

Lebanon Traveler

A publication of Hospitality Services in a joint venture with Beyond Beirut - Issue 0 July 2011

& **Ramadan Drinks**
Lebanese Sushi

10 MUST VISIT
IN JEZZINE

More than 100
things to do around
the summer festivals

PLUS
40 pages of people
places and products

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Lebanon Traveler

unveils Lebanon's hidden treasures



Lebanon's pockets of unique biodiversity and cultural variety are its major assets. And Lebanon Traveler is a brand new magazine that invites Lebanese to rediscover their own country and tourists to explore Lebanon beyond the bustling city of Beirut, as well as the capital itself.

Beyond Beirut, an NGO working towards developing quality tourism in the regions of Lebanon, and **Hospitality Services**, a company that has contributed to the development of the hospitality industry through its HORECA and Spring Festival and Garden Show events, as well as its publications Hospitality News Middle East and Taste & Colors, have worked together to bring you this quarterly magazine highlighting local assets and helping develop them into treasured attractions.



We bring forward genuine hosts for you to enjoy authentic Lebanese hospitality and live a true experience with family and friends. We invite the reader to take part in the support of local initiatives and the conservation of Lebanon's natural and cultural assets.

We encourage you to explore the countryside, engage in an adventure or join a tour and taste rural delicacies. But most of all we ask you to extend your stay with an overnight in the countryside. Each region is unique. And in this issue, Jezzine and Upper Metn are put under the microscope. Discover remote villages and the communities that are eager to receive tourists and develop sustainable tourism trends.



Lebanon Traveler also features relevant tourism information, about the latest international trends, accurate statistics, in-depth interviews and insider information on alternative tourism destinations. Lebanon Traveler offers you a seasonal guide about where to go and what to do, as well as all essential contact details you will need.



Your feedback as a reader and as a user of this information is very important for us to develop quality sustainable tourism in Lebanon. Enjoy and share your experience on info@lebanontraveler.com

The Lebanon Traveler team



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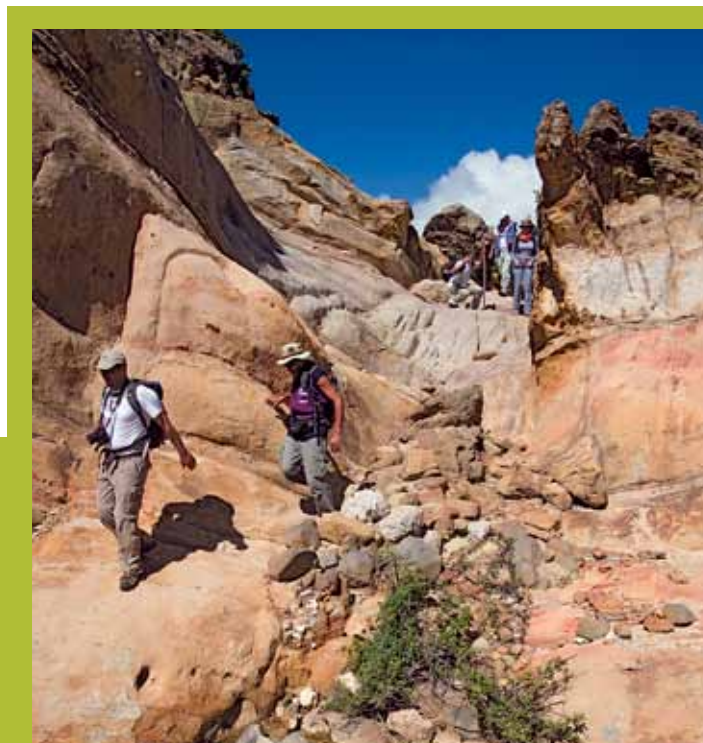


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Luxury hotels

Budget hotels

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Furnished apartments

Hotels in Tyre

Spa resorts

Tours & activities

3 stars

Online booking

5 star hotels

Beach resorts

Large choice of hotels

Hostels

Week-end getaways

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Spa

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Hotels in Beirut

now chalets

4 star hotels

Guesthouses

Fireplace

Cheap accommodation

Hotels in Hamra

5 stars

Charming lodges

Hotels in Tripoli

The Orange House Project

The Orange House, a B&B, has three rooms for guests who can help out with the conservation project or just appreciate the simple pleasures of one of Lebanon's wildest and most beautiful beaches. A kitchen is available for the use of visitors who wish to prepare other meals. Otherwise the nearest restaurants are in the next village or in Tyre.

What to do and what not to do when on the turtle conservation beach or any beach for that matter

DO

- ask about the turtle conservation project
- offer to help with cleaning the beach or taking care of nests
- explain to others how to protect turtles
- call if you find any sign of turtle activity or any evidence of stranding
- place beach umbrella only near shore where indicated

DON'T

- leave litter on the beach
 - visit the beach at night during the nesting/hatching season
 - shine lights at night that could disorientate hatchlings
 - light fire on the beach or near it
 - do not remove any mark (like string or other) that you find on the beach
 - do not take pictures of turtles during the night
 - If you dig holes or make castles, remember to erase them before you leave the beach
 - do not take too many shells from the beach
 - do not drive on the beach
- orangehouseproject.com



Nada Sbaiti El-Zein

June 2011



I never thought of myself as a nature buff, despite the fact that I respect nature and try to do my bit to lessen my impact. However, I always had this feeling that people who go to extremes to protect and preserve nature not only become annoying but also harbor a hidden show-off streak that I find even more annoying. This all changed when I visited the Turtle reserve in Tyre.

It all started when a friend of mine, an AUB professor, called to ask me if I was interested in going with her and her son to see turtles hatching. I accepted without a moment's hesitation. I took half a day off from my work, called my son who was 13 at the time and off we went. I honestly didn't know what to expect, except that this was an adventure I didn't want to miss.



We arrived at the Orange House bed and breakfast in Tyre at around 3 in the afternoon. It was beautiful, simple and serene. Walking through the banana field you reach a gate that opens onto a golden, unspoiled stretch of sandy beach. We swam and lay on the sand until around sunset, just in time for the hatching of eggs in 3 nests. Each nest was covered by a one square meter metal grid, anchored with iron hooks, to keep the predators out while allowing the hatchlings to leave. The expert removed the iron grid and started digging a hole. There we saw white leathery eggs that started hatching instantaneously. They were placed in a bucket, counted, measured and then set free. Instinctively the hatchlings oriented themselves towards the sea and started their almost impossible mission, pushing themselves against all odds to reach the water.



It is worth noting that the above photos were taken in the company of The Orange House Project specialists. Please do not handle the turtles by yourself.

Once they hit the water they immediately started swimming. They were so tiny compared to the vast and dangerous sea that I couldn't help but wonder how many would survive and whether this sandy beach - to which they are now programmed to return to lay their eggs - will still be there to receive them in 20 to 30 years. Most likely, it will be gobbled up by progress and turned into a super duper beach resort. This was when it hit me and I realized what a colossal and against-all-odds effort the people at Orange House have embarked on.

I still don't think of myself as a nature buff but now I appreciate nature enthusiasts who go out of their way to make a difference.

Share your nature experience with us and let others learn by writing to readersexperiences@lebanontraveler.com



is organizing the first annual forum on
National Sustainable Tourism Development

Lead, Sustain, Engage

In collaboration with the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism and in partnership with the United State Agency for International Development (USAID), the forum is projected to take place in Beirut during the month of September 2011.

A significantly interesting facet to the Forum is the speaker panel and moderators composing a diverse and unique bouquet of professionals and specialists from around the region.

This forum is the first of its kind in the country aiming to promote dialogue and linkages among local tourism stakeholders and the first to involve entrepreneurs and municipalities in rural areas with national tourism stakeholders.

The forum is carefully divided into 3 main sections; a conference, a round table discussion and an exhibition. Each of the sections was designed to help tackle a bottle neck restrain in the industry:

- The conference will allow attendees to be informed about International niche market potentials, get updated about local Initiatives with potential for International Marketing, and be exposed to gaps identified and solutions suggested.
- The round table will see that a list of Next Steps for "Beyond Beirut" to fill the gap (quality) be drafted, that Next Year's Forum be profiled and that the Plan for a Campaign to Create Full Demand for Tourism in the Regions be defined.
- The exhibition will be a platform for regional tourism providers to display their services and products; it will encourage the creation of linkages, and the sharing of perspectives between them, tour operators and other tourism stakeholders.

Why should you, as a municipality representative, a member of a local development committee or a local community tourism provider attend this forum?

To establish a base of contacts with national tourism providers and to be exposed to their requirements and the constraints they face, in order to better address them. Your attendance will also secure that you get a position in the value chain, as well as inspire you to venture into new products and services. This will automatically channel towards internationally recognized tourism trends.

Why should you attend if you are a national tourism provider?

To be exposed to new rural potentials and services, as well as to pave the way for active participation in the economic development of rural areas, thus bringing added value to your operation in the form of CSR and to confirm that your growth strategy is aligned with international trends.

Why should you attend if you are an NGO working on rural tourism development?

To be exposed to international tourism trends, active communities and potential beneficiaries, as well as the requirements of national tourism providers and the constraints they face to better address them in your work with your beneficiaries.

Stay posted about exact date and venue, media and speakers and download your applications on beyondbeirut.com or call **03 016 607** or email lakkis2009@gmail.com

What is Beyond Beirut?



Lebanon Traveler talked to Wafa Osta, executive director of the NGO Beyond Beirut about the organization's goals and aspirations.

What is Beyond Beirut?

Beyond Beirut is a Lebanese based non-governmental organization with a mission to encourage the development of experiential tourism beyond the city limits of Beirut by creating a tourism industry platform for cooperation and market growth.

What is the vision it operates by?

Its vision is to transform tourism in areas beyond Beirut into models for superior hospitality and community development.

What are its aims?

The organization aims to create awareness of the importance of tourism, beyond Beirut, as an economic driver. It further aims to advance appropriate standards and enhance the quality of service, as well as conserve natural and cultural heritage. Beyond Beirut seeks to promote rural tourism as a means for sustainable economic and community development, in addition to enhancing potential job creation and retention. It also aims to encourage public and private partnerships, as well as policy making.

What is in store for upcoming plans and programs?

Beyond Beirut plans to develop and promote tourism activities that help strengthen and diversify the local economy, and to improve the quality and professionalism of small and middle scale hospitality businesses, such as lodging and food & beverage outlets. Beyond Beirut also plans to establish incentives that provide enhancement of sustainable tourism businesses, as well as conduct awareness campaigns and provide capacity building workshops to the sector's players.

For further information beyondbeirut.com



Tourism in numbers

By the Consultation and Research Institute

Determining the contribution of tourism out of Lebanon's GDP is a challenging endeavor. Unfortunately the Lebanese national accounts do not disaggregate the services' components sufficiently to deduce the direct value of this sector. Further than this, tourism is connected to many other sectors both up and down on the chain of production, which in itself creates methodological difficulties in adequately setting the boundaries of the sector.

However, specific surveys by international organizations provide reasonable estimates that allow the illustration of some of the major characteristics of Lebanese tourism. **These estimates reveal that Lebanon's economy remains highly dependent on tourism.** As a direct contribution tourism represents around 9.4% of GDP, a relatively high share compared to other similar countries in the region. Direct contribution to GDP reflects spending on travel and tourism by residents, non residents and government. This contribution is calculated to be consistent with national accounts definitions.

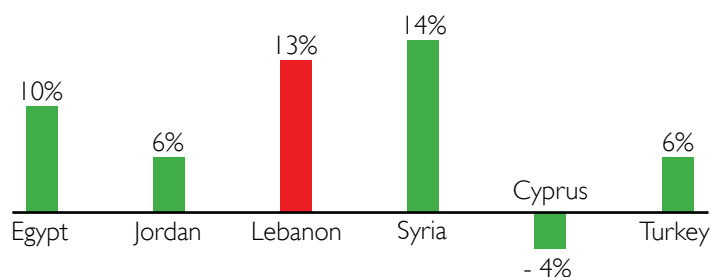
On the other hand, the total contribution of tourism, which in Lebanon reaches 34% of GDP, includes its wider impacts on the economy such as purchases made by the hotel and restaurant industry as well as investments that encourage the growth of tourism. Compared to other countries in the region, the economic impact of tourism as reflected by the difference between total and direct contribution is magnified in the Lebanese case.

Despite this however, successive Lebanese governments have not dedicated sufficient funds to the promotion of this sector. Indeed, the 2010 Budget Law Proposal provides for only 1% of total budget to the Ministry of Tourism. Furthermore, total investment in tourism in 2011 is estimated to reach 10.2% of total national investment.



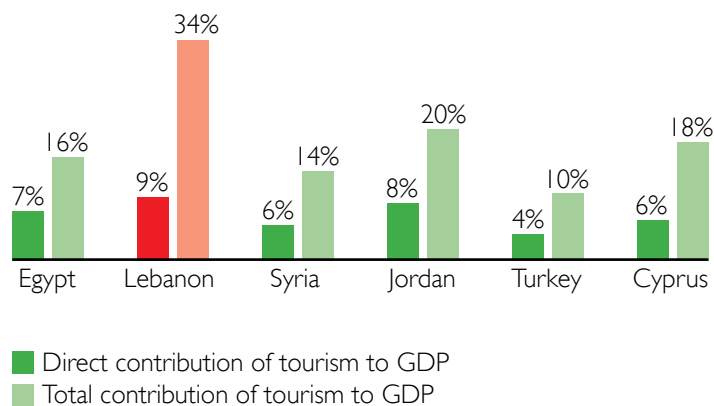
Lebanon's tourism sector is significant and is continuously growing despite regional tensions and the repercussions of the 2008 financial crisis. Indeed, the country has registered an average yearly growth rate of 13%, only surpassed by Syria's 14% average yearly growth rate between 2005 and 2009. This kind of growth needs to be reflected in governmental planning for infrastructure development, and further investment.

Tourist number average yearly growth rate



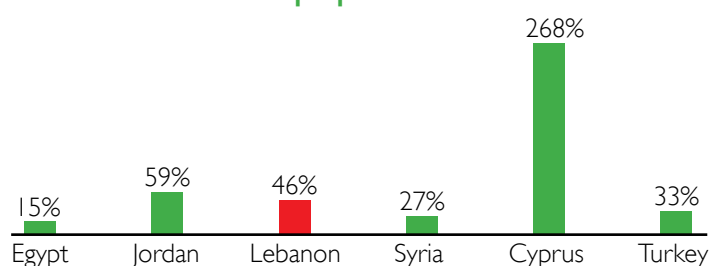
Lebanon is a relatively expensive tourist destination compared to other countries such as Syria, Egypt and Jordan. However despite inflationary pressures that are evident across the region, Lebanon has fared relatively better than its neighbors. The consumer price index for Lebanon (calculated monthly by CRI since 1977) has registered a 36% increase over the past 10 years compared to 74% in Syria, 48% in Jordan and 113% in Egypt. This is in part due to fixed exchange rates and a strict monetary policy. Nevertheless, inflation needs to be kept in check in order to ensure that the country retains its competitiveness.

Contribution to GDP 2011



More than 1.8 million tourists visited Lebanon in 2009 representing nearly half of Lebanese residents. This reflects a relatively high increase since 2005 when 1.1 million tourists visited Lebanon despite a slump in 2007 related to the both the July 2006 war and the Nahr el Bared crisis.

Tourists share of population



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15 and 16 ,
23 and 24 ,
30 and 31

August:
6 and 7,
13 and 14
(Families weekends),
20 and 21
(Adventure weekend),
27 and 28
(Gastronomy weekend)

September:
3 and 4
(Adventure weekend),
10 and 11,
17 and 18
(Cultural tour weekend)



**For packages' prices and reservation please contact Pascal at: 03. 218 048 or
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10 things to do in Jezzine

Lebanon's Jezzine is one of the country's most beautiful districts. Surrounded by mountain peaks and pine forests, it is one of Saida's summer resorts and tourist destinations. Not only does it offer stunning natural beauty, but the area is also home to major religious sites and ancient ruins.

The area of Jezzine is also remarkable for its rich agricultural diversity. Although years of political difficulties have left the area's tremendous promise largely untapped, however, thanks to sustainability efforts this is beginning to change.

Over the last few years, initiatives to capitalize on Jezzine's potential have been coming to fruition. On the whole, these revolve around the principal of nature tourism meaning responsible travel to natural areas that simultaneously conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people. Nature tourism is especially suitable for an area like Jezzine, whose inhabitants are overwhelmingly proud of their home. Through this the emphasis of travel is focused on mingling with the local community. Travelers are also made aware of local concerns such as the conservation of natural areas, as well as endangered and threatened heritage.



1 Bkassine Pine Forest

Bkassine lies next to the largest fruitful pine forest in the Mediterranean, spreading over 200 ha. This forest is the most important feature of the village and is the main touristic attraction.

The Municipality is responsible of the management of the forest and of all activities taking place within. The forest includes several traditional features such as kilns, olive presses, old bridges, water sources and hydraulic mills representing an ideal location for ecotourism. The forest also offers a beautiful panoramic views of the Mount Lebanon ridge.



2 Jezzine's waterfalls

At 74 m they are among the highest in Lebanon and have earned the town the title of 'City of Falls'. According to Joe Naim, consultant of the Union of Jezzine Municipalities, "to see it in full force it is necessary to come in winter or spring."

3 Explored caves

The Fakhreddine grotto is especially well known. Situated 500 m from the waterfall, it is a cave that Emir Fakhreddine hid in before the Ottomans captured and killed him. It was still used as a refuge for people of the region at the time of both the first and second world wars.

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4 A diversified landscape

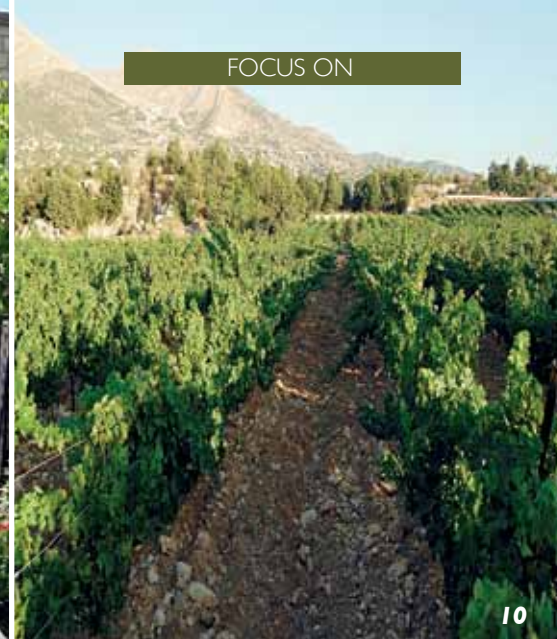
Jezzine's mountains also bear a mass of unexplored caves. With its average altitude of 950 m, it offers stunning views with the higher altitude lands offering views of the town and the Mediterranean, as well as the Mount Lebanon ridge. The area where the mountains reach their phenomenal height of 1670 m has fondly been called "Toumet Jezzine", and a recently planted cedar forest is known as The Coca Cola Cedar as it was financed by the company.



8



9



10

FOCUS ON

5 Religious sites

Phoenician and Roman archeological sites have been found, along with Roman water canals and tombs. The 1252 **Church of the Lady of Bisri**, the **Monastery of the Lady of Machmouche** (one of Lebanon's largest and most important Maronite monasteries, is built on the burial site of Patriarch Semaan Awad), the **Monastery of Bhannin**, **Monastery of Saint Peter and Paul** in Qattin, the **Monastery of Mzayraa**, the **Monastery of Saint Antoine and Saint Thècle Church** in Bkassine are widely celebrated.

6 Hiking & trekking

The Lebanon Mountain Trail, is a long-distance hiking trail extending from Qbaiyat in the north of Lebanon to Marjaayoun in the south. The Jezzine region is one of the country's most-loved hiking spots and showcases the natural beauty of Lebanon's mountains. The Iris Flower Hotel hosts LMT hiking trips over distances both long and short – the choice is yours! Horseback trekking has gained in popularity worldwide over the years and is available now in Jezzine.

7 Mouneh

A selection of preserved foods for the winter months that Lebanon has become famed for. Jezzine specialties include pine nuts, olive oil, olives, soap, kechek, jams and Arak. Jezzine's wine is also becoming more and more known. Medical herbs and locally made candles are other favorites.

8 Local handicrafts

Daggers made of inlaid mosaic and bone, and trademark ebony and bone handled cutlery, typically inlaid with mother of pearl, gold, silver and other precious metals. Of the cutlery, most favored are those with handles carved in the shape of a phoenix and vibrantly painted. This firebird cutlery has been presented to dignitaries all over the world, a tradition that began in the 18th century with a gift to the Sultans of Oman. All visitors to the Lebanese Presidential Palace continue to receive the phoenix-handled knife.

9 Jezzine's B&Bs

offer as much of the Jezzine experience as the tourist activities themselves. There are 8 in the Jezzine district, operated by amazing women giving a range from B&B to full board, most of them in Bkassine. As for hotels, there is Jezzine's newest Iris Flower Hotel (mentioned above), the popular Bouhaira Hotel near the lake of the village of Annane and the L'Etoile du Loup resort consisting of 15 chalets around a small pool; it has been open for two years now.

10 Wine and dine at Karam Winery

During the spring and summer seasons, the winery is open for visitors with prior notice from 10:00 am till 5:00 pm. Visits include lunches, wine appreciation and tasting courses.



Meet Joe Naim, who made a difference in his community

Winter Enjoy nature clothed in white snow. The waterfalls especially are exquisite to see in the chill of winter.

Spring Enjoy the environment green and flourishing. Go picnicking, hiking and horseback trekking.

Summer The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on 15 August. Lebaa's August Festival. Room in early September for the Vineyard Festival (Al Karma). And don't forget the Bkassine Festival (MarTakla Festival) around 24 September.

Fall Discover the color of nature and go bird watching. During this season the gathering of grapes and olives takes place and olive oil is produced. It is also a time for harvesting pine kernels to obtain pine nuts.

And what is the favorite activity of the consultant to the Union of Jezzine municipalities, Joe Naim?

"Hiking and nature exploration, and of course the festivals!"

Tel +961 3 561 389

To contact any of the above 10 turn to page 54

Meet 3 Upper Metn locals that made a difference

The Metn district covers a wide area east of Beirut including some of the country's most favorable hinterland. The Upper Metn where country roads cling to mountainsides fully laden with ancient pine forests and traditional red roofed-villages is a few minutes from the capital and easily makes for a great day trip.

Laura Hatem

Local development officer, Hammana Municipality

Hammana is seen in all of its red-roof glory from the road that winds down from Bhamdoun. This picturesque village is just one of 28 that make up Upper Metn and which are all working on creating a map marked with the towns and touristic attractions. The **Hammana Summer Festival** is well known throughout Lebanon, as is the **Hammana Cherry Festival**, which is run in collaboration with Souk el Tayeb, an organic farmers' market. The festival offers venue for local villagers to sell their homemade produce, such as jams and pickles..

The 2011 Cherry Festival included ecotourism projects supported by the Spanish organization Cercs Bergueda. "There are hiking groups, rock climbing activities and rappelling, as well as four hiking trails - the longest being for five hours - that lead to nearby villages such as Chbanier and Falougha," explains Hatem. Other activities are run by the Touristic Club, Sports Club and Shallal Club, all supported by the municipality.

This year sees the first **Balcons et Maisons Fleuris Competition**. The winner will be awarded a trophy and have their taxes reduced for creating a more beautiful Hammana. And in conjunction with Ibsar Associations many trees are being planted with the aim of securing a place on the Google Green maps for local towns.

There are ample opportunities to actually 'live' the Hammana life. Contact the municipality to see how you can lodge with a local family and consequently get to taste a Hamannian dish: Loubieh Badrieh is cooked in Mjadret Loubieh. The Good Shepherd Convent offers private rooms, as does the House of Moukadem Mezher, where poet Lamartine stayed during the 1800s. Currently the municipality is organizing cultural exchanges between the village of Lamartine in France, Macon and Hammana.
hamanamunicipality.com



Fadi Gerges

Owner of Clos de Cana Vineyard, Ras el Harf, Bhamdoun

Most people are aware that the Bekaa Valley is the place for wineries yet there is one winery that is much closer to Beirut than the Bekaa. Just 18km away from the capital and conveniently situated off the Damascus Road at Ras el Harf, Bhamdoun, Clos de Cana Winery is owned by Upper Metn local Fadi Gerges and has been in operation for 12 years. This hidden treasure is great for wine tasting tours and lunches for large groups if booked in advance. Currently, free accommodation is on offer and in the near future, building individual chalets is on plan.

With panoramic views across the Lamartine Valley, so named after French poet Alphonse de Lamartine, who once visited the area, Clos de Cana produces a whopping 200 to 300 thousand bottles of wine per year. "We sell it to the UK, France and further afield," said Gerges. "We even produce wine for other grape growers too."

Fadi Gerges is fully engaged in the local community and works towards bringing people back to the land and the villages that are spread throughout the Upper Metn. In a unique and eco-friendly project, Gerges supplies villagers with vines to plant on their own land and at harvest time he buys the grapes from the landowners at market prices. Currently, 32 villages have participated in the project and this has allowed the villagers to put roots back in villages that were once virtually empty.

"It is pretty foolproof. I offer the vines and an agriculture engineer explains to villagers how to care for the vines. It's ecological and a reason to stay in the village," said Gerges. His vision for the area doesn't end there. He has his eyes on a hundred-year-old silk factory which currently stands in ruins, and which Gerges wants to renew and have working again. Also in the pipeline are walking and driving tours throughout Upper Metn.

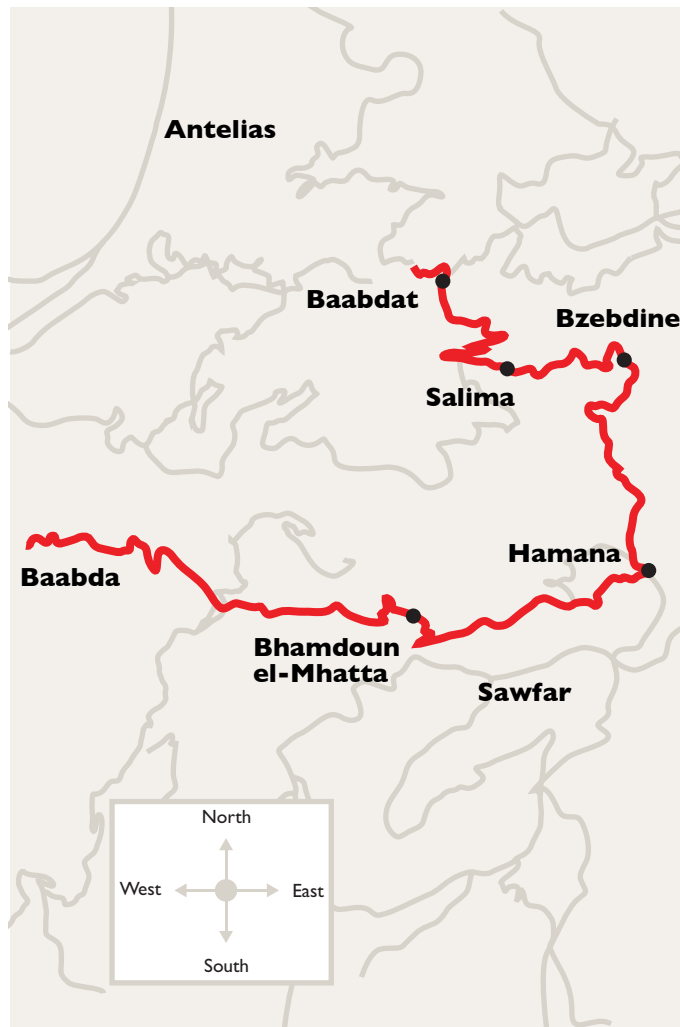
closdecana.com



Whistle-stop Tour

Short on time yet don't want to miss out on the upper Metn's beauty? If you have access to a vehicle then do a circular road trip and drive through realms of pine forests through villages and by the side of a river.

Take the **Damascus Rd** to **Mattar Bhamdoun el-Mhatta** then follow the road through **Hammana** to **Bzebdine**. At the **Hidden Valley** take a left down a narrow lane and follow the road down the valley to **Salima** and follow signs to **Baabdat**. The route takes you into a forest valley with unexplored hamlets before rising to **Baabdat** in **North Metn** and back down on the new **Baabdat Highway** to **North Beirut** suburbs. En route there is ample opportunity to stop at scenic spots, as well as munching on a manouche from a local bakery.



Meet Jolly jumper

Think she looks like an ordinary common sheep? Well, think again. Jolly jumper believes she's a horse. Residing at Bzebdine Hidden Valley Ranch, Jolly jumper spent the entire three years of life sleeping, feeding and interacting with horses. She even jumps over the fences. Like any pseudo-horse, Jolly jumper enjoys a good patting and lots of affection.

If you are in the area, be sure to say hello as she is always awaiting visitors.



Tony Germany

Owner of Bzebdine Hidden Valley Ranch

The drive to Bzebdine is spectacular as it passes through lush forests and handsome Lebanese villages. At the end of the village is the Hidden Valley Resort run by Tony Germany. The all-year-round resort has plenty to offer for families and accommodation is available for small and large groups who wish to stay and explore the area around Bzebdine. Activities on the ranch are horse riding, rappelling and a plethora of other activities. There is a Sunday buffet every week and booking is recommended. Group caving, hiking and special events allow you to discover Bzebdine's countryside. Though the Ranch appears pretty much isolated, it is in fact at the outskirts of Bzebdine and makes for a pleasant walk into the village's downtown, bzebdinehiddenvalleyranch.com

Where is international tourism headed in 2011?

By Scott Wayne, President, SW Associates, a Washington DC-based consulting practice dedicated to sustainable development through tourism.

Well, if you asked that question before January, the answer was nowhere but up in nearly every market across the globe. After weathering the financial storms of 2009, international tourist arrivals jumped by 7% to 935 million, according to the UN World Tourism Organization.

That means 58 million more people traveled from country to country in 2010 than in 2009. Every region reaped the benefits with increases in arrivals ranging from 8% in the Americas to 14% in the Middle East and 18% in Lebanon.

However, headlines began shifting with dramatic events from North Africa and the Middle East to Japan and travelers predictably began cancelling travel to the region and opting for less dramatic destinations.

With tourism contributing nearly \$62 billion directly in 2010 to the economies of the Middle East - \$4.3 billion for Lebanon - and \$36.5 billion for North Africa, people in the region have too much at stake not to yearn for a tourism recovery as quickly as possible.

With cautious optimism, we review some of the trends that drove growth in 2010 and try to predict future longer-term growth. The trends driving growth varied from region to region.

Key 2010 Tourism Trends (Source: UNWTO Barometer)

Mega-events Events such as the FIFA World Cup in South Africa, the Winter Olympics in Canada, the Commonwealth Games in India and the Expo in Shanghai helped create more positive tourist destination images for these countries and regions.

Emergence of markets as growing generating markets Chinese travelers spent 17% more in 2010 than in 2009, Russians 26%, Saudis 28% and Brazilians 52% on travel in other countries.

Emerging market domestic tourism is gaining as disposable incomes rise, particularly in China, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and India. Increased internet access is also helping to make more travel dreams realities.

Beach holidays continue to dominate Most international travel is still concentrated in summer months to beach or coastal destinations and this never seems to waver.

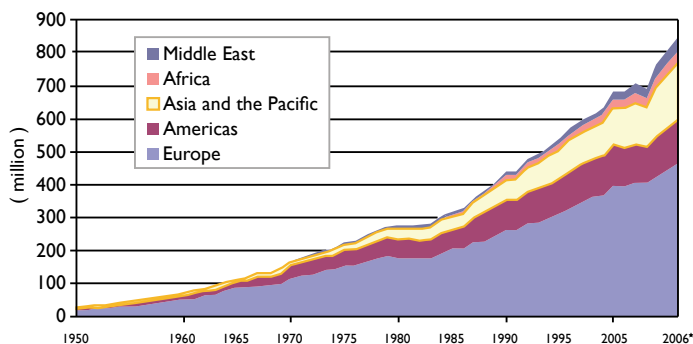
Nevertheless, **niche markets for special interest activities and authentic experiences** are growing. International tour operator TUI predicts that adventure travel will increase by 70% between 2010 and 2013. Cultural tourism, voluntourism, ecotourism, educational travel – all are increasing.

With growing interest in niche markets and easier online access to international markets, more travelers are discovering more destinations. This bodes well for new or renewed destinations, such as the type of touristic experience offered by Beyond Beirut.

Events across the region are derailing economic growth, including tourism, but from a longer-term historical perspective, the derailment is a temporary bump in the path towards more positive changes. Since 1995, international tourism has experienced a few declines, but overall has steadily climbed from 528 to 935 million.

Taking a more historical perspective from 1950, tourism growth has been nothing short of dramatic – despite multiple wars, natural and man-made disasters, political upheavals, and economic convulsions on every continent touching every country. Travel, the desire to explore and discover the world, is in our DNA. (see Graph 1)

Until events in Tunisia and Egypt began roiling across the region beginning in December and January, the Middle East was one of the fastest growing regions in the world. UNWTO's Panel of Experts was optimistic and enthusiastic about the prospects and scored the region higher than any other since the Panel began its rankings for the UNWTO Barometer Confidence Index in 2003. In fact, with a 14% increase in international arrivals – the highest in the world – there was reason for optimism. Lebanon rode the wave with about an 18% increase and an even greater increase for Syria at 43%. Again, although tourism is mostly derailed for the first half of 2011 in the region, the longer-term outlook bodes well for the future.

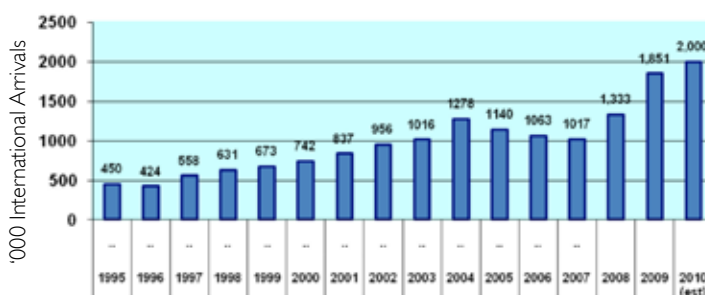
Graph 1 - International Tourist Arrivals 1950-2006

According to the UNWTO, tourism to the Middle East was growing quickly due to a relatively strong regional economy and increased demand for business travel, particularly the MICE market. Other reasons cited include increased air capacity, relatively improved stability in the Levant and a surge of 66% additional arrivals to Saudi Arabia.

Over half of the tourism to the Middle East has been concentrated in Egypt, Syria, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. For Egypt, over 75% of the visitors were from Europe, most of whom were leisure visitors. Saudi Arabia has a different market composition with almost two thirds coming from just three countries – all in the Middle East – Kuwait, UAE and Egypt. Tourism to Syria has also been concentrated in the Middle East with over half of arrivals coming from Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.

In 2010, the author and Beyond Beirut founder, Wafa Osta, were commissioned by the World Bank to produce a "Tourism Sector Review & Potential for Growth Study," which analyzed Lebanon's tourism trends and prospects for future development and growth.

As the study emphasized, Lebanon exemplifies the resilience of tourism. Despite tumultuous drops from wars and conflicts, tourism has always bounced back. In 2010, international arrivals were estimated to reach over 2 million earning the country the UNWTO designation as one of the fastest growing destinations in the world.

Graph 2 - International Tourism Arrivals to Lebanon 1995-2010

For 2009, international arrivals to Lebanon comprised about 3.5% of total international arrivals to the Middle East and less than 1% of world arrivals. However, for a country with a population of only 4 million and an area of only 10,452 square kms, comparable to Hawaii or Los Angeles County, it is notable that the country received the equivalent of about half of its population in 2010. Nevertheless, it is still less than what Albania was expected to receive in 2010 – which

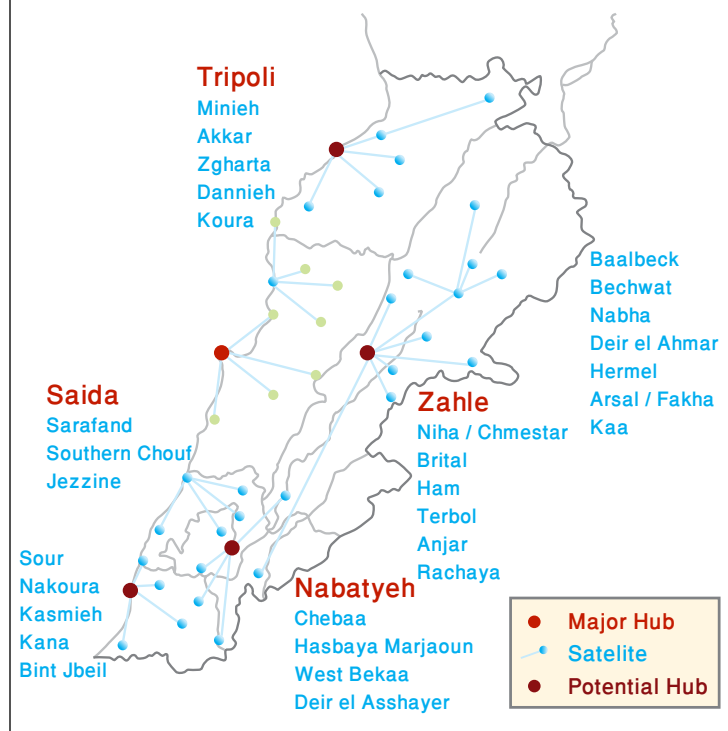
has only just begun to appear on the international tourism map and does not have the cultural and natural diversity, as well as tourism history of Lebanon.

To put the tourism "picture" further in perspective, the country received almost the same number of international visitors as Malta, which is only 316 square kms and is also less culturally and naturally diverse than Lebanon.

Lebanon, which has a much broader and historic base of tourism than these countries, has fallen short of tapping its potential. To better leverage this potential and maximize the opportunities for tourism as an economic driver of Lebanon, the country's destinations and attractions lend themselves well to a hub and spoke approach to tourism development. Hub destinations would serve as prime destinations for accommodations, attractions, investments in tourism, transportation and access to "spoke" destinations near the hubs.

The World Bank study has recommended this approach to the government and tourism industry in Lebanon with the following five key sets of performance targets:

1. Tourism generated export earnings of USD 43 billion by 2020.
2. 200,000 new jobs by 2020 for a total of 749,000.
3. 2.5 million intel arrivals - 400,000 higher spending visitors by 2015.
4. 100% increase in the number of rooms by 2015 outside Beirut.
5. Increased numbers of visitors from Europe and North America.



Scott Wayne has advised Beyond Beirut, the Lebanon Business Linkages Initiative & the Lebanon Mountain Trail project. Previously, he was the North America Director for WTTC, UNWTO's first Chief of Communications, and author for Lonely Planet.

sw-associates.net

Welcome to *Dhiafee*

Your guide to welcoming, warm and
affordable lodgings throughout Lebanon

For decades, people all over the world have loved to visit Beirut to see the "Paris of the Middle East" and enjoy the life the city has to offer. However, throughout all Lebanon many of the wonderful treasures that are waiting to be discovered are often missed.

Tourists typically take day trips to the better known sites such as Baalbek, Byblos or Tyre, where they get to see the countryside through the window of a bus, visit the site, and then return to Beirut by night. This is probably because they do not know where to stay in the small towns around Lebanon. Tourists, as a result, often miss out on discovering the richness of quaint villages and their beautiful natural, cultural and historical treasures.

No matter where you choose to go, you are always bound to find a warm and cozy place to stay through the DHIAFEE network. DHIAFEE was originally conceived by ANERA (anera.org) as a development program in recognition of the outstanding potential for tourism to contribute to the economic development of communities' throughout Lebanon.

Through this network, you get to choose your lodging through a wide variety of options: guesthouses, small inns, small hotels lodgings in convents, youth hostels or eco-lodges. Many of these are also bookable online.

Be sure that by staying at any DHIAFEE lodging you are actively contributing to economic development of local people, and helping them enhance their service quality.

Today's highlight takes us to 2 DHIAFEE guesthouses, El-Ashkar guesthouse and El-Qontar guesthouse, respectively in Khreibeh and Mtain.

El-Ashkar guesthouse

Easy to access, the newly furnished family guesthouse with a panoramic view of high Shouf is located in El-Khreibeh, 70km from Beirut. The host, Salim El-Ashkar, relates the story of the 200-years old house. More than five generations of the Ashkar family have

lived in this house before Salim decided to transform the ground floor into a guesthouse. He relates that a few years back when he used to randomly receive guests through an alternative tourism company, the clients used to stay in one room on the ground floor. "Because of the limited space, few of them used to stay in my house on the first floor where my mom and I live", says Salim.

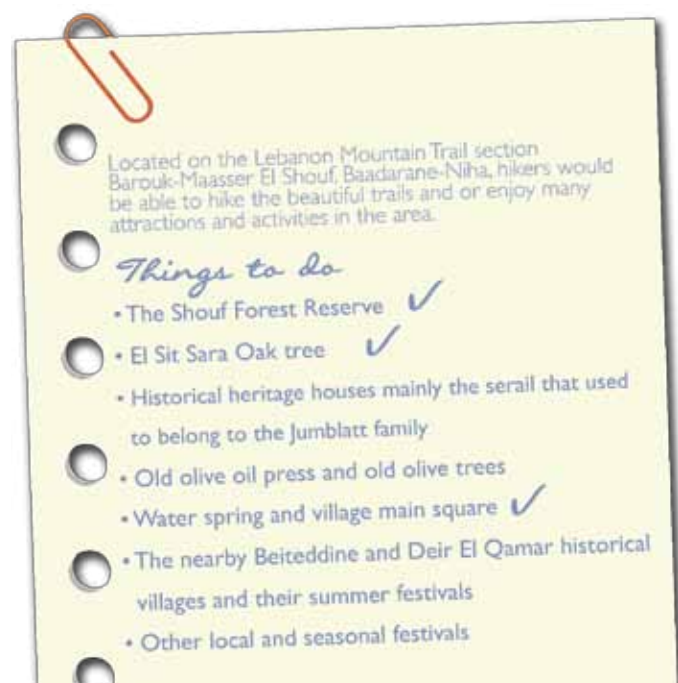
Salim works as a contractor and has never considered working in tourism before. However, with the growing interest of tourists, especially hikers and nature lovers in the Shouf area, and with the development of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, Salim was encouraged to renovate the house. With his private funds and support from the Shouf Biosphere Reserve, Salim renovated the ground floor and the exterior of the house, garden and terrace. While renovating, he tried to preserve the traditional look of the house. He also benefited from the in-kind support and training offered by the Lebanon Mountain Trail and DHIAFEE programs to help him manage his new business.

Salim also tries to benefit the local community through his newfound activity: He engages people from the local community and neighbors to help with the meals, local products and housekeeping.

Whether you are a hiker or just interested in relaxing and visiting the wonderful green Shouf, El-Ashkar guesthouse offers:

- 4 rooms and 15 beds with the possibility of adding mattresses for large groups
- A common kitchenette, sitting room and two bathrooms
- A large terrace and green space for gatherings and events
- Tasty recipes for breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as lunch boxes
- Tour guide for trips in the Shouf

The place is suitable for individuals and/or groups wishing to hike, relax and/or tour the area.





El-Qontar guesthouse

The newly refurbished guesthouse is located in one of the famous and historic Abillamaa palaces of Mtain, one of the areas in Lebanon's most preserved pine forests; at only 35 km from Beirut.

Since 1905, four generations of El-Qontar family have lived in this place; but the age of what used to be a grand Abillamaa Serail dates back to year 1670. It's a three-floor still-standing wonderful old stone building that used to comprise, among others, a court and a prison. Since 1949, the building, with the main square and the five other surrounding buildings are on the historical list of the Directorate General of Antiquities.

"The house is very big for us. It has always been my dream to renovate it and transform it into a Hotel de Charme, but this is a very costly endeavor and I do not have the means" says Faisal, the owner. Faisal lives with his family and his sister in one part of the big mansion. "My profession is law but I grew up with the interest in history of the village and tourism..

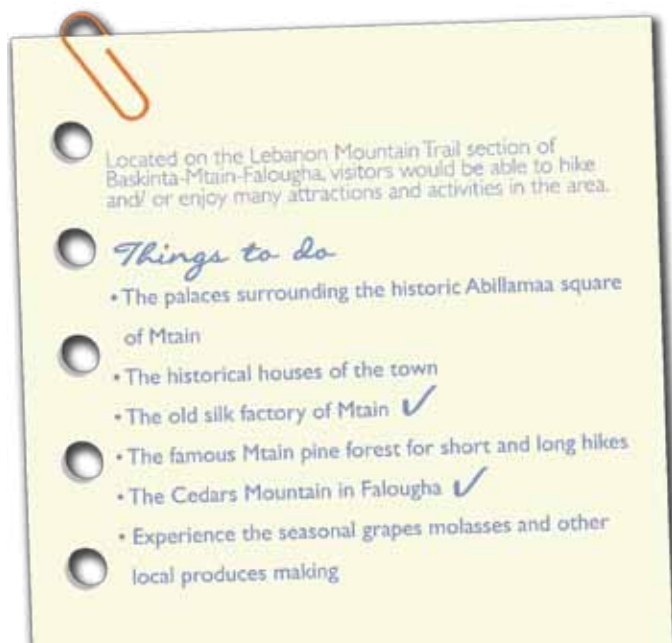
My father was a very hospitable man and we have long since received guests and family", he continues.

The Lebanon Mountain Trail team approached Faisal about 4 years ago when they were looking for a stop-by guesthouse on the hiking trail. The project helped Faisal renovate and equip part of the ground floor among others a big room, a kitchenette and a bathroom to accommodate hikers and visitors looking for a place to stay in the area. This was a start-up for Faisal to begin renovating the place, but a big part still needs work.

Faisal and his sister also benefited from the training offered under DHIAFEE and the Lebanon Mountain Trail programs to run the business.

Whether you are a hiker or just interested in relaxing and visiting the historical and beautiful natural area, El-Qontar guesthouse offers

- One common big room with 6 beds, with the possibility of adding mattresses for larger groups
- A common kitchenette, small sitting room and one common bathroom
- Tasty recipes for breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Lunch boxes for the hikers
- Tour guide for trips in the region



The DHIAFEE Program is a development program that works on promoting responsible and alternative tourism. It was conceived by ANERA in recognition of the outstanding potential for tourism to contribute to the economic development of communities' throughout Lebanon. dhiafeeprogram.org
info@dhiafeeprogram.org

Get *acquainted* with Lebanon's *capital*

It's still a rare sight to see tourists wandering around the streets of Beirut and even less common to see native Lebanese being tourists in their own country, their favorite pastime still being a rendezvous for lunch or dinner. But, a curious few are keen on discovering the less-known sites of the capital. And as there is no better way to explore a city than in the hands of a knowledgeable guide, WalkBeirut tours are a sure blessing to visitors and residents alike.

"I started offering walking tours in June 2006, in memory of Samir Kassir," explains Ronnie Chatah, the 29-year old founder of WalkBeirut currently studying for his Masters at CAMES (Center for Arab and Middle East Studies). Kassir is a Lebanese journalist who was assassinated in 2006. "I enjoyed the way he brought Beirut to life through print, and I wanted to add to the narrative with visual storytelling of Beirut's history, similar to other walking tours offered in European cities."

The WalkBeirut tours never properly materialized due to the 2006 summer war following which tourism more or less disappeared until early 2009, when Chatah brought the tours back to life in April of that year.

The concept is simple: get to know Beirut by foot. Tours involve walking a route through neighborhoods that particularly portray Beirut's diversity, and thus the group gets to see places that tourists might otherwise miss.

The walking tours start off at the American University of Beirut, they move through the Hamra area and onto Downtown ending up in Martyr Square. The tour takes around four hours with various stops, including a 30-minute break midway. Chatah is there to guide on the past and present, from the Roman sites and the Ottoman statuary, to the history of Beirut's ethnic heritage. "The tour's route follows a story-thread that is pedestrian-friendly and mostly downhill, crisscrossing Beirut's history. It took a few months to get it right," admits Chatah.

Well, it seems that he got it just right. Elizabeth Etoll took the tour last month and loved it. "Walk Beirut was a





spectacular chance to learn so much via our fascinating guide extraordinaire, Ronnie. I learned more than I had on previous four trips combined."

After a record year for tourism in 2009, this year has not got off to a good start. June, July and August are generally the busiest months, but Chatah admits that the general news coming out of the region has resulted in a pretty large drop for bookings compared to last year.

"I'd guess almost 30% of those who book for the tour eventually cancel their trips to Beirut. The groups are also smaller than this time last year, roughly a 30% decline."

But, this hasn't dimmed the passion with which Chatah guides through the city. Whether you are a tourist, an expatriate or a born and bred Beirut, WalkBeirut tours are a definite eye opener through Beirut's intricate history and culture.

Chatah's biggest obstacle is not the downturn in bookings, but rather Beirut's increasing noise pollution. At times he struggles to be heard competing with construction and traffic, despite his most pedestrian-friendly route.

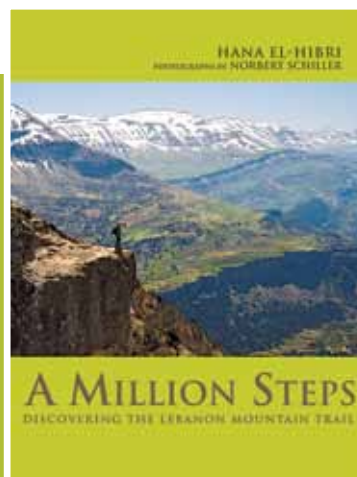
"Beirutis (and foreigners alike) know a bunch of tit-bits of Beirut's past. But it's hard to navigate the city's history, without spending a few hours by foot bringing it to life," says Chatah. "I think the tour helps connect a few dots that cannot be connected in a car or a bus...they have to be done on foot."

Walk Beirut tours meet on Saturday and Sunday afternoons at 3.30 p.m. at the AUB Medical Gate. Times may change during the summer months to avoid the afternoon heat.

For reservations

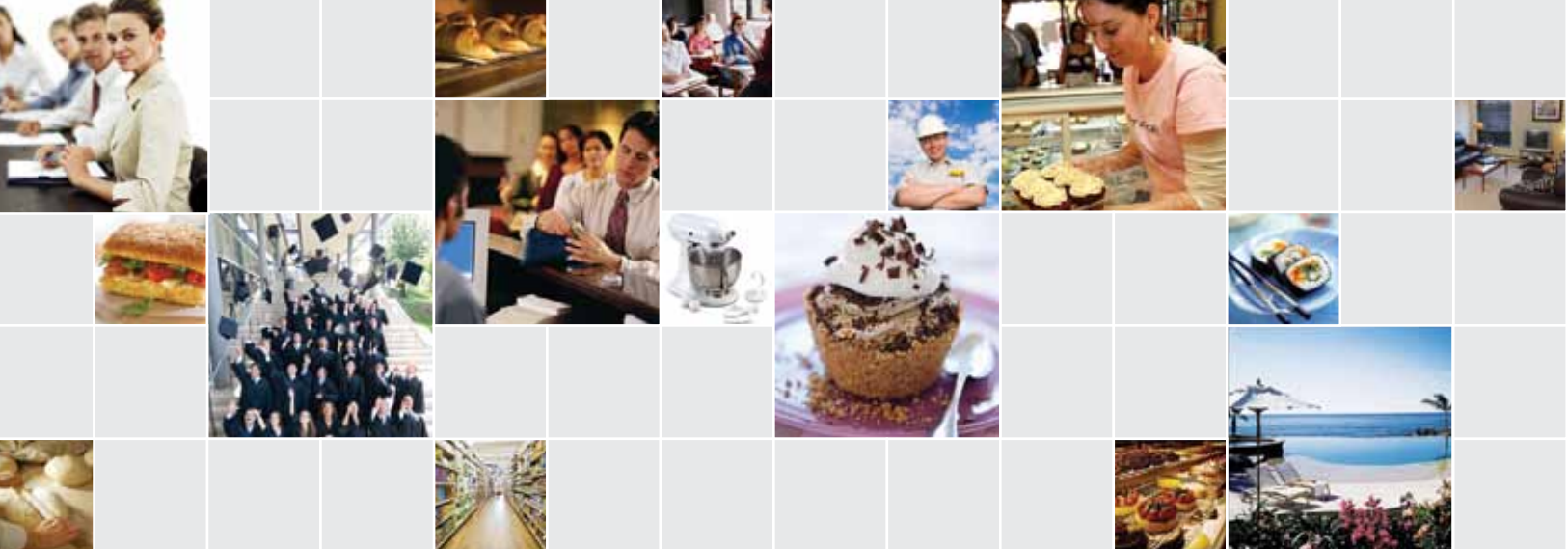
E-mail walk@bebeirut.org

Tel +961 70 156 673



►► Now that you have walked through Beirut try walking through Lebanon page 26

A Million Steps gives us wonderful glimpses of a Lebanon rarely seen, and of an adventure of discovery, beauty and companionship to be treasured by all who value Lebanon's rich rural heritage. Photos by Norbert Schiller



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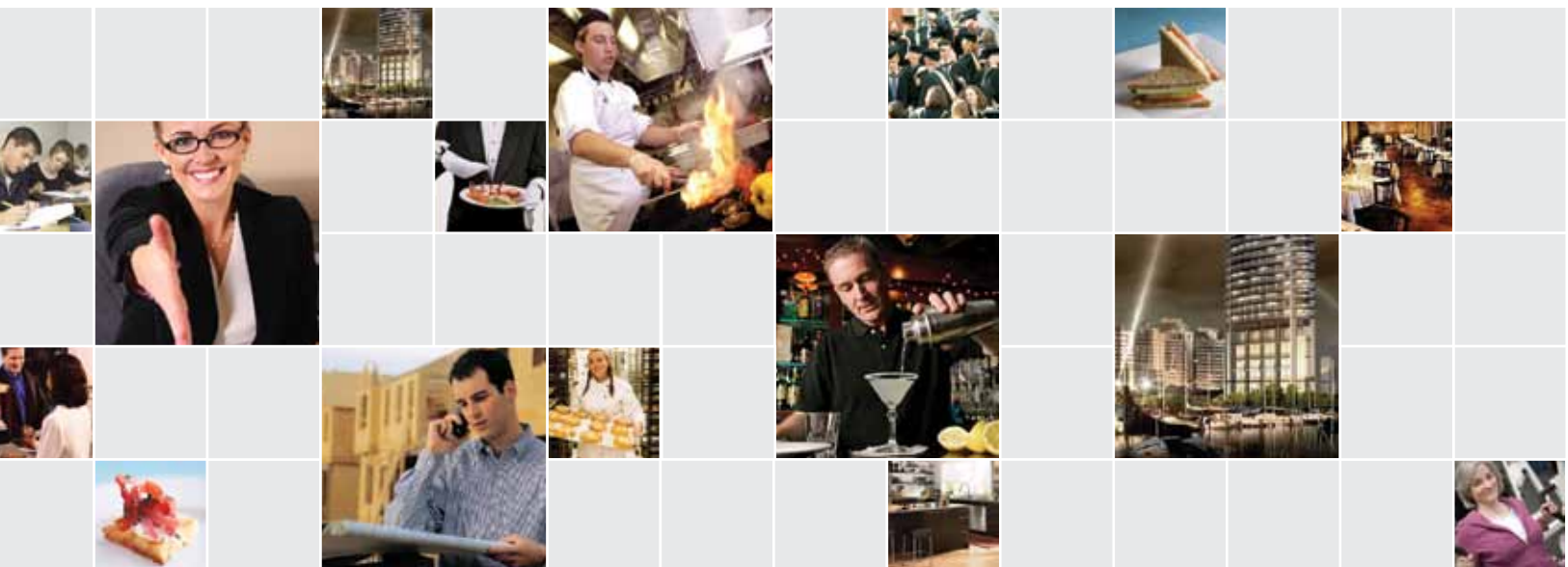
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Walk through Lebanon in a month

The Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT), is a 440 km hiking trail, extending from **Al Qbaiyat** in the north of Lebanon to **Marjayoun** in the south, passing through high mountain ranges and deep valleys, 600 meters to 2,000 meters (about 1,800-6,000 feet) above sea level. It passes **through or near 75 towns and villages**, three nature reserves (**Horsh Ehden, the Tannourine Cedar Reserve, and the Al Shouf Cedar Reserve**) in addition to the Qadisha valley, a World Heritage Site.

The LMT was conceived by ECODIT, a worldwide environmental consulting company, to expand economic opportunities in rural areas through environmentally and socially responsible tourism.

On 1 April 2011 the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) organized its 3rd complete Thru-Walk, from Marjayoun to AL Qbaiyat. Several international hikers from a dozen countries came to Lebanon especially for the occasion, and were joined by Lebanese hikers who trekked sections on both weekdays and weekends. The Thru-Walk ended in the Akkar region on 28 April and the hikers received a warm welcome in the village of Qbaiyat by the town mayor and local residents. The next Thru-Walk is planned for autumn 2011.

lebanontrail.org

Museums with a difference

Museums provide a unique interactive experience of getting up close to things we usually only see in books, newspapers or on the television. In terms of education, going to a museum can bring what is taught in schools to life. Research shows that those who have had firsthand experience are more likely to retain it in later life. Museums can then be an extremely valuable source of creativity, particularly art galleries or photography exhibitions, as many people find they are inspired and subsequently want to try such activities themselves.

Museums are also a significant factor in attracting tourists to an area and can therefore be instrumental in helping the local economy in terms of supplying a passing trade as well as offering local people employment. Juliana Khalaf, curator and museum specialist takes a look at two very different and interesting museums

The Silk Museum



When you think about Lebanon and cultural tourism, you can't but think of ancient ruins and archeological art. However, we tend to forget that Lebanon was once one of the more important silk producers in the world. The silk tradition in Lebanon is more than two thousand years old. The advent of synthetic fabrics in the 20th century marked the end of silk production and by 1983 all silk productions were suspended. In order to preserve the memory of traditional silk making, the Bsous Silk Museum that originally operated as a silk factory between 1901 and 1954 was inaugurated in 2001.

Georges and Alexandar Asseily restored it lovingly and now the museum offers a step-by-step guide to silk producing and beautiful examples of finished pieces as well as an extensive historiography of how silk production affected Lebanon on a social and economical level. Occasionally, if you are lucky, the museum houses temporary exhibitions.

The Silk Museum is located in Bsous, in the Mount Lebanon district and is approximately a 30-minute car ride from Beirut. It is open from May through end of October, from 10 am to 6 pm, daily (closed on Mondays) and it is advised to reserve in advance for group visits.



Keep in mind that the approximate time to tour the museum is 1h 30 to 2 hours. A visit to the boutique is well worth it as you may find interesting artisanal & local produce, and later enjoy a drink and a bite to eat at the coffee shop. You can also take some more time to relax and enjoy the beautiful grounds of the traditionally built museum, and since there is a lot of walking involved it is advisable to wear comfortable shoes.

The gardening workshop in the ethno-botanical garden is a must-see for those who like to get in touch with nature. Otherwise it offers a comprehensive study on ethnic plants and trees of the region

and in that sense the museum is a perfect example of eco-tourism.

“The silk tradition in Lebanon is more than two thousand years old”

What not to miss

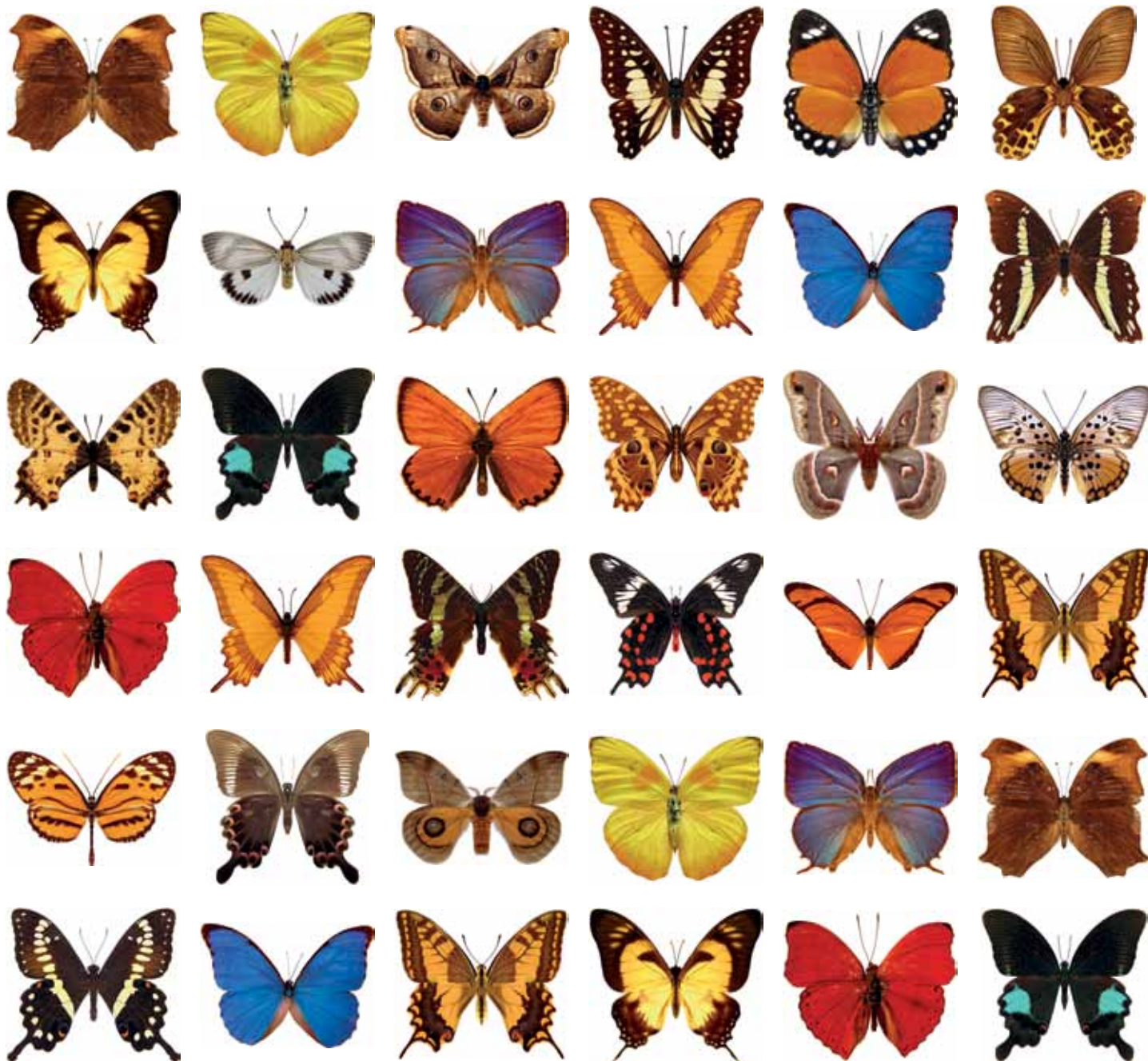
Live silkworms
Botanical Garden
Boutique
Gardening workshop

What to wear

Hats, apron & sunscreen for the gardening workshop
Comfortable walking shoes

The Silk Museum

Tel +961 5 940767
thesilkmuseum.com
info@thesilkmuseum.com



The Butterfly Museum

Eco-tourism has become more and more popular in Lebanon, as this country is very much blessed with breath-taking nature reserves such as the one in Kobayat, in the North of Lebanon (Akkar). Kobayat is also well known for the Scientific Museum for Birds, Butterflies and Animals.

This museum was once a school run by Carmelite priests founded in 1908. Today the building has been transformed into a museum housing species of birds and animals found in Lebanon and up to 4000 species of butterflies from all over the world. And more than 400 birds and animals from Lebanon.

As most of Lebanon's wild life has become extinct, this museum's existence is crucial as a reminder to the Lebanese of what once

roamed their lands as well as an interesting study or the general public on the indigenous species of the region. As the museum is approximately a 2-hour car ride from Beirut it is advised to visit the nature reserve of Kobayat and make a whole day out of it.

What not to miss

The Butterfly section of the museum

The traditional architecture of the building, now a heritage site

What to wear

Hats & sunscreen and walking shoes if you are to continue to the nature reserve

Scientific Museum for Birds, Butterflies & Animals

Mar Doumit Carmelite Monastery

Tel +961 6 350004 - carmes-liban.org

editions@carmes-liban.org

Come for the **festival** stay for the **weekend**

There's plenty to explore near **Byblos, Beitiddine and Baalbeck**. Lebanon's summer festivals this year in Byblos, Beitiddine and Baalbeck offer an impressive line-up of cultural events sure to mark this summer as one of the country's best. However, there is a lot more to see in these areas than a stellar performance. Opportunities abound to enjoy a brief holiday a few miles away from the festivals, with comfortable accommodations, good restaurants, and amazing natural and cultural sites. Here we take a look at some of the lesser know treasures to explore before and after the show.

**“Byblos may
be one of
the world’s
oldest,
constantly
inhabited
cities.”**



Old house on the seafront of Byblos ruins



BYBLOS

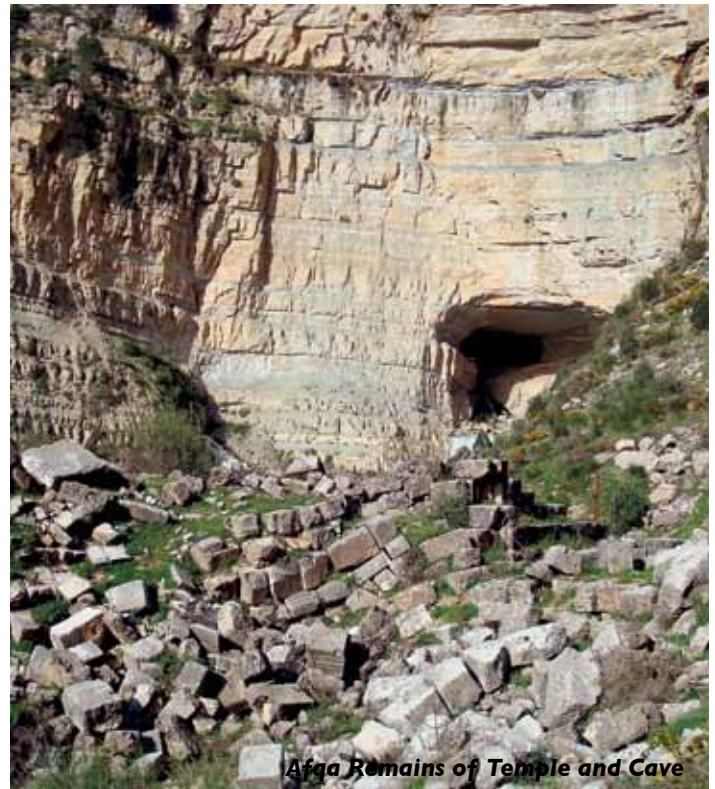
Byblos marina restaurants

In the last five years, locals agree that Byblos has truly grown up, with an abundance of new shopping, dining, and nightlife options near the old center and port, just steps away from what may be one of the world's oldest, constantly inhabited cities.

For culture and history buffs, the famous Byblos ruins, which span 5,000 years of history and include **Phoenician temples**, a **Crusader castle** and **medieval city walls**, are a UNESCO World Heritage site with an engrossing museum. After taking in ancient history, some fascinating contemporary history can be found at **Pepe's Fishing Club** in the port, where photos of numerous celebrities and 20th century figures deck the walls. Another find in the old souk is the **Byblos Fossil Museum**, which contains a fossil collection of fish, sharks, eels, shrimps, squids, rays, and other local sea life. Not far away is the **St. John the Baptist Church** of the old city, a medieval cathedral built in 1116 by the crusaders.

Further afield, the **Afqa Grotto** 30 km north of Byblos cuts into a 200 meter-high cliff, formed by the Adonis River. Legend has it that the grotto is the site where the handsome Adonis, mortal lover of the goddess of love Astarte (Aphrodite), was gorged to death by another jealous god in the form of a wild boar. Astarte pled with the Underworld to release Adonis from death, and due to the depth and sincerity of her love, it was agreed that Adonis could return to Earth in spring and summer. When the river flows red in springtime from mineral run-off in the mountains, locals believed it was the blood of Adonis, and the grotto became a pilgrimage site symbolic of his rebirth, attracting people from all over the region to pray and be healed. Today, the site still receives pilgrims, albeit of a more modern kind.

For pure retail therapy, the old souk features many workshops and boutiques selling handcrafted fashionable and artisanal items. An abundance of seafood restaurants by the port offer the catch of the day, and tried and true restaurants like **Locanda** and **eCafe** in the old souk offer pleasant inland dining experiences, with **eCafe** serving up excellent cuts of meat grilled over an open



Afqa Remains of Temple and Cave

flame in a picturesque cafe trottoir setting. For white tablecloth dining, **Dar El Azrak** of Byblos Sur Mer offers both indoor and outdoor spaces for gourmet Mediterranean fare.

To soak up some sun, a visit to **Edde Sands** is a must, where an all day beach party lasts from morning till night. Next door, **Bay 183**, formerly known as La Voile Bleu, offers a calmer daytime option for families, but transforms into an evening beach party after nightfall. Further afield in Batroun are the more relaxing and low-key yet trendy beach clubs **Pierre & Friends**, **White Beach** and **Bonita Bay** which was newly renovated and rebranded this year, with the addition of a new seafood restaurant.

To slumber soundly within the historical city, the new **Byblos Sur Mer** hotel offers five-star standards directly on the sea. The 30-room boutique hotel breathes romance and tranquility, with artisanal touches like plush oriental carpets, locally embroidered wall hangings and cabinet handles crafted from seashells. The **eHotel** owned by Edde Sands is also a hip spot to snooze, with newly refurbished suites this summer and modern bungalows that can comfortably sleep up to four adults. In Batroun, the hillside **Batroun Village Club** or casual beachside **San Stephano Hotel** are easier on the budget, and just as much fun. For the slightly more adventurous, **Les Colombes** – a picturesque camping site in Amchit – is not far from Byblos, and is a hidden natural refuge where one can enjoy the beauty of the beach and sound of the waves in pristine silence. Pitch a tent or stay in one of their small but tidy studio chalets.

Off the beaten path

CULTURE Venture to **Amchit** to see 88 townhouses built in the 19th century by wealthy silk merchants trading with the Duke of Tuscany. For more historical architecture, continue to **Douma**, an ancient village named after a Syrian queen who married a Roman Caesar. Although the town square is the final resting place for a Greek sarcophagus dated 317 AD, much of the village was built in the 19th century and is a living architectural museum of the Ottoman era, with a gated old souk and terracotta roof-tiled houses. Near Douma in the old village of **Hakel**, marvel at ancient marine fossils in a private museum that has received international acclaim in the world of archeology, the **Expo Hakel Fossil Museum**.

TASTE For a taste of France in Lebanon, visit **La Ferme Saint Jacques**, the only Lebanese producer of duck delicacies like foie gras, confits, and magrets de canard. This unique country farm is located in the hinterland of Batroun near Douma, in the village Bechtoudar. To discover wine, follow **La Route des Vins du Nord**, a wine trail that passes by northern Lebanese wineries Batroun Mountains, Ixsir, Adyar, Aurora, Coteaux de Botrys, Domaine S. Najm and Chateau Sanctus.

RELIGIOUS The countryside village of **Hardine** lies amid a forest of pines near Batroun. This idyllic spot boasts more than 30 monasteries and churches dating back to as early as the 6th century AD, as well as the ruins of a pagan temple dedicated to the god of Mercury from 117 AD. Hardine is the birthplace of Maronite Saint Neemat Alla el Hardini, mentor of Saint Charbel.

ADVENTURE AND NATURE To see something truly awe-inspiring, visit the **Balou Balaa of Laklouk**, a natural sinkhole with breathtaking depths and a stunning natural bridge. For adventure, hike in the **Tannourine Nature Reserve**, or organize a **fossil hunt** with the museum, which will include a journey into a stone quarry where kids and adults can learn to use hammers and chisels like a pro. In Laklouk, contact the Shangri-La Hotel to arrange a **guided jeep** or **trekking tour** to see dramatic natural gorges, grottos, and canyons that are hidden deep within the valley. For a longer stay, sign-up for activities like archery, caving, roping, and climbing at **La Reserve Afqa**, a camping and extreme sport site in the mountains.

SHOP In Byblos, the **Edde Sands boutique** has a selection of handmade designer accessories, and in Douma, the **Assia Pottery workshop** sells exquisitely crafted ceramic pots.

STAY The **Hotel Douma** is 15 minutes away from Assia Pottery and has a lovely view on the mountains. The Laklouk **Shangri-La Hotel** offers breathtaking vistas from its verandas, and the 1950's and 1960's vintage furniture and bamboo-themed bar lend the place a classic retro vibe.

WINE AND DINE The **Esclapio** restaurant in Douma has an impressive view of the valley, and a variety of Lebanese mezze. **Kfar Helda** has a choice of riverside restaurants. In the old port of Amchit, try **Chez Zakhia** for decadent seafood specials. In Batroun, visit the charming and historical **Batrouniyat**, an organic restaurant in a 300-year old newly restored country house that offers Lebanese cuisine, fresh saj, and a generous international-style brunch on Sundays.



Cafés in the old town of Byblos

BEITIDDINE

While the **Beitiddine Palace** may be an impressive structure to gaze upon during the festival, paying a visit to this palace before dusk is a beautiful journey through time and Lebanese decadence. The palace, built by Emir Bachir Chehab II between 1788 and 1818, is an exquisite example of Italian and Arab baroque architecture. Its museums, gardens, and immaculate arabesque courtyards continue to inspire awe, making it one of Lebanon's most popular tourist attractions.

Not too far from Beitiddine Palace is the enchanting historical village of **Deir El Qamar**, or "the Monastery of the Moon". Its narrow streets and red tile-roofed stone houses characterize the village. Many of Lebanon's diverse faiths have passed through the village with each one leaving their own architectural mark, including a synagogue. Several historical palaces and stately residences are worth visiting, and the summer **Deir El Qamar Festival** presents young Lebanese artistic talents in a variety of cultural performances in a spellbinding setting.

Another picturesque historical village is **Moukhtara**, invested heavily in renovating the town according to Lebanese tradition. The visit is complete only with a stop at the **Joumblatt Family Palace**, where all are welcome to enter and marvel at its ornate antique furnishings and 300-year old architecture. To satisfy any hunger pangs, the famous restaurant **Chalalat Nabeh Merched** in village serves Lebanese cuisine for lunch and dinner next to a cascading waterfall.



Beitiddine



Chouf Cedar Reserve

Maasser el Chouf

Nestled in the green hills of the Chouf, Beitiddine is also near many attractions that showcase the bounty of Lebanon's natural gifts. The nearby **Chouf Cedar Reserve** is a deep wood that is home to a quarter of Lebanon's majestic cedar trees, some of which date back to biblical times. Hiking of all levels is available, and a wide variety of flowers, plants, trees, and animals can be sighted with the help of a professional guide from the reserve or from the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT).

To spend a night in luxury, the **Mir Amine Palace** is a historical boutique hotel just a five minute drive away from Beitiddine Palace. It was fashioned from the ruins of the original palace of one of Chehab's sons, and has 22 rooms decorated in an oriental style, with several restaurants and bars providing ample evening entertainment. For a more rustic yet equally as charming overnight stay, the **Beit El Hana** guesthouse, in the village of Maasser el Chouf, which lies quietly at the edge of the cedar forest, offers opportunities for meeting other nature lovers, savoring organic meals, and being completely overtaken by the tranquility of nature.

Off the beaten path

CULTURE Visit the **Silk Musuem** in Bsous that documents Lebanon's fascinating silk trade. The **Marie Baz Wax Museum** showcases characters from Lebanese history in a wing of Fakreddine's 17th century palace. In the quaint village of **Maasser**, visit an old olive press and winery, and pause to take in the village architecture. Call ahead to organize yoga classes, guided treks, photography workshops, stargazing, and more at **Beit El Hana**.

NATURE & ADVENTURE Hike in the **Chouf Cedar Nature Reserve**, which scientists around the world have designated a biosphere of rare species of flora and fauna. Official entrances are in Barouk, Maasser and Niha. A fantastic grotto at the site of Niha is a hidden gem that can be reached safely with a guide from the reserve after a high adrenaline walk along the mountainside.

TASTE Try the local **korban bread** available in bakeries only on Sunday, and sample fresh **cedar honey** at a small outlet that sells natural products at the entrance of the Chouf Cedar Reserve.

SHOP The Chouf is famous for intricate **needlework** crafts, **medicinal herbs**, and **essential oils**, all of which can be purchased in local shops, especially in Maasser.

STAY In Maasser, the **Beit El Hana** guesthouse is quaint, clean, and perfect for couples, while the **St. Michel Auberge** is ideal for families and youth groups. Other options include **La Bastide**, a modest guesthouse in Deir El Qamar with a view on the Chouf Mountain, and the **Ashkar House** in Khreibeh.

WINE AND DINE At the Mir Amine Palace, **As-Saray** is a fine Lebanese restaurant with magical panoramas. **Al Midane** in Deir el Qamar offers French fare with a twist. For lunch or a snack, discover why Italian pizza kitchen **New Garbatella** in Baakline has such a strong local following.



Mir Amine Palace

BAALBECK

Home to the largest roman ruins in the world, Baalbeck is a relatively far drive from Beirut. To get the most of the ride, make arriving there part of the fun by doing a tour of some of Lebanon's wineries in the Bekaa Valley like **Kefraya**, **Ksara**, **Massaya**, and **Clos St. Thomas**. Most offer packages for wine tasting and lunch, but it is best to call ahead and reserve. Given that one of Baalbeck's most famous temples is devoted to the god of wine, a wine tour could be justified as a prerequisite for fully appreciating the site's archeological wonders.

If having a look at a modern manmade feat of engineering before seeing an ancient one sounds appealing, then another stop is **Lake Qaraoun**. The lake was created artificially by a dam, and is a picturesque spot to take in the vast spaces of the lush West Bekaa Valley. For nature lovers, a little known treasure on the way to the lake is the **A'ana Nature Reserve**, where more than 150 deer live in a 1,000,000 square meter evergreen forest that is also home to rabbits, ducks, and other woodland creatures. To see more animals, a visit to the **Taanayel Farms** in Chtoura is not only a good place to sample fresh cheese and labneh, but also to see farm animals that will surely delight children.

Visiting the World Heritage site of **Baalbeck** itself before the festivities begin is a thrilling step back in time that is not to be missed. Visit the **Baalbeck Museum** first, and the ruins will come alive in a whole new way. For another dose of sacred history, **Anjar** is a short drive away, featuring a World Heritage site of well-preserved Umayyad ruins in a village with a sizable religious Armenian community.

For a quick bite on the road, many **fresh dairy shops** line the main road descending into the valley after Dahr El Baydar, perfect for a labneh sandwich. For fine dining, **Le Relais Dionysos** at Chateau Kefraya serves French and Lebanese fare. For a more traditional Lebanese experience, **Shams** in Anjar offers tasty mezze and succulent seafood like gambas and fresh trout in a modest but friendly setting. To sleep amidst the sounds of the valley, the **West Bekaa Country Club** in Kherbet Anafar, the **Chtaura Park Hotel** in Chtoura, and the **Grand Hotel Kadri** in Zahle all offer reasonable rates and attractive grounds for enjoying a relaxing weekend escape.

Off the beaten path

CULTURE Visit the **Niha ruins** in the village of Niha in the Bekaa, where two Roman temples from the 1st century AD were dedicated to the goddess of Niha. The great temple was the seat of a mysterious cult that spread throughout the area, and it was extensively restored in 1950's by the Lebanese government. For contemporary history, visit the **Palmyra Hotel** and step into the past; the colonial-era relic remains unchanged since the 1960's and still has its star-studded guest book on display with names like General Charles de Gaulle. The hotel was used as a German army headquarters in WWI and a British army headquarters in

WWII. Drawings done by the famous French artist and writer Jean Cocteau still adorn the walls. The new wing is more luxurious for an overnight stay, and the hotel cafe is a good spot to stop for a fancy tea.

NATURE & ADVENTURE Contact **WADA** (Women's Association of Deir El Ahmar) for organized cultural and hiking tours in the area, and discover sites like the **Yammouneh Nature Reserve**, the **Temple of Astarte** (Aphrodite), and the churches of **Our Miraculous Lady of Bechouat**, where locals claim to have witnessed recent miraculous healings.

SHOP Painter Najwa Rifai Sinno and architect Hareth Haidar created an original fashion line inspired by Lebanese and Bedouin abayas, reviving both traditional embroidery techniques and rich local textiles. Their creations are on display in their shop, **Assyla**, which is located in front of the Palmyra Hotel. The workshop of **Hayat el Rifai** on the old main street of Baalbeck features lovely artisanal wares for the home.

STAY In Baalbeck, the new annex of the **Palmyra Hotel** is much more comfortable than its historical counterpart, with a phenomenal view over the ruins. **Pension Shouman** is clean with all of the basics, and has 5 small rooms that also overlook the ruins. **Wada B&B** in Deir El Ahmar and the **Al Rachid** in Jdeydet El Fekha are warm and friendly guesthouses. **Taanayel Ecolodge** is a unique and fun experience from Arc en Ciel, which restored and transformed traditional houses of the Bekaa into rustic and colorful chalets that reflect the culture of the valley. The ecolodge organizes cultural and sport activities for guests.



"Baalbeck is home to the largest roman ruins in the world"

WINE AND DINE In Baalbeck, enjoy Lebanese cuisine at the restaurant of the **Palmyra Hotel**, **Casino Ras Al Ain**, or **Sheherezade**, which is located on the rooftop of the Yaghi shopping center; ideal for lunch with daytime views on the ruins. In Zahle, many cozy restaurants lining the **Berdawani riverwalk** are bustling with families and street vendors selling candy, nuts, and

other local treats. The **West Bekaa Country Club** offers frequent evening packages including dinner, live Arabic music, and bellydancing.

To contact any of the places featured in this article turn to page 54



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Bonding time with dad

Father's Day, inaugurated in early twentieth century, is a celebration of fathers to complement Mother's Day in celebrating fatherhood and male parenting on one hand, as well as to honor and commemorate our forefathers on the other hand. Father's Day in Lebanon is celebrated on June 21, before the first day of summer. It typically involves gift-giving, special dinners in the honor of fathers and family-oriented activities.

Long before any modern observances, a young Babylonian named Elmesu wished his father good health and a long life on a clay tablet. How did our 20th Century Father's day come to be?

After listening to a church sermon about the newly recognized Mother's Day, Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, Washington felt strongly that fatherhood needed recognition as well. She wanted a celebration that honored fathers like her own father, William Smart, a Civil War veteran who was left to raise his family alone when his wife died giving birth to their sixth child. With the assistance of her pastor the Ministerial Alliance endorsed her idea

and helped it spread by celebrating the first Father's Day in 1910. Sonora had suggested her father's birthday, June 5, be established as the day to honor all Fathers. However, the pastors wanted more time to prepare, so on June 19 young members of the YMCA went to church wearing roses: a red rose to honor a living father, and a white rose to honor a deceased one.

It took many years to make the holiday official. It wasn't until 1972 that President Richard Nixon signed it into law that the day was made a permanent national holiday. Soon it spread to Lebanon and the world.

In Lebanon these days, there are a variety of options to spend Father's Day, especially since it falls in the hype of the beginning of the summer season. Most sons and/or daughters opt to spend time together with their fathers while having fun. What better way than taking to the high seas. Take a boat trip, fish together or simply anchore off shore and swim to one of the country's many beaches for a meal of fresh seafood.

Phoenician Hippoi Green Beach, Jounieh Marina, Jounieh (03 249091)

It took three years for Rock Mouawad to build this modified model of a Phoenician Hippoi from scratch, and the result is a graceful, double-tiered delight of polished wood. Trips can range from an hour to five of coastal exploration. Short tours start at LL15,000 for adults, evening tours start at from LL 45,000 per person. Call to reserve.

Eden Yachting, La Marina Dbayeh, Movenpick Hotel Marina, Solidere Marina (71 839437)

Catering for private clients and corporate events, Eden Yachting supplies yachts for weeklong and day charter; private parties, events, diving, fishing, photography shoots, corporate hospitality and team building. Activities include Cruising, Sailing, Fishing and Diving.

Dbayeh Fishing Club Dbayeh Port, La Marina Dbayeh (03 843131, 03256626)

Provides boat rentals and fishing lessons to all levels, with all boats fully equipped. They also offer boating lessons and experienced, professional skippers who will pilot the boat if you're not up for learning yourself. Also contact for diving, cruising and nighttime trips.

Dolphin Team Yachting Dbayeh (04 407788)

Daily 9am-5pm Youssef Jaber Building, Dbayeh.

A variety of luxurious yachts available for rent or sale, and includes maintenance services and a marine store. They also organize luxury boat parties for up to 300 people, incorporating catering, crew and entertainment.







‘ Janna Byblos ’

Eid Al Saydeh

A national religious holiday for Christians and Muslims alike, Eid Al Saydeh is also known as the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. A period of fasting and mourning, when no weddings or communions take place, starts on August 1 and ends at sundown on the eve of August 14 leading to the feast day on the 15th. After which for two weeks every year, celebrations take place across Lebanon.

According to the belief of Roman Catholic, Maronite and other Western Christians the Assumption of Mary was the bodily and spiritual taking up of the Virgin Mary into Heaven at the end of her life. Catholic Church teaches a dogma which Pope Pius XII dogmatically and infallibly defined, that the Virgin Mary "having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." "The Greek Orthodox and Eastern churches know this belief as the Dormition of the Theotokos whereby the Virgin Mary rose in spirit and her body is till today, buried

in Jerusalem," says Father Constantine Nassar of the Greek Orthodox Saint Nicholas Church in Achrafieh, Beirut. In the churches, which observe it, the Assumption is a major feast day, commonly celebrated on August 15.

Mary's Assumption is said to have been a divine gift to her as the 'Mother of God' whereby she rose to heaven. Western Christians also believe that she was free from impurity and was Annunciated whilst in her mother's womb.

"On the other hand, the Greek Orthodox and Eastern Christians see that the Virgin Mary was born and raised an ordinary human being and was Annunciated after archangel Gabriel appeared to her and said that she would become the mother of Jesus Christ. To the Greek Orthodox and Eastern Christians the Virgin Mary is a 'means' to Salvation while to Western Christians she is a 'partner' in Salvation," says Father Constantine.

Mary is the most sacred female figure among Christians and Muslims alike. The religious sites of Maghdoushe and Harissa are visited by both Christians and Muslims, including a high concentration of Iranian tourists. Her feast is one for all sects in Lebanon.

Whatever the belief, this period is marked by a number of activities that promote tourism, such as outdoor exhibitions for local produce, promoting charities and raising proceeds for the poor or simply getting in touch with nature through activities like camping, hiking and site seeing. Meanwhile the hospitality sector is at a constant lookout for better and more refreshing ways to help guests enjoy that mid-summer break. Be it municipalities, slow food farmers, artisans, scouts or family committees, everyone gets involved. Urbanites opt to visit cooler altitudes or beachfront villages where kermises are thrown by contributing families to raise funds for charity. They sell homemade



olive oil and soaps, jams, pottery, handicrafts, knit work and delicatessens. They also promote slow-food small-scale farmers, and children's trivia games. Churches all over the country also call upon private charities in order to help the needy.

"We are expecting a lot of visitors, who can experience exterior local heritage, specialties, delicatessens and produce at each village's bazaar, whilst being able to come back to the tranquil interior or hotel," explains George Karam, Director of Sales and Marketing at the Intercontinental Mzaar Mountain Resort & Spa. Tourists and local families from all religions can enjoy a mid-summer break in the cool altitude of the area – famous in the winter for skiing – along with precious time away from the bustle and heat of the city.



Festivities around the country

The traditional dish served all over Lebanon to break the fast on the Eve of the 14th is 'Hreeseh'. A broth made from boiled wheat and chunks of lamb/beef bones and cutlets, this dish is a healthy nutritious meal symbolic of the basic essentials of life; wheat, water, and some meat to flavor a broth. Today, every cook adds his/her own perfecting ingredient to make this dish not just a must-have during the feast, but a delicious one as well!



Photo courtesy of Charine Yazbek

Anfeh is a town lying on the coast of Al-Koura district in North Lebanon located 65 Km from Beirut. The Crusaders built Our Lady of Al-Natour Monastery, on the Cape of Al-Natour, over Byzantine ruins, at Raas Al-Natour, an area that lies opposite to the Anfeh Peninsula. People from the entire region visit this historic monastery during this feast. The Our Lady of the Wind Church is another site built during the Byzantine era and located on the Northern coast of the peninsula. The town's importance stems back to this church, which is considered by many historians, to be the oldest church in the Middle East. Decorated with frescos that are so faded that they can only be viewed when the wall is wetted with clean water. The church is located in the midst of now endangered salt marches.

Beirut's urbanites take comfort in the cozy Church on Makhoul Street in Ras-Beirut, where special masses are held for the occasion, followed by a festive reception of Hreeseh, Lebanese delicacies and neighborhood fireworks.

Bhamdoun is also famous for its festivities around the Saydeh Church located in the main village square better known as "Sahat Eddayaa". Because Bhamdoun is close to Beirut it is the summer second home to many Beirutis, each household triples in number on this day and the streets are filled with people from all over. A night mass is held while Hreeseh is prepared right under the terrace of the church. Another unique feature of Bhamdoun in the famous local 'tamriyeh', a crunchy square pastry made only in very special occasions!

Deir el Qamar, situated in the Chouf region, is a much frequented destination by tourists looking for a dry cool atmosphere within a convenient half-hour drive from Beirut. The population of the Chouf, cooperate on creating an experience that exposes people to the region's staple traditional crafts, foods, tapestries, flavors, and homemade delicatessens like jams, syrups, orange blossom water, olive oil, and most importantly, the dish that is served all over Lebanon in parallel with this holiday: Hreeseh.

Faraya and Faqra On this occasion six days of fun that include concerts, dance performances, handicraft exhibitions, book animation sessions and a variety of activities take place here. "The entire area of Kfardebyan, Faqra, and Faraya will be celebrating, especially seeing as it will coincide with the Holy Month of

Ramadan this year so we are creating dual packages for the entire month,” explains George Karam, director of sales and marketing at the InterContinental Mzaar Mountain Resort & Spa.

Hamatoura, a village near Kousba in the Batroun region, houses an ancient Church built into the rocks of the mountains, called The Church of Dormition or “Kneesit Rukkad Al Saydeh” where people from all over visit for the special mass that is held there during this time.

Jezzine is a town located 73 km south of Beirut at an altitude of 950m, where grand religious and cultural festivities take place during this holiday. The town is famous for its shrine of Our Lady of the Waterfall. Ancient sarcophagi and Crusader remains and sites are scattered about the town, along with remains like The Saint Antoine Convent belonging to the Antoine order (1774). Kafr Jarra, a village that lies south of Jezzine also houses the Church of Saint John the Baptist. Built in the 16th century, it is one of the oldest churches in the area and the Lebanese Directorate of Antiquities is currently restoring it.

Maghdouché According to Christian belief, when Jesus came to Sidon, the Virgin Mary who accompanied him, waited for him

at the top of the hill where Maghdouché is located today, 8 km southeast of Sidon. She spent the night in a cave that came to be known as Mantara, or the “Awaiting.” Emperor Constantine the Great responded to St. Hélène’s request and transformed the cave into a sanctuary for the Virgin. He erected a tower in honor of the Virgin. The tower collapsed during the earthquake of 550. Later, King Louis IX erected a watching tower in the same location. A shepherd discovered the Mantara cave accidentally in 1726. An icon of the Virgin was also discovered, and it was of Byzantine style, dating back to the 7th or to the 8th century. Since then, the cave has been transformed into a place of pilgrimage for all the Lebanese confessions. In 1860, the Greek Catholic Church became the owner, and transformed the cave into a sanctuary in 1880.

Zahle and the Bekaa A Marian shrine is located in the city of Zahlé in the Bekaa Valley. A ten-meter-high bronze statue of the Virgin Mary, sculpted by Italian artist Pierrotti, rests on a 54 meter high tower, crowning a hill known by the name of Tel Chiha. An elevator takes pilgrims and tourists up to a platform overlooking the brick-adorned town, and offering panoramic views of the valley. At its base, the tower houses a small chapel that seats nearly 100 people.



Eat traditional food & empower rural communities with Mawassem

Beirut tour operator raises interest in the origins of local food, its traditions, and production and, of course, its taste!

The delicious olives served to travelers on Saad tours' Mawassem trips will not have travelled as far as the participants have. They are likely to have been grown in the back garden of a rural family and preserved by the grandmother. To enable tourists and Lebanese alike to discover, taste and shop traditional, homemade products, tour operators are now adding a line up of responsible trips aimed at raising an interest into where the food comes from and how it is made.

With a chance to meet the producers of Lebanon's culinary classics, such as olives, cheese and jams, such tours are proving to be popular with tourists and expats alike. Lebanon-based **Saad Tours** has partnered with tour operator **Responsible Mobilities** to provide the Mawassem trips, aimed at connecting people with the food-production cycle, with tempting themes like **'Dairy and Mouneh'** and **'Lentils and Tomato Paste'**.

Along the route participants meet local producers of Mouneh, the traditional method of food preserving, observe the production and then savor a meal cooked by a local family. Travelers tour rural Lebanon accompanied by a tour leader who explains the country's history as well as food making traditions and participants are encouraged to interact with the producers.

With the changing of the seasons, Mawassem offers different tours and activities to coincide with seasonal harvesting; for example, fruits and vegetables picking, jam and honey making, olive picking and virgin olive oil pressing, preparation of the Mouneh, and more. Activities focus on the Lebanese towns with distinctive specialties and the trips are targeted at young and old age groups alike. And after sharing lunch with a local family, the participants are encouraged to buy food directly from the producers before returning to Beirut. This perfectly demonstrates a truly responsible experience that enables tourists to give back to their host country.

"What impressed me so much about the people in the villages, is that they are really welcoming and they make the most delicious food," said Geena Norton, who visited Lebanon last year. A reminder of why we love this country – and its incredible mouneh.

*Barbara Abdeni Massaad raised interest in Lebanese food traditions a notch when she published **Mouneh: Preserving Foods for the Lebanese Pantry**, last year, a truly comprehensive study and a must have on the bookshelf of every foodie.*



Ramadan drinks

Prepare with
syrups from
sustainable
sources

Since Ramadan falls during summer this year, cool and refreshing drinks made with nutritious ingredients will be more than welcome to break the fast.

During Ramadan, refreshing drinks are a must and no Iftar table is complete without them. This year Ramadan falls in the month of August, so the days of fasting will be hot and extremely long. By the time the call to prayer sounds those fasting will be more than ready to quench their thirst with a cold drink.

Eating nutritiously is especially important and healthy drinks should be served up during Iftar and souhour to help to withstand the heat of the day and the long hours of fasting ahead.

The drink most associated with Ramadan is Amaredine. A good source of vitamins, this drink is made of dried apricots boiled in water with some sugar and a little rose water. Dried apricots are excellent sources of potassium, vitamin A, as well as fiber, protein and vitamin C. Jellab is also at the top of the list of drinks to break the fast with, as do rose syrup and lemonade.

Everybody looks forward to these coolers and no one makes them better than Lebanon's rural women who are known for their syrups, such as mulberry, apricot, rose and lemon, all of which are the base ingredients to making delicious beverages.

"We produce natural juice syrups, without preservatives, made by rural women all over Lebanon," says May Traboulsi chairperson of Rural Delights Cooperative established under the patronage of YMCA Association. "If the women grow apricots in their backyard then we encourage them to make apricot syrup."

Rural Delights Cooperative specializes in traditional Lebanese food products, including syrups, free from additives or preservatives; the name itself literally translates to 'rural delights' in Arabic. The cooperative was established initially as a byproduct of a donor funded development program aimed at providing rural women in Lebanon with income opportunities. The program was established in women owned food-processing centers, linked to Rural Delights Cooperative for marketing their productions. The syrups are made under the quality control of the HACCP and the GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices).

May Traboulsi is not the only person supporting pure local products made by rural women. There are several other associations across the country, including Aghsan in Deirmimas, South Lebanon, established by a group of friends whose aim is to support the work of rural women. They formed Bayt el Mooneh, and the association is led by Asma Al Hourani who ensures that the women produce quality homemade products including syrups which are sold through catering and food fairs as well as directly to the public.

So when looking to Ramadan drinks buy local and support Lebanon's rural communities to uphold age-old syrup-making traditions ... and to quench your thirst after a long day of fasting.
aghsan.org.lb

Loving sushi

the Lebanese way

The sushi craze has taken a firm hold on the Lebanese culinary scene, with the number of restaurants serving raw fish rising fast. It's considered so trendy that you can even find snazzy black T-shirts on sale in Beirut's Virgin Megastore with the slogan "Sushi: Lebanese traditional food".

Just a decade ago sushi was considered fancy, requested by a select group of gourmets and available only in the capital. These days sushi is on offer at most seaside fish restaurants. This should not really come as a surprise, as eating raw fish is actually not such a novelty in Lebanon, it's been around long before the Japanese style sushi arrived on our shores. Devoted fishermen and divers in Batroun have long been slicing their catch of the day to eat on the spot, scoffing at the idea of fancy additions like soya sauce or wasabi.

"For me the best raw fish is in Batroun at Le Marin. They do something very unique, raw tuna pickled, its amazing," says Fares Jammal, photographer, Shadow Professional Photography and passionate foodie. Open since 1993, the Le Marin fish restaurant in Batroun has the perfect location, on the seaside facing the ancient Phoenician wall. It has earned a reputation for providing



fresh lip smacking sushi in the cozy surrounding of a typical Lebanese fish restaurant. The owner Philippe Zeenny is a huge fan of raw fish and has introduced sashimi, Lebanese style, to Batroun.

In Japan chefs marinate raw fish in sake, while in Lebanon the chefs use olive oil. Zeenny pays special attention to detail when preparing the raw fish and has come up with a marinade for fish which gourmets make the journey all the way from Beirut for. With the sushi market becoming more crowded Zeenny knows that his menu needs to be different in order to stand out. "We serve raw the fish marinated in olive oil, lemon juice and pepper," says Zeenny. It's become the house special. And his menu caters to local tastes by using regional fish, tuna and ghazzal.



Amaredine

- 300g dried apricots or 3 sheets of paste
- 2 1/2 cups hot water
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 3 teaspoons orange blossom water

Cut apricots into small pieces, put in a bowl and add the hot water. Leave for 2 hours or more, stirring from time to time until dissolved. Strain the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve, then add sugar and orange blossom water. Leave to cool in the refrigerator and serve.



Jellab

- 1 cup jellab syrup
 - 5 cups water
 - 5 teaspoons pine nuts
 - 5 teaspoons almonds
 - 5 teaspoons raisins
- Pour the jellab syrup into a pitcher; add water and stir. Serve with crushed ice and add 1 teaspoon pine nuts, 1 teaspoon almonds and 1 teaspoon raisins to each glass.



Rose syrup drink

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups rose water
- 1/2 cup lemon juice

Boil 1 cup of water with sugar until completely dissolved. Add lemon juice and let the mixture boil for a while. Add the rose water and keep boiling for a few minutes. Remove from heat and store in glass bottles. For serving, dissolve 3 tablespoons of syrup in water. Serve with ice cubes and mint leaves.



The art of Glassblowing

The making of molded or cast glass vessels or objects was first achieved about 1500 BC but it is unclear whether this process was invented in Mesopotamia or Egypt. Documented evidence for the production of glass includes offertory lists on Egyptian temples. Glassmaking processes were also detailed in Mesopotamian cuneiform texts discovered in Nineveh, as part of the library of King Assurbanipal.

Photo courtesy of Ban Fakihi



A primary glasswork shop was recently discovered at Piramesses, Egypt, while others of the period have been discovered at Amarna. Also of interest is the deposit of molded ingots of glass discovered in the Bronze Age shipwreck called Uluburun off the coast of Turkey.

During the hey-day of the Phoenician civilization, the trading post of ancient Serepta would have had a thriving artisan community with glassmakers selling their wares to seafarers.

Today in Serepta, better known as Sarafand, a sleepy village in southern Lebanon, one family is determined to keep the ancient tradition alive.

The Khalifeh family has been blowing glass for about 40 years, selling their goods in their local shop or to wholesalers. Today the family-run business is the last glass blowing enterprise in Lebanon.

They recycle glass scavenged from garbage sites and turn it into vases, water jugs, drinking glasses, oil lamps, decorative baubles and pieces of art.

All the employees are family members. Apprenticeship begins at the age of 12 and lasts for eight years before trainees are allowed to say they have mastered this delicate skill. It takes 24 hours to heat up the homemade kiln to the required 1,400 degrees C. The kiln is split into two sections, the larger contains molten clear glass and the smaller, the colored glass.

When making a water jug, first, the end of a thin tube is dipped into the molten glass. Then the glassmaker gently blows down it forming a bubble of glass on the end. The tube is afterwards swung in circles to elongate the viscous glass into what will be the neck of the jug. The handle is attached separately with stretched blobs of red glass. Finally, the vessel is decorated with a coiled thread of green glass.

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Eco Luxe with a green touch

Eco-friendly spa is a comparatively new and modern trend of the spa industry, and is becoming more and more popular among the adherents of wellness services. This type of spa is a combination of the modern facilities of the today's day spa, and the natural beauties and benefits of nature.

The essence of the overwhelming positive effect created by the spa center is in the environment and location, where the spa pleasures are offered. There is nothing better than pampering your body and mind in a quiet and verdant setting, enjoying the spa treatments along with the panorama of surrounding nature.

Spas evoke such an atmosphere when nature is lacking. The idea of environment-friendly setting is incorporated even in the rooms design and features, such as 100% organic cotton linen or products from recycled paper. However, most use naturally made products with creams and lotions contain only natural botanicals.

Wellness can be truly efficient and pleasant when achieved through the natural beauties and man-made luxury.

Though approached by international fashionable cosmetic brands, the Eddé Sands Tropical Spa was keen on using natural and organic elements.



Its products, which are free from synthetic material, come from different parts of the world.

With these elements at its essence, EddeSands developed their provençal scrub using sea salt, lavender flowers, olive leaves and lavender essential oil and their Agadir spice scrub by mixing sea salt, coarsely ground pepper grains, crumbled cinnamon sticks, mint leaves, lemon skin and essential oils. Their fruit scrub is composed of crushed fresh kiwi, papaya and pineapple while their sunshine wrap uses beeswax, carrot oil and sweet almond oil. Even their slimming anti-cellulite Massage comprises of green tea, essential oil of lemon, honey and wheat germ oil.

EddeSands recently introduced a new organic line based in Bahrain for their royal manicure and pedicure. It is a luxury product specialized in cold pressed oils infused with naturally extravagant flowers. Damascan rose water and Frangipani body oil are used to give a finishing touch to hands and feet.

New facial treatments are based on aloe vera and the pulp of the prickly pear cactus found on the volcanic Canary Islands. And the anti-aging face treatment includes avocado, calendula, passion fruit seed and red mandarin oils, as well as orange blossom water. Rich in Vitamin A and E, it helps hydrate the skin and keep it firm and is considered to be excellent for skins that have been over-exposed to the sun.

Ayurveda products and treatments use only pure, natural herbal ingredients found in India such as ginger oil, ghee from buffalo milk, kurcuma, piper beetle root, coconut oil and rice bran to name just a few of the more familiar ingredients. Herbal oils are massaged into the body to relieve various ailments including arthritis, insomnia, migraine, back pain and even to improve blood circulation in the legs.

Meanwhile the Spa at the Phoenicia Hotel Beirut is now using ila products, whose three cornerstones are purity, energy & balance.

Each ingredient is chosen for its spiritual attributes as well as its physical and emotional benefit: Argan oil, Himalayan salt crystals and Rosa damascene.



Their Ananda facial uses Marma massage and light techniques to open up the energy centers of the face. The techniques come from Mexican Shaman women, who believe that the energy of light is deeply rejuvenating.

Their bio-energy body wrap, an energizing and detoxifying scrub, is intensified by the addition of a mud wrap, drawing deeper toxins from the cells. A body scrub incorporates specific products designed to cleanse the body of tired energy and restore vitality and vigor, inside and out. The Himalayan crystal salt and argan oil scrubs stimulate the lymphatic system, aid blood circulation and eliminate toxins. Deeply revitalizing the skin and lymphatic system, the mud wrap also promotes profound healing in the body's energy fields.

Starting with a purifying and detoxifying scrub, the Manipura massage then stimulates and balances the solar "sun" vitality within through Marma massage, lymphatic drainage and the application of Himalayan salt poultices. Other massages include the Kundalini back massage, which uses gentle techniques along the body's seven chakras, is deeply soothing, relaxing and balancing to the whole nervous system.

**Here in Lebanon and the region
Beesline products are known for their
natural ingredients, light textures and
compatibility with all types of skin.**

It all began when the company's current general manager, Mohammed Arayssi, was majoring in chemistry and started mixing creams as a hobby. His mother was using a very expensive line of products back then and she challenged him to create alternatives. So he did and his fascination with cosmetics never ceased from that day on.

His sister, a PhD in pharmacology, was researching an ancient science called apitherapy based on the healing properties of bees and bee-derived goods, which they wanted to implement into the creation process of their products, and this is how the first beeswax-based line was born, so they decided to call it Beesline.

Their first product an all-natural lip balm and ointment found great success and through word-of-mouth, Beesline received lots of requests to produce more natural products for specific uses. From

a tiny room in a family apartment, they expanded to a big factory in Bshamoun, with state-of-the-art machinery and talented personnel.

The first line was 100% natural and edible, and wanting every product they created to be consistent Beesline banned the use of all unnecessary chemical additives and colors, using only freshly extracted natural ingredients from the Lebanese countryside as a base. For example Propolis and thyme act as natural antibiotics to fight microbes, olive oil, nigella oil and citrus are all ingredients which are available locally, and which have plenty of enriching vitamins and nutrients:

Beesline also try to use minimal packaging, and always recycle their packages, papers and bottles. Their waste is organic since they only use natural raw materials in the production process. They also use green filters to limit carbon dioxide emission from their machines.

**eddesands.com
phoeniciabeirut.com
natural-ltd.com/beesline**



Your summer calendar

EVENTS

30 June - 3 July

Tyre Festival

01 791252 / 791140

tyrefestival.com

July - August

Deir el-Qamar Festival

05 505173 / 505907

deirelqamarfestival.org

July - August

Ehdénayat

Ehden

01 209309 / 06 662117

ehdeniyat.org

July - August

Freykeh Festival

04 921664 / 03 425280

July - August

Kulturzentrum Festival

09 835572 / 835826/092

1 July *

**Charbel Rouhana and
the Beirut Oriental Ensemble**
Beirut

1 - 3 and 28 July *

Don Quixote

Byblos International Festival

2 - 30 July

Tripoli Festivals

06 423167

2 July *

Sassy Pandez

Edde Sands Resort - Jbeil

4, 6 & 7 July *

Scorpions

Byblos International Festival

5 July *

MOBY

Byblos International Festival

7 - 9 July *

From the Days of Saladin

Baalbeck International Festival

7 - 8 July *

Souad Massi

Beirut

8 July - 2 September

Deir Al Qalaa Festivals

Beit Mery 04 870702

8 July *

Seafood Festival Jounieh

Jounieh Port

03 217099 / 09 938189

8 July *

Roberto Alagna in "Sicilien"

Beiteddine International Festival

9 July *

Ali Campbell

Batroun Festival Mainstage

9 July *

Florent Pagny

Byblos International Festival

9 July *

UB40

Batroun

10 July - 7 August

Star El Metn Festival

Kornt Chahwane

03 331663

12 July *

Jamie Cullum

Byblos International Festival

14 - 17 July

Sayfieh Bil Chbaniyeh

03 129 121

14 July *

Eifman Ballet Theatre

Baalbeck International Festival

14 - 20 July

Rachmaya Festivals

03 331116

14 July *

Richard Bona & Raul Midon

Beirut

15 July *

Kazem As Saher

Beiteddine International Festival

15 July *

Thirty Seconds To Mars

Byblos International Festival

15 July *

Ziyad Sahhab

Beirut

16 July *

Najwa Karam

Batroun

17 July *

Plácido Domingo

Zouk Mikael

09 213213 / 222222

zoukmikaelfestival.org

19 July *

George Benson

Beiteddine International Festival

20 July *

Amadou et Mariam

Byblos International Festival

20 July *

Roomful of Blues

Zouk Mikael

09 213213 / 222222

zoukmikaelfestival.org

21 July *

Clinton Fearon

Beirut

21 July *

Fadl Shaker

Zouk Mikael

09 213213 / 222222

zoukmikaelfestival.org

22 July *

Babel Contemporary Dance

Beiteddine International Festival

22 July *

Tania Saleh

Beirut

23 July *

Abdel Rahman El Bacha

Baalbeck International Festival

23 July *

Les Mysteres Lyriques

Byblos International Festival

27 July *

Ibrahim Maalouf

Beiteddine International Festival

28 July *

Tuck & Patti

Beirut

29 July *

Soumaya Baalbaki

Beirut

30 July *

Louis Hayes & The Cannonball

Legacy Band

Baalbeck International Festival

30 July *

Stabat Mater

Beiteddine International Festival

30 July

Hammana Summer Festival

Laura Hatem 05/530109

bmdl.hammana@gmail.com

August

Haramoun Responsible Tour

03 218 048

4 August *

Iraqi Maqam Ensemble

Beiteddine International Festival

5 - 6 August

Transfiguration Day

Rachaya - Haramoun

03 639 776

12 - 14 August

Eid El Saydeh Festival

Jezzine

03 469 541

26 August - 4 September

Cedar Stampede Rodeo &

Wild West Festival

09 741 188

23 - 25 September

Bkassine festival

Jezzine

Joeharfoush 03 237812

bkassine@cyberia.net.lb

* ticketingboxoffice.com

Afqa

La Reserve Afqa
01 498776 - lareserve.com.lb

Aley

Al Saray 03 467084

Amchit

Chez Zakhia
Zakhia Moujahid 03 846222

Baakline

New Garbatella 05 301411

Baalbeck

Baalbeck International Festival
09 542020

Palmyra Hotel 08 370230

Batroun

Batroun International Festival
03 105700

Batroun Village Club
06 744336 batrounclub.com

Bonita Bay
06744844 - bonitabay.me

Assia Pottery
03 630626 - assialebanon.com

Batrouniyat batrouniyat.org

Bay 183 Beach 03 000183

La Ferme Saint Jacques
lafermestjacques.com

La Route des Vins du Nord 03 661699

Le Marin Restaurant
Philippe Zeeni 03 328678

Pierre and Friends 03 352930

San Stephano 06 643201
sanstephano.com

White Beach
Edmond Abi Saab 06 742404
whitebeachlebanon.com

Beirut

Biladi
Promoting Lebanon Heritage
03 859723

Beesline
Mahmoud Kharmah 01 808817
beesline.com

Beyond Beirut
Nell Hasbani 03 016607
beyondbeirut.com

Consultation and Research Institute
crilebanon.com

Hospitality Services sarl
JoumanaDammous Salamé
03 516555
hospitalityservices.com.lb

Phoenicia Hotel
Maya Hanna 03 874849
phoeniciabeirut.com

Rural Delights Cooperative
May Traboulsi 01 490640

Saad Transport
Miray Ayoub 01 429429
saadtransport.com

Walk Beirut
70 156673 - bebeirut.org/walk.html

Beiteddine

Beiteddine International Festival
01 373430

Bekaa

Clos St Thomas Winery
08 500812/3 - closstthomas.com

Kefraya Winery
01 512002 - chateaukefraya.com

Ksara Winery
01 200715 - ksara.com.lb

Pension Shouman
dhiafeeprogram.org/lodgingmap.asp

WADA
Women's Association of Deir el Ahmar
wadalebanon.org

West Bekaa Country Club
08 645601 - wbccbekaa.com

Bhamdoun

Clos De Cana
Fadi Gerges 05 456259
closdecana.com

Bkassine

B&Bs, Mouneh & Bkassine Natural
Reserve Project
Joe Harfoush 03 353293

Development for People & Nature
Association
Rami Shamma 07 727005 - dpna-lb.org

Bsous

The Silk Museum
Dona Raad 05 940767

Byblos

Byblos International Festival 09 542020

Byblos Sur Mer Hotel
Mona Monzer 09 548000
byblossurmer.com

Dar Al Azrak Restaurant 09 737379

Edde Sands
Joanne Zarife 03 997688
eddesands.com

Locanda Restaurant 09 944333

Chouf

Beit el Hana Guesthouse
70 103222

Shouf Cedar Reserve
05 502230 - shoufcedar.org

Chtaura

Park Hotel
08 540011 - chtauraparkhotel.com

Taanayel
08 514502 - conservestaanayel.com

Dbayeh

Dbayeh Fishing Club
03 843131 - dbayefishingclub.com

Dolphin Team Yachting
04 407788 - dolphineteamonline.com

Eden Yachting
71 839437 - edenyachting.com

Deir El Qamar

Al Midane Cafe 05 505107

Deir El Qamar Festival
deirelqamarfestival.org

Douma

Douma Hotel
06 520106 - hoteldouma.com

Esclapio Restaurant esclapio.com

Ehden

Ehdeniyat Summer Festival
Tourea El Khoury 71 901704

El-Khreibeh

El-Ashkar Guesthouse
Nasim Ashkar 03 354558

Faraya

Mzaar InterContinental Mountain
Resort & Spa
09 340100 - intercontinental.com

Jezzine

Crafts
Abdo Al Khawaned 07 871095
Antoine Chahine 07 780324
Elie Abi Rashed 07 871095
Joseph Aoun 03 100049
Toni Haddad 03 683369

Daggers Craftsmen
Boulous Abou Rached 70 870082

Firebird Cutlery
Tony Haddad 03 683369

Jezzine Municipality
Fakhreddine Grotto
Church of the Lady of Bisri
Monasteries of Bhannin, Saint Peter
and Paul, Mzayraa, Saint Antoine and
the Lady of Machmouche
The Serail of Jezzine
Joe Naim 03 561389

Jezzine Festival
Sana Abi Dib 70 748354

Karam Winery
Habib Karam 01 367139
karamwinery.com

Mouneh
Tony Aoun 03 780065

The Iris Flower Hotel
Joseph Khoury 70 449305

Jounieh

Phoenicia-Hippo (Boat)
03 249091 - phoenicianhippoi.com

Kobayat

Scientific Museum for Birds, Butterflies
and Animals 06 350004

Laklout

Shangrila Hotel
09 430006 - lakloutresort.com

Mtain

El-Qontar Guesthouse
Faisal Al-Qontar 03 236062

Sarafand

Glass Blowing
Nisrine Khalife 03 906091

Tannourine

Tannourine Nature Reserve
05 955777 - tannourine.com

Tyre

The Orange House
orangehouseproject.com

Upper Metn

Bzebdine Hidden Valley Resort
Tony Germany 03 339370
bzebdinehiddenvalleyranch.com

Chbaniyeh Local Festival
Samar Abou El Hosn 03 129121

Hammana Festival
Laura Hatem 71 234644
hammana.com

Hammana Municipality
Kamal Karam 03 807700

The Good Shepherd Convent
Soeur Saidi Dargham 05 530029

Zahle

Grand Hotel Kadri
08 813920 - grandhotelkadri.com

Walking Clubs

Blue Carrot Adventures 03 553007

Club des Vieux Sentiers 01 203988

Cyclamen 03 486 551

Esprit Nomade 70 813 001

Lebanese Adventure
Andre Bshara 03 360027

Lebanon Mountain Trail
03 955302 - lebanontrail.org

Liban Trek - 03 291 616

Responsible Mobilities
Pascal Abdalla 03 218 048

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