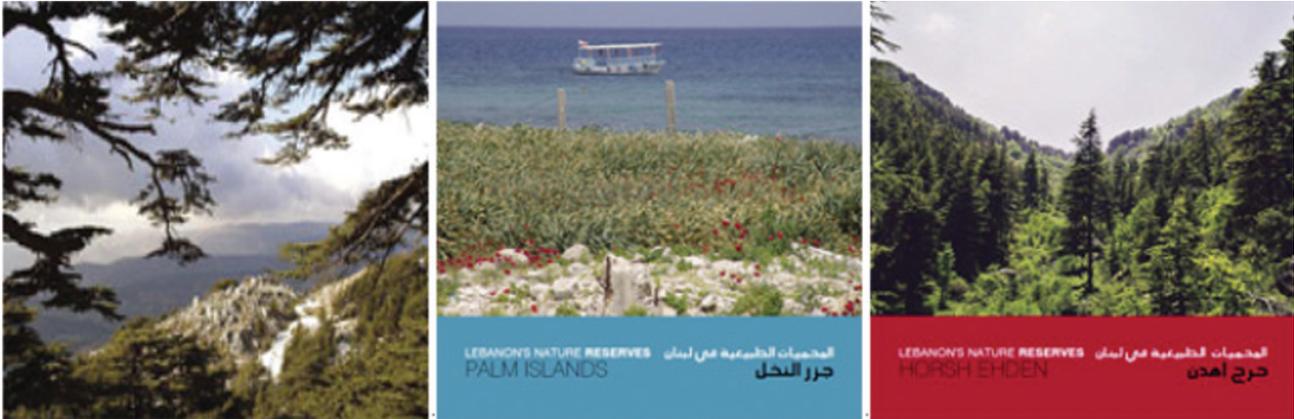


LEBANON ECO TOURISM – NATURE RESERVES



Lebanon's climatic diversity and varied topography have bestowed the country with a unique ecological system that ranges from the subtropical coast to the alpine high mountains of the interior. The country is rich in its biodiversity and in the last decade special attention has been paid to protecting endangered species and conserving their habitats in specific parts of the country. The more than 20 Nature Reserves and Protected Areas are a testament of Lebanon's focus on conservation and sustainable development. Some of the most popular Nature Reserves include:

Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve

Enclosing the three cedars forests of Maasir Shouf, Barouk and Ain Zhalta/ Bmohray, Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve is located on the western slopes of Mount Lebanon chain and reaches from Dahr al Baidar in the North to Niha Mountain near Jezzine in the South. The Niha Mountain, with only scattered patches of trees, represents the natural southern limit of Lebanese cedar (*Cedrus libani*).

Covering nearly 2% of Lebanese territory, Al-Shouf Cedar Nature reserve is the largest Nature Reserve in Lebanon and is considered as a suitable location for the conservation of large mammals such as the wolf and the caracal lynx and eventually an adapted site for the reintroduction of previously extinct species such as the mountain gazelle and the Nubian Ibex.

Located on the important intercontinental migratory route for birds, the Reserve is considered as an IBA (Important Bird Area). In addition, there is the presence of ancient ruins such as the spectacular Niha cave fortress and cultural sites.

The Bentaal Nature Reserve

Bentaal Nature Reserve is located in the foothills of Mount Lebanon northeast of Byblos. It was one of the first reserves to be created in Lebanon and set an example for the need to conserve Lebanon's natural heritage. The reserve is situated in the flight path of migratory hawks, eagles and other raptors and is enjoyed by bird enthusiasts.

Horsh Ehden Nature Reserve

Situated on the upper north western slopes of Mount Lebanon, ranging in altitude from 1200m – 2000m, Horsh Ehden Nature Reserve is considered a very important part of the country for its unique biodiversity.

Extending over 3 bio-geographic zones, the forest contains different species of mammals, birds and plants of which some are nationally rare and threatened such as the imperial eagle and wolf.

The amount of plant species recognised until now accounts for nearly 40% of plant species in Lebanon.

Palm Islands Nature Reserve

Covering 5 sq km and located on the northwest of Tripoli, Sanani, Ramkine and Palm Island together with their surrounding sea make up the Palm Islands Nature Reserve. They are Lebanon's only true Islands.

Palm Islands reserve is a resting place for migratory birds such as the grey heron. It also harbours some endangered reptiles such as green sea turtle and Loggerhead turtle as well as endemic sub-species of lizard, bats and a number of sheltering fish. Visitors can also find there some medicinal plants and an exceptional species of butterfly, known as the painted lady.

Parts of the reserve are accessible during summer for swimming and snorkelling. The rest of the year the Islands remain quiet calm haven for wildlife.

Tannourine Nature Reserve

Covering 12 sq km, Tannourine Nature Reserve lies in a splendidly beautiful area and protects one of the largest and densest cedar forests in Lebanon. The area is rocky and mountainous with sharp slopes and a deep valley where cedars defy gravity and grow on extremely vertical slopes.

Visitors can also enjoy the opportunity to discover naturally occurring grottos on their hike, as well as rare flowers particular to this high altitude terrain, like the mountain tulip or Lebanese prickly thrift.

Beside the 70,000 ancient trees, the Nature Reserve is also known for its various types of birds such as eagles, owls, robins and wild animals such as hyenas, boars, squirrels, snakes and bats. This reserve is enriched with floating lakes of water. It has more than one hundred springs and water sources. Outdoor activities include hikes through the forest and treks to visit rock-cut monasteries, as well as cross-country skiing and snow shoeing in the winter.

Tyre Coast Nature Reserve

Tyre Coast Nature Reserve is not only a Nature reserve but also a Ramsar site. Located in Southern Lebanon expanding over 380 ha, Tyre Coast Nature Reserve remains the largest sandy beach in Lebanon. Tyre Coast Nature Reserve harbours many species of plants, animals and insects. It is a nesting site for the endangered Loggerhead and green sea Turtle and the shelter of the Arabian spiny mouse and many other important creatures.

About Lebanon: A Heaven on Earth!

Landscapes that change with the seasons, but are always bathed in the warm sun. The daylight rising over Lebanon brings endless opportunities of fun, beach, nature and outdoor activities. You'll never know what to choose. Whatever it will be, an unforgettable time awaits you under the shiny Lebanese sun.