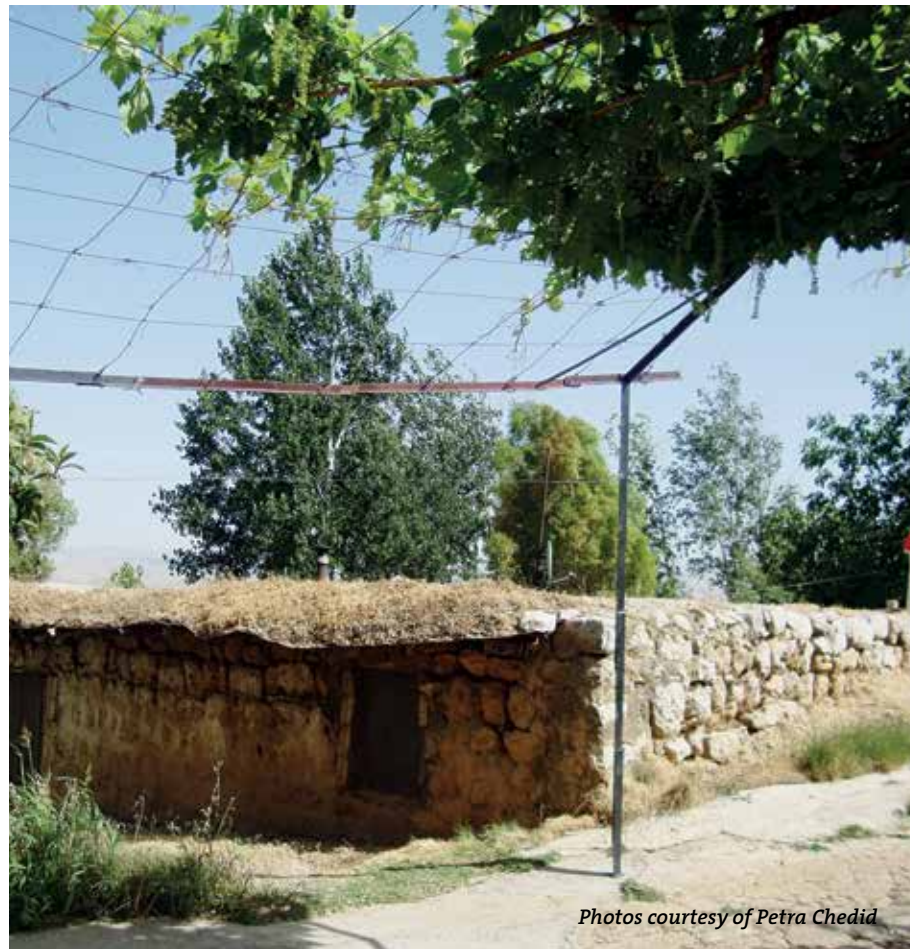


1 Ammiq

The village of Ammiq is home to the **Ammiq Wetland Natural Reserve** (03 330413), a destination for bird watching, and an important spot for migrating birds in the Bekaa Valley. Not far from the reserve, hidden within the mountainous part of Ammiq, lies the ancient shrine of **Lady Shaawane**. The story goes that she disguised herself as a boy and ran away with her father, the King, to escape a life of luxury and dedicate herself to prayer. After facing many problems in her life, she was exiled to the village of Ammiq where she later died and her grave was turned into a shrine. Managed by the Druze community, Sheikh A'aram will happily receive visitors and tell them the legend in detail. While in the area, enjoy the splendor of the surrounding nature with a picnic lunch or stop by **Tawlet Ammiq** (03 004481) to eat traditional dishes from the local region, while supporting small farmers and producers.

2 The village of Deir Tahnich

Deir Tahnich was originally composed of only seven mud houses and was the first village to be populated in the Bekaa area. This small village and its geographical lands allowed its residents to raise goats and other grazing animals. Take a walk between the village houses, chat to local villagers and visit the recently renovated ancient church to soak up the atmosphere. The high season for visitors is between 1 and 15 August when the village celebrates the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. To visit the church contact Hiyam Farhat (03 258678).



Photos courtesy of Petra Chedid

3 Sultan Yaacoub Mansour Shrine

Sultan Yaacoub is the highest village in the West Bekaa. It is thought that Sultan Yaacoub, originally from Morocco, came to Lebanon with the aim of establishing contacts and buying merchandise to trade in Morocco. His reign was distinguished by an architectural boom and prosperity. He was mesmerized by the beauty of the village and decided to build his tomb on the highest rock in the village. The village took his name and his shrine has become a touristic site.



4 The village of Saghbine

Though just a small village, **Saghbine** has **seven churches**, most of which are open to the public. In 1809, Patriarch Youhanna El Helou is said to have celebrated mass at the old St. Georges Church and the church of Saydit El Kherbeneh later opened in 1828. Saghbine has two churches dedicated to St. Georges and four dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the final church is dedicated to St. Therese. Established in 1996, the 3-star Hotel Masherif Saghbine, has

become a popular overnight stop in the area. **Masherif Saghbine** (08 671200) welcomes guests all year round. The hotel's restaurant specializes in freekeh, with chicken and meat. Also in Saghbine is **Ets. Elias Zaidan** (08 670166), a family dairy production business that was one of the first in the West Bekaa to be certified by the Ministry of Health. Here you can purchase fresh, local dairy produce including labneh, cheese, yogurt and shanklish.



Photo courtesy of Gaby Nehme

5 Aytanit village

Overlooking the vast man-made **Qaraoun Lake**, created in 1959 on the Litani River, the village of **Aytanit** is renowned for the historic **St Georges Church**, where Patriarch Kyrilos Kyrilos was buried in 1796. The church was recently renovated and its ancient arches restored. Visit the village during the olive season, from mid September until mid December, and pass by **Bchara Shaqar's Olive Mill** (03 322478). Here you can observe both old and new olive pressing techniques, taste and buy freshly pressed extra virgin olive oil, olive oil soap and olive charcoal, made from the residues of the olives and known to generate high heat. You can also take out one of the boats in the lake and eat at one of the many restaurants established along its shore.





6 Chateau Kefraya

Located in the middle of the West Bekaa, Kefraya is renowned for its vineyards producing red, white and rose wine.

Chateau Kefraya (08 645333/444) is the second biggest winery in the Bekaa after Ksara. While visiting the winery, take in the area's breathtaking landscape and stop by the Dahr-el-Moghr site of Roman graves dating back to the 3rd Century. End the visit with an afternoon of wine tasting at Kefraya, followed by a meal at the winery's restaurant, which offers exquisite French dishes.

7 Chateau Qanafar

Though not a regular stop on the Bekaa Valley wine route, **Chateau Qanafar's** tavern (*Qaissar Karam 71 131964, Georges Naim 71 725708*), which lies in the hills of Kherbet Qanafar Mountain overlooking the village, is worth a visit. The winery's owners send out off-road cars to pick up visitors because of the challenging terrain leading to the winery. It has produced white and red wine since 2010, for which it won two Gold Awards from the New York Club for Wine.



8 Ain Zebde B&B and Table D'Hote

In the tiny village of **Ain Zebde**, perched on a small hill at the foot of Mount Barouk, lies a homey B&B where you can enjoy an authentic food experience. Host Noha Abou Rached (*08 670572*) is famous for her grilled potato *kebbeh* stuffed with *labneh* and *kawarma*. She also prepares the dish *mansoufeh*, made from bulgur wheat, pumpkin, caramelized onions and sour grape juice. These two recipes are the trademark of Ain Zebde village. If you spend a night at the B&B, Abou Rached will serve a Lebanese breakfast, consisting of *kishik* soup, goat *labneh* and many more delicious dishes.





9 Mouneh, Kherbet Qanafar

Lina Saade Haddad (08 645303) is the host of **Lina Saade Haddad Table d'Hôte**, part of the Food Trail, established by the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU) at the American University of Beirut in collaboration with the Food Heritage Foundation and the Shouf Biosphere Reserve in the framework of the Lebanon Industry Value Chain (LIVCD) project. Lina specializes in *mouneh* making (*kishik*, tomato paste, pumpkin jam, mulberry juice), as well as milk cookies. The fruits and vegetables she uses are from her orchard and fresh milk comes from her family farm. Also in Kherbet Qanafar is **Raymonda Nehmeh Table d'Hôte** (03 480035) which is part of the Food Trail project, where you can buy homemade arak and wine.

10 Trek: the West Bekaa's Ein Zebde to the Shouf's Mresti

This four-to-six hour **Ein Zebde to Mresti Trekking Trail**, linking the village of Ein Zebde at the foothill of Mount Barouk and the village of Mresti in Higher Shouf, was recently rehabilitated and several members of the Youth Association of Ein Zebde were trained as local guides. Historically, inhabitants of both villages used this foot trail to attend festivities and support each other in moments of grief. To take a guide along the trail contact Shouf Cedar Biosphere Reserve at (05 350150).



GO WITH A GUIDE

- Petra Chedid 71 676267
- Yara Abou Mounsef 76 059050
- Bachir Abou Mounsef 03 125144
- Faisal Halabi 03 330413



The women of Deir Al Ahmar

In a northeast Bekaa village, the Women's Association of Deir Al Ahmar has redefined the role of its women. The founder, Dunia El Khoury, shares their vision for a sustainable future



Dunia El Khoury (third from the right) in the village of Deir Al Ahmar

Originally from Ghadir, Dunia El Khoury's adopted village of Deir Al Ahmar and its women have become her life's passion. She set up the Women's Association of Deir Al Ahmar (W.A.D.A.) in 1991, a non-profit dedicated to sustainable development and empowering women, which gained legal status in 1994. The volunteer-led initiative, which counts 50 women among its members, is a powerful example of how sustainable development can come from within a community and in 2002 it was recognized for its achievements with the Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment.

"My husband is from Deir Al Ahmar. I got married there. I suggested to him that we should do something to support the local community. It's a very rich area but we don't really know about its resources," El Khoury says. "This is why I founded the organization. It's a long process but it's very well implemented as the project is really coming from the local community."

Deir Al Ahmar has important historical significance, located on the Roman road connecting Baalbek to Byblos. It stands at the crossroads between Phoenician,

Roman and Greek heritage and the ruins of those civilizations can still be seen. Impressive natural landscapes and mountains surround Deir Al Ahmar. Its many water springs and rich fertile lands have created a region abundant in biodiversity. W.A.D.A.'s missions are many, all with an ecotourism slant and a focus on self-sustainability and protecting the village's natural, cultural and historical heritage. The association aims to improve the life of the local community, involve women in development, train disempowered groups such as women, youth and farmers and develop agro, rural, religious and eco tourism.

Deir Al Ahmar's W.A.D.A. center has acted as an incubator for the community since it opened. It's the headquarters for the association and the site of its many activities. Surrounded by vast gardens, it houses an industrial-sized kitchen where local women prepare regional dishes with local produce such as *maakroun bi toum*, *kaak bil halib*, *khobeyz'e borghol*, *freekeh* and *kebbeh hazineh*. They provide a catering service and share the culinary heritage of the area by preparing mounneh in the production center to be sold around the country. Regional crafts are also made in the center and it's become an educational hub for locals.

“ It's our village. We have to fight to improve the environment ”

"We wanted to enhance the role of women and improve the living environment in the rural areas in Deir Al Ahmar," El Khoury says. "It's our village. We have to fight to improve the environment because it's a rural area, and there are lots of problems like migration. It's our role to contribute to sustainable development."

W.A.D.A. has also put a structure in place to activate and improve rural and ecotourism to attract tourists, provide income for local families and kick start the local economy. They work with local farmers to promote organic farming and support two organic wineries, Barka Wine and La Couvent Rouge. There is a network of 30 guesthouses, with locals encouraged to renovate their homes and open them to visitors. W.A.D.A. has launched various

environmental awareness campaigns and worked with local schools on paper recycling. The association has recently launched a new small grants project Zaater and Zayzafoon, which culminates in a weekend festival in May. The project promotes the conservation of *zaatar* (wild thyme) and *zayzafoon*, a flowering tree, both native to the region but in decline. “We want the local community to replant these trees because there are only a few left. Through the annual festival our objective is to conserve these two species which are at risk,” El Khoury says.

“There are economic opportunities in rural tourism; it’s very important for us. Through this we can support the local community and have direct income,”

El Khoury says. Though the country’s current political instability has posed a challenge in bringing tourists into the village, El Khoury is confident that they now have the right structure in place for a sustainable future. “We’re convinced it’s an important sector for us.”

It’s W.A.D.A.’s “bottom-up” approach to development, directly involving the locals, that’s clearly the key to its success. Local women have been given a voice and now have an active role in the village’s development. “Before women had no role, now they are very strong. Now there is a big change in the community. Women are fighting to have a role in decision-making and as a result the opinion of men towards them has changed.”



WHERE TO SLEEP

W.A.D.A. has a 30-strong network of local guesthouses in Deir Al Ahmar. Stay in a traditional house with local villagers for the authentic experience.

WHERE TO EAT

Eat in WADA Center where women from the local community prepare traditional food or prepare your own meal while learning from the masters with a preparation course in culinary tradition food or *mouneh*.

WHAT TO SEE

Take a hike from W.A.D.A. center to the ruins of Saydet El Borj built on a Roman temple and the old village. Visit Our Lady of Bechwat and the biggest rosary in the world with a hike from Bechwat finishing at local vineyards. Visit one of the 20 farms linked to W.A.D.A., producing dairy products, organic fruits and vegetables and experience rural life from fruit picking to making cheese, rose water or arak.

The colorful Zaatar and Zayzafoon festival takes place in the village between 1-3 May, 2015.

W.A.D.A. organizes all visits with a local guide.

W.A.D.A.

Harf El Deir Street, Deir Al Ahmar, Bekaa
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wadaguesthouse@gmail.com



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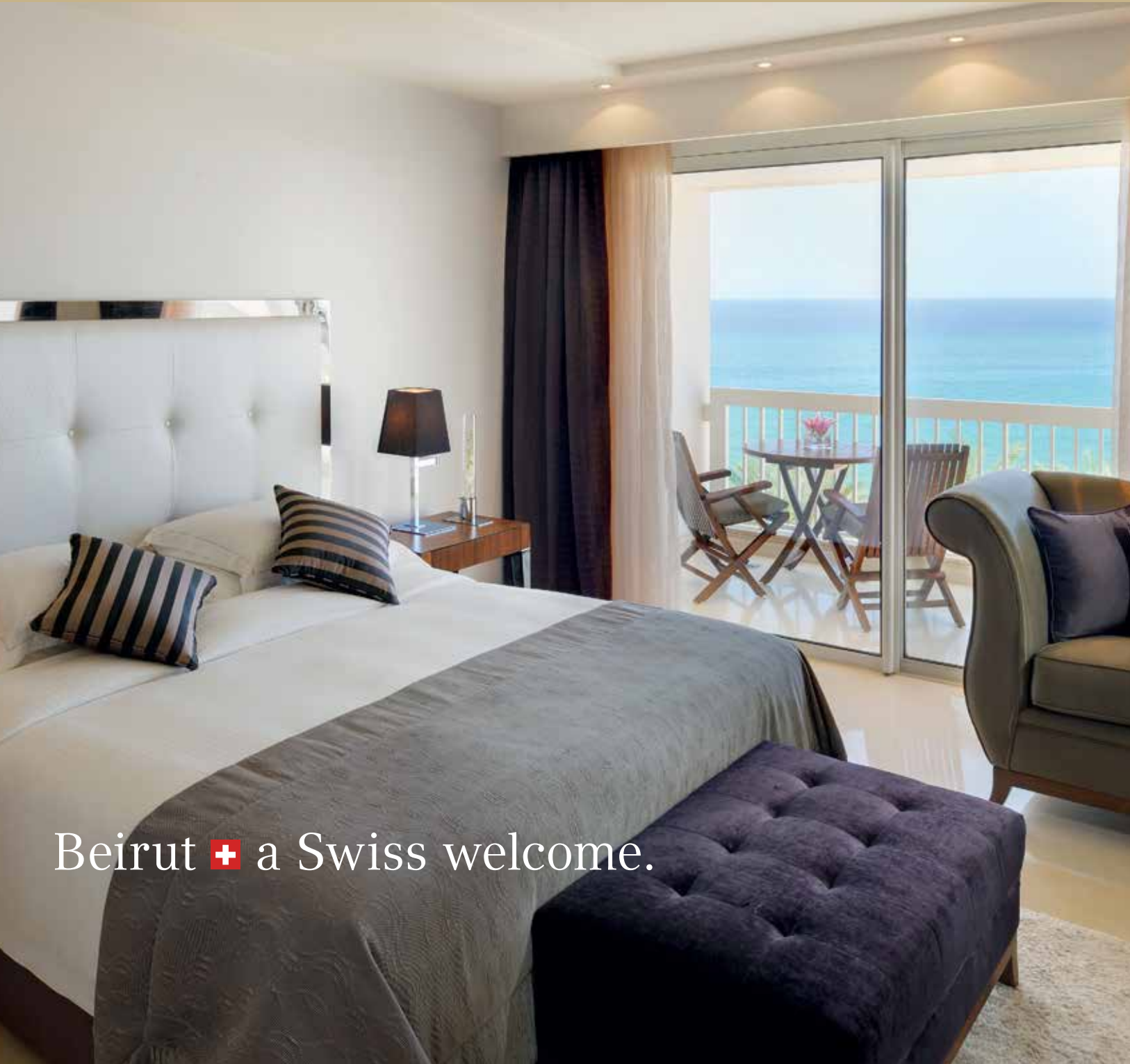
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Whispering trees *in a northern Lebanese village*

Biodiversity conservationist **Elsa Sattout** reflects on the emotional connection we can have to a place through the village of Aito



Photos courtesy of Elsa Sattout

A daylong hike through heavenly views can take you far away, through memories of time and history. A journey through nature invites you to dwell on the historical richness of a country and the religious icons imprinted on its landscapes. In fact, we rarely realize the value in the hidden beauty of places until we long for spaces remembered from childhood and hold onto the memories of trees whispering about their magic.

“To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places,” and it is well known that “significant places provide stability and security. They act as anchors,” and a “symbolic life line,” and become “fields of care,” say Shampa Mazumdar and Sanjoy Mazumdar

in “Religion and place attachment: A study of sacred places” (*Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 2004).

For many, the north Lebanon village Aito is one of these “significant places,” that brings a deep attachment. Throughout history, the whispers of trees echoing in the ears of solo hikers have seemed somehow engraved in the mosaic patches of the landscapes that reflects the past uses of land resources and social dynamics in this village.

Lying on four mountains located at 900 and 1,300m altitude, nature lovers and hikers will be enchanted by the panoramic view from Aito which overlooks the hills of El Qarn, El Alama, Dnit, and Kanissa. Here it’s easy to reflect

“ For many, the north Lebanon village Aito brings a deep attachment ”

on the connection we have to nature and our attachment to places. Though the meaning of the village’s name in Syriac is “Summer Resort,” the dense silent pine and oak forests are a big pull during all seasons. The sleepy village of no more than 200 houses is a site of pilgrimage (St Rafqa) and has more than four ancient churches dating back to the early 18th Century. Even with the sounds of cracking rocks while overcoming frosty winters on the hills and pinecones opening in the

warm days of early spring, silence is the loudest language in Aito.

During a silent walk, oak trees whisper that cedar trees once thrived among them giving a famous reputation to the community in ancient times, as revealed by the hieroglyphic inscription that can be found in the Beirut National Museum. It was during the 2nd Century BC that Pharaoh Pepi II requested “trees from the woods of the God Aito,” from one of the kings of Byblos. The resin was extracted and used by Egyptians for embalment.

We sometimes wonder if it is nostalgia or the orderliness we create in our minds

“ **During a silent walk, oak trees whisper that cedar trees once thrived among them** ”

for familiar places that shapes our identity and connects us to a place. Or is it the magic that transforms our hearts through silent walks and talks. I used to believe that once we can enjoy nature's beauty and leave it behind us for the next highland trek, without holding any of its traces, then we would be heading towards a better state of mind. In Aito village, a highland trek takes you on a tour through pine forests, or traversing agricultural terraces and orchards, or on the road leading to old convents dating back to the early 18th Century that reveal that the Phoenician worshiped this space in time.

Is it because Aito encompasses these significant places that “are invested with deep emotional meaning, so much so that collective sentiments strongly resist any attempt to alter the setting” (*Firey in Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1945/1961*) that keeps villagers, summer dwellers and visitors attached to this place?

During dusk in Aito, while you run to embrace the sun before it dips into the valley, you may forget that the intense Milky Way will replace a shiny blue sky. It's the perfect reminder that we are just eternal travellers in this tiny world.



HOW TO GET THERE

From Beirut take the highway towards Tripoli, passing Chekka, Koura, Kosba, Torza, Ser'el, Ishaya, Ijbe'e and down to Aito. If you choose to pass through Tripoli, pass Abou Samra, St Gilles Castle, Nahr Abou Ali, Mejdlaya, Zghorta, Sebe'l and Aito. The village is located 113 km from Beirut; 27 km from Tripoli.

WHERE TO SLEEP

Spend a tranquil night in the Convent of St Simeon Al Amoudi (06 575401).

WHERE TO EAT

Close by to Aito is Ehdn the perfect lunch stop after a hike around Aito, known for its kibbeh. Al Ferdos Restaurant (06 560605) has a great reputation for food and the mountain views to match.

WHAT TO SEE

Religious sites of interest include the Church of the Virgin Mary of Aito, Saint Simeon Al Amoudi dating back to 1808, St Simeon El Sheikh dating back to 1909 and also St Rafqa, St Chalita in Dnit, St Bakhos and Peter. The old ruins of Aito are also unmissable, including an old tower and temple close to St Simeon El AMoudi and the sarcophagus on the road leading to El Qarn.





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Oyoun Orghosh

Photo courtesy of Roula Koussaifi

NEW WAVE



Ask any Lebanese surfer about riding the waves and they'll tell you it's like nothing else in the world. Quietly building in popularity over the last few decades, Lebanese surf culture now has firm roots up and down the country's coastline

Malek Daou has been surfing since 1994. He founded Batroun Water Sports ([f Batroun Water Sports](#)) in 2006 to follow his passion for riding the waves, and has been coaching aspiring surfers since, along the northern shores of his hometown of Batroun. Though surfing has been around Lebanon since the '60s, back then there were just a handful of guys who surfed in Jiyeh, but over the past decade, surf culture has really picked up. And for such a small country Lebanon has a varied coastal landscape, offering surfers diverse surf spots and waves.

According to Ali Elamine, who founded Surf Lebanon ([surfinglebanon.com](#)) in 2012 in Jiyeh and is also an International Surfing Association (ISA) certified instructor, it's a great factor for surfers looking for new waves to conquer. Each spot along the country's coastline has its day when the conditions for surfing and the waves come together harmoniously. "The most consistent spot is Mustafa's A Frame in Jiyeh and it can hold some size. [Surfing spots] Tos and Nate Dawg's Reef are also fun and can dish out beatings when they turn on," Elamine says.

An architect by trade, another Batroun-native, Roger Ragi, first started surfing in 1994, almost by experimentation. "I was windsurfing in Batroun when suddenly the wind dropped, but the waves were still too big to stop the session. I removed the sail from my funboard [a windsurfing board for wave style] and went back in," he says. "I was trying to catch the waves by paddling like I remembered in the movies. I ended up sliding, laying on the board, but nevertheless, I can say I had the feeling of the surf." Back when he first started there weren't many surfers



Photos courtesy of Samer Abi Saab



“Surfing offers lessons in the school of life... It has been inspiring”

around, so he did his research, from how to paddle for a wave to learning the best way to take off. Over the years he's seen a thriving surfing community evolve in Lebanon. "I noticed that I wasn't the only surfer in town. There were a few from the south, and some who come from abroad. The surfing community increased and we can now count around 200 surfers who share Lebanon's waves."

Lebanon offers surfing all year round, though the best months to catch the surf are during the winter season, from November until March. Anyone can learn, as long as you are confident enough to swim in the sea and deal with the waves. And, the feeling is hard to match, as Daou attests, "the feeling of being in nature, in the water, it's so peaceful, like meditation."

Maybe the best thing about this sport is the constant challenges it can offer. "It's not like any other sport. You have to paddle out against the wave then wait for the right one and catch it," says Elamine. "Once you catch it you feel so good because you had to work hard for it. The reward outweighs all the work." For Ragi, surfing teaches valuable skills and offers an escape from day-to-day life. "Surfing offers lessons in the school of life. It teaches you how to be patient, achieve goals, break the limits, stand up after falling and to never give up because there is always another wave," he says. "It has been so inspiring, so out-of-the-box. It's a disconnection."

Sabina Llewellyn-Davies

WHERE TO GO

- Mostafa's A Frame, Jiyeh
- Public Beach, Byblos
- Colonel Beach, Batroun
- Sandy Beach, Chekka

WHO TO GO WITH

- Samer Abi Saab 70 090048
- Malek Daou 03 156402
- Ahmad Farhat 76 900322
- Mostafa Hajj 71 900322

WHERE TO BUY

Batroun Water Sports
03 156402, batrounwatersports.com
Batroun Main Road, Batroun

Surf Lebanon
71 900322, 76 900322
f SurfLebanon1
El Hajj Street, Jiyeh

WHERE TO SLEEP

Stay in B&B, Tafla (71 749448, f Taflalinn, Smar Jbeil, Batroun) for a relaxing mountain break on the edge of Batroun or in the charming boutique B&B with sea views Beit Al Batroun (03 270049, beitalbatroun.com, f Beit-al-Batroun).

Stay in Jiyeh's Golden Tulip Hotel (07 996736, goldentulipjiyehmarina.com) for a luxurious sleep right next to the sea.

WHERE TO EAT

Batroun is the place to eat seafood from well-known lunch stop **La Marée** (06 742760, Marselino Street Batroun) for octopus, fish or calamari wraps to **Chez Maguy** (03 439147, Makaad El Mir Street, Batroun), a down-to-earth seafood restaurant that keeps things simple with fresh fish and mezze.

For cheap eats in Jiyeh grab a sandwich at **Jonas Beach** (03 688011), the oldest beach on the strip, or enjoy a full Lebanese spread under their leafy terrace.



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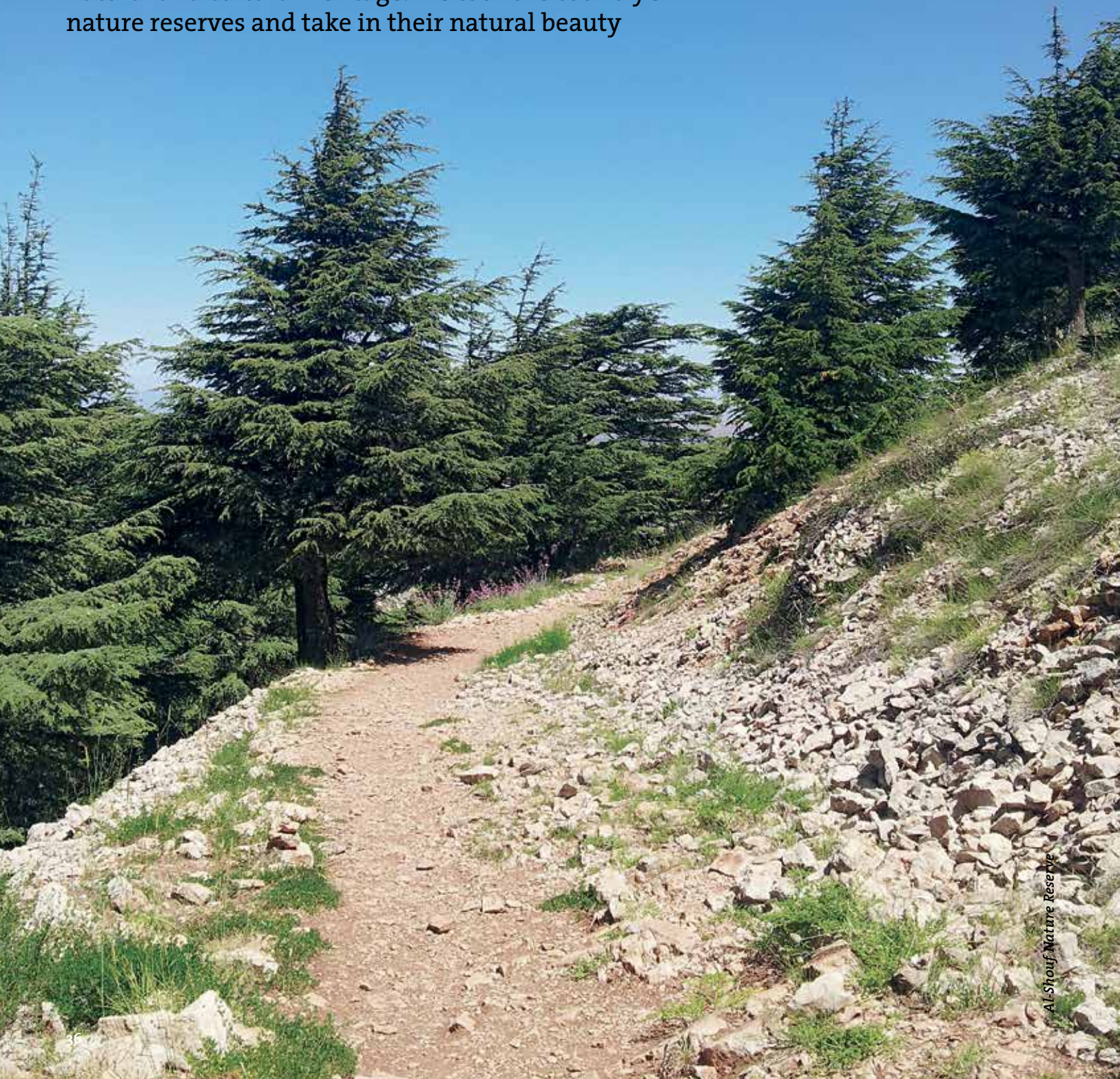
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Escape to nature

Featuring diverse landscapes from snow-topped mountains to a vibrant coastline, Lebanon has a rich natural and cultural heritage. We tour the country's nature reserves and take in their natural beauty





Tannourine Nature Reserve, Photos courtesy of Roula Koussaifi

Extensive forests used to thrive across Mount Lebanon in ancient times. The country was a rich natural paradise, plentiful in biodiversity and known for its thick cedar forests and blossoming countryside. Though the magnitude of these forests has noticeably decreased over hundreds of years of deforestation, as issues of conservation and reforestation come into center play there has been a nation-wide push to preserve the natural landscapes that remain.

The country's commitment to the protection of its natural environment is clear. In the last 20 years 15 nature reserves have been classified, with Dounieh Nature Reserve currently under discussion in Parliament, along with marine reserves Ras El Cheqaa and Naqoura. From protecting the natural landscape and rare species to encouraging a sustainable eco-approach to tourism and boosting the local economy, the benefits of classifying nature reserves are many. "If the area is rich in biodiversity and includes endangered, rare and endemic species that need protection, the main aim of declaring it as a nature reserve is to conserve these species and their habitats," says Lara Samaha, Head of Department of Ecosystems at the Ministry of Environment.

Here are some of Lebanon's stunning nature reserves awaiting discovery:

The Palm Islands

The Palm Islands, which lay off the coast of Tripoli, was one of the first to be classified back in 1992. Take a boat from the city's Mina between July-September and spend a day exploring this isolated wilderness. The historical remains of an old Crusader's church are still visible, along with a freshwater well from the same period. The island still thrives with wildlife from migratory birds, to turtles that come to its shores to lay their eggs.



Photo courtesy of Elsa Sattout

Horsh Ehden

Also recognized as a reserve in 1992, Horsh Ehden still features part of the forest that made up the Cedars. With a unique climate, Horsh Ehden is the place to see an abundance of plants, including many rare and endemic species, also hosting a forest of juniper, fir and wild apple trees. With a stunning landscape of valleys and gorges, punctuated by the color of flowers, Horsh Ehden is a hiker's paradise.



Tyre Coast

With some of the best preserved sandy beaches in Lebanon, wetlands that have been recognized as a site of "international importance" and Phoenician freshwater



Tyre Coast Nature Reserve



The Palm Islands Nature Reserve



Ammiq



West Bekaa

wells, Tyre is home to marsh birds, and a multitude of plants. It's also the nesting site for endangered Loggerhead and Green Sea Turtles. Take a snorkel and explore Tyre's underwater life or visit the Orange House Project (03 383080 **f** *TheOrangeHouseProject*), run by Mona Khalil, dedicated to turtle conservation, which also doubles as a guesthouse.

Al-Shouf Cedar

The largest natural cedar reserve in Lebanon, Al-Shouf Cedar, stretches from Dahr Al-Baidar in the north to Niha Mountain in the south, covering five percent of Lebanon's land and boasting 25 percent of the country's remaining cedar forests. In 2005 UNESCO classified it as

a biosphere reserve, including Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve, Ammiq Wetland and the surrounding 24 villages. A popular hiking spot, Al-Shouf Cedar is blanketed with oak and juniper forests and home to 520 plant species, 250 bird species and 31 reptile and amphibian species.

Bantael

A village in the heights of the Jord, Bantael Nature Reserve has a rich covering of oak and pine trees through which foxes wander and butterflies flourish. The local community came together in the '80s pioneering conservation, dedicating parts of their communal lands to the nation to be protected as a nature reserve.

VISIT THE RESERVES

Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve

05 350250/150, *shoufcedar.org*; Park House, Maaser Al Shouf, Village Square

Tyre Coast Nature Reserve

07 351341, 03 287211; Hajo Building, 1st Floor, Tyre

Horsh Ehden Nature Reserve

70, 601601, *horshehden.org*

Tannourine Nature Reserve

arztannourine.org; Information center, located at major entrance to the reserve; Apr- Nov; 8am-6pm

Bantael Nature Reserve

09 738330, *bantaelreserve.org*; Info center, located at the Bantael village entrance in the reserve; All year, 8am-5pm

For more info on Lebanon's 15 nature reserves visit: *moe.gov.lb*

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Wild Edible Plants

The Food Heritage Foundation's **Zeinab Jeambey** meets rural women around the country continuing the tradition of collecting and cooking Wild Edible Plants



The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines wild plants as “those that grow spontaneously in self-maintaining populations in natural or semi-natural ecosystems and can exist independently of direct human action.” Though not part of urban diets, many wild plants are edible and local communities consumed them for their health and medicinal qualities long before their nutritious, protective and therapeutic effects were proven by science. Several of these often-called famine foods proved to be important sources of high

quality protein, essential amino acids and minerals. In low-socioeconomic communities, wild edible plants contribute to food security and nutrition.

In Lebanon, Wild Edible Plants (WEP) are regarded as valuable food within rural areas. Known as *sliq* or *sliqa* in Arabic, traditional knowledge about these plants is often passed down through generations by word of mouth, with women being the main beholders of this wealth. Come spring, you can spot rural women in orchards and highlands

collecting what Mother Nature has in store for them. But WEP are more than just food. They reflect the pride of rural residents in their land and hold the wisdom of their ancestors. Eaten raw, boiled or cooked, a whole culinary tradition has developed around them, all the while being used for their medicinal benefits, treating health problems ranging from skin irritations to anemia (*Zeinab Jeambey Masters' thesis "The Perceived Health and Medicinal Knowledge of 6 Species of Wild Edible Plants in Northern Lebanon"*).

MY WISDOM, MY PLANT: AN ODE TO THE WOMEN OF RURAL LEBANON

You can still find people knowledgeable in WEP in rural Lebanon. Nonetheless, this knowledge is dwindling because of the lack of interest among younger generations and their detachment from nature. Jeambey meets some of the villagers still retaining this tradition.

It's a call for everyone to document knowledge about WEP in order to preserve this centenary heritage.



KHADIJEH CHAHINE AND HINDBEH (CHICORY)

Khadijeh Chahine, responsible for Al Ahd Co-op in Buwayda, Hermel, has a wealth of knowledge on local seeds and is a fervent activist for the sustainable collection of WEP. Her co-op specializes in selling local crops such as *jurdi* chickpeas and *salamouni* bulgur and flour. For orders: 71 579547

WISDOM THROUGH CHICORY

Health and medicinal tips: Chicory treats anemia and fights constipation.

Cooking tips: Eat it raw with a few olives or in a salad with green onions, pomegranate molasses and olive oil. Another alternative is to stir-fry with lots of onions and eat it with a squeeze of lemon.



SURAYA AND SUMAYA KAAKOUR AND SHUMAR (FENNEL)

These adorable 75-year-old twin sisters from Baassir in Iqlim Al Kharroub made sure everyone knew that they were on a mission to enrich our research study. As I accompanied them and thanked them for their generosity, Sumaya told me “take pictures of us! This way, when we are gone you will remember the two old ladies from Baassir who told you how important Wild Edible Plants are.” Info FHF: 71 731437

WISDOM THROUGH FENNEL

Health and medicinal tips: Fennel seed infusion alleviates bloating and stomach aches.

Cooking tips: Eat it boiled, strained and marinated with lemon juice, garlic and olive oil. Chop it with mint, parsley and onions and mix it with eggs and flour before frying into an omelet.



NABILA AZZAM AND KHEBBAYZEH (MALLOW)

Nabila Azzam, a passionate cook from Ein Zebde in West Bekaa, inherited her extensive knowledge about plants from her mother. Although WEP are abundant from February until the end of April, Azzam collects a variety all year round. She is a host on “darb el karam” – food heritage trail – a USAID-funded food tourism project established by the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit at AUB, the Food Heritage Foundation (FHF) and the Shouf Cedar Biosphere Reserve, within the framework of the Lebanon Industry Value Chain Development (LIVCD) program. Join Azzam on a touristic activity collecting WEP and enjoy her WEP turnovers, baked on *Saj*. For activities on “darb el karam,” contact FHF: 71 731437

WISDOM THROUGH MALLOW

Health and medicinal tips: Mallow is known for its anti-inflammatory properties.

Cooking tips: Stir-fry it in olive oil with onions, *cilantro* and chickpeas. Eat it with bread and a squeeze of lemon juice.

MAY KANAAN AND QORS AANEH (ERYNGO)

Known as the “Queen of Saj” in her village Mrosti in the Shouf Mountains, May Kanaan has the energy of a bumblebee.



Owner of a mini-market, Kanaan has been baking *Saj* bread for over 20 years. In spring, Kanaan roams the highlands and collects wild oregano to make and sell her *zaatar* mix. She also gathers other edible plants to use as fillings for her turnovers and *mana'ish*. Full of energy and life, she is a main host on “darb el karam” – food heritage trail, and will make a joyful guide to follow on a day in the wild. For orders: 05 331036

WISDOM THROUGH ERYNGO

Health and medicinal tips: Eryngo is a potent anti-poisonous plant. It was often used to counteract the effect of snake and scorpion venom.

Cooking tips: Make an *eryngo tabboule* by substituting parsley for *eryngo* or simply pickle it.

food-heritage.org

f [foodheritage](https://www.facebook.com/foodheritage)

“ They reflect the pride of rural residents in their land and hold the wisdom of their ancestors ”



Oregano



Photos courtesy of Food Heritage Foundation



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Beirut Hippodrome
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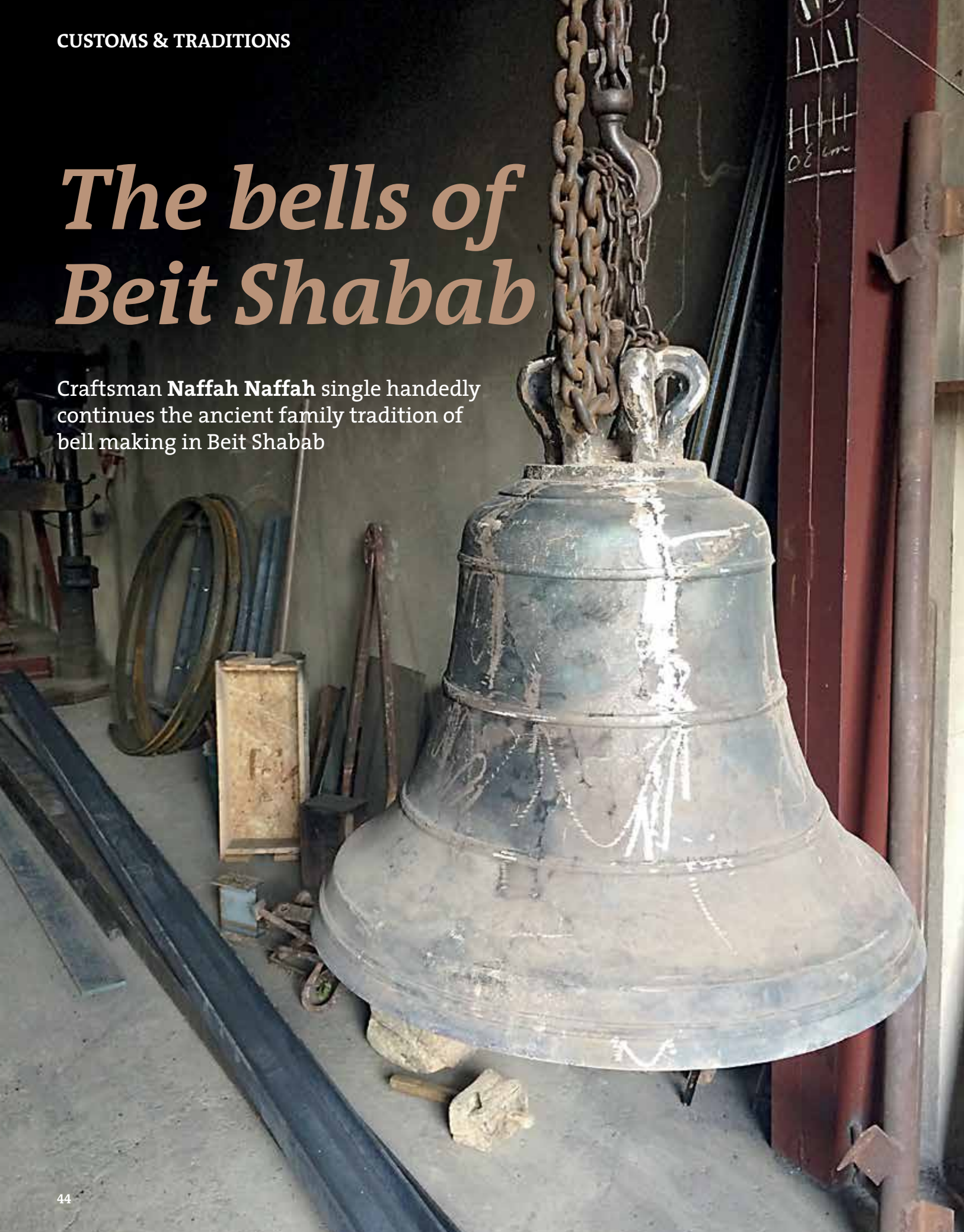


SOCIALIZE WITH US



The bells of Beit Shabab

Craftsman **Naffah Naffah** single handedly continues the ancient family tradition of bell making in Beit Shabab



On a countryside road that winds through stunning landscapes in the Metn region, lies Beit Shabab, a typically Lebanese mountainside village with a history deeply intertwined with bell making. It's Lebanon's oldest bell foundry where craftsmen from the village have long designed and crafted bells. Down an isolated tree-lined road, hides the workshop of Naffah Naffah, whose family has been making bells for over 300 years, he is continuing this ancient tradition into the modern age.

For Naffah, who learnt the trade from his father and has been making bells for the past 27 years, the craft is his life's passion and he's also aware of the long family heritage that he's continuing. With his brother following the path of priesthood, Naffah is now the only remaining family member to still work in the same workshop used by the family for generations. Even his family name is linked to the bell-making heritage of his distant relative. "Russians came to Beit Shabab at the beginning of 1700 when it was a center for industry, there were lots of craftsmen here," Naffah says inside his vast workshop where several bell casts lay setting, and tables are lined with tools for finishing metal work. "A local man, Youssef Gabriel, worked as an apprentice in bell-making for the Russians. When he made his first bell they gave him the name Naffah as he had "done well" for the community, then the name continued through the family." The story of the Naffah family history is

part of Lebanon's heritage, documented in the archives of the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik.

The Naffah family are renowned for their skills as bell craftsmen and Beit Shabab has become the regional center for the trade, with Naffah-made bells ending up in churches all across the country, and exported to Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and Palestine.

“ I was very happy to continue the family tradition ”

The art of bell making is a long and delicate process and even though Naffah now runs the family business solo he still produces around 30-35 per year, for which there is plenty of demand. He works long days, a strict routine from 5am-5pm every day, only stopping to collect his kids from the nearby school. When a priest orders a church bell, Naffah finds out the size of the village and the area they want the sound of the bells to reach, from that he knows the size and weight of the bell needed. Naffah creates four or five molds at the same time from clay, which take 40 days to make and set. Afterwards a mixture of bronze, copper and tin is melted at 1000 degrees Celsius and poured into

the mold. Once set the mold is broken from the inside and out and the finishing touches are made to the bell.

Over the years Naffah has worked within the field he has noticed it evolve. "The industry was primitive before. The bell was set in a very simple oven made from wood, now we have a brick oven. My relatives used to only make molds in the summer so they would dry under the sun, now we can make them all year around."

The Naffah family home above the workshop is starkly furnished; simple but comforting with a log fire stove, like the humble living quarters of a monk. His two kids eat from a freshly prepared broth, cooked in a huge pan on the stove. "I was very happy to continue the family tradition," Naffah says. "I don't work because I have to, I work because I love it." He hopes that when his kids grow older one of them will choose to continue the family tradition and learn from him as he learned from his relatives. Then the long bell making tradition of Beit Shabab will continue.

WHAT TO SEE

Beit Shabab, known for its typically Lebanese heritage houses and old grand mansions, is a picturesque village to wander around and soak up the atmosphere. For such a small village, Beit Shabab has 15 old churches, perhaps a result of its rich bell-making history. The oldest is Our Lady of the Forest, built in 1761.

For a visit to the historic bell foundry of Beit Shabab call Naffah Naffah (03 575632).



Photos courtesy of Myriam Shuman



WHY IS THE QUESTION

What began as a passion for designer, **Sibylle Tamer Abillama**, has led to the creation of the charming Gemmayzeh-based studio, Atelier S/Z, and a series of handcrafted pieces rooted in Lebanese tradition



The object that launched Sibylle's career, the "Why-U...Y-Me" water pipe, has become her trademark. Although several original pieces have followed including the "Why... Not?" teapot exhibited in Italy and currently displayed at the International Museum of the Applied Arts (MIAO) in Torino, Italy, she is still identified by her waterpipe creation.

Was the water pipe the answer to Generation Y's need for innovation and individualism? Or, was it an exploration of leisure, as related to the individual and society? In fact neither is correct; the answer is surprisingly unexpected. This modern adaptation of the traditional *shisha* was actually the result of decades of conflicting emotions over the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War. Watching the grim events unfold from abroad, her frustration and resentment led to the creation of the "Why-U...Y-Me" – design as catharsis. "I wanted to rise above the ugliness of war," she said. "I needed to continue living, continue creating."

Her training took her from Beirut (Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts) to Paris (Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts) by way of New York (Parsons School of Design). After moving back to Lebanon, Sibylle was encouraged to explore her creativity using what she referred to as the expert hand of the Lebanese artisan. "My pieces are made in Lebanon to encourage Lebanese production, even if it might cost more than manufacturing abroad."

With a fresh take on everyday objects from candlesticks and vases, to breathing new life into second hand items like the clutch cheese board and the tire rim table, Atelier S/Z is the perfect union of modern design and heritage.

How does your Lebanese heritage inspire you?

Before my career in product design, I was inspired to paint the desolate buildings of war in bright yellows and reds, so that I would be able to move on from the sadness. I wanted very much to return to Lebanon and rebuild, the only way I knew how. Objects like the *Mastara* backgammon board and the revisited *rakweh* are a contemporary take on a cherished tradition. With the water pipe, I was trying to create a new language that would help me get through my frustrations – the result was clean lines, sharp right angles and red Plexiglas.

What is your design process?

The ideas are in my head. I have to draw to express myself. Doors open up during the process that lead to other designs. It takes time to create, even when I have several ideas, because I want to be sure of what I'm making. I'm always searching for the best local artisans who can execute my drawings because the finishing is very important to me.

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

There are so many designers and so much variety that we are free to provoke the consumer as we please. One of my favorite pieces is the teapot, "Why... not?", shaped like a shoe. People were shocked at first and un-accepting. I was even called crazy. It was only after the piece became a fixture at MIAO museum in Torino that the public grew to appreciate it. Some designs are still met with hesitation but sentiments are slowly changing.

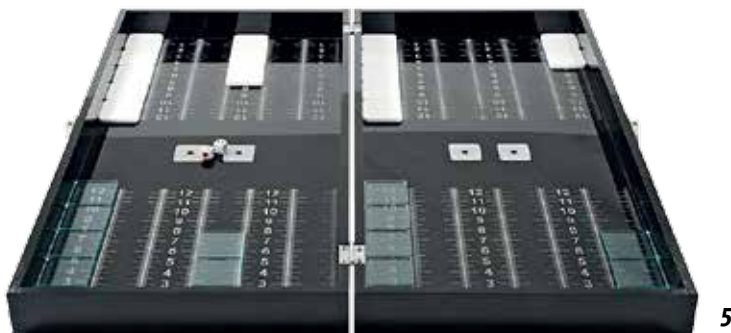
Annie Keropian-Dilsizian

Atelier S/Z

01 587929, 03 727929

atelier-sz.com, f Atelier-SZ

Gemmayzeh, Charles Malek Avenue, Beirut



- 1 Why-U...Y-Me water pipe
- 2 "Why... Not?" teapot and cup
- 3 Iron shot glass holder
- 4 Nickel bowl
- 5 Mastara backgammon board



Below the surface

In under a year the **National Museum of Beirut** plans to reopen their basement, which has laid empty for over 40 years. Anne-Marie Maïla-Afeiche, the museum's curator, talks us through their collection from Roman frescos to 6th Century BC sarcophagi

Perhaps unknowingly at the time, Raymond Weill, a French officer stationed in Lebanon, founded the National Museum of Beirut in 1919 when he exhibited a small collection of ancient objects in a temporary museum. Soon afterwards the idea to raise funds for a national museum were set into motion and building work began in 1930, opening to the public in 1942.

For over three decades, the museum housed an extensive collection of antiquities ranging from prehistory to 19th Century AD. Closing its doors with the outbreak of the civil war in 1975; the long restoration process beginning in 1995.

Behind the National Museum there has always been a resilient team, that despite working against funding difficulties and the scars of a war that damaged both the building and its collection, have shown dedication to the preservation of its ancient antiquities discovered in Lebanon and sharing them with the public. Currently under way is a huge project to reopen the basement of the museum that has remained unused since 1975.

It all started with the restoration of the Tomb of Tyre, a 2nd Century tomb with impressive Roman frescos, first discovered in 1937 by a peasant digging in his field, 3km from Tyre.

When discovered, the frescos were removed and transported to the National Museum but during the war they were badly damaged. In 2010 the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided specialists and funded the conservation, restoration and museum display of the frescos. Opening to the public in 2011, it's now perhaps the museum's most magnificent masterpiece.

The exceptionally intact frescos are now displayed in the National Museum's basement, showing images of eternity in the Hellenistic concept, including a



winged Eros with fruit and flower filled garlands and an image of double doors, typical of the Pompeii style in the 1st Century BC, hinting at the other world laying in wait. It features scenes from Greek mythology from Tantalus in the Infernal Gardens to The Abduction of Proserpina. "Be courageous, no-one is immortal," reads a Greek inscription.

"In 1939 they made the decision to remove the frescos from the tomb and transport them to the National Museum," Anne-Marie Maïla-Afeiche, the museum's curator says, "We've re-composed everything. [Nowadays] we would preserve them in their situation. But who knows what would have happened during the war if they had been left in Tyre."

After the success of the Tomb of Tyre restoration, the Italian Cooperation Office have agreed to fund the entire basement which will comprise of 518 objects and will open in December 2015. It will feature a chronological path of funerary art, representing all periods of Lebanese history. "One part of the objects will be

from the old collection of the museum, masterpieces of the collection. We have things from before the war that people are longing to see again, along with new discoveries," Maïla-Afeiche says.

With the reopening of the basement, large marble 6th to 4th Century BC sarcophagi will be exhibited. The museum's 31-strong collection makes it the largest in the world. There are numerous new discoveries from recent excavations across Beirut, found from new constructions. "They discovered glass items in a tomb in Furn el Hayek. It used to be a Roman necropolis, now it's the site of Fall Towers," Maïla-Afeiche says sardonically. Though the land being built on might be privately owned, anything found underground belongs to the state and once a discovery is made, the Director of General Antiquities sends in a team.

In the '90s speleologists caving in the Qadisha Valley discovered eight naturally-mummified mummies, dating back to the Mamluk period in the 13th Century, along with 24 manuscripts and

objects from daily life from onion skins to ceramics, all which will be put on display along with three mummies. "USEK have just finished restoring the manuscripts. Everyone is helping in the process," Maïla-Afeiche says.

Though many remnants of the city's ancient civilizations that once lived in Lebanon remain underground awaiting discovery, Maïla-Afeiche is realistic. "The thing is not to discover them but how to restore them, preserve them and keep them for the next generation."

GO WITH A GUIDE

To see the Tomb of Tyre before the basement reopens you can go with the guide Lydia Debbas (03 605200) for a private view.

beirutnationalmuseum.com
Tue-Sun, 91m-5pm
Entrance LL5,000, students and
under 18 LL1,000

IN FOCUS

Brutalist Beirut

Discover the capital's modernist treasures through the work of the **Arab Center for Architecture**



Balancing precariously high above the Sassine Square underpass in Achrafieh is an unassuming mid-to-late 20th Century residential tower block. One of the building's apartments is home to the Arab Center for Architecture (ACA), a non-profit organization for the preservation and dissemination of modern Arab-built heritage, which was set up in 2008 by architect George Arbid, alongside photographer Fouad Elkoury, architects Bernard Khoury, Jad Tabet, Hashim Sarkis and Nada Assi, and urban planner Amira Solh.

Open to the public and researchers (by written request), the large space is minimalist in style and remains much the same as when the building was first constructed. The center collects and preserves photographs, drawings, models and notebooks that deal with modern architecture and urbanism, which are evident throughout the center; architecture books line the shelves in each room and framed photographs, renderings and plans of modernist buildings line the walls. In one of the center's rooms are rolls of plans stacked on metal utility shelves. The collection is small but steadily growing. In another room sits a modernist office desk, once belonging to Polish architect Karol Schayer, who designed the now-demolished Hotel Carlton in Raouche, the 1958 Ilyas Murr building in Hamra, better known as the Horseshoe – the name of the café which once sat at its base, and the 1959 Shell building in Beirut. Today the desk is owned by ACA founder George Arbid.

“ACA has three missions,” says Claudine Abdelmassih, the center's project manager. “Firstly, it's about collecting archives on the modern movement in Lebanon and make research of it in the Arab world. Secondly, we want to raise awareness on modern architecture – we just got funding from the EU – and we are offering tours for the public and for students, architects and journalists, with a tour of the Bourj Hammoud area for the public on the cards. The third mission is to advocate saving modernist architecture.” Abdelmassih knows that saving them is not an easy task due to the public's perception of modernism. “The buildings are still perceived as modern, constructed in the near past so don't hold as much value as older buildings,” she adds. “They are also seen as part of colonialism, although Arab

architects chose modernity to express themselves, which in turn was adopted by politics to show [the world] progress.”

Some of the capital's modernist buildings have become well known landmarks such as the Beirut Dome known as “the egg”, an intriguing concrete structure in Downtown Beirut that was initially used as a cinema designed by Philippe Karam in 1965 or the headquarters of the Electricité du Liban (EDL) building in Mar Mikhael designed by Lebanese architect Pierre Neema, a construction which is influenced by the Brazilian movement in modern architecture. Others are less well known, such as the Interdesign building in Clemenceau, designed in 1975 by the late, great Lebanese architect Khalil Khouri and his brother Georges Khouri as a showroom for the family furniture business and the 1950s space-age beach “Chalet Raja Saab” in Ouzai by architect Ferdinand Dagher. Today the chalet is split into four dwellings and difficult to locate and view due to the built-up environment that surrounds it, a teasing challenge to modernist buffs eager to explore and see it.

While Beirut's traditional architectural heritage has been shattered in favor

of shiny new tower blocks, the outcry has been loud with pressure groups such as Save Beirut Heritage, a cultural heritage organization, vocalizing the dangers facing Beirut's ancient sites and traditional buildings. The voice, though, for the more recent-past's brutalist architectural gems is not as loud, but it is there and growing ever louder.

Derek Anthony Issacs

VISITING THE ACA

Arab Center for Architecture

Mrad Building 4th floor
Selim Rustom Baz St., Sassine
Achrafieh
arab-architecture.org
info@arab-architecture.org
Mon – Fri, 9am–2pm

An appointment is required for visits and material consultation, ACA also organize architectural tours around the country.



Photos courtesy of Bernard Khoury

Looking up

Artist **Rudy Rahme** draws on Lebanon's rich cultural heritage and the nature surrounding his hometown of Bcharre to spark his creative impulses



If work is love made visible, as Kahlil Gibran famously wrote in “The Prophet,” then artist Rudy Rahme’s colossal sculptures in the heart of the fabled Lebanese cedars are a clear labor of love and a powerful gesture of his patriotism. Crafted entirely from dead wood, the grandest piece – dubbed La Martine Cedar (or Holy Trinity) – measures 39m in height, making it one of the largest of its kind in the world. A closer look reveals the face of Jesus delicately sculpted into the tree. A jaw-dropper by any measure, the site-specific installation took six years for Rahme to complete. “People are used to seeing art directly in front of them, I wanted to force people to look up – the sculptures have a more shocking impact when viewed in the direction of the sky,” he says.

A vivid, impressionistic sense of physicality is his signature style and he achieves it using elementary tools: various sizes of chisel, rope and scaffold. Like Gibran, Rahme is a native of the northern Lebanon village Bcharre, the life and work of Lebanon’s preeminent poet has had profound resonance for Rahme. In fact, he is the secretary of the Kahlil Gibran committee for culture and actively participates in increasing the exposure of the iconic Lebanese poet. In addition to being a sculptor, Rahme is himself a poet and a painter.

Possessed by a youthful excitement that belies his 47 years, Rahme’s passion for creating work that springs from the land is palpable. “There is no place like Bcharre and the Qadisha valley, there is a stillness and sense of calm that I carry over to my work,” he says. Touting the restorative nature of the beautiful landscape – operatic mountains and vast greenery – Rahme says that “the land has been touched by the divine.” Indeed, some of the earliest Christian monastic settlements can be found in the Qadisha Valley, ample inspiration for Rahme to draw on to fuel his more religious works.

Though his studio is located near Jounieh, Rahme spends much of his time in the mountains of Bcharre. And while some art works are definitive of their moment, Rahme aims to transcend time. Reflective of his philosophical nature, he looks upon

the creative process as a continuous state that merges past, present and future. “I am not just creating for the present, but also for the future generations; it is these two forces in addition to the concept of space that compel me to create.” His work is also rooted in historical detail. “I envision my sculptures as putting a mark on the cultural record of our country.” Indeed, rather than merely create art for art’s sake, there is a strong social dimension to his works which often depict national symbols or past titans of Lebanese culture like the late poet Said Akl, for who he created a custom-made coffin when the 102-year old passed away back in November 2014. “Art is connected to the education of history, to our architecture, our alphabet, to our collective memory, especially for the younger generation,” he says.

“ There is no place like Bcharre and the Qadisha valley, there is a stillness and sense of calm that I carry over to my work ”

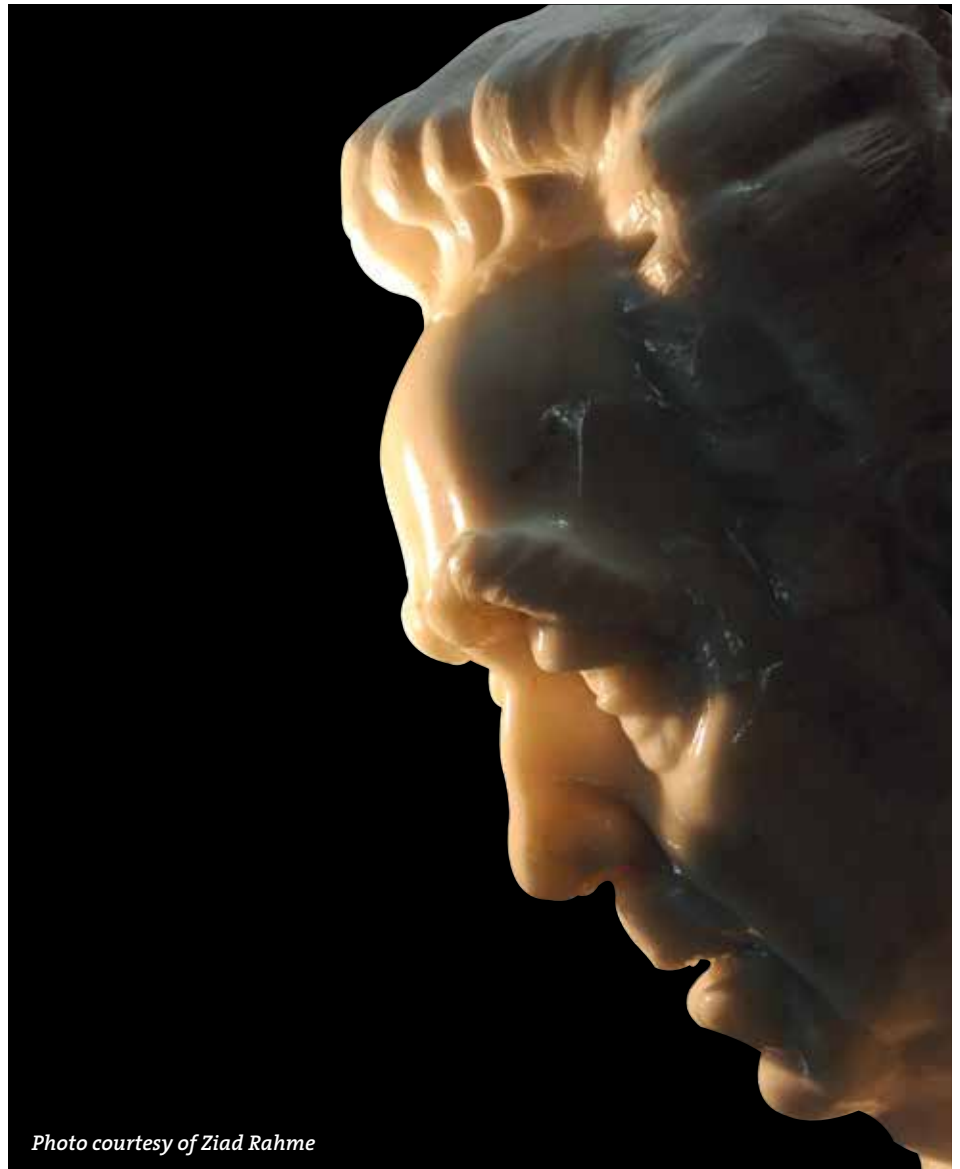


Photo courtesy of Ziad Rahme



Photo courtesy of Ziad Rahme



WHERE TO SLEEP

Bcharre offers a number of reasonably priced hotels including the Tiger Guesthouse (06 672480) with simple rooms and a shared lounge and Bauhaus Hostel (bauhauslb.com). For a tranquil night's sleep stay in the nearby Qadisha Valley in the old Saint Elisee monastery or the newer Deir Mar Lichaa (06 671559) or in the dormitories of Qozhaya – House of Prayers, Saint Anthony the Great Monastery (06 995504/5, qozhaya.com).

WHERE TO EAT

Bcharre is a rural retreat, with food to match from the homemade cuisine of Al Rif Restaurant (06 672090, 70 545562, past St Elisee Monastery on the road to the Qadisha Valley) to the picturesque location of Al Shallal Restaurant (06 671131) where a typical Lebanese menu can be enjoyed next to a waterfall. There's also the well-known Le Montagnard at Hotel Chbat (06 672672, Main Road, Bcharre) with an international menu.

WHAT TO SEE

Stop by the famed Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran's former home and museum (01 396921/16, gibrankhalilgibran.org, LL5000) and don't leave without a walk around the Cedar Forest of Bcharre. A day-long hike can be the best way to take in the breathtaking scenery, (libantrek.com, 33-north.com).



“ I believe you have to give back to your country. I live for Lebanon ”

When he himself was a child, he learned much about his country through literature and painting. Fortunate to grow up in a cultured household, Rahme had the support of his family when he went off to Florence to train and work as an artist. “It’s interesting, when you are in Lebanon the country seems very small. The further you go away, the bigger it becomes.” What the country stood for captured his imagination and his art, whether its paintings, sculpture or poetry, has always circled back to the underlying theme of the country’s heritage.

In the lifecycle of many Lebanese artists there is often a moment where they are forced to make a calculation of whether to stay or leave their country, and while Rahme has traveled extensively he always knows his place is right here. “I believe you have to give back to your country. I live for Lebanon.” When prompted to offer his favorite passage from “The Prophet”, he says: “You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.”

Mehrnoush Shafiei



**YOUR HANDS-ON
GUIDE TO
LEBANON**



GETAWAYS

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



Getaway with friends: “Jannet Artaba”

Before the proposed project of Janneh Dam potentially gets the go-ahead, take the beautiful scenic road along the river of Nahr Ibrahim, towards Jannet Artaba. The road, narrow and difficult but amazingly beautiful, passes through pine, oaks and cypress trees. Once at the valley there are numerous hiking trail possibilities; park up your car and walk along the river.

SLEEP Nothing beats a night in the wild. Take a tent, pitch it and camp by the river.

EAT Enjoy a simple Lebanese BBQ by the river or eat in one of the small cafés along its banks such as that of Naim Abi Akar (03 699089) who also organizes strawberry-picking in the spring with local farmers.

SEE Take some time to explore the beautiful valley of Nahr Ibrahim and hike into the wild with local guide Randa Zaarour (71 883738) to visit the Machnaka site.



Religious Getaway: Maad

The small village of Maad is home to the 10th Century church of St Charbel, known for the unique frescos that adorn its northern room. The original structure may even date back to the 6th Century; it was built on the foundations of a Roman temple and many architectural elements and columns of the temple remain. Go with local guides Ghalieh Hajj (09 750139) or Rene Habib (09 750142) for an authentic Maad experience.

SLEEP Spend a relaxing night at

Beit El Kahen, The House of the Priest (Reverend Toufic Abou Hadir 09 750370, 03 288211; www.beitelkahen.com).

EAT Enjoy a *manoushe* at Snack El Day'a (09 750142).

SEE Visit the historic churches of Maad, Saint Charbel and Saint Rafqa, traditional old houses with frescos (Naoum A Hajj 09 750063, 09 750001) and the unique snail farm of famous Lebanese singer Tony Hanna.



Family Getaway: Eshmoun and Joun

Located just before Sidon, by the Awali river in a lush valley of orange and citrus groves, is the ancient site of the 7th Century Eshmoun temple, known locally as Bustan Esheikh. It is well worth a visit especially in spring when the air is fragrant with blossoms. Then, take the road towards the village of Joun to enjoy beautiful green sceneries, passing olive and pine trees until you reach the Saint Sauveur Monastery of Joun.

SLEEP Stay overnight in Deir El Moukhalles at Saint Sauveur Monastery

(07 975064/5) or Deir El Saydeh (07 975070) in Joun.

EAT Picnic under pine trees on the way to the monastery or enjoy excellent Lebanese *mezze* by the river of Bisri at El Rif Restaurant (03 332611, 70 332611).

SEE Visit the archeological site of the 7th Century Eshmoun temples; the only Phoenician site in Lebanon that has retained more than just its foundation stones.

BEST BEDS

The **DHIAFEE Program** profiles four guesthouses located in different regions around the country offering the local rural experience



1 Akram Guesthouse Barouk, Shouf

This meticulously designed house preserves every aspect of traditional Lebanese architecture. Featuring a typical Middle-Eastern living room, with a diwan built around the fireplace, high ceilings and yellow stoned walls, give warmth, intimacy and a nostalgic experience. With a wide range of gastronomical activities, staying at Akram Mahmoud's guesthouse offers a taste of local authenticity. The breathtaking scenery of the Shouf Cedars can be seen from Mahmoud's balcony. 03 829102

2 Beit El Nessim, Al Mina, Tripoli

Located in the heart of the old town of Al Mina in Tripoli, Beit El Nessim's restoration was completed in 2012. It offers a unique ambiance; a peaceful oasis away from everyday life. There has been a conscious effort to preserve the unique style and architectural details of the building, while integrating the amenities of modern

comfort with style, elegance and integrity to its original design. Visitors can enjoy its harmoniously designed spaces, tastefully furnished rooms, healthy gourmet breakfast and warm hospitality along with additional activities such as yoga and meditation classes. 03 308156

3 Dar Haneen, Bhorsaf, Metn

Located in Bhorsaf, Dar Haneen creates an intimate, friendly, and welcoming atmosphere, where you will feel right at home. Its tiled floors, religious iconography, vintage typing machine, old photographs and traditional furniture add to the ambiance. If you're looking for an escape from the city, grab a book, a board game and take your loved ones to Dar Haneen. 03 743316

4 El Sahili Guesthouse, Rachaya El Wadi

In January 2008, El Sahili Guesthouse opened its doors to the public and started receiving people from all over the world.

A small lodge in the heart of Rachaya El Wadi, the guesthouse offers a unique ambiance in intimate surroundings.

It caters for both nature lovers and history admirers, with a variety of activities on offer including hiking, biking, a walking tour through the old market, a visit to the Independence Fortress and a visit to see the traditional production of grape syrup. 03 615702

WHO ARE DHIAFEE?

DHIAFEE Program, initiated by ANERA – Lebanon as a part of The Lebanon Industry Value Chain Development (LIVCD) Project, implemented by DAI and funded by USAID, arranges training and workshops for the owners and staff of guesthouses. 01 382590, their website will soon be launched

ON THE TABLE

Lebanese celebrity chef, TV personality and culinary consultant **Joe Barza** picks some of his favorite urban restaurants for Lebanese food



1 Mhanna

Mhanna has an unmatched reputation for fine-dining Lebanese cuisine. Bringing together old school Lebanese hospitality and service with high quality ingredients, the restaurant continues the traditions of Lebanese cuisine brilliantly.

What Barza says:

"Mhanna is very consistent and I like their generosity. For me, it's among the best Lebanese restaurants. The food has a homemade feel. I can't pick a particular dish, most of their dishes are my favorite."

04 403636

Antelias Main Road, Metn

2 Babel Bay

Babel Bay at Zaitunay Bay offers an innovative approach to Lebanese cuisine, with seafood and mezze that creates a modern version of traditional food, with a modern interior to match.

What Barza says:

"I like everything about it – I like the service, the decoration, the modern interior design of the place, the presentation and, of course, the taste. I like how they stay within traditional Lebanese food but make it modern."

01 370846

Zaitunay Bay

3 Abd El Wahab

One of the most iconic Lebanese restaurants in Achrafieh, Abdel Wahab is where food tradition continues. It's a place to while away the hours on a Sunday afternoon with a big group, for reliable, high quality Lebanese classics, washed down of course with a jug of arak.

What Barza says:

"They have some very good ideas and have been long enough in the market to know what they're doing. They have great variety and do the classics of Lebanese

food, such as hummus, fattoush and wara enab, very well. I also like the setting of the restaurant very much."

01 200550

Abd El Wahab El Inglizi Street, Monot

4 Bioland Sioufi

With the slogan "from farm to fork", Bioland's philosophy is self-explanatory. Focusing on organic food and fresh farm produce, this eatery is all about high quality ingredients and simple delicious recipes with a menu created by Barza himself.

bioland-lb.com

01 398 111

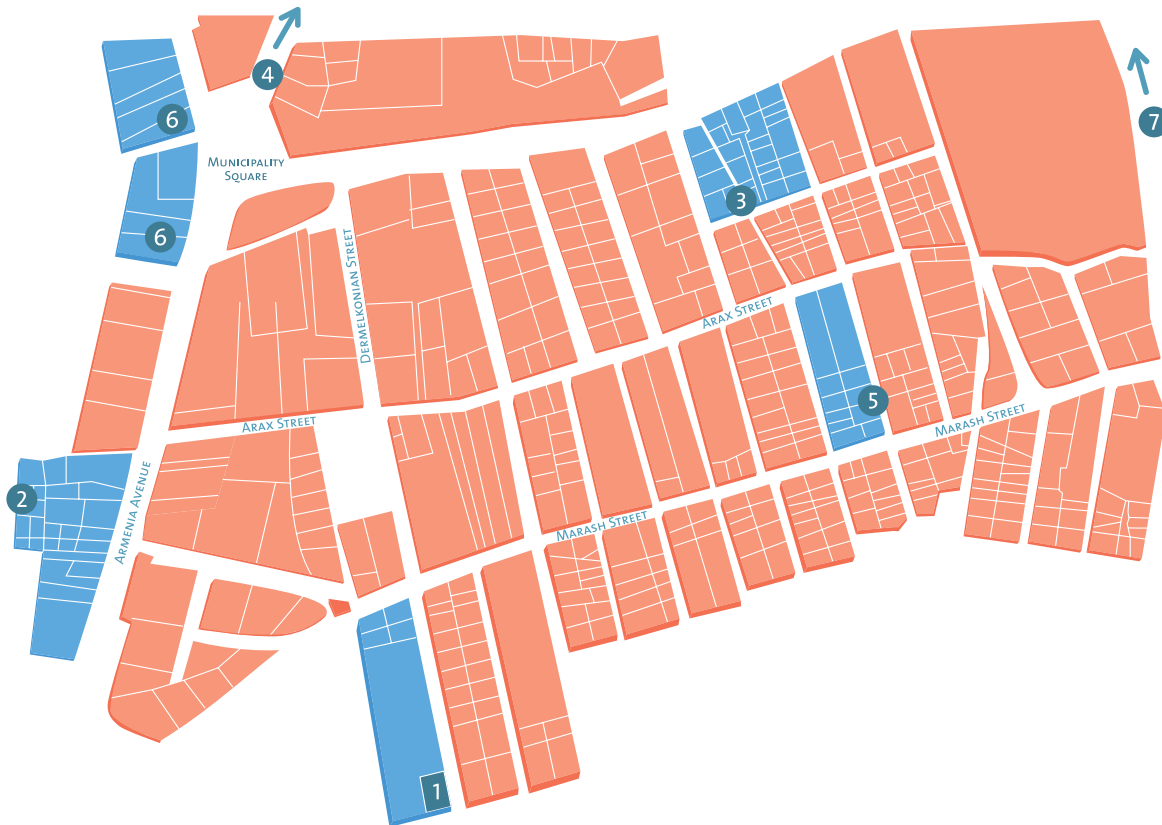
Sioufi

What Barza says:

"I really like the place. They have a very healthy and organic menu. Its main focus is the terroir."

FOOD TRAIL

Arpi Mangassarian, founder of the Armenian restaurant and cultural center Badguèr, takes us on a food tour to explore the rich cuisine of Armenia in the heart of Bourj Hammoud



1 Badguèr

Combining food, arts and crafts in one house, Badguèr creates homey Armenian dishes and traditional specialties. It gives visitors the opportunity to discover the authenticity of Armenian culinary heritage and acts as a social platform and meeting place for the community.
01 240214, 03 652235
badguer.org
The Pink Building, Der Melkonian Street

2 Restaurant Apo

Located down the backstreets of Bourj Hammoud, Apo offers 1001 kinds of Kebab. It's everyone's "go to" place when it comes to the best kebabs in town.
01 261789, 03 325402
restaurantapo.com
Aztag Street

3 Ghazar Bakery

This family-run bakery first opened more than 50 years ago and has built up a solid

reputation for the best *lahme bi ajeen* in town. With more than five kinds of the famous meat pastry there is something for every taste.

03 254835
Periphery of Arax Street

4 Foul Abou Hassan

A very friendly restaurant that opens 24/7, Foul Abou Hassan is the place to feast on *fatteh*, *foul* and *hommos*.

01 266888
Mar Youssef Street

5 The Spice Market

All sorts of spices, dried fruits and seasonal vegetables are on offer on this popular spice market on the bustling Marash Street. They have the essential ingredients to spice up any dish with colors, flavors and aromas.

01 252902, 03 207445
Marash Street

6 Basterma shops: Mano & Bedo

These two neighboring street food stops work for lunchtime hunger as well as for midnight cravings. Here you can indulge in the famous Armenian spicy beef sausage *sojouk* as well as *basterma*, a type of air-dried cured beef – a tradition that stretches back centuries, along with of course, the famous *shawarma* and *makaneh*, served with fresh pickles.

01 261439, basterma-bedo.com
01 268560, basterma-mano.com
Armenian Street

7 Patisserie Manoug

After indulging in the savory, end with the sweet with a wide variety of delicious Armenian and Lebanese delicacies at Patisserie Manoug. They offer a selection of seasonal sweets and all-time favorites, to satisfy a sweet tooth.

03 571501
Masaken Khoury Ariss Street (Underpass)

AGENDA

MARCH

Sun
15



Hike through Smar Jbeil

A day hiking through the northern area of Smar Jbeil, Jrebta and Sghar, Batroun taking in the historical church of Smar Jbeil, Jrabta village and the impressive 12th Century Citadel. There will also be a visit to LBC's premises to see where "El Wadi" was filmed, the ancient Al Qattine Monastery and the Museum of St. Rafqa. Different hiking levels available. Meeting point Mar Maroun Church, Dora, 7:30am. LL35,000; LL30,000 under 18s or groups of 5+, including transport. Dale Corazon

FOR DAILY EVENT
UPDATES VISIT
LEBANONTRAVELER.COM

Snow sleds in Beity Kfardebian

A fun full day out for kids taking slides through the snow in snow sleds, followed by a mountain lunch at Beity Kfardebian. Meeting point Sin el Fil, facing Pain d'Or between Hayek and Mkalles roundabout. Adults LL67,500; Kids under 12 LL45,000 including transport. NEOS Kids



Wed
18



Zakir Hussain & Hari Prasad Chaurasia

American University of Beirut (AUB) organizes two concerts on one night with Indian tabla and flute (Bansuri). AUB. Info contact Maha Al-Azar, 01 759685

Thu
19



Byblos Flower Festival

The International Byblos Festival and the Center of Tourist Information and G.A.L. Byblos Local Action Group hold their annual Flowers of March festival, including free guided tours of Byblos and its citadel, souk, old port and wax museum; workshop and painting for kids; art exhibition; musical instruments exhibition and a market with local handicrafts. On the 19th at 4pm there will also be the special event "The Baptism of Byblos Rose". Thu 19- Sun 22. Roman Road, Byblos Main Entrance. Info 09 543100/101



Sun
22



Snowshoeing and snowman competition

Enjoy the close of the winter season in the mountains with the kids with a day snowshoeing and the epic 2015 snowman competition at Beity Kfardebian. Meeting point Sin el Fil, Facing Pain d'Or between Hayek and Mkalles roundabout. Adults LL75,000; Kids under 12 LL52,500 including transport. NEOS Kids

Hike in Assia

A hike with breathtaking views along the mountain cliff that overlooks the valley of Assia. The village in the middle of Batroun is known for its handcrafted pottery, historical ruins that reveal ancient civilisations and spring and water ponds. The hike will be followed by a visit to one of the village's pottery artisans. Different hiking levels available. Meeting point Mar Maroun Church, Dora, 7:30am. LL35,000; LL30,000 under 18s or groups of 5+, including transport. Dale Corazon.

Hike Nahr El Jouz

A hike in the Batroun region, along the river valley for level 2 hikers (5km, 150-

200m) and taking in old bridges and watermills for level 4 hikers (8km, 150-400m). Meeting point La Sagesse Parking, Facing Hikmeh School, Achrafieh. Adults LL40,000; Married couples LL70,000; Students LL35,000; Under 18s LL30,000 including transport. Liban Trek

Hike Wata Al Joz

You don't have to go far from Beirut for stunning mountain views. ProMax are offering a 10km hike through the fresh mountain air of Wata Al Joz in Mount Lebanon at 1300m altitude. Meeting point Sagesse University, 8am. LL45,000 including transport, breakfast and lunch. ProMax Sports

Hike - Afqa's Plateau Juniper trail

A hike through the Keserwan area, towards Nabeh Al Hadid and Al Nabi Hedwan, to take in the unique juniper forest. A huge cavern dominates the mountainside where water roars down under a Roman bridge before snaking its way towards the sea. Meeting point Sodeco Square. LL40,500 including transport. Beyond Byblos

Sun
29



Hiking in Tannourine Reserve

The Tannourine reserve lies in a splendidly beautiful area near the mountain of the same name with a cedar forest of some 70,000 trees, some of which date between 1000-2000 years. The nature reserve is also known for its various types of birds and wild animals and is also enriched with lakes. The hike through the reserve is moderate level and 4 hours long. *Meeting point Futuroscope, Sin el Fil, Facing Hilton Hotel. LL49,500 including transport. Adventures in Lebanon*

Hike in Ebre Shouwen Jannet

A hike along the banks of Nahr Ibrahim, a valley offering a varied landscape. It's considered one of the most enchanting places for hiking in Jbeil Caza, especially during this season. Level 4 hikers (2.5 hours) will start from Ebre village and take the path through Jabal Moussa, passing through trees and bushes with remarkable views. Level 6 hikers (2.5 hours) will take ascending trails from Shouwen to Ebre. There will also be a stop at the historical Phoenician ruins of Mashna'a and Shir El Meidan. *Meeting point Mar Maroun Church, Dora, 7.30am. LL35,000; LL30,000 under 18s or groups of 5+, including transport. Dale Corazon.*

Chouen Lake

A hike through the Ftouh Keserwan region where level 3 hikers (6km, 400-500m) take a lake trail, and level 6 hikers (12km, 400-900m) pass wooded slopes and isolated hamlets. *Meeting point La Sagesse Parking, Facing Hikmeh School, Achrafieh, 7.30am. Adults LL40,000; Married couples LL70,000; Students LL35,000; Under 18s LL30,000 including transport. Liban Trek*

Snowshoeing, Temm Al Oubour

A snowshoeing trail in the Mount Lebanon region taking in the beautiful scenery between Temm Al Oubour and Al Telejeh. *Meeting point Sodeco Square. LL40,500 including transport. Beyond Byblos*

Hike Wadi Mokhtara

A wholesome daylong hike through the Shouf region. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL40,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

Hike Balaa to Douma

Balaa in Mount Lebanon is famous for its 250m deep natural sink-hole, carved by water 160 million years ago. A magnificent waterfall can be observed during winter and spring. Douma is also named Douma El Hadid, meaning

Douma of Iron due to the abundance of iron found in its soil and the superior craftsmanship of its blacksmiths. The hike will range from 200m to 1700m altitude and be around 9km long. *LL35,000. We Are Hikers*

Hike Darb Rachid Nakhle

A hike around Darb Rachid Nakhle. Available at different difficulty levels. *Meeting point Sagesse University, 8am. LL45,000 including transport, breakfast and lunch. ProMax Sports*



APRIL

Wed
01



Brahms concert

A concert playing the classical great, Brahms "Violin Concerto in D." *AUB. Info contact Maha Al-Azar, 01 759685*

Fri
03



LMT Thru Walk

It's that time of year again for the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association's annual Thru Walk along the historic Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT). This year the walk is for cultural and archaeological heritage. Hikers can join the group at different points throughout the trail. *3 Apr-3 May. Register at lebanontrail.org. Lebanon Mountain Trail Association*

Sat
04



Charity Ride

This fundraising charity motorbike ride supporting NGOs working with those with special needs starts in Beirut's Martyr's Square with around 300 bikers gathering to ride towards Kfardebian. *Info 01552312. Lebanese Motorcycles Club*

Monot Street Book Market

Professional antiquarians, second-hand book vendors and everyone who wants to sell and buy books is welcomed to this monthly book market. Enjoy the charming cultural street life with unexpected treasures waiting to be discovered at bargain prices. *First Saturday of every month. Opposite RectoVerso Library. 10am-6pm. Info 01 330994, 71 347716*

First Saturday at the AIF Library

On the first Saturday of every month, the Arab Image Foundation library opens its doors to the public to discover its collection of over 1,300 books and DVDs related to the study of photographic and artistic practices, regional history, theory, preservation and cinema. Visitors can search the AIF photographic archive, browse prints and images from the collection, watch videos and DVDs and study in a quiet environment. *Arab Image Foundation, Zoghbi Building, 4th Floor, Gouraud Street, Gemmayzeh. First Saturday of every month. 11am-6pm. Info 01 569373, fai.org.lb*

Sun
05



Hike Naher El Jawz

A hike through Nahr El Jawz in North Lebanon. The level 3 hike starts at the village of Rashkida, visiting the tomb of Patriarch Elias Hoayek in Sainte Famille Convent and Deir Mar Geryes (St. Georges) built in the 3rd Century. Level 5 hikers start from the St Famille convent in Ibrine, passing through the dense pine forest El Sheikh forest, heading towards Rashkida. Both hikes end with a stop at Kfarhay to visit St. Maroun Monastery. *Meeting point Mar Maroun Church, Dora, 7:30am. LL35,000; LL30,000 under 18s or groups of 5+, including transport. Dale Corazon.*

Hike Fraidis

Qadisha Valley, is well known for its breathtaking scenery and a valley that climbs steeply in a deep gorge up to the mountains that surround the Cedars, dominated by Qornet es-Sawda (Black summit), at 3080m. This day-long hike will take you through Qadisha Valley, following a footpath starting at the village of Fraidis along agricultural terrain. *Meeting point Sodeco Square. LL40,500 including transport. Beyond Byblos*

Hike Nahr El Jawz

A hike taking in history and nature through the National and Historic Heritage Site, Nahr El Jawz. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL60,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

Hike Mantara, Daraya

A full day 11km hike in the Mount Lebanon region, through Mantara, Daraya, around 1200m altitude. *Meeting point Sagesse University, 8am. LL45,000 including transport, breakfast and lunch. ProMax Sports*

Hike Darb El Sama, Harissa

A 14km upward hike, challenging at first, but worth it once you reach Harissa, for stunning view across the coastline. After a visit to Harissa Church, the hike continues to Dar'oun, finishing at Mansourieh. *Meeting point CIT/ Al Mawared, Dora. LL35,000 including transport. We Are Hikers*



Mon
06



Easter hike to Mazraat Al Teffah

This 13km Easter hike in Mazraat Al Teffah, in the North Zgharta Casa area features stunning views and a rich trail through pine and oak trees and water sources, stopping for a picnic in the midst of nature. *Meeting point Futuroscope, Sin el Fil, facing Hilton Hotel. LL40,500 including transport. Adventures in Lebanon*

Hike Dahr EL Baidar

A hike through the Bekaa area. Level 3 hikers (6km, 1,000-1,400m) will start at Wadj ad-Delm and descend to the Bekaa, level 5 hikers (7km, 1000-1500m) will start at Wadj ad-Delm and take a more challenging uphill route. *Meeting point La Sagesse Parking, Facing Hikmeh School, Achrafieh, 7:30am. Adults LL40,000; Married couples LL70,000; Students LL35,000; Under 18s LL30,000 including transport. Liban Trek*

Tue
07



Egg hunting in Baabda Forest

During the Easter holidays take the kids for an egg-citing egg hunt through nature, in Baabda Forest. Also on Sat 11. Half day, 2.30-6pm. *Meeting point Sin el Fil, Facing Pain d'Or between Hayek and Mkalles roundabout. LL30,000 including transport and snack. NEOS Kids*

ORCHID TRAIL

The Shouf Biosphere Reserve (SBR) with more than 500 species of plants welcomes enthusiastic hikers to the exceptional Orchid Trail, ornamented by more than 20 species of orchids. This 4km trail starts at the Park House of the SBR situated in the village of Maasser El Shouf, and varying from 1100 to 1250m above sea level it passes through an oak forest towards the village of Kreibeh. Along the trail, you'll find stunning orchids in two particular sites that were identified to contain between 8 and 20 species of Orchids respectively in Maasser (9,000 m2) and Khreibeh (54,000 m2). Flowering in different seasons from April to June, the best time to see most of the orchids is in May

(depending on the weather). Enjoy the hike with your friends in a group of 5 to 15, with a local guide. After completing the trail, enjoy a traditional meal for around LL22,500 per person and a stay in one of the nearby guest houses of Khreibeh (Salim Ashkar), Baadaran (Nazih Baz), and Maasser El Shouf (Auberge St. Michelle and Beit El Hana).

Mirna Riman in collaboration with Dr. Nisrine Machaka-Houri (nisrinemachaka.com)

Shouf Biosphere Reserve

05 350250/150, info@shoufcedar.org
shoufcedar.org

LL10,000-LL15,000 dependent on group number. A botanist specialist is also available to guide. Reserve a week in advance.



Sun
12



Hike Mokhtara to Haret Jandal

A 10km hike (825m altitude) from Mokhtara to Haret Jandal in the Chouf Biosphere Reserve. Taking hikers along the Barouk river, the walk passes under the impressive cliff of Amatour, crossing two Ottoman and Mamluk wooden bridges, old caves, old mills, an old burial ground, a waterfall, and finally a forest track that ends the trail. *Meeting point Futuroscope, Sin el Fil, facing Hilton Hotel. LL40,500 including transport. Adventures in Lebanon*

Hike Zghartaghine

In the North Lebanon area of Zghartaghine, level 3 hikers (7km, 700-1100m) will pass through pinewoods and panoramas, level 6 hikers (11km,

700-1300m) will pass through impress oak forests. *Meeting point La Sagesse Parking, Facing Hikmeh School, Achrafieh, 7:30am. Adults LL40,000; Married couples LL70,000; Students LL35,000; Under 18s LL30,000 including transport. Liban Trek*

Hike Smar Jbeil

In the Batroun district lies Smar Jbeil, where a walk will take you through its cultural sites including the Phoenician citadel, occupied by the Romans, followed by the Crusaders, who built cellars next to its towers and a church to the east. The citadel is also characterized by its wells, carved into the rocks and its deep tunnels connecting the castle to the neighboring valleys. *Meeting point Sodeco Square. LL40,500 including transport. Beyond Byblos*

Wed
15



Great Violin Sonatas

A classical concert revisiting the great violin sonatas for classical music heads. *AUB. Info contact Maha Al-Azar, 01 759685*



Sun
19



Ehmej to Ehmej

Want a challenge? Join Liban Trek for a six-day hike split over three weekends from Ehmej taking in Douma, Tannourine Tahta, Wata Houb, Laqlouq and looping back to Ehmej. *Sun 19 April; Sat 25-Sun 25 April; Fri 1-Sun 3 May. Overnights optional. Liban Trek*

Mini trek in Nahr El Jaouz

Take your kids into nature with NEOS Kids' mini trek and picnic in Nahr El Jaouz. *Meeting point Sin el Fil, Facing Pain d'Or between Hayek and Mkalles roundabout. Adults LL52,500, kids LL37,500 including transport and lunch. NEOS Kids.*

Hike in Mazraat Teffah

The Apple Forest, or Mazraat Teffah is a magnificent green forest of pine and oak trees, which continues to expand. Hikes of different difficulty levels will follow old stone paths, pass fresh water springs and traverse tree forests. On the return journey there will be a stop at Bnachaeh Lake at the Wildlife Taxidermy Museum. *Meeting point Mar Maroun Church, Dora, 7:30am. LL35,000; LL30,000 under 18s or groups of 5+, including transport. Dale Corazon*

Wine tasting in the Bekaa

A day of wine tasting in the Bekaa Valley taking in three wineries with a lunch stop in Chtaura. *Meeting point Futuroscope, Sin el Fil, facing Hilton Hotel. LL52,500*

including transport, breakfast and wine tasting. Adventures in Lebanon

Hike Ehmej to Jaj

A hike in the Mount Lebanon area with level 3 & 4 hikers (7/8km, 1000-1300m) trekking through Ram Mechmech and level 7 hikers (13km, 1000-1700m) passing the ancient cedars of Jaj and snow pits. *Meeting point La Sagesse Parking, Facing Hikmeh School, Achrafieh, 7:30am. Adults LL40,000; Married couples LL70,000; Students LL35,000; Under 18s LL30,000 including transport. Liban Trek*

Hike Ain EL Deir

A Sunday hike through the breathtaking scenery of Ain Al Deir, Ehmej. The hike starts at Qornet Al-Raheb (The Monk's Peak) before heading towards Ain Al Deir, passing an old mill, water springs and a waterfall. *Meeting point Sodeco Square. LL40,500 including transport. Beyond Byblos*

Mountain Climbing & Rappel, Afqa

A day of mountain climbing and rappelling in the Mount Lebanon/ Jbeil region. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL50,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

Hike Ammiq Reserve

A hike through the natural reserve of Ammiq, in the West Bekaa. *Meeting point Sagesse University, 8am. LL45,000 including transport, breakfast and lunch. ProMax Sports*

Mon
20

HORECA 2015

This eagerly anticipated yearly trade fair is the essential meeting place for all those in the hospitality and food and beverage service industries. Now into its 22nd edition, the fair includes The International Trade Show for the Hospitality & Foodservice Industry and the Beirut International Wine and Drinks Fair, along with live cooking demonstrations, tastings and workshops. *Mon 20-Wed 23. horecashow.com*



Sat
25



Hike Jaj

A hike from Mount Lebanon's Jaj to Douma with an overnight stay possible. Level 4 hikers (8km, 1000-1200m) will pass along an ancient paved path; level 7 hikers (13km, 1000-1600m) will hike through Jabal Figfri forests. *La Sagesse Parking, Facing Hikmeh School, Achrafieh, 7.30am. Adults LL40,000; Married couples LL70,000; Students LL35,000; Under 18s LL30,000 including transport. Liban Trek*

Sun
26



The Garden Show & Spring Festival 2015

Now into its 12th edition, The Garden Show & Spring Festival returns bursting with flowers and plants, colors and design. Also happening simultaneously within the same grounds is Travel Lebanon, the first event promoting rural tourism in the country. *Beirut*

MAY

Fri
01



Labor day hike

A hike celebration of both Labor Day and the 6th anniversary of Adventures in Lebanon, to the holy valley of Qannoubine, known as Wede El Eddissin. Beginning with a two hour hike in one of the deepest and most beautiful valleys in Lebanon, scattered with caves, chapels, hermitages and monasteries cut from rock. The trail starts from the top of Haouqa village and goes down the valley, stopping to visit St. Marina Convent. *Meeting point Futuroscope, Sin el Fil, facing Hilton Hotel. LL40,500 including transport. Adventures in Lebanon*

Hike Tannourine Tahta to Wadi Houb

A hike from Tannourine Tahta to Wadi Houb, with an optional overnight stay in a monastery. Level 4 hikers (8km, 900-1300m) will pass by Wadi Tannourine, level 7 hikers (13km, 900-1700m) will pass Wadi Ain ar-Raha. *La Sagesse Parking, facing Hikmeh School, Achrafieh, 7.30am. Adults LL40,000; Married couples LL70,000; Students LL35,000; Under 18s LL30,000 including transport. Liban Trek*

Hippodrome. Sun 26- Thu 30, 5-11pm. The-gardenshow.com

Hike Douma to Tannourine Tahta

Level 3 hikers (6km, 800-1000m) will start at Kfarhelda, level 5 hikers (10km, 600-1000m) will trek via Nabaa Dalli and a cliff fault from Douma to Tannourine Tahta. *La Sagesse Parking, Facing Hikmeh School, Achrafieh, 7.30am. Adults LL40,000; Married couples LL70,000; Students LL35,000; Under 18s LL30,000 including transport. Liban Trek*

Hike Al Khinchara

A hike through the attractive town of Khenchara, between Bologna and Bteghrine, known for its traditional red-roofed houses and skilled stone masons. Along the way, admire a view over Sannine, Zaarour, Wade El Jamejm and Zabougha. The ending point will be at the village of Hemlaya, a quiet and serene village in Mount Lebanon located away from the city hustle. *Meeting point Sodeco Square. LL40,500 including transport. Beyond Byblos*

Wed
29



Billie Holiday: Lady Day

A celebration of the lady of jazz, playing the music of legend Billie Holiday. *AUB. Info contact Maha Al-Azar, 01 759685*



Sat
02



Hike Wata Houb to Lklouk

A hike taking in an impressive sinkhole; level 4 hikers will trek 8km, level 7 hikers will trek 12km. *La Sagesse Parking, facing Hikmeh School, Achrafieh, 7.30am. Adults LL40,000; Married couples LL70,000; Students LL35,000; Under 18s LL30,000 including transport. Liban Trek*

Sun
03



Hike Wadi Qannoubine

Find silence and solitude with a hike through the stunning scenery of the Qadisha Valley, which has sheltered Christian monastic communities for many centuries. Qannoubine's history dates back to the 7th Century with monasteries and sanctuaries spread all over the gorge, in the form of caves or churches. *Meeting point Mar Maroun Church, Dora, 7.30am. LL40,000; LL35,000 under 18s or groups of 5+, including transport. Dale Corazon.*

Hike Jezzine

The hike around South Lebanon's Jezzine starts with a breakfast with a view at Bkassine picnic spot, 1060m above sea level. The hike goes downward until reaching the famous waterfalls where we can take pictures before we continue continuing to the bottom part of Bkassine before passing through the forest to reach the big church in Bkassine. *LL40,000 including transport. We Are Hikers*

Hike Siket El Cham

Known for its special location in a valley surrounded by mountains at the head of a long fertile valley, Siket El Cham is home to several bird species, wild animals and has spectacular views of gorges. Its ground is rich and welcomes all sorts of plants and has an abundance olive trees, vine and apple trees. *Meeting point Sodeco Square. LL40,500 including transport. Beyond Byblos*



Sun
10



Hike Deir Mimas

The picturesque town of Deir Mimas in South Lebanon is the starting point of this hike, overlooking the Litani River and the medieval Beaufort Castle to the west and snow-capped summits of Mount Hermon to the east. The level 4 hike (6km) heads to the vast forest of the area to visit the 15th Century religious site Deir Mimmias, passing ancient olive trees and waterfalls. The level 5 hike (11km) takes a vertical trail to Tallet Allie with panoramic views, stopping at Aadisse, close to the Blue Line Border with the occupied land. *Meeting point Mar Maroun Church, Dora, 7.30am. LL40,000; LL35,000 under 18s or groups of 5+, including transport. Dale Corazon.*

Hike from Rachaya to Hasbaya

A hike through the stunning scenery of the South between Rachaya and Hasbaya. *Meeting point Mathaf. LL35,000 including transport. Footprints Club*

Hike Nahr El Joz

A hike through the North Lebanon region of Nahr El Joz to take in history and nature. *Meeting point Sagesse University, 8am. LL45,000 including transport, breakfast and lunch. ProMax Sports*

Mon
11



Dedicated Night Hike to Harissa

A hike under the moonlight dedicated to the Virgin Mary of Harissa, an important pilgrimage site above Jounieh. The night trail begins at Sahel Alma, stopping at the historical St. George convent built in 1718, continuing the climb up old steps, cut through pine woods, before reaching the huge 15-ton bronze statue painted in white of "Our Lady of Lebanon", with her arms outstretched, at midnight. *Meeting point Futuroscope, Sin el Fil, facing Hilton Hotel. LL30,000 including transport. Adventures in Lebanon*

Barouk River Valley

A hike as the flowers come into bloom along the Barouk Rivery Valley Trail in the Shouf. It's a unique journey through time; the trail a rare beauty with historical monuments from the Hellenistic and Roman eras to the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. *Meeting point Sodeco Square. LL40,500 including transport. Beyond Byblos*

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Jbeil District

A visit to Jbeil's historic ruins including a painted crusader chapel, Phoenician rock carving and the Annaya Pilgrimage. *Every Monday. Hotel pickup 7.45-8am, departure 8.30am. LL105,000 including lunch and transport. Minimum 3 people. Liban Trek*

Paragliding

See Lebanon from above with a paragliding tandem over the Jounieh area. *Meeting point Jounieh, Maameltein, facing Portaluna Hotel. Mon-Fri 2pm-sunset, Sat 1pm-sunset, Sun all day. LL180,000. Exit to Nature*

Rafting

Wild at heart? Spend a day rafting in nature. *Meeting point National Museum of Beirut. LL75,000 including transport. FootPrints*

Beirut, Beiteddine, Deir El Qamar

Start the day at Beirut's lively Corniche, seeing the iconic Pigeon Rocks and Downtown district. Continue to the 1930-built National Museum, before heading to the Chouf Mountains for a stop at the historic Deir El Qamar. After lunch in a local restaurant visit the Palace of Beteddine and its colorful marble mosaics. *Starting LL150,000 depending on group size, including lunch, entrance fees and transport. Kurban Travel*

Snowshoeing

Enjoy a day or weekend snowshoeing through nature from Aquora to Tannourine. *Meeting point Dbayeh, parking lot next to Spinneys. LL60,000, overnight LL150,000 including transport and full board. 33 North*

Paragliding

Daredevils sign up here for this tandem paragliding from Harissa to Jounieh. *Meeting point Jounieh, Teleferique. Daily 2-5pm. LL180,000. Club Thermique*

Jeita Grottoes and Harissa

After stopping at Nahr el Kalb to see the historical inscriptions, tour Jeita, before proceeding to Jounieh where a ride on the legendary cable car will take you to the Virgin of Mary statue, in Harissa. *Starting at LL72,000 dependent on group size. R. Rida International*

Tripoli

A visit to the citadel of St. Gilles, the Medina, the Caravanserail of Soap, and the souks of Lebanon's northern city, Tripoli. *Hotel pick up. Half day, Saturdays, 8.30am. LL.72,000. Wild Discovery*

Hike Qadisha Valley

A hike around the breathtaking Holy Valley, Qadisha. See dramatic valleys, ancient caves and murals. *Meeting point Virgin Megastore. Every Sun, 8.30am. LL157,500 including transport. Saad Tours.*

ADDRESS BOOK

33 North

03 454996 – 33-north.com

Adventures in Lebanon

71 443323 – adventuresinlebanon.com

Beyond Byblos

03 486551 – 71728165

Club Thermique

09 237193, 03 933359
clubthermique.org

Dale Corazon

70 986118 – dalecorazon.com

Exit to Nature

03 559992 – exittonature.com

Footprints Nature club

03 876112 – footprintsclub.com

Kurban Travel

07 760500 – kurbantravel.com

LibanTrek

01 329975 – libantrek.com

NEOS Kids

03 733818 – neoslb.com

ProMax Adventures

03 955642 – promaxsports.com

Rida International Travel & Tourism

04 718790 – ridaint.com.lb

Saad Tours

01 393100

We are Hikers

03 3582084 – wearehikers.com

Wild Discovery

01 565646 – wilddiscovery.com.lb

Kamal Mouzawak

Passionate foodie and founder of Tawlet restaurant and Souk el Tayeb, Kamal Mouzawak shares some of his favorite eating spots and rural destinations in Lebanon

If someone were visiting Lebanon for 24 hours where would you take them?

To start with they should eat well – in the morning a Lebanese breakfast at the roof top garden of Albergo (01 339797, albergobeirut.com, 137 Rue Abdel Wahan El Inglizi), then a second *foul* breakfast at Le Professeur (01 703666, Mar Elias Street). Then street food as an early dinner, *falafel*, *shawarma*, followed by the perfect *mezze* dinner. End the day with a sunset drink at Sporting Club (01 742482, El Manara). In between all the indulgence take a drive through the city to understand Beirut, taking in the Corniche, Hamra, the former Green Line, Gemmayzeh, Mar Mikhael and Achrafieh, a visit to the National Museum (beirutnationalmuseum.com) and of course some Beirut socializing... *salut, ca va?*

Name your favorite places to go for Sunday brunch?

For an early family lunch go to the seafront restaurant Chez Maguy in Batroun (03 439147, *Mak'ad el Mir*). For a fancy French meal go to Villa Clara (70 995739, villaclara.fr, Mar Mikhael, Achrafieh).

Where is the olive oil in your kitchen from?

The north! That's what my father decided for us, for all of our lives! With the



competition between north and south over their olive supremacy, it was Koura and the north that won over my father. He used to go for the day, buy his olives, then go to an olive press and extract "his" oil – a two year stock in huge old clay jars.

Tell us about one destination in Lebanon that nobody knows about – your hidden gem awaiting discovery.

Jord el Batroun with its dramatic valleys and villages, and then, at the end of it, the majestic Laklouk.

Name one village or region that feels like home.

Any high mountain village – I'm definitely a son of the high altitudes, the jord, deep valleys and high mountains. One of my favorites is the Adonis Valley and at its top Charbineh in Jord Qartaba.

What's your favorite outdoor activity in Lebanon and where to do it?

I love to do nothing in the middle of nowhere; in nature or in the high mountains.

Where would you go for the perfect spring weekend in Lebanon?

Anywhere in Lebanon where it is green, clean and flowery in spring is just perfect. For me, it's the mountains again... where melted snow flows into the rivers everywhere. I love the green West Bekaa, the lush Ammiq wetlands, the Cedars and the surrounding mountains from Jaj to Tannourine, where you can find the most precious wild tulips and iris. Though they are just for the pleasure of the eyes ... don't pick!

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