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YOUR HANDS-ON
GUIDE TO LEBANON

A publication of Hospitality Services in a joint venture with Beyond Beirut | Issue 18 | March - May 2016

90+ IDEAS TO
SPRING
INTO THE
NEW SEASON

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW
**ANDRÉE
MAALOUF**

TOURING JBEIL
*ARAB TOURISM
CAPITAL 2016*

DESTINATION
TRIPOLI:
CITY OF CHARM

**LEBANON'S
RECYCLING
PIONEERS**



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

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Cover photo by Joe Elliot El Hage

Interior Design graduate Joe Elliot El Hage is a concept photographer who aims to unveil the beauty of the world through images. He took the cover photo in Oyoum El Samak, Donieh, placing himself into the scene as a cartoon-type character in the director's chair.

Follow him on

Joeelhage

Joe El Hage



Photo: Nada Karam

Spring fling

It's no wonder that many of Lebanon's nature lovers, hikers and rural wanderers mention spring as their favorite season. The weather is idyllic, flowers begin to blossom and forests come to life. It's a time of new beginnings that extends beyond the natural world.

This issue we speak to the innovators and activists behind recycling initiatives that are calling for change and searching for a solution to Lebanon's garbage crisis. They are fighting for a more sustainable future through collecting, recycling and composting our waste. We tour the Lebanon Mountain Trail – the historic hiking trail that covers the length of the country from north to south. We take a trip north to Jbeil and bring you a roundup of what to do in the city, crowned the Arab Tourism Capital for 2016, and continue to Bcharreh, to visit the museum of Khalil Gibran, the third most published poet of all time. And we go on a tour of the country by night, meeting Lebanon's after-hours community of astronomers and astrophotographers.

Culture wise, we meet young calligrapher Ghaleb Hawila, who is breathing life into an ancient art form and taking it to the streets, we visit the studio of Lebanese mosaicist Dana Adada and head south to meet a family of craftsmen continuing a long tradition of firebird cutlery in Jezzine. We also sit down with prominent figures such as Andree Maalouf, who has just released a second cookbook of Lebanese cuisine, and Michel Elefteriades, the characterful owner of Music Hall to get his tips for discovering the country.

As usual, we've crammed our guide section full of tips to explore the country from top to bottom, from guesthouse recommendations to a boutique wine trail of Batroun. Now it's up to you to lose yourself in Lebanon – send us your photos!

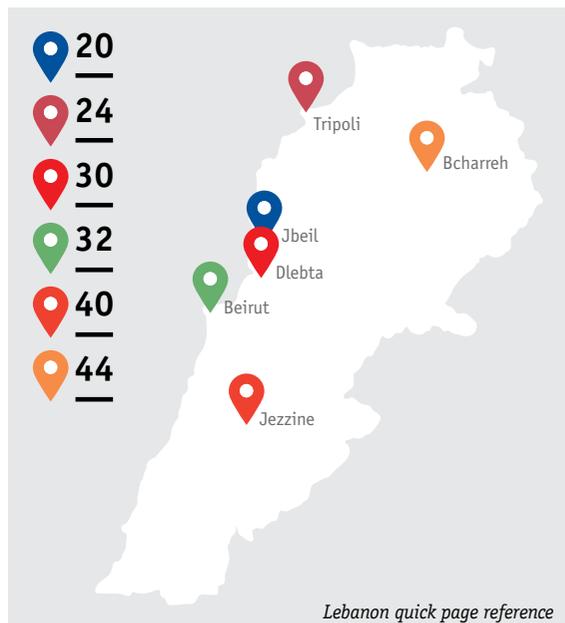
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Lebanon quick page reference



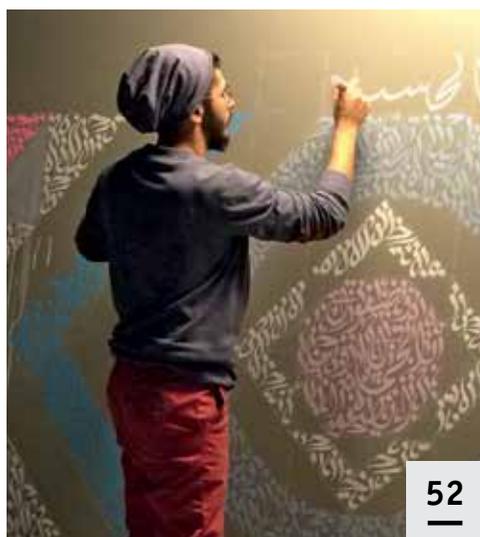
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Contributors



Nada Karam

Nada Karam's passion for adventure led her to be a professional artistic photographer in 2007. In her photographs, Nada transmits that "a photo is boundless, like the soul."



Martine Btaich

Martine Btaich is an independent professional working in community and rural development. She is also the Vice President of the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association.



Anton Haddad

Born in Mogilev, Belarus in 1991, Anton Haddad is an interior design student at Notre-Dame University. His favorite photography topics are portrait, landscape and pre-weddings.



Pierre Sakr

Spending most of his time in the mountains, Pierre Sakr, is a hiking guide in Club Des Vieux Sentiers. As an outdoor photographer, he aims to showcase Lebanon's beautiful nature and valuable heritage.



Elie Nohra

Elie Nohra is a Lebanese photographer based in Beirut. After being a finalist in Ayyam photography competition he now specializes in fashion and art photography.



Elsa Sattout

Elsa Sattout, PhD, is an interdisciplinary professional and a UNEP consultant with over 17 years of experience in the ecological, socio-cultural and economic aspects of biodiversity conservation.



Béatrice Le Bon Chami

Nature fascinates Béatrice Chami, a Belgian pulmonologist who moved to Lebanon in 1991. She also loves street and travel photography, trying to capture the best emotion, angle and light.



Nour Farra-Haddad

Nour Farra-Haddad manages her own travel consultant company NEOS and is also the author of Eco-Lebanon and Wiz Kids guidebooks.

News



On the web

A NEW DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR ACCOMMODATION

On 16 February, guesthouse network DIYAFA Association launched a new website that will serve as a digital search and booking engine for alternative lodging across Lebanon, as well as a platform for touristic information and recommendations.

diyafa.org



Conscious tourism

PUTTING LEBANON BACK ON THE TOURIST MAP

Lebanese guesthouse network L'Hote Libanais has partnered up with the leading players in responsible travel and tailor made journeys in France, Voyageurs Du Monde, with a shared ambition to open up Lebanon and the region to tourism. Together they will work to promote Lebanon to curious travelers.

hotelibanais.com, voyageursdumonde.fr



Photo: Kuba Rymiewicz

♥♥♥ We love... VIA MINA HOTEL

Opened in November 2015, Via Mina is a beautifully restored traditional Lebanese house, now transformed into a stylish boutique hotel. Located on a backstreet in the charming El Mina district of Tripoli, a stone's throw from the sea, Via Mina is the perfect place to unwind after a day touring the city. Its spacious rooms are refreshingly minimal and its interior simple and clean, retaining original features such as wooden floors and a spiral staircase. On warmer days recline around its outdoor pool. The highlight is enjoying Via Mina's traditional Lebanese breakfast in the street-front garden while watching the world pass by.

06 222227, [f Via Mina Hotel](#)

5 MINUTES WITH... Mireille Boustany



LT sat down with Mireille Boustany, CEO of the Beit El Qamar, a newly opened guesthouse in the Shouf

HOW DID THE STORY OF BEIT EL QAMAR START?

My husband Yahya Al Boustany, and me are from there. We had a land with an unfinished building, so we decided to do something with it and thought the concept of Tawlet would suit. When we spoke to [Tawlet owner] Kamal Mouzawak he was very excited. Gretta Feghali also came on board.

WHAT IS THE GUESTHOUSE'S MAIN CHARACTER?

We wanted to make it as if you are going to your grandmother's house, in everything from the food to the décor.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE HOUSE?

I love the sunny terrace area. The outside is very big and green with lots of plants. You don't see buildings, just the forest.

HAVING TAWLET ON BOARD, YOU MUST HAVE A SPECIAL FOOD MENU?

There is a buffet every weekend and we have an à la carte menu during the week. Every weekend we have a special cook from a different region in Lebanon. We specialize in food from the Shouf and all our food is bio – we grow our own fruit and vegetables.

05 511722, [f Beit El Qamar](#)



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Snapshot

BILAL TARABEY WINS PHOTOMED

French-Lebanese photographer Bilal Tarabey was the winner of the PhotoMed photography competition in January, with his black and white series “Al Aawda” (The Return.) Shot between February and December 2015, the 20 photographs illustrate Tarabey’s move home to Lebanon. The prize gives him an opportunity to exhibit his series at PhotoMed Festival in Sanary, France, in 2016. “I am very moved to represent Lebanon. Born and raised in Paris, I always felt that something was missing and it was my country,” Tarabey says. “This series ‘Al Aawda’ tells that story, how by a combination of circumstances I finally moved back to Beirut. I feel very honored and touched by this award.”

bilal-tarabey.com



Creative view

RISE ABOVE LEBANON

One video that has recently gone viral showcases Lebanon from above, offering a bird’s eye view over some of the country’s most breathtaking landscapes. Part of the Ministry of Tourism’s #LiveLoveLebanon campaign, Rise Above Lebanon was shot by photographer Christian Ghammachi

over a period of five months using drones. His book of the same name was released in December 2015.

christianghammachi.com, [@riseabovelebanon](https://www.instagram.com/riseabovelebanon)

Food talk

SOUK EL TAYEB EXPANDS

Food producers’ market Souk el Tayeb has just launched at Clemenceau’s Gefinor Center. A long running success in their weekly Saturday food market at Beirut Souks, Souk El Tayeb brings seasonal fruit and vegetable stalls, fresh juices, *mouneh*, *saj* and homemade Lebanese foods, all sold by the farmers and producers who grow them, every Wednesday from 1-7pm.

01 442664, soukeltayeb.com



lebanontraveler.com



Award winning designers with The Arab British Centre

Award winners

LEBANON TRIUMPHS IN LONDON

A team of designers from the Starch Foundation, led by its co-founder Tala Hajjar, exhibited at this year’s London Fashion Week under the theme Blueprint Beirut. They won the coveted International Fashion Award for art direction, with Hajjar picking up Best Curator.

starchfoundation.org

WHAT’S TRENDING

#SilvioChiha – the Lebanese sporting champion, took a break from extreme sports for a book signing session for his new release “Lebanon Through My Eyes.” The book is a collection of photographs of the young champion exploring the country’s hidden gems. All proceeds go to Bassma, an NGO for social development.

#ALSultanBrahim, the renowned Lebanese restaurant, picked up the Arab Tourism Quality Award for 2016. Established in 1961 on the Lebanese coast in Jnah, the company has just opened its new branch in Beirut Central District, which covers 1,800m².

#CableCar – Ziad Hawat, president of the Byblos municipality, revealed plans for an eco-touristic project for a cable car that will link Byblos to Bentaël Reserve in its first stage, and later St. Charbel Convent in Annaya.

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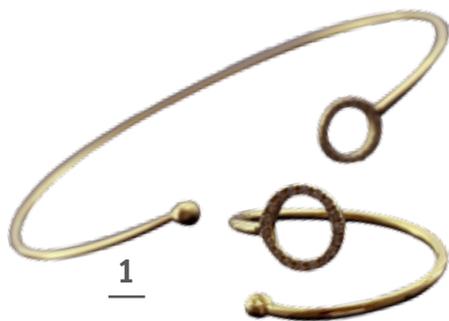
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JEWELRY CULT

From the kitsch to the extravagant, Lebanese jewelry designers continue to innovate, blending craftsmanship with high quality materials and creativity. **LT** asked some of our favorite designers to share their latest pieces





7



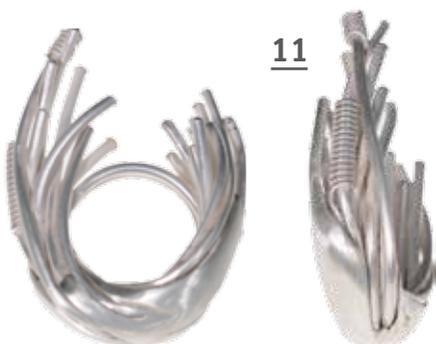
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10



11

BANGLES & IRIS

1. Ring and bangle (18k gold, diamond) LL277,500; LL480,000
2. Earrings (baroque Chinese pearl with diamonds) LL540,000

Metn, Beit Chaar, 71 377248, [f](#) Bangles & Iris Gold

VANINA

3. Patches scarf (textile leftovers, gold thread) LL150,000
4. Prelude jewelry set (Swarovski crystals and shiny sequins, velvet base); earrings LL225,000; necklace LL330,000

Mar Mikhael, 01 448173, [vanina.me](#), [f](#) Vanina

MUKHI SISTERS

5. Turtle ring, (18k gold, multicolored sapphire) LL1,170,000
6. Dreamcatcher ear cuff (18k gold, diamond, turquoise), LL3,480,000

Beirut Souks, 01 989188, [mukhisisters.com](#),

[f](#) Mukhi Sisters

DORI MOUZANNAR

7. Meteor rings (18k pink gold set with rubies and black diamonds; 18k yellow gold set with sapphire and black diamonds) LL5,940,000

ALIA MOUZANNAR

8. Arabesque modular earrings (18k pink and white gold set with white diamonds; can also be worn as brooches) LL13,500,000

Achrafieh, House of Aziz & Walid Mouzannar,

01 200756, [awmouzannar.com](#), [f](#) Aziz Walid Mouzannar

NADA ZEINEH

9. Earrings Pompadour (brass dipped in gold, semi-precious stones and culture pearl) LL188,000

Achrafieh, 01 448156, [f](#) Nounzein, [i](#) @nadazeineh

SEVAG DILSIZIAN

10. Origins brooch (copper and sapphires) LL2,250,000
11. High Hope ring (925 sterling silver) LL525,000

Bourj Hammoud, 03 624494, [f](#) DAS Jewelry,

[i](#) @sevagdilsizian

IN THE HEART & THE KITCHEN



Passionate Lebanese foodie **Andrée Maalouf** has been living in France for 30 years, but her favorite place in the world remains the family terrace in Lebanon's Aïn El Abou, overlooking the sea. Elsa Yazbek Charabati catches up with her, following the release of Maalouf's cookbook "Saveurs Libanaises" and discovers a strong connection to Lebanon's cuisine

AFTER THE BESTSELLER “CUISINE LIBANAISE D’HIER ET D’AUJOURD’HUI,” YOU’VE WRITTEN A NEW COOKBOOK “SAVEURS LIBANAISES.” TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR GASTRONOMIC JOURNEY.

When Karim Haïdar and I wrote our first book, we wanted to gather the classics of Lebanese gastronomy, as well as the dishes we found particularly interesting. But Lebanese food is a great cuisine with a wide and varied repertoire. We had to put aside many recipes, not without regret. Throughout the years, readers didn’t stop asking: why did you set aside the *chiche-barak*, or the *moghrabiyeh*, or this or that dessert that had accompanied our childhood? A second book was a must.

Cuisine is one of the rare things that unites us; that we love and openly share with others wherever they are ”

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE THE BOOK “SAVEURS LIBANAISES?”

One of the ideas that guided our work was searching for old or regional recipes, such as *kebbet banadoura*, so typical in south Lebanon.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE LEBANESE FLAVOR?

I like the flavor of *zaatar* (thyme) and black olives with tomatoes, as a souvenir of my childhood, in an *arousse* (Arabic for sandwich.)

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US ANY OF YOUR OWN FAMILY’S SECRET RECIPES?

Chiche barack was my mum’s favorite recipe. She used to prepare the pastry herself and cut it into rings that she filled with meat.

HOW IMPORTANT IS LEBANESE FOOD FOR THE DIASPORA TO PASS ON THROUGH THE GENERATIONS?

Cuisine is one of the rare things that unite us; that we love and openly share with others wherever they are. It is the symbol of the nurturing mother and part of our most beautiful childhood memories. And when you’re away from your homeland, you miss it badly, until it becomes indispensable. Moreover, it is a great cuisine that reflects a nice image of our country.

WHAT IS YOUR CONNECTION TO LEBANON?

My connection to Lebanon is permanent. I carry it in my heart and live in nostalgia.

HOW DO YOU CONVEY THIS LOVE TO YOUR THREE SONS?

I think that it happened naturally. Their father [Editor’s note: famous Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf] and I have always been proud of our belonging and have been living in France with a permanent feeling of having an added wealth: our Lebanese origins.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE IN LEBANON?

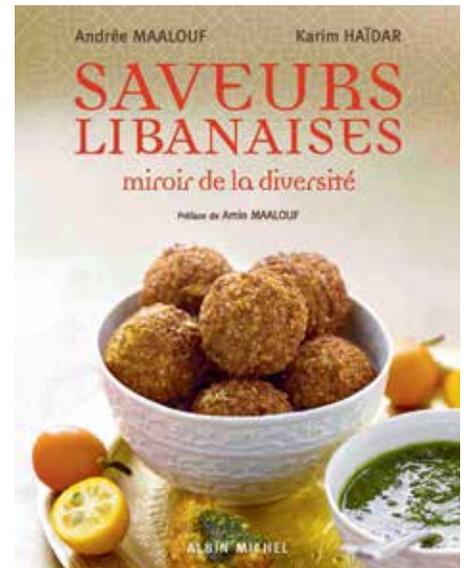
Bsous, my village, where I used to spend my summer vacations throughout my childhood and youth and where my mum and dad are from. I also like Aïn el Abou, Amin’s village, a place that I loved the moment I set foot in.

YOUR HUSBAND WRITES GREAT BOOKS AND NOVELS ABOUT LEBANON. YOU WRITE BEAUTIFUL BOOKS ABOUT LEBANESE CUISINE. IS IT YOUR WAY OF EXPRESSING YOUR NOSTALGIA AND LOVE FOR YOUR HOMELAND?

I think that it is his way and mine of carrying Lebanon in our hearts. It is always present with the image we like to give of it.

ARE YOU WORKING ON A NEW BOOK?

I actually have some ideas for a new book, but it’s still too early to talk about it.



“Saveurs Libanaises,” LL47,000 at Librairie Antoine (01 218175, antoineonline.com)

Andrée Maalouf’s favorite...

Place in the world: The terrace of our house in Aïn el Abou, facing the sea

Smell: The smell of the tuberose

Color: Red

Book: One of the books I really liked is *The creature* by John Fowles. I read it a long time ago. I will not talk about Amin’s books, I’m too close to him and he makes me read them all before he sends them to his editor

Dream: Peace in our region, so that women and men can live in decency and dignity

PUT THE TRASH OUT

In July 2015, the Naameh landfill in Lebanon was closed, after accumulating eight times its waste capacity. Trash soon began to overwhelm the streets and riverbanks of Beirut and Mount Lebanon, resulting in a series of civil protests. More than six months on and with no governmental waste management solution in sight, established and new NGOs and recycling initiatives have stepped in. We speak to four recycling ambassadors who are fighting for a more sustainable future in Lebanon



Waste iPad cover, made from recycled advertising banners

CEDAR ENVIRONMENTAL

Established: 1999

Known for: Waste management and recycling pioneer in Lebanon

How to get involved: Sort your garbage at home and take it to a drop off point in Badaro, Nahr El Mot and soon in Beit Mery

Contact: 01 389409, 03 293222, cedarenv.com



Ziad Abi Chaker

“I got into this whole mess when I was 19,” jokes environmental and industrial engineer, Ziad Abi Chaker, from his Beirut office made almost solely from recycled material. “I fell in love with this kind of work after I was approached by my professor who got a grant to research composting techniques and I got hooked since then.” He later founded waste management company Cedar Environmental that works with municipalities to build recycling facilities and developed Dynamic Composting, a technology that speeds up the composting period from 90 to just three days.

“We have a different approach than classical waste management. We look at waste from a sustainable point of view, as a resource. Our understanding of recycling is remanufacturing goods into new products,” he says. The household waste they recycle becomes raw material: food waste can be used as organic fertilizer, and plastic bottles for cushioning in furniture making, plastic bags become eco boards. These plastic panels that the company has developed can be transformed into chairs, street-recycling bins or even mounting for vertical green wall structures. “We can divert a plastic bag from ending up in a landfill or a forest and transform it into a wall with greenery all year around,” Abi Chaker says. “Imagine if all these buildings had green walls on them made from plastic bags and the compost was made of organic waste. It’s not science fiction. This is something we have done already. We’ve proven that it’s feasible.”

Until now, Cedar Environmental’s recycling plants have been developed in south Lebanon with local municipalities in locations such as Khirbit Silim, Aytaroun and Naqoura. But their success shows the potential for introducing recycling plants around the country. At their peak, prior to the July 2006 war, which damaged some

of their plants, the company was recycling around 48,000 tons of garbage each year.

In the near future, Abi Chaker hopes to have recycling plants in the areas hit hardest by Lebanon’s waste crisis, such as Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

Since the country’s only glass manufacturing plant was destroyed in the 2006 war, around 71 million green and amber bottles have been dumped in landfills every year. Cedar Environmental launched the Green Glass Recycling Initiative – Lebanon (*GGRIL*,  *ggrilebanon*) in 2013 as a solution to the problem. “I met up with Sarafand, a traditional glass blowing company, and they were on the brink of bankruptcy.

This is a very dynamic society. We see problems and we want to tackle them



We decided to put one and one together and see how we could address the crisis of recycling green glass and them having no sales. This is how it started. Since then it’s been a success,” Abi Chaker says.

He believes the waste crisis has changed the course of the country’s history in terms of waste management. “No one can monopolize it anymore. Municipalities have to take matters into their own hands. If they don’t do anything they are going to be buried in garbage. Recycling is the right thing to do on all levels, environmentally, health wise and economically.” Abi Chaker is also positive about the DIY role of individual initiatives in finding solutions to the crisis. “This is a very dynamic society. We see problems and we want to tackle them. We come from a long history of it,” he says.

WASTE

Established: 2006

Known for: Sustainable design and quality manufacturing, upcycling advertizing banners into bags and accessories

How to get involved: Support their initiative by buying their sustainable products at mysouk.com, and boutiques around Beirut and Dubai (check their website for details)

Contact: 01 258369, waste-lb.com

Founded in 2006 by friends, architect Stephanie Dadour and designer Waleed Jad, later joined by geologist and environmental scientist Marc Metni, Waste makes bags and accessories from recycled advertizing banners. “We wanted to do something about the overuse of nylon bags at grocery stores,” says Metni. “We started experimenting with the material and the *kees ed dekkeneh* (grocery bag) was born.” Its durability and success encouraged them to create more

products and the story of Waste kicked off. In 2012 the pair evolved the company, investing in a Bourj Hammoud space.

Since early 2013, Waste has recycled over 600 non-biodegradable banners which would have ended up in landfills. Each one is 14 by 4m, equivalent in size to 4.7 soccer fields. Each item is unique, with the original advertizement graphics used as part of the design. Their range includes laptop bags, beach bags, satchels, passport holders and furniture. “By aiming to wisely consume products that generate less waste, to discard less products and to sort waste in our daily lives, we end up adopting more sustainable habits without even realizing it,” says Metni. “We simply need to make an effort at the beginning before it becomes a reflex.”

They recently launched a Saifi-based pop-up shop and held an exhibition of collaborations with local designers. In 2016 they will launch their first branded store and new product designs.



Photos: Elsie Haddad

RECYCLE LEBANON

Established: Early 2016

Known for: Beach clean-ups

How to get involved: Join their beach clean-ups and the community

Contact: 71 131115,  Recycle Lebanon

Initiated by Joslin Kehdy, Recycle Lebanon was created as a response to Lebanon’s trash crisis, calling for community action through its *#DiveIntoAction* events and collaborations for sustainable solutions and change. They aim to become a kind of syndicate of all issues and initiatives about the economy, society and environment concerning sustainable development. “Recycle Lebanon came out of a basic need. How can I make Lebanon better? What can I do? Who’s already doing what, where and how?” says Kehdy. “There are an abundance of initiatives working towards sustainable development. This needs to be accessible to people. With the launch of Recycle Lebanon’s hub, it will soon be easier to get involved on an individual level.”

Recycle Lebanon started their action on the country’s beaches, organizing a series of clean ups, collecting waste washed up by the sea. They chose Nahr el Kalb beach as their first project with Zbeleh bala 7oudoud – a victim of the waste crisis with trash thrown into the valleys taken from the river into the sea, and back to the shorelines.

With its first public beach clean up held on 16 January, each edition is getting bigger, with 42 volunteers collecting 210 60 liter bags of waste in the last edition. Recycle Beirut, Arcenciel, Cedar Environmental and Catalytic Action are collecting the waste Recycle Lebanon gathers and so far, 580 bags of plastic waste have been processed. Kehdy believes recycling is only part of the solution with awareness of waste production essential. “Rethink, refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, rot,” she says. “Sort at the source and say no to plastics, use re-useable bags and consume less single-use plastics. Small actions can make big impacts.”



Left: Recycle Lebanon Founder Joslin Kehdy



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COMFORT



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ARCENCIEL

Established: 1985

Known for: Sustainable development through social projects, waste management and recycling

How to get involved: From staying in their guesthouses, to buying their natural dairy products or second hand furniture, there are many ways to support arcenciel's work

Contact: 01 495561/5, arcenciel.org

  aec.arcenciel

Founded in the mid '80s, arcenciel is one of the country's early sustainable development NGOs. It was created to help people left injured, disabled or suffering from social or financial problems or drug addiction, get back on track and regain their autonomy and dignity near the end of Lebanon's Civil War. "We believe that difference is a factor of richness and that everyone is capable of progressing," says Mario Goraibe, responsible for the education section of arcenciel's environment program. "In arcenciel you find people in wheelchairs manufacturing wheelchairs, canes, walkers, crutches and orthopedic shoes; disabled women paint on ceramic pottery fabricated in arcenciel's workshop and others restore old furniture and resell it in a second hand store known as La Brocante d'arcenciel."

Now arcenciel conducts its operations through eight different programs, 13 centers and 550 volunteers. In addition, the NGO



treats more than 80 percent of Lebanon's hospital waste and more than 1,000 tons of solid waste each year. It also manages the Jesuit Domaine de Taanayel, a 2km² land for sustainable agriculture, and promotes responsible tourism through its youth hostels and eco-tourism activities, with more than 100,000 visitors a year. arcenciel's contribution to solid waste management started in 2009 in Taanayel, Bekaa, with a pilot recycling scheme. It assessed 300 families to see what kind of waste they were generating and look at the sorting process to see if there was potential for it to become national policy. "We started back then because we knew that the waste management strategy will lead to a crisis during which we won't be able to find any piece of land in Lebanon to

This is where civil society intervenes... in keeping recycling alive until a national strategy will be adopted

”

dump our waste," Goraibe says. When that became a reality in 2015, arcenciel's role in solid waste management was accelerated, as they began to spread their experience and knowledge through awareness sessions and collected waste from 600 partners. They have also worked with municipalities, guiding them through the process of sorting at source and implementing secondary sorting facilities and a compost facility. "The involvement of municipalities is crucial because it ensures the sustainability of our work. At the end of the day we're just an NGO helping the people where the state failed to do so. We will never replace the role of the state," Goraibe adds.

Currently, arcenciel are collecting 68 tons a month of recyclable waste including paper, plastic and metal. The sorted waste at source is then collected from their partners and dropped at secondary sorting

plants in Baabda and Taanayel, where it is split, compacted and later sold. The profit generated is invested back into arcenciel's programs and reinvested in social work for people in need. Though Goraibe is positive about a growing awareness to waste management in Lebanon, for him the only long-term solution can come from the government. "If citizens start sorting and see the lack of interest and involvement of their municipality and state they will simply lose faith and stop sorting and recycling. This is where civil society intervenes through NGOs like arcenciel in keeping the good practice of sorting at source and recycling alive until a national strategy will be adopted."

Recycling hit list

Many recycling initiatives exist in Lebanon. Here are a few to get you started

Beatoona

(01 249653, Beatoona.org)

Collects batteries and electronics.

Compost Baladi

(compostbaladi.com)

As with Cedar Environmental, Compost Baladi can set up the composting of organic waste.

Association L'Ecoute Recycling Dept.

(70 391908, lecouste-ls.org)

A branch of NGO L'Ecoute, collecting household and industrial waste.

Mapping Lebanon's Trash

(trashleb.crowdmap.com)

An initiative to collect data about the trash crisis and create a map to visualize the data and mark where trash is being dumped illegally or burned.

Recycle Beirut

(03 050170, recyclebeirut.com)

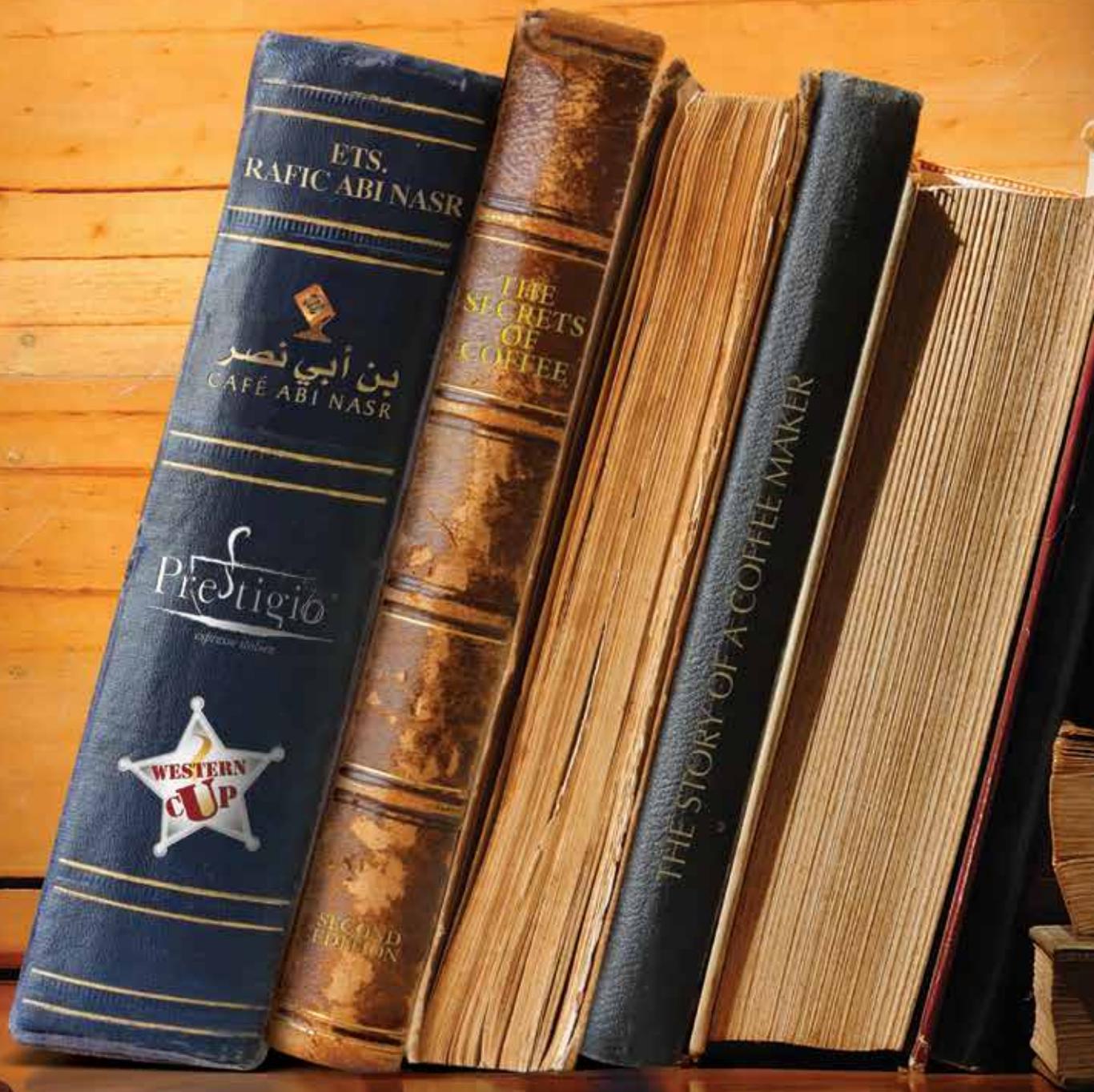
A pick up service for recyclables in Beirut for a LL15,000 monthly fee.

Zero Waste Act

(01 381381, zerowasteact.com)

A waste management/recycling project working with schools and institutions.

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began with us*



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HOT ON THE TRAIL OF HERITAGE

Ehden. Photo: Christian Akhras

The Lebanon Mountain Trail is the first long distance hiking trail in Lebanon; a 470km path from north to south showing the diverse landscapes, food, and culture of Lebanon. **Martine Btaich**, vice-president of the LMT Association, shares its history, conservation and its 2016 food heritage focus

I read somewhere that “the simple act of walking touches a chord deep within us... it challenges us and brings us solace and perspective.” I can’t but agree when walking the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT). Yet, this is not all it offers. Walking the LMT is an opportunity to connect with nature and appreciate the variety of landscapes, the hidden natural beauty and biodiversity in our miniscule country. It is a chance to discover the archaeological and historical remains of the different civilizations that crossed Lebanon, that we, Lebanese, wouldn’t have imagined existed. It is a way to experience the agriculture and healthy rural food specialties, and to meet hospitable people, from different communities accommodating travelers and introducing them to Lebanese culture. Today, these village communities are struggling to sustain their livelihoods, and to maintain their landscapes, endangered more than ever by the current exploitation of the mountains.

WHAT IS THE LMT?

The LMT is the first long distance hiking trail in Lebanon. It stretches from the village of Andqet in northern Akkar to the southern town of Jdeidet Marjaayoun. Over 470km in distance, the trail connects communities together and crosses 75 towns and villages, resting at 670-2,011m above sea level. The LMT cuts across one heritage site, three nature reserves, one biosphere reserve and several protected and Important Bird Areas.

HOW DID IT START?

Inspired by his childhood walks in Baskinta, and the 3,500km Appalachian Trail that he discovered after moving to the US, Joseph Karam imagined the LMT in 2002, trusting that the Lebanese mountains, with their cultural and natural heritage, are a great potential for the development of a long distance trail. The project became a reality in 2005 when ECODIT, Karam’s company working on environmentally and

socially responsible development programs, received funds from USAID to implement the project. Thanks to the efforts of partner organizations and individuals, the LMT is today a rural tourism destination attracting thousands of people each year.

In 2007, the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) was founded to develop and safeguard the LMT. The association promotes sustainable rural tourism that protects natural, cultural and historical heritage along the trail and brings economic benefits to local communities. Coordinating closely with partner organizations, municipalities, ministries, NGOs, tour operators, accommodation, local guides and schools, the LMTA is endeavoring to bring mountain conservation to the attention of local communities and decision makers, with the hope that one day the entire trail is preserved and the LMT becomes a world class sustainable destination.

WALKING AND RECREATION ON THE LMT

Travelers can walk the LMT throughout the year and each season has its charm. The trail is divided into 27 sections – and until 2015, two side trails in Ehmej and Baskinta – each of different difficulty level. Each section offers accommodation, attractions and seasonal food specialties. Visitors can go on a short day-long hike, for a few days, or hike the entire trail for one month. In addition to hiking, different sections offer the possibility of recreational activities such as snowshoeing, mountain biking, running, camping, agro-tourism, discovering rural food specialties as well as literary and cultural trails, such as the Baskinta Literary Trail.

APRIL 2016 THRU-WALK: WALKING FOR FOOD HERITAGE ON THE LMT

In April, for the 8th consecutive year, the LMTA is organizing its annual Thru-Walk. A core team of long-distance hikers will walk the entire trail over a period of 30 days starting 1 April. The LMTA is not a tour operator but the Association organizes this yearly event (and the Fall Trek in October) to promote the LMT as a sustainable travel destination and to consolidate the trail's long-term conservation. Since it started the annual Thru-Walk has been attracting hundreds of nature, culture and mountain lovers. In 2015, it attracted more than 170 hikers from 12 different nationalities. Interested hikers can join the Thru-Walkers for sectional hikes and/or weekend hikes.

FOOD HERITAGE ON THE LMT

Between 2012 and 2015, the LMTA has been highlighting themes of importance on the LMT, such as water conservation, birds, trails, and cultural and archaeological heritage. In 2016, hikers will be celebrating food heritage on the LMT. The theme is a toast to the wonderful and hospitable people, owners of guesthouses and small eateries, cooks, female cooperatives and farmers that still take pride in preserving their farms, foods, processes, recipes and cooking methods characteristic to their villages. Many outings revolving around food on the LMT will be organized in collaboration with eco-tour operators.

05 955302/3, info@lebanontrail.org,
lebanontrail.org,

 Lebanon Mountain Trail Association
 Lebanontrail



Some of the food discoveries on the LMT

Tbaybisseh

A typical vegetarian dish from Aqoura made with pumpkin, bulgur, stir-fried onions with sour grape juice served at Germanos Guesthouse (09 439520, 03 643429) in Majdel Aqoura.

Beetroot with tahini

A salad available at Al Atayeb Coop (09 300108, 03 845257.) Also served at Auberge Beity (03 214871) in Kfardebiane.

Shmamit bi Laban

This boiled yogurt stew with poached eggs, is on offer at Hobeika Guesthouse (03 451113) in Baskinta.

Moghrabiyeh flavored with lavender

A grain that looks like an oversized couscous, *moghrabiyeh* is served with chicken and shallot onions flavored with lavender at Shmeiss Guesthouse (03 515829) in Hasbaya, followed by *Kaak* with lavender for dessert.



5 THINGS TO DO IN JBEIL

The Arab Council of Tourism has crowned **Jbeil** with the title “Arab Tourism Capital for 2016.” As one of the oldest cities in the world it has impressive historical ruins that show the remains of past civilizations, but Jbeil is certainly not a fossil to the past. From its picturesque port and bustling souks to its vibrant restaurants, Jbeil is full of life. LT explores one of Lebanon’s most iconic cities

Photo: Anton Haddad

① Old city tour

The old city area of Jbeil can easily fill a full day's visit at a leisurely pace. **The Citadel** (09 540001, Winter 8am-4pm, Summer 8am-7pm. Entrance LL8,000, visitors from the Middle East LL2,000) is a vast archeological site made up of numerous landmarks. It's worth taking a guide around the site to fully grasp the numerous civilizations that passed here. Some of the highlights include a Persian fortress (555-332 B.C.), a main gate (3000 B.C.) with skylight and the remaining signs of a fire from an Amorite invasion that took place in 2150-2500 B.C. On the seaside, next to a traditional Lebanese house from the 19th Century, are the foundations of houses from the Canaanite Period. The remains of the most recent crusader castle dates back to 12th Century B.C. Continue to the beautiful **St. John Marc Cathedral** (09 621448, open upon request,) built during the 12th and 13th Centuries.



View from The Citadel



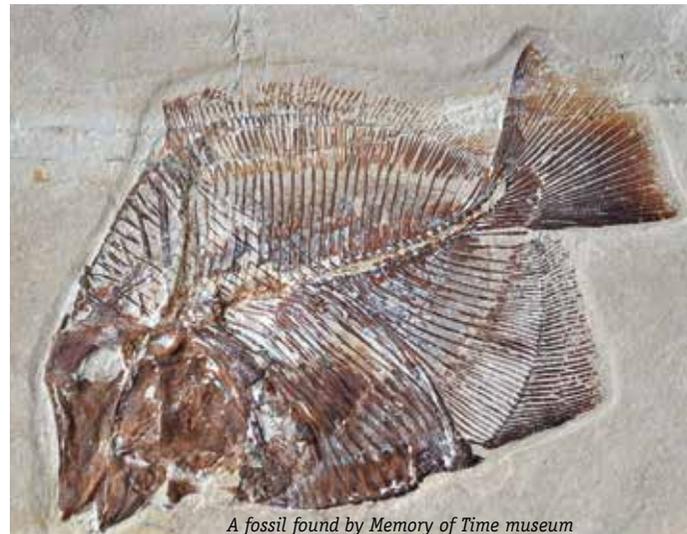
Byblos Historic Wax Museum

② A stroll through the souks

Wander down the city's characteristic stone cobbled street where you can find old stone arched souks that sell everything from traditional embroidery to souvenirs and boutique jewelry. **Ebre w Kheit** (71 077066, 03 462512) is a must stop for delicate embroidery work on towels, dressing gowns and tablecloths. **Alice Eddé boutique** (09 943023, eddeyard.com) is the place for high-end design featuring leather bags including clutches and travel bags by Lebanese designers. The owner Alice Eddé often holds in-store events with local artisans and designers. Close to Ebre w Kheit is **Eddé's Herbs** (09 542226,) a great place to pick up the spices and herbs of the ancient spice road. **Reynaldo and some Ideas** (03 261217) is the shop of Lebanese artist, Reynaldo Sayegh, who creates paintings and drawings on pottery, wood and glass. You can usually find him listening to old songs from Lebanese singer Sabah. Make sure to pass by the **Byblos Historic Wax Museum** (09 540463, 70 400240. Entrance LL8,000, under 10s LL5,000,) which offers a kitsch look at Lebanese history through wax statues, taking in the Phoenicians, the Emirs and Lebanese folklore.

③ Fish fossil museum

In Jbeil's old souk is **Memory of Time** (09 540555, memoryoftime.com,) a fascinating fish fossil museum run by a family of fossil experts. "Our story with fossils started a long time ago, thanks to our grandfather George," says Pierre Abi Saad. "One day, he accidentally discovered a fossil fish which led him to understand that his country and his mountains were favored by destiny." Pierre's father Mikhaël continued the family collection and his sons George, Joseph, Pierre and Albert connected the project with international museums and universities. Because of the disruptions of the Lebanese Civil War, Pierre was the only one able to continue to university with the family passion, doing a BA in archeology and MA in paleontology. The family behind Memory of Time look for fossils for eight months of the year and also organizes scientific excursions that the public can join from April to May and September to October. "We have found a huge variety of species. In fact, the quarries of Lebanon are the richest in the whole world," says Pierre.



A fossil found by Memory of Time museum



Photo: Pierre Sakr

④ Fishing boat trip

In Jbeil, the sea has a constant presence, with the whole city centered around the seafront. Rent a bike from one of the city's many bike shops and cycle along the coastal road to the nearby fishing town Amchit. Take some drinks down to the rocky beach and enjoy the view before your journey back. After unwinding in Jbeil's charming port area in one of the many restaurants that offers the typical seafood lunch, rent a boat from the owner of fish restaurant **La Pirogue** (03 535223, 70 077407) and see the city from the sea. For only LL37,500 enjoy their lunch of fish or grills, followed by a free boat tour.

⑤ Nature escape nearby

Make a weekend of your Jbeil escape. After exploring the city, head out into the surrounding nature, which is among some of the country's most picturesque. **Bentael Nature Reserve** (bentaelreserve.org) is located in the hills above Jbeil, only 8km away. It's the region's first protected area developed by local villagers in the '80s. The reserve village is situated among a forest of oak and pine trees and is rich in cultural heritage, with many villagers involved in art, philosophy and artisanal products.

Where to Sleep

Jbeil's sleeping options are many from budget to luxury. For reasonably priced accommodation, book a night in **L'Hôtel de Mon Père** (09 795996, lhoteldemonpere.com) or **Byblos Comfort** (09 942200, bybloscomforthotel.com) located in the heart of the souk. For an extravagant night's sleep stay in a room with a sea view at **Byblos Sur Mer** (09 548000) or take a room with a jacuzzi overlooking the castle at **Monoberge** (09 550999, monoberge.com.) There is also **Aleph Boutique Hotel** (09 945666, alephboutiquehotel.com) and the characterful **Byblos Fishing Club Guesthouse** (09 540213) in the harbor.

Where to eat

A trip to Jbeil isn't complete without a seafood lunch on a sunny terrace. **Pepe's Byblos Fishing Club** (09 540213) is famous for its heritage. The walls are lined with photographs of the Hollywood glitterati who used to make up its clientele. **Bab El Mina** (09 540475, babelmina.com) is another renowned sea-fronter in the port, with great seafood and fish. **Adonai Le Petit Libanais** (70 236778), located in the souk, is the place to eat a traditional lunch, with meals served in clay pottery. You can also take a lunch stop at **éCafé Jbeil** (09 542224) in Eddé Yard, which offers a modern international menu and great cocktails.

Where to drink

At weekends, the atmosphere in the newly located **Publicity** (71 012003) is particularly raucous. In this extravagant nightlife hub featuring 12 bars and restaurants, a swimming pool with bar and six Jacuzzi lounges, barhopping is a must. For a more laidback drink stop by the bars of the old souk, open all year round.



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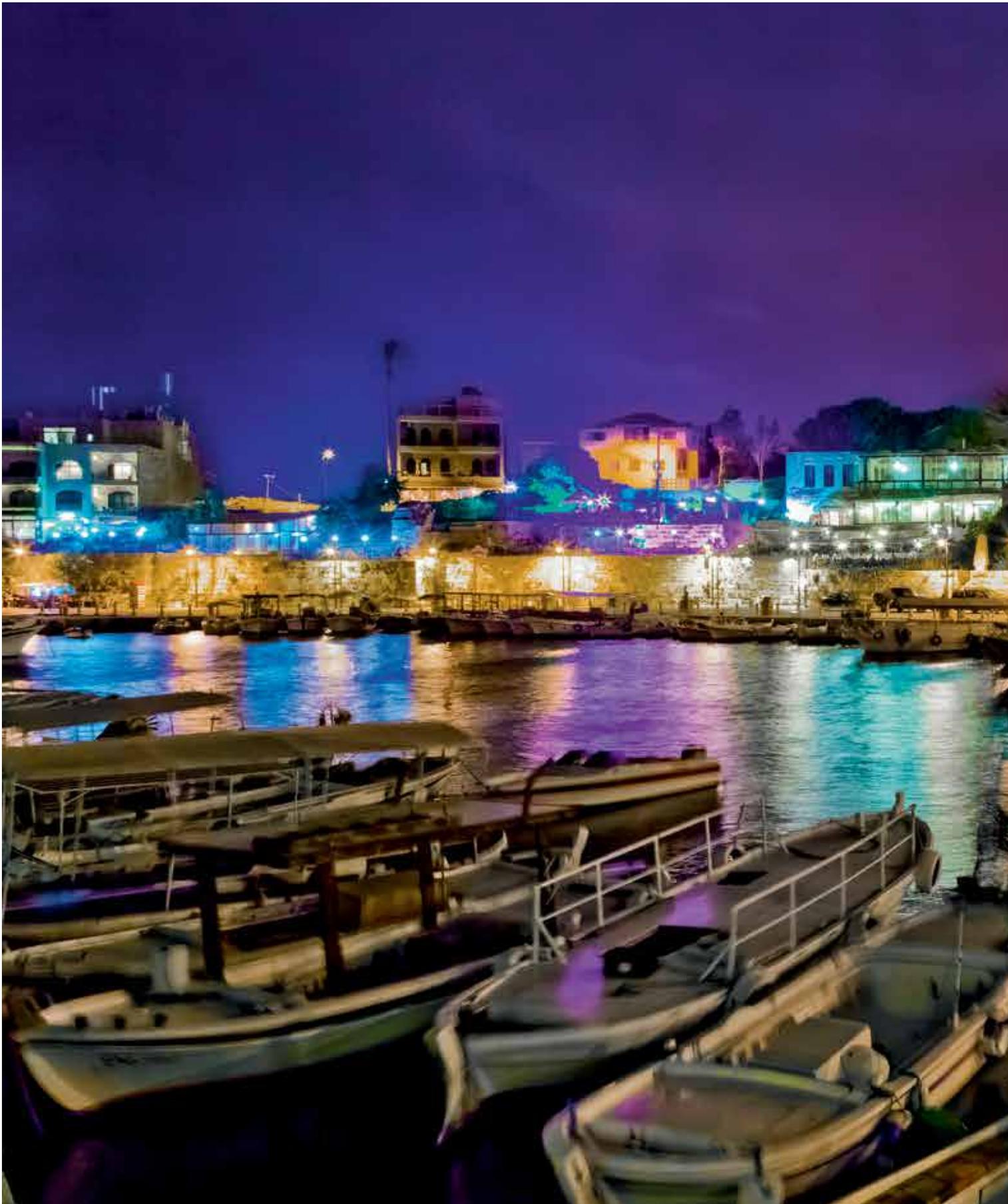
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JBEIL HARBOUR

"I took this shot last year at the beginning of the summer season. Jbeil relies so much on the summer that they flood the harbor with lights to attract tourists."

Photo by Elie Nohra, [f elienphotograph](#),
[✉ elienphotograph@gmail.com](mailto:elienphotograph@gmail.com)

THE CITY'S NARRATOR

Tour guide **Mira Minkara** has made it her mission to bring visitors back to her home city of Tripoli. LT joins her on one of her now-famous tours taking in modern and heritage architecture, winding alleyways and a train station frozen in time



Below a midday sun on a warm winter morning, a crowd of 50 people surround tour guide Mira Minkara in the Rashid Karami International Fair Complex in Tripoli. It's a beautiful example of modernist architecture designed by prominent Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer in the '60s and includes several theaters, a water tower and restaurant combined and a helipad, spread over a vast 1km length oblong. "There are no limits, no boundaries, no borders. The whole idea is to see the landscape around you," Minkara explains to the group. "Niemeyer was a communist. He didn't want walls, he wanted to create a public space." The Fair Complex has been frozen in time in an unfinished state, with construction taking a permanent hiatus in 1975 with the onset of the Lebanese Civil War.

Graduating in tourist guidance from the Lebanese University in 2002, Minkara worked as a freelancer for a few years, showing visiting guests of the municipality and even Miss Lebanon around Tripoli. But, with the ups and downs of tourism following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, her guiding work dried up. It was only in 2014 when a bomb fell outside the ancient 14th Century Bourtassi Mosque, during sect clashes between the neighborhoods of Bab al Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen that Minkara decided she would organize tours in the old city as soon as the troubles were over, before the city's important monuments might be destroyed. Soon after a 2014 governmental security operation disarmed the city's militias, Minkara organized a tour of the old city. "I got 25 people on the first tour which was great," she says. "People loved it and wanted more, so I realized it would be interesting to organize another tour."

While working at Beirut Art Center, Minkara was inspired by a conference in Beirut on

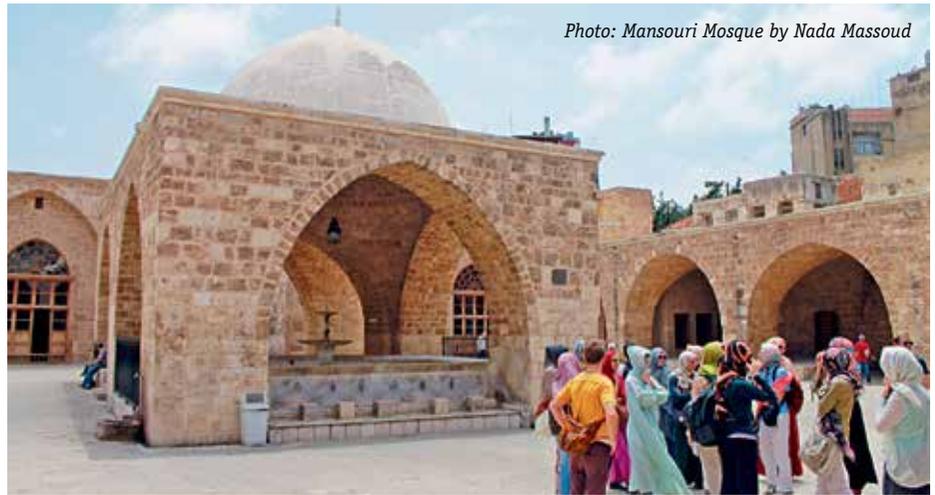


Photo: Mansouri Mosque by Nada Massoud

the architecture of Niemeyer's International Fair Complex by Suspended Spaces – a group of architects, artists and urbanists interested in unfinished spaces – and she started researching and planning a tour there. "I was always familiar with the Fair, but I didn't know that it was so important in the history of Lebanon and modern architecture. After I began the tour I saw that people were really interested in it. Later the Arab Center of Architecture (ACA) hired me to do a tour. It was amazing as architect George Arbid gave me plans and more information, so I was more connected to the architectural environment," she says. Wassim Naghi, an architect from Tripoli, also helped her research on the space that fascinates them both. Soon, Minkara combined a tour of the Fair Complex with a walk around the old Mina neighborhood and a stop at Tripoli's long-abandoned railway station – it's become her most popular.

Believing that Tripoli is underrated as a tourist destination, Minkara has become the poster-girl for its rediscovery. Her tours have been well covered in both local and international press including a recent half-hour documentary on national German TV channel ARD. "My tours are breaking

“ I have a lot of hope for this city because it has so much to offer

this fear of Tripoli and the idea that it is dangerous. It's just propaganda – in reality it's as safe as Beirut," she says. Foreigners living in Beirut mostly frequented her early tours, but recently she has seen the number of Lebanese attendees grow. "My last tour was mostly Lebanese which is amazing. I had all these women from Ashrafieh that never leave their zone seeing another side of Tripoli they never thought existed. For me that's a big achievement."

Another tour Minkara offers explores the old city and the diverse civilizations that have left their mark. "Tripoli really has everything. It's an old city with a medieval feel with hammams and khans that go back to the 13th Century. It's Lebanon's only Mamluk city and is also rich in Ottoman architecture. Then there is also important modern architecture and the seaside and mountains are not far," Minkara says.



Photo: A Mamlouk hammam in Tripoli's old city by Pedro Safadi

Perhaps the reason Minkara's tours have become so popular is because they manage to be both informative and light-hearted. Her tour of Niemeyer's International Fair Complex is fast paced and punctuated with stories, anecdotes and jokes and her awe at the beauty of this space is visible throughout. At the Pavillion du Liban, she takes visitors to the upper level to admire the panoramic view of the Fair Complex, and reflect upon the beauty of a space that offers a sense of freedom.

Outside the dome-shaped experimental theater Minkara tells stories from the past, about a cow that lived in the dome during the '80s and became famous across Tripoli, and about her brother and his friends, who once climbed over the gates as teenagers and played football on the dome's peak. At the open-air theater, originally designed to appear floating on water, Minkara has the whole group walking up the slope backwards to appreciate the view of the city, backed by snow-topped mountains: "You can see the cedars behind, the whole space and you can smell the clean air." After leading back to the start, passing La Grand Couverture, a long exhibition hall fronted with glass, Minkara guides the group around the winding alleyways of the ancient El Mina district. Close to the sea, some of the buildings here date back to the 17th and 18th Centuries. "What I like

about this area is that there are no cars and it's really quiet with small streets and old houses. This was the neighborhood of my first romances when I was 17," she laughs. Minkara is keen to highlight the warmth of Tripolitans who she describes as simple and authentic. "Whenever we are in the souks even the poorest falafel places give us falafel for free. This is what I like about Tripolitans; we are always very genuine and generous when people are visiting. We try to show them the best of our city."

After the success of her Tripoli tours, Minkara plans to take her tourism concept to other areas around Lebanon, with a tour in Tyre due to launch in March. "My plan is to hire specialized guides in different cities, people who are passionate and knowledgeable about a city or area. It's not a classical tour. We joke, laugh and have fun while discovering new places," she says. Meanwhile her tours to Tripoli will continue as she sheds light on what she believes has become a "taboo city." "I have a lot of hope for this city because it has so much to offer," she says. Certainly with individuals such as her as its ambassadors, the future looks positive.

70 126764,  *Mira's Guided Tours*
Full day tours are usually priced at LL30,000,
organized bus from Beirut LL15,000

MIRA MINKARA'S TRIPOLI TIPS

Where to sleep

For affordable accommodation **Saint Francis Monastery** (El Mina, 03 580354,  *Saint Francis Monastery*. Single LL52,500, Double LL90,000) is great. Two beautiful old renovated houses, now boutique hotels, are located in Mina: **Beit El Nassim** (Labban Street, 03 308156, *beitelnessim.com*. Single LL112,500, double LL135,000) and **Via Mina Hotel** (Farah Antoun Street, 06 222227,  *Via Mina Hotel*, Double LL135,000, Double premium LL165,000).

Where to eat

For fish go to **Sayad Sandwich** (Port Said Street, El Mina, 79 117986.) Its seafood sandwiches are the best. **Baytna** (Achir El Deyeh Street, 06 413060, 76 838000,  *Baytna*) is the place for traditional Lebanese food. **Una Pizza** (Achir El Deyeh Street, 06 412654, *una-pizza.com*) has great pizzas, salads and desserts. **Timmy's** (Al Rahbat Street, El Mina, 06 204771, *timmysbistro.com*,  *Timmy's*) is a great restaurant and bar. **Ahwak Coffee Shop (Ban Tafesh)** (Achir El Deyeh Street, Dam wel Farez, 06 412160, 70 520083,  *Ahwak Coffee Shop Ban Tafesh*) has great coffee, homemade desserts and a nice atmosphere.

Culture fix

Al Kindy (Labban Street, El Mina, 70 745169, *alkindy.me*) is a social cultural hub that screens films, holds poetry readings and workshops. **Safadi Cultural Center** (Ramzi El Safadi Street, Maarad, 06 410014, *safadiculturalcenter.org*) is good for live music and cultural events.

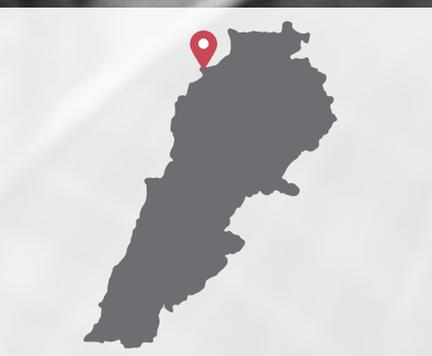


Photo: Mira Minkara leading a Tripoli tour by Emrah Oprukcu

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Dlebta: Village in the valley

Biodiversity conservationist **Elsa Sattout** takes us on a trip to her local green getaway, Dlebta, a village where natural landscapes meet history



Amid a busy life, reconnecting with nature and places that have preserved their identity, traditions and landscapes can be a source of replenishment. To break the pace of our everyday life, we crave nearby green spaces in which to escape. In Lebanon, you don't have to journey far from the city to reach the countryside. A green escape can be just around the corner, only a few steps away from towns and cities around the country. Looking out from the window of my office in Jounieh in February, craving a space to enjoy some peace of mind away from urban areas, I rushed out for a drive up the slopes of the mountains of Kesrouan. The ride to the village Dlebta, passing by Chnaniir takes only 10 minutes from the Maameltein highway, just 26km from Beirut. Dlebta stretches over 3.23km² and is located at the heart of a water-rich valley with an elevation ranging from 400-800m above sea level.

From the entrance of the valley, the beauty of the area is apparent. Lebanese traditional houses with red-tiled roofs are surrounded by a wilderness of dilb (Oriental plane trees) lining up in pockets, alongside pine, Syrian maple, strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*), laurel, Judas tree, pistachio and clematis. Dlebta's name itself refers to the plane tree and the village was known throughout history for the affluence of its community, which is still reflected in the square gardens and terraces of its residents, unexpectedly blending with natural green spaces.

The village, which has four ports of entry from Ghazir, Aramoun, Mearab and Chnaniir, was once active in silk and arak production. The Roman stairs that cross the valley were once used to reach nearby villages such as Achkout and more distant places such as Baalbeck. In Dlebta's Albayada's Street, a stairway of 350 steps, followed by a narrow road, leads to the convent Saydet El Haqlet (Our Lady of the Fields) that dates back

to 1670 and holds traces of the Crusaders from 1099. Halfway up the stairway, at 200 steps, there is the church Saydet El Najat (Our Lady of Relief), dating back to 1894, which offers a picturesque view of a colorful tapestry of trees such as cedar, cypress, prickly pear, almond, walnut, olive, and plum in home gardens and orchards. Among the many mulberry, loquat and orange trees growing in the local gardens, chestnut is uncommon, though a lonely tree can be spotted standing in the middle of the landscape.

The village hosts many old churches and convents such as St. James church from 1893, St. Anthony of Padua from 1902, along with St. Peter Antonine and St. Benoit Maronite convents. Before leaving, stop by the village square, where a public library lies close to the cliff edge, and glimpse back at what you have left behind; the blue horizon where lines of sea and sky meet at Jounieh bay.

Where to eat

For a quick local snack eat at **Layali Dlebta** (03 609159) or for a full Lebanese mezze spend an afternoon at **Al Afess or Kaser El Sanawbar** (09 920329, 03 346089, kaserelsanawbar.com.)

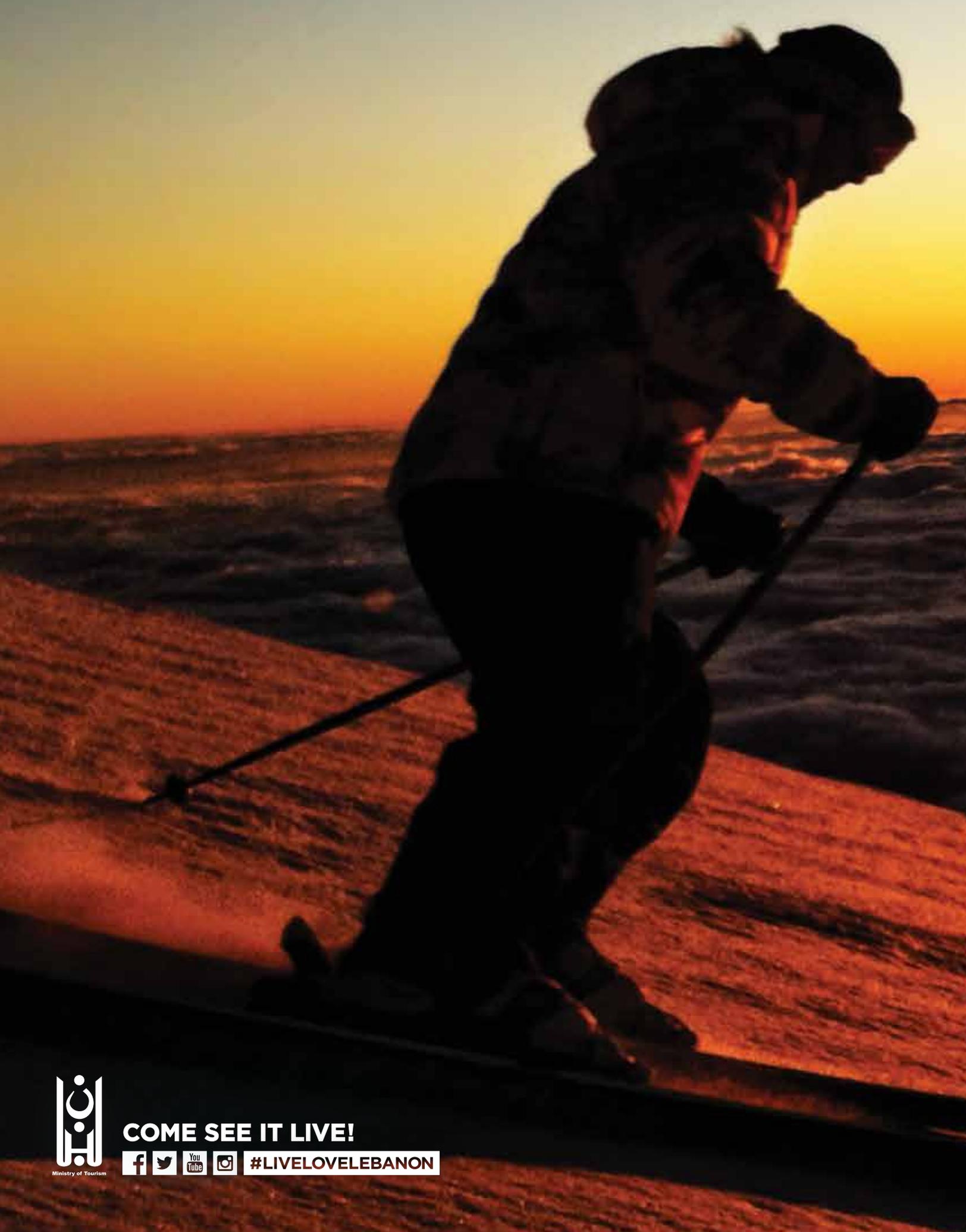
What to see

Tour the village's religious sites, taking in the historical convent **Saydet El Haqlet** (Our Lady of the Field), **Deir El Moukhales** (St. Saviour 1799) and the churches of **Saydet El Najat** (Our Lady of Relief 1892-1900) and **Mar Ya'coub El Muqata'** (St. James Church 1733-1893.) Pause at the top of the steep stairway to take in the view, before touring the village, taking in old houses dating back to the 18th Century with traditional architecture.



Photos: Elsa Sattout





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ON THE GREEN



A green sanctuary on the edge of the city, the Golf Club of Lebanon has been promoting the sport for almost a century. We dig into its history and get some tips from golfing champion **Myrna Raad**

WORDS FROM A FEMALE CHAMPION

Lebanese golfer Myrna Raad inherited a passion for golf from her father. Growing up in Sierra Leone, she still remembers holding a golf club and trying to hit the ball at a very young age. When the family returned to Lebanon, they joined the Golf Club of Lebanon and after the war Raad took the game up seriously, though it wasn't without its challenges. "When I first started with this game I was very much hooked on it. After my first year of playing I recall meeting a fellow player who said to me that if within two years I do not become a single figure player then I'll never be a good one. That was the first challenge. The second one was the club. They did not allow me to participate in any international game until I became a single figure and when the time came they owed me this. I made sure they kept their word."

Raad's perseverance paid off as she became a Lebanese golfing champion with some of her career highlights including the Lebanese Championship, the first Arab Ladies Championship, Greece International Amateur, Cyprus International Amateur and, two of her favorites, The Asian Games and Mediterranean Games. "Being a female player in Lebanon was very difficult when I started. For every international competition I had to fight my way through. My rescue was my handicap (single figure). As long as there was a female category within the competition. I always had to remind them that I could participate. Now things have changed though," reflects Raad.

Raad insists it's essential to start learning golf with a pro, rather than picking up the sport alone, to avoid developing bad habits that are difficult to get rid of. "Golf is an amazing game. It is physical and, although people find it hard to believe, it is also very mental. It is a continuous challenge of yourself. Unfortunately it is not very popular in Lebanon. The Golf Club, though, is working hard to attract new generations into the game," she says.

THE GOLF CLUB OF LEBANON, A HISTORY

Founded by the American Consul and a group of Lebanese notables in Bir Hassan in 1923 the Golf Club of Lebanon was spread over 1500m² land, overlooking sand dunes, amid a forest of pine trees planted by Ibrahim Pasha in the first half of the 19th Century to protect the city from sandstorms. Back then, golfing was certainly an exclusive pastime and the club had around 200 members, mostly non-Lebanese. The committee hired Egyptian pro, Ibrahim Youssef Ibrahim, aka Baba Ibrahim to give golf lessons to aspiring golfers. As Beirut expanded and landowners around Bir Hassan reclaimed their properties, the club shrank down to a small land surrounding the clubhouse and so they decided to relocate.

Salim Salaam, who worked at Middle East Airlines, joined the club in the '50s and learned that the Civil Aviation Authority owned around 200,000m² of sand dunes where steel aerials for airport communication had been placed. The club was given a 15 year agreement from the government to plant grass in the

area, protecting the installations of the communication center from damage in sandstorms. In the early '60s a British golf architect was brought over from England to design the golf course and the first game was played in 1965. After Israel's 1982 invasion in Lebanon, the club's trees, grass and buildings were destroyed by tanks. When they left, reconstruction started immediately. Not long after the club reopened and a swimming pool, squash court and six tennis courts were renovated. Today, the club has a full calendar of tournaments including monthly medals, sponsored competitions and championships. Salaam founded the Arab Golf Federation in 1975 and initiated the Arab Golf Championship, hosting the first edition the same year. The competition continues to be played annually in various Arab countries. Lebanese golfers have picked up medals and championships from tournaments around the Middle East and Mediterranean in the past, and the heritage of The Golf Club of Lebanon continues.

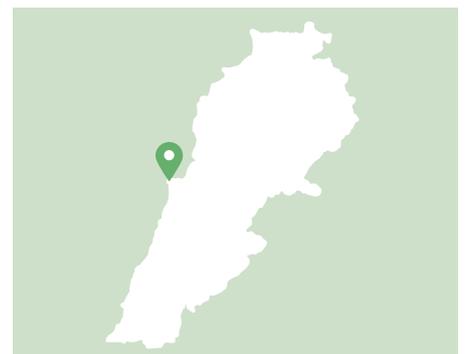
The Golf Club of Lebanon
01 826335, golfcluboflebanon.com

WHERE TO PLAY

Spread over a vast 660,000m² of green land The Golf Club of Lebanon is a green oasis in the heart of the city, close to the airport. The 18 hole course is made up of manicured fairways and tricky greens, making it one of the best golf tests in the region. It also offers a health club, tennis and squash courts, a swimming pool, restaurants, snookers and billiards and children's playgrounds. Becoming a member doesn't come cheap though. The one time joining fees cost \$7,500 for women, \$11,000 for men and \$15,000 for families. But if that is too big a commitment, day guest passes are much more reasonably priced as long as you have a member to invite you or are already internationally certified as a golfer. Golf green fees are LL60,000 on weekdays and LL90,000 on weekends. Access to the practice area is LL20,000 and under 18s only pay LL15,000 and LL10,000 for the practice range. On site lessons are available for beginners or golfers looking to further their ability and improve their game.

GOLFING TIPS FROM MYRNA RAAD

1. Start with small irons
2. Practice your putting – although it will bore you, it will save your game
3. Hit lots of balls on the practice range
4. Don't forget your pro while focusing on your target



IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS



A growing community in Lebanon is showing a passion for exploring Lebanon by dark and studying the night sky. LT meets two enthusiasts, astronomist **Dr. Roger Hajjar** and astrophotographer **Dr. Antoine Faissal**

Active under the cover of darkness, far away from the city lights, there is a growing community of people in Lebanon drawn to exploring and capturing the night sky; from academic astronomy groups to astrophotographers and photo collectives. The Lebanese Astronomy Group was established informally in 2005 with the aim to bring together the numerous astronomy groups across Lebanon's universities and develop one national association for astronomy to help the field's development. Dr. Roger Hajjar, a passionate astronomer and the first professor in physics and astrophysics at Notre Dame University (NDU), hopes to regroup the association this spring.

NDU is home to Lebanon's only dedicated department to physics and astronomy with four astronomers on faculty and a professional observatory on campus. Hajjar has noticed a surge in interest in astronomy in Lebanon. "You just have to witness what happens every August for the Perseids, a prolific yearly meteor shower. It is mind boggling. Driving up the road to Ouyoun El Simane, you will see 100s of people on the side of the road looking up to see meteors striking the night sky," says Hajjar. Astronomy events are well attended – 500 students spent the night watching the Perseids in 2015 in Lebanon's mountains at 2,000m last summer, a trip organized by astronomy clubs in NDU,

“Last year in the beginning of the Milky Way season, I was in the Tannourine area and was testing my camera settings, when a huge fireball crossed the sky and was caught by my sensor. It was the best meteor I ever saw,” says Antoine Faissal





Antoine Faissal

the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University. A similar trip was organized the same year to Qanat Bakish by the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association, which reached full capacity with 70 attending, and the same amount on a waiting list.

There is also a growing number of individuals interested in astrophotography and taking photos by night. The Night Collective ([Facebook](#) *The Night Collective*, nightcollective@gmail.com) is a group that has been active for five years bringing together night photography enthusiasts, with an aim to show the beauty Lebanon after the sun goes down.

PLEASURES OF THE NIGHT SKY

A maxillo-facial and plastic surgeon by day, a photographer by night, Dr. Antoine Faissal has never missed a solar or lunar eclipse in Lebanon since he picked up a camera a few years ago. "Lebanon is beautiful, there are many places you can visit during the day and take stunning photos, but during the night you see the scene differently, you can admire the sky and the quietness of the night. Being alone, far from the city lights make me feel great," he says. For Hajjar, the beauty of the sky and planets with the naked eye is unparalleled, though one of his most impressive sights was through the end of NDU's 35cm telescope one September night in Ouyoun El Simane, of NGC 891, an edge-on spiral galaxy about 30 million light years away, in the constellation Andromeda.

A NATIONAL OBSERVATORY IN PLANNING

In 2008, Hajjar led a project to study the sites in Lebanon where a high altitude national observatory could be built; identifying Lebanon's highest peak Qornet



Roger Hajjar

Assouada as the most suitable. The main element of the observatory is a Japanese telescope donated by the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (NAOJ) to NDU. "An altitude observatory has been in the plans ever since we ended up with a professional astronomy community in Lebanon. It is a natural consequence of the development of the science. The first report mentioning an observatory was written in 2000. Back then I was one of three astronomers in Lebanon, now there are 10," Hajjar says.

Following tests of the telescope in early 2016, Lebanon's national observatory may soon start being built. "It will most likely belong to a network of similar telescopes that circle the globe, thus allowing for a 24-hour monitoring of certain objects in the universe such as asteroids, stars, galaxies and active galactic nuclei," says Hajjar. When it is completed, the observatory will be open to the public during the day, with a main focus on research and education at the graduate level by night.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

For Faissal, a good knowledge of the night sky is a great starting point. "For astrophotography you need almost the same knowledge as for astronomy and you have to know how to use your camera and lenses for long exposure photos and how to edit them afterwards," he says. He advises joining a group of astrophotographers such as The Night Collective, who make special events and help new members start in night photography. Hajjar also recommends linking with a local group or astronomy club and starting out with a pair of binoculars or a small telescope.

Best spots for night sky viewing

According to Hajjar, the most densely populated coastal area of Lebanon has a lot of light pollution, though the country's high altitude plateaus help to mitigate the effect of the cities. "Lebanon is blessed with quite a large expanse of mountains above 1,800 or 2,000m. Satellite based maps of light pollution show the darkest areas of Lebanon are the northern parts of the Anti-Lebanon Mountain range." He recommends locations such as Ouyoun El Simane, Laqlouq and Ouyoun Orghosh for the best conditions, the higher the better. "Once you move out of villages, sky conditions are very nice. I often take groups to areas very close to Jezzine." For Faissal, light pollution in Lebanon's otherwise natural places pose the biggest problems, though a dark sky can still be found in areas such as Tannourine, Ehmej and Kfardeblian.

For astronomy enthusiasts

In 2015, a group led by engineer and amateur astronomer Jean Pierre Saghbini brought the astronomy festival, Festival d'Astronomie de Fleurance (festival-astronomie.com) to Lebanon, with a second edition planned for Fall 2016. Also **The Cosmic Dome** (71 540203, thecosmicdome.com, [Facebook](#) *The Cosmic Dome*), a digital planetarium in Hamra created by astronomer Mohamad Abbas, aims to educate the public on astronomy.

Where to buy

Based in Bourj Hammoud, telescope seller **Sky Optics** (01 265111, [Facebook](#) *Sky Optics*) offers everything for the amateur to the professional astronomer.

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LAKE QARAOUN, WEST BEKAA

"I was walking down to the lake early in the morning on the road from Aitanit village, when I captured this landscape. It was May 2015 and it was just before I went to join the annual Thru Walk on a section of the Lebanon Mountain Trail. Lake Qaraoun is the largest artificial lake in western Bekaa at 800m above sea level."

Photo by Béatrice Le Bon Chami, [@beachami](#)



THE ART OF CUTLERY

Developed from a heritage of blade-making that stretches back almost 250 years, by the Haddad family in Jezzine, the traditional cutlery adorned with intricately designed handles in the shape of a phoenix has become an emblematic craft of Lebanon

The history of blade-making in Jezzine dates back to 1770, when the Haddad family were forging daggers and swords. Always adapting with the times, the Haddads expanded to the production of rifles for the Lebanese army and then began the first manufacture of their now famous cutlery in 1930. Today, the company is called S & S Haddad, named after brothers Samir and Souheil and their product line includes bar, desk, dessert and manicure sets, small items such as bottle openers and key chains, and specialty pieces including daggers and swords. While Samir passed away a year ago and Souheil is now retired, the company remains a family business, run by cousins Tony (son of Samir) and Fouad (son of Souheil.)

According to Fouad, the distinctive handles are based on the Lebanese legend of the phoenix. A myth that can be traced back to Phoenician times, the phoenix - a firebird from paradise - lives 500 years, filling the air with its heavenly voice before perishing in fire. It then rises from the ashes to live another 500 years. This fabled bird resonates with Lebanon's own history, from ancient times till today, a country that has shown its own resilience throughout years of occupation, war and regional conflict.

The success of the Haddad's business inspired other families in town to follow suit, and Souk al Sad Street in Jezzine is now home to several cutlery shops. At Eid Bou Rached, the cutlery is produced

following traditional methods, and shop owner Ghazi Bou Rached is happy to explain the process to visitors. Handles begin as cow bone and buffalo horn, which are then carved into the firebird's head and body, polished and fitted with stainless steel utensils. Brass wings are added, and hand-painted details. Black and ivory are the traditional colors, reflecting the color of the base material.

"Our family started this business in 1925 and I inherited the shop from my father," says Ghazi, pointing to an elderly man seated outside his shop. Like the phoenix, Haddad's company continues to reinvent itself. In order to create a more durable product, the handles of Haddad's cutlery are now made of a composite material.

“We use bone powder that is mixed with cellulose acetate and poured into molds,” explains Fouad. “We have introduced new colors this way and variations in the design of the phoenix,” he says, pointing out different styles of head crests, beaks and wings on the handle. Some pieces are encrusted with brass and copper, others with mother of pearl. “We don’t change the phoenix itself though, because it’s the tradition.”

The craftsmanship of Haddad pieces is such that it garnered an article in National Geographic in 1958 about fourth-generation owner Said Haddad, followed by the issuance of a 1974 Lebanese stamp featuring Said Haddad at work. The Haddad workshop in Jezzine currently employs

three craftsmen and they work with a charity to contract additional handicapped home-based craftspeople. Haddad pieces can be found in museums in Russia and Iran and have been gifted to dignitaries around the world.

Whether traditional cutlery hewn from horn or modern incarnations fashioned from composite materials, all pieces dazzle like the legendary firebird after which they are modeled. From key chains to 114-piece table sets, visitors to Jezzine are certain to find the perfect souvenir to immortalize their visit.

Words by Amy E. Robertson



Samir Haddad, one of the two brothers behind Souheil and Samir Haddad company that started the firebird cutlery tradition of Jezzine



Photos: Rana Tanissa

Where to buy

Pick up some intricate pieces of cutlery from **S & S Haddad** (*Souk al Sad Street, 01 280353, 03 683369, haddadcutlery.com.*) Keychains range from LL19,500-LL34,500 and table services range from LL2,700,000- LL3,900,000. At **Eid Bou Rached** (*Souk al Sad Street, 07 780082.*) a simple bottle opener is just LL9,000, while a complete service of hand-carved cutlery is LL1,050,000.

Where to sleep

In Jezzine is the modern and well-regarded **Iris Flower Hotel** (*07 781999, l-iris.com, double LL66,000; LL120,000 with breakfast*). Outside the town, next to Bkassine pine forest, is **La Maison de la Forêt** (*07 800222, lamaisondelaforet.net, weekdays LL115,500; weekends LL165,000*), a complex of small wooden bungalows.

Where to eat

Perched above Jezzine waterfall is **Al Chalouf** (*07 781774*) serving Lebanese cuisine with signature dishes of *kibbe* with *labneh* and *ashta liyye*. On Sundays, **Beit al Ghâbeh** at La Maison de la Forêt offers an open buffet for LL60,000.

What to see

Jezzine’s famed waterfall cascades some 80m down a cliff at the edge of town. The best viewing spot is from Wadi Jezzine, just underneath the town. Visitors can also walk in the neighboring **Bkassine pine forest**. At a million m² it is the largest pine forest in the Middle East.



Mosaics

A Modern Interpretation

Eighteen years ago, **Dana Adada** took a four-session course in mosaics. What began as a hobby became a passion, and she is now one of the foremost mosaicists in the region. LT meets the Lebanese artist transforming the ancient art form





Dana Adada's projects range from small coasters and trays to fountains and murals. She was awarded first prize in mosaics at the 2011 Muscat International Festival for Arts, Heritage and Creativity. Adada has a degree in fine arts from the Lebanese University, and taught mosaics at Saint Joseph University from 2004 to 2014, when she opened her own atelier near the French embassy in Beirut. Her work is available exclusively through her atelier. In addition to existing pieces, she designs and executes customized projects for homes and businesses and offers classes in mosaics.

HOW DID YOU COME TO THE MOSAIC ART FORM?

I am basically self-taught. It was an art form that I was curious about. I first learned the craft and then started adding techniques and artistic flair. I went [a long way] with my creativity to explore how we can see mosaics in a different way. I am also a painter. I love working with my hands as tools. People know more about painting than mosaics. I am trying to introduce this new vision of mosaics to people.

DID THE ANCIENT MOSAICS OF LEBANON INSPIRE YOU?

My interest wasn't linked to the archaeological history of Lebanon but something I wanted to know in the art field. Although I appreciate them a lot and love their designs, I wasn't inspired by those pieces because I'm doing something different, and I hate copying.

WHAT INSPIRES YOUR WORK?

My Oriental spirit: I love it and I am sticking to my Arabic roots. As a Lebanese, I'm Oriental, or Arab, with a window open

to the modern world, the new generation, the cosmopolitan city. I went to a school where I was taught in three languages and like most Lebanese, I have a very rich culture that combines European influences with Oriental or Arab ones. I love the mixture of this combination. My work reflects both sides.

HOW DID THE MOSAIC, THAT YOU CREATED WITH THE OWNER OF GUESTHOUSE BEIT AL BATROUN, COLETTE KAHIL, AT GEMMAYZEH CAFÉ-BISTRO PAUL COME ABOUT?

Colette took my mosaics class 15 years ago and she contacted me to see if I would want to work on the project with her. We created the mural in 2010. It was a very challenging project with a lot of new materials included and I enjoyed sharing it with my friend Colette, who was a great support and help.

WHAT MATERIALS DO YOU USE?

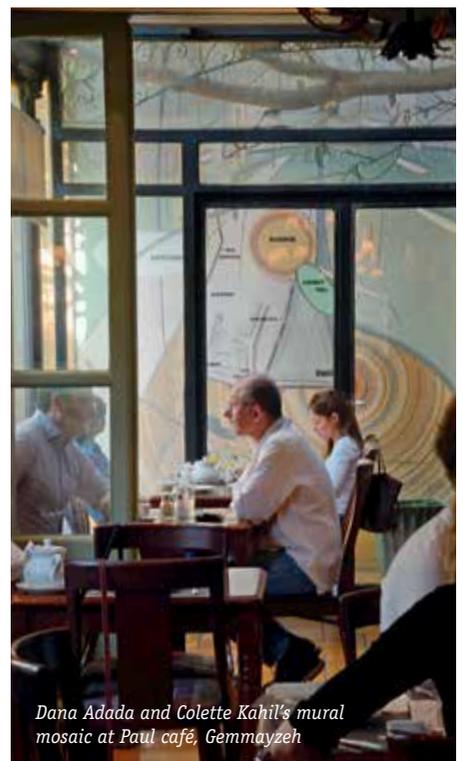
The materials I use vary widely and include natural stones, vitreous glass, ceramics, opaline and metal. I only use materials with color that will not fade with time. I would never use plastic for instance.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CREATING A MOSAIC?

Develop the design, cut the stone, lay the stone, stick the stone (different materials require different types of glue,) grout with cement and polish.

Words by Amy E. Robertson

[Cut to Size](#), [@cutosize](#)
 Ras el Nabeh, Koleilat street
 To visit Adada's atelier, contact her for an appointment at: cutosize@gmail.com, danaadada@gmail.com, 03 234998



Dana Adada and Colette Kahil's mural mosaic at Paul café, Gemmayzeh

Prices clockwise from left:
 Small tray with wooden rim LL75,000
 Stool, including game LL1,800,000
 Tissue box LL105,000



POET OF THE VALLEY

Set in an ancient monastery within the dramatic scenery of Bcharreh in north Lebanon, the Gibran Museum tells the story of legendary Lebanese poet **Gibran Khalil Gibran**

Set in the Qadisha Valley, the historic town of Bcharreh has a rather huge cultural heritage to boast of. It's the hometown of celebrated Lebanese poet Gibran Khalil Gibran, the third best-selling poet of all time, following only Shakespeare and Laozi. Despite spending much of his life in the United States, Gibran remained connected to Bcharreh throughout his life and the town continually inspired his writings and appeared in his paintings.

GIBRAN'S WRITINGS

Gibran is of course best known for his 1923 book, "The Prophet," a series of inspirational philosophical poetic essays written in English prose that have been published in over 40 languages. Writing in both Arabic and English, he's considered a literary pioneer and rebel, breaking away from the classical style to create what became a new movement in modern Arabic literature. In 'The Prophet,' Gibran taught about love, peace and how to have

human relationships – about marriage, family, children, justice, education, until death, even death he spoke about. I think 'The Prophet' is important because he treats these big questions very simply,"

says Dr. Tarek Chidiac, president of the Gibran National Committee (GNC.)

Studying Syrian poet and writer, Francis Marrash at Al Hikma School in Beirut, many academics say Gibran was influenced by his style and concepts. Marrash's idea of universal love had a particularly big impact. Gibran's great works were many, from his renowned poem "Pity The Nation," reflecting his dream of his homeland being freed from Ottoman rule, to the 1934 philosophical literary work "The Earth Gods."

THE MUSEUM

After a long scenic drive along the winding mountainous road to Bcharreh from Beirut, a road just before the town's entrance that curves into the mountainside leads to the Gibran Museum. It's located inside an ancient 7th Century hermitage; a small monastery, cut into the rocks, where monks once sought shelter. Having always said he wished to be buried in Lebanon, close friend and advocate Mary Haskell and Gibran's sister Mariana purchased Mar Sarkis Monastery in 1932 on his request. His body was laid to rest there and his tomb remains there today, along with the contents of his New

York studio, his private library, manuscripts and 440 original paintings, restored and transformed into a museum by the Gibran National Committee in 1975. "Even without Gibran, the monastery is a real museum by nature," says Chidiac. "It's very old and it's carved into the stone of the mountain. It's a very beautiful touristic site."

The museum is a unique, atmospheric place – a maze of rooms with arched ceilings and stone interiors. His paintings are full of mysticism, showing naked human forms blending into one and ghostly portraits. Recreations of his studio give an insight into how Gibran lived, along with his library showing the books that once inspired him.

“**The Prophet is important because he treats these big questions very simply**”



Gibran Museum's interior

PRESERVING A LEGACY

The non-profit organization GNC was founded in 1934 to manage Gibran's legacy. The poet bequeathed all of his paintings, writings, scriptures and personal things to his hometown, also giving the future American rights of his books to Bcharreh to be used for good causes. They have been managed by the Committee to develop the town's tourism and social activities. "Gibran loved Bcharreh very much. He spent his childhood in the Qadisha Valley. He knows about its history," says Chidiac. "If you look in the background of his paintings you will see the mountains of Qadisha. It's in almost all of his works."

Along with preserving Gibran's manuscripts, paintings and belongings, the GNC's main aim is to disseminate his heritage. "We aim to spread Gibran's thinking about life, society, his philosophy, with people all over the world," says Chidiac, who first began studying Gibran around 20 years ago.

With The Prophet due to go into the public domain in the US by 2018 and many of the museum's paintings in need of restoration, the committee have had to look for alternative ways to sustain their work. They've found success with a series of international exhibitions and conferences that started in Sydney, Australia in 2010/11, continuing with an exhibition in São Paulo, Brazil, a week-long conference on Gibran at the University of Maryland in the USA and an exhibition in Sharjah, UAE. Upcoming exhibitions are also planned in France and England. "The exhibitions have been very popular. With Gibran there are many topics to talk about and so lots of potential for exhibitions. Gibran is relatable to so many people. He was like a bridge between the Occident and the Orient," Chidiac says.

Gibran Museum, Bcharreh, 06 671137, gibrankhalilgibran.org



Bcharreh

GIBRAN IN POPULAR CULTURE

As one of the world's most popular poets, Gibran's influence can be found everywhere from music and theater to cinema. Here's just some of those he touched

THE PROPHET, THE FILM

A 2014 animation starring the voices of Lebanese actress Salma Hayek and Liam Neeson, among others, The Prophet works as a great introduction to Gibran's masterpiece. The GNC approved the script and licensed the film. gibransprophetmovie.com

ELVIS WAS A FAN

Elvis Presley received his first copy of The Prophet in 1956 and is said to have become deeply connected to it. Giving out copies to friends over the years, photographs exist of his handwritten notes under different passages of Gibran's books.

JOHN LENNON

"Half of what I say is meaningless, but I say it so that the other half may reach you," from Gibran's poem "Sand and Foam," was used by John Lennon in "Julia" from one of The Beatles' most renowned records, "The White Album."

DAVID BOWIE

Gibran was also mentioned in David Bowie's 1970 album "The Man Who Sold the World," showing the poet's ongoing popularity in the '60s counter culture.



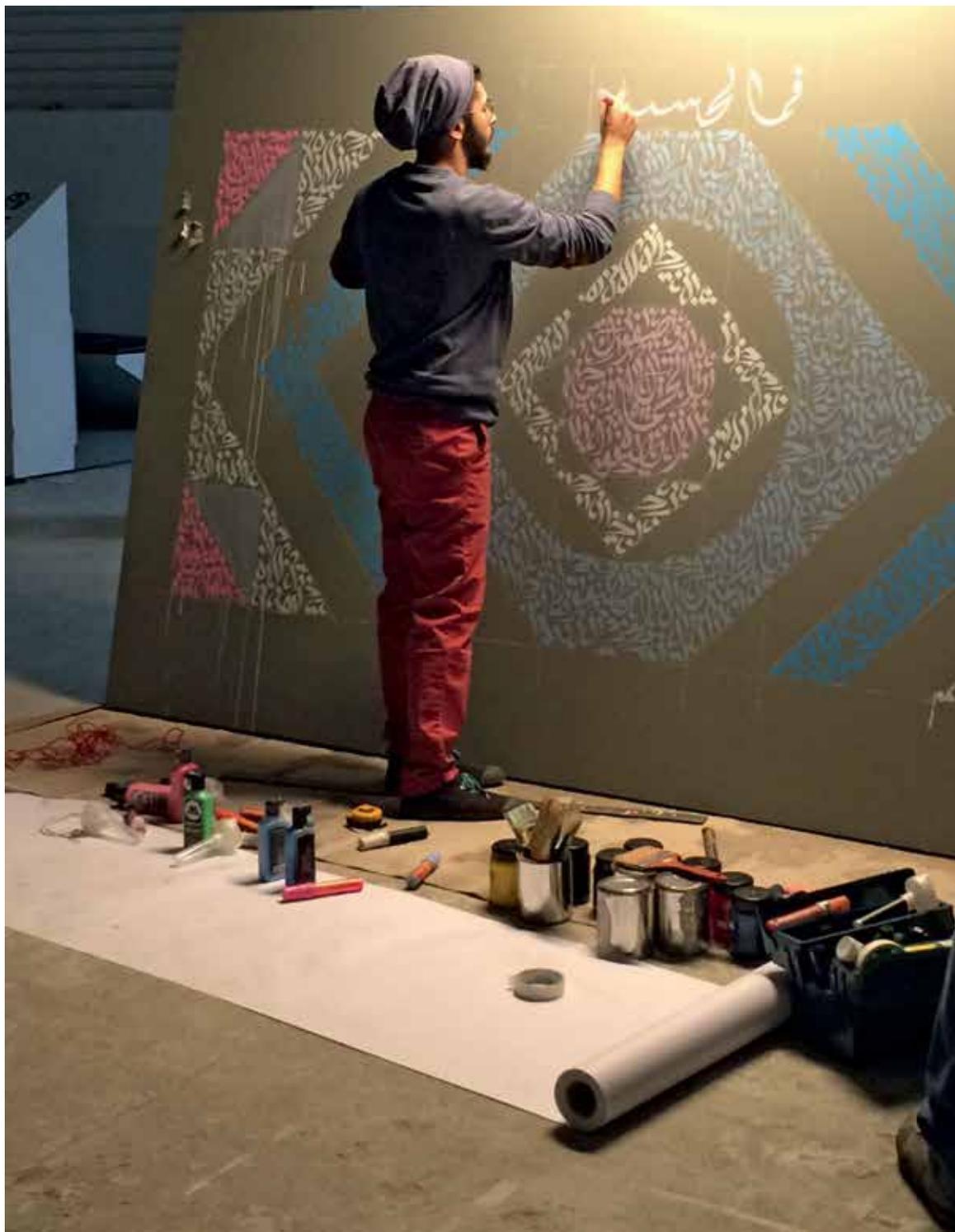
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Writing on the wall



Young calligrapher **Ghaleb Hawila** is breathing life into an old art form, taking it everywhere from the streets to people's bodies

For many, the ancient art of calligraphy is a field of work attached to an older generation and a time before the digitization of graphic design. But calligrapher Ghaleb Hawila is part of a new generation showing interest in the art form, and playing with its potential. Since graduating from university and discovering his talent in calligraphy just a few years ago, he's never been busier, commissioned for everything from the album artwork of popular Arabic rock band, Mashrou' Leila to body art and café murals.

HOW IT STARTED

In Hawila's final year studying graphic design at the American University of Science and Technology (AUST), he struggled to decide on a specialism. He eventually settled on calligraphy for his senior research topic, based on a sketchbook in which he had started experimenting with the art form. "I was trying calligraphy out of nowhere. I had this passion from studying typography and wished to see how it worked.

“

Calligraphy doesn't need any improvement. It's perfect as it is and surviving on its own

I wanted to go to the old school of classic calligraphy but I didn't know how. I started researching calligraphy – everything that is happening in Lebanon and outside, in street art and what's happening with contemporary and classical calligraphers," he says. Interested in the relationship between calligraphy and graphic design – two fields he believes are often in conflict – alongside his university research Hawila began to start training on the side. He spent the summer working with calligraphy, first on paper, then as body art, experimenting directly on his friends. His first commission was to design a tattoo for someone in Miami who had been following his work on social media.

"I was posting everything. My trials, my experiments," he says. "I read this book, 'Show Your Work!' by Austin Kleon. It said that people love to be involved in the process of growing. They relate to it more. It felt good when people believed in my work and started hiring me." One of his first street art experiments was a circular calligraphy design on the wall of a traditional Lebanese house in Mar Mikhael. It was a big success and he was soon being commissioned to do similar murals on the walls of houses from Tyre to Beirut. "It's not a provocative art, it's a beautiful art, so I found that people love to have it in their house."

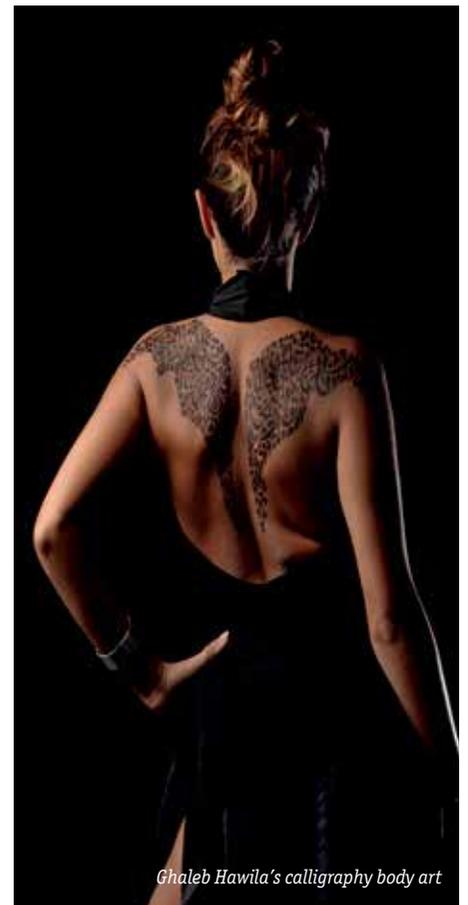
A CAREER IN MOTION

Hawila has worked on a variety of projects over the last few years from private commissions, including tattoo designs, body art and outdoor murals, to projects for brands such as Samsung. He's also been involved in social endeavors including a Red Cross event at ABC Mall, and has even led a workshop with kids at the school Lycée Abdel-Kader. "It was so interesting and inspiring to see these kids so into calligraphy," Hawila says. "We did street murals together and I was teaching them different kinds of scripts at the same time." Another big project saw him paint entire walls of a café interior in Salim Slem. One of his career highlights so far was working with Arabic rock band Mashrou' Leila. Having previously experimented with the band's logo, he was contacted to work as a calligrapher with them and designed the cover of their 2015 album "Ibn El Leil," the band's logo and promotional material.

As Hawila continues to experiment and develop his style, working on a mixture of more classical pieces while also experimenting with modern forms, the work is already building up. Noticing a rising interest in calligraphy, Hawila also offers calligraphy workshops teaching students the riqā' script. He's now into his fourth edition.

NATURAL FORMS AND IMPERFECTIONS

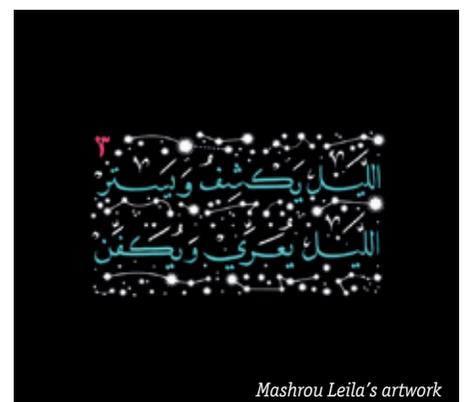
Hawila is drawn to the organic form of calligraphy that took its early inspiration from the curves of nature. "Some see it as floating on the page, others a form that is easy on the eye. It feels good just



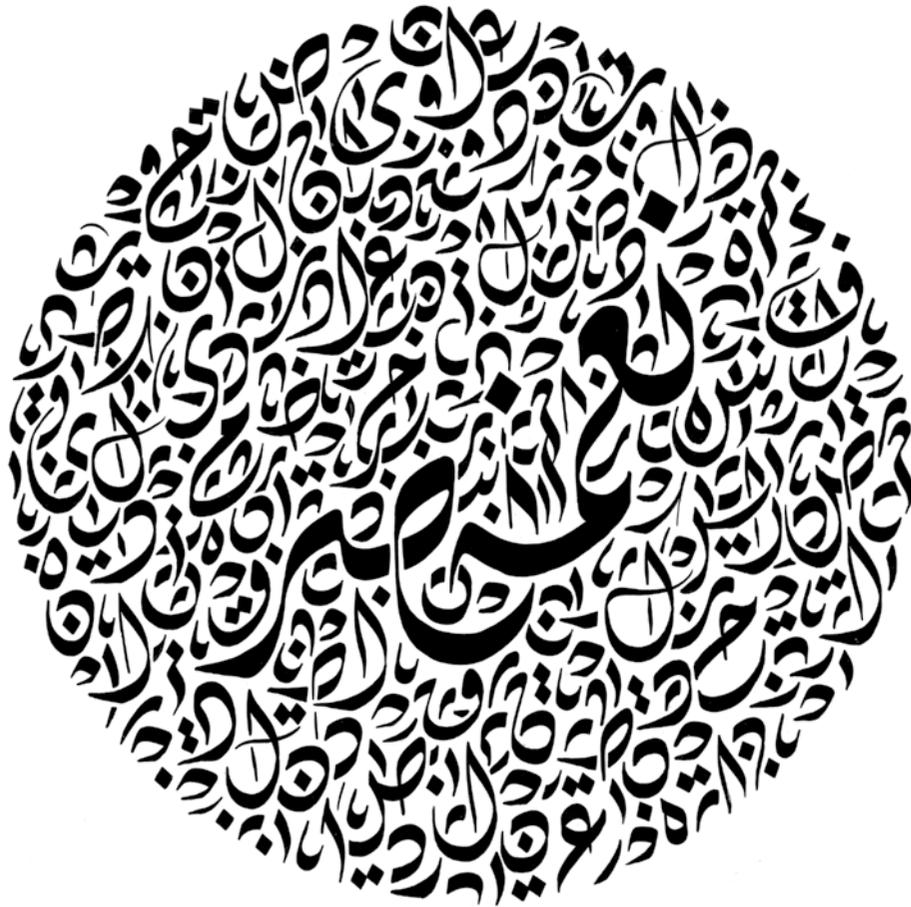
Ghaleb Hawila's calligraphy body art



Mashrou' Leila's album cover



Mashrou' Leila's artwork



to look at. When I teach I always tell students to watch the healthy curves. There are no jerks, there is nothing harsh about it.” He finds doing calligraphy meditative by nature and is in love with the imperfections of the art form. “You’re perfecting something, but you know it won’t be perfect. You can’t repeat the same letter twice. Some people are trying to systemize calligraphy but its beauty is in the hand strokes, the errors, the flows that are different in the work of every artist.”

THE FUTURE OF CALLIGRAPHY

Once used everywhere from shop signs, to official event invitations, calligraphy used to be a big business, but with the digitization of design, calligraphy went into a lull, unable to compete with cheap, fast design work available on demand.

Hawila believes that though the art form may have slowed, there is still a place for it and there is no need for its modernization. “Calligraphy doesn’t need any improvement. It’s perfect as it is and surviving on its own. Though you can’t get calligraphy cheap because it takes a lot of time, the quality a calligrapher can give is different from typography. It’s more alive.” He’s personally seen growing appreciation of calligraphy as an art form, with people wanting it “on their body, to hang in their homes and around them, to inspire.”

Hawila does believe though that more could be done to promote calligraphy as an art form, starting with the accessibility of calligraphers. “Calligraphers are usually old school. We are social media beings now. If I want a calligrapher, I

Tools of the trade

Though industrial calligraphy papers are now available, Hawila prefers to use the original paper, which he gets from Turkey. A process in itself, the handmade paper is coated with a paste made from eggs, which prevents the paper from soaking up the ink. “The ink on the paper should exactly follow the lines of the straw,” he says.

The pen, one of the oldest calligraphy tools in the world, is usually made from bamboo reed, which varies widely across countries where calligraphy is still common such as Iran, Egypt and Turkey.

Though composite calligraphy inks are now widely available, Hawila likes natural inks such as saffron and coffee – “You can imagine how they dealt with calligraphy before. It was an art that was very connected to the places they were living and what materials were available.” He often though experiments in calligraphy with a variety of materials, even using street-graffiti style paint for his bigger outdoor murals.

Where to learn

If you’re interested in learning calligraphy, Hawila offers workshops in riq’a’ script. It’s a form of calligraphy that dates back to the 10th Century, its name coming from the Arabic word ruq’a meaning a piece of cloth – because it was once written on small pieces to petition the royal rule.

Contact Ghaleb Hawila on 70 701821

Follow him on

📷 #ghalligraphy

@g.hawila

will Google ‘calligraphy in Lebanon’ and if nothing comes up, I will assume there is no calligraphy here. I wouldn’t go out and search for it.” As a solution to that, Hawila is working on developing an online platform of calligraphers – creating a website to promote their work and provide easy access where there is a demand for it.

الصحة بتليق لسفرتنا



3RD EDITION

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Your hands-on guide to Lebanon



Photo: Nada Karam



Getaways

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

1. FAMILY GETAWAY *Hiking Darb El Sama*



Harissa. Photo: 4bArchitects - Said Bitar

This easy-level trail through Harissa forest takes walkers from Jounieh, past monasteries and modern developments, until reaching quiet tree-lined trails. In spring, enjoy the blossoming flowers along the route such as cyclamen, marguerites and anemones, before reaching the great statue of Our Lady of Harissa at the mountain top. The trail was created years ago by villagers, and has more recently been used by scouts and hikers. In the past few years however, it has been renovated as an international pilgrimage trail by the foundation Darb Essama (darbessama.org, [f](https://www.facebook.com/Darb-Essama/) Darb Essama,) translating as The Trail to Heaven.

SLEEP Stay overnight at **Bethania hostel** (09 260060, 03 044110, bethania-harissa.com) at the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lebanon.

EAT Stop for a picnic along the route or eat at the **Harissa food court** (harissaevents.com;) with its wide choice of restaurants, from fast food to Lebanese mezze. Kids will love it.

SEE Once at the sanctuary, discover the **basilica**. Its shape is a cross between a cedar tree and a Phoenician ship and the Lourdes Chapel before climbing to the top of the **statue of the Virgin Mary** for a beautiful view over Jounieh bay. The Darb Essama Foundation offers guide services.

2. ROMANTIC GETAWAY: *By the sea in Batroun*

Scores of tourists come to Batroun for its stretch of beach resorts and vibrant nightlife. It's also a perfect romantic escape for couples. Start with a walking tour in Batroun, strolling through the old souks of the city and visit its historic churches and cathedrals, not missing the beautiful **Church of Saydet El Bahr** (*Our Lady of the Sea*,) located in front of the city's Phoenician Wall, a 225m long maritime structure the Phoenicians carved into rocks in the sea. End the day with a taster palette of beers at microbrewery **Colonel** (06 743543, colonelbeer.com) and enjoy the sea air.

SLEEP Stay overnight in the heart of the old city in the boutique hotel **L'Auberge de la Mer** (06 740824, laubergedelamer.com) or the charming, **Mayouli** (71 000516, mayouli.com, [f](https://www.facebook.com/MayouliBedBreakfast/) *MayouliBedBreakfast*.)

EAT Batroun is the place to eat fresh fish and seafood, which **Maguy** (03 439147,) perched on a large rock jutting out of the Mediterranean, and **Le Marin** (06 744016, 03 328678,) both do brilliantly. For traditional Lebanese cuisine, eat at **Batrouniyat** (06 744510, batrouniyat.org.)

SEE Don't miss Batroun's varied historic architecture including **St. Stephen's Maronite Cathedral**, built on the site of an old church and completed in 1910 and the **St. George Greek Orthodox Church**, completed in 1867, that showcases a Byzantine-influenced architectural style.

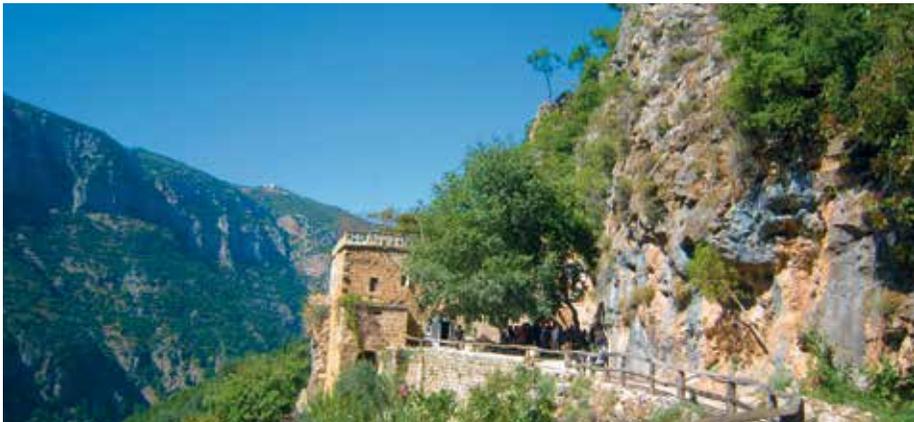


Church of Saydet El Bahr.
Photo: Nour Farra-Haddad



Batroun old souks. Photo: Nour Farra-Haddad

3. GETAWAY WITH FRIENDS *Hiking the Qadisha Valley*



Qadisha Valley. Photos: Nour Farra-Haddad



Spring is the best season to enjoy hiking in Lebanon, particularly the UNESCO World Heritage Site Qadisha Valley. In this holy valley, divided into Qannoubine and Qoshaya, find caves and sanctuaries, which were inhabited from the third millennium B.C. until the Roman period. Hermitages, rocky monasteries and churches are scattered everywhere and Muslim sophists also lived here. Considered to be one

of the most important early Christian monastic settlements in the world, its ancient monasteries and hermitages are built in the cliffs of the valley. Trails of different difficulty levels, from villages surrounding the monastery of Our Lady of Qannoubine, are the best way to explore the valley, such as the trail going down from Blowza village straight to Qannoubine. Though the more challenging hikes offer the best views, the easiest is along the road from Mar Elishaa monastery.

SLEEP Experience a mystic overnight sleep in **Our Lady of Qannoubine Monastery** (06 645505) in the middle of the valley or the hostel of the **Monastery of St. Anthony of Qozhaya** (06 995504/5, qozhaya.com.)

EAT Eat a picnic by the river of Qadisha or under pine trees or stop by the renowned **Abou Joseph Restaurant** (03 277898) for excellent traditional Lebanese mezze.

SEE The main monasteries are those of St. Anthony of Qozhaya, Our Lady of Hawqa, Our Lady of Qannoubine and Mar Lichaa but there are many more hidden along the valley's walking trails to explore, such as Deir El Salib and Deir Mar Youhanna. Take local guide **Johnny Nehmé** (03 517289) or **Aline Bou Abdallah** (03 458435.)

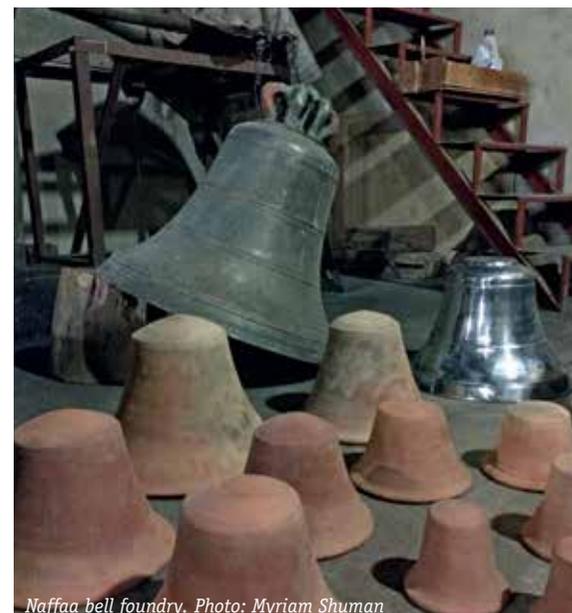
4. CRAFT-INSPIRED GETAWAY *The crafts of Beit Chabab*

A mountain village 24km north of Beirut, Beit Chabab has retained its traditional crafts of pottery, bell making and fabric into the modern age. The only bell foundry in Lebanon, the craftsmen of the village cast the half-ton bronze bells in a single mold. The pottery workshop turns out a selection of pottery ware including huge storage jars traditionally used for storing olive oil, preserving meat or ageing *arak*. The national textile known as Dima, is the country's oldest and most famous fabric industry that used to supply the local market and be exported.

SLEEP Stay in Ain Aar at the **Mariapolis Center** (04 914442) or in Beit Chabab itself, where you can take a basic dormitory at **St. Peter and Paul Convent** (04 980882.) For full comfort lovers, many hotels are available in the nearby Bikfaya and Naas areas.

EAT In Beit Chabab taste the famous *fatayer* filled with tomatoes and herbs at **Furn El Qediss** (04 980890, 71 184743) or at **Al Salam Bakery** (70 284265.) Eat a traditional Lebanese lunch on one of the terraces of **Fadel** (04 980979) or **Tellet Nasr** (04 983549) in nearby Naas.

SEE Stroll through Beit Chabab, passing along narrow streets and old stairs (including the one featured in 1967 film "*Safar Barlik*" starring Lebanese singer Fairouz.) Visit craft workshops: pottery by Fawzi Fakhoury and bell making by the Naffaa and Haddad families. Also stop by the oldest church, Our Lady of the Forest, built in 1761. Local guide **Wael Yammine** (71 876398) can take you on a tour around the village.



Naffaa bell foundry. Photo: Myriam Shuman



Best Beds

The DIYAFA Association profiles four new guesthouses located in different regions around Lebanon, each offering a genuine rural experience



Dimitriades Guesthouse, *Ghbeleh, Keserwan*

This three-floored house is perfect for gatherings with plenty of communal space, from a movie lounge with a large library and music discotheque to a relaxing terrace for barbeques. The guesthouse has spacious rooms and kitchenettes on every floor. Located close to the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve, Dimitriades Guesthouse is fitting for nature lovers, while also offering a cozy escape from the outside world. **71 307301**



Merchad Guesthouse, *Niha, Shouf*

Before exploring the sites of Niha, drop your backpack at Merchad Guesthouse and eat a warming bowl of lentil soup. At Merchad's, small details evoke memories of the past, like the crochet sets on bed-side tables or the traditional wooden chairs placed around the dining table. Guesthouse owner Chafiq Merchad is also a tour guide who organizes hiking trips to the Tomb of Nabi Ayoub, Niha's castle cut into the rock and the Cedars Nature Reserve. **05 330755**



Eco Dalida, Tannourine

Located in the beautiful Tannourine region at the entrance of the Cedars Forest Nature Reserve, the Eco Dalida guesthouse is surrounded by unspoiled mountainous scenery. The indoor chimney makes the living room particularly cozy and is perfect for baking potatoes – best enjoyed with butter and fresh herbs on a stunning terrace that looks over the Cedars Forest. Eco Dalida also features a welcoming restaurant with an extensive menu of homemade Lebanese cuisine. **06 500007, 03 679055**



Auberge Hadath el Jebbeh, *Hadath El Jebbeh*

This restored traditional mansion still has its original features, from its yellow stoned walls to antique chandeliers dangling from high ceilings. Simply decorated with retro furniture, it gives visitors a glimpse into the 19th Century. Marked for its genuine hospitality, this guesthouse is famous for serving traditional Lebanese garlic *maakroun* – a salty dough mixed with garlic – and for its host's stories who can organize guided hikes and tours of the area. **71 680222, 71 680333**

What is DIYAFA?

The DIYAFA Association, initiated by ANERA (American Near East Refugee Aid), arranges training and workshops for guesthouses as part of the Lebanon Industry Value Chain Development (LIVCD) Project, implemented by DAI and funded by USAID. On 16 February, DIYAFA launched their website – an online guide to alternative lodging and rural packages in Lebanon that helps visitors choose, plan and book trips. **01 382590, diyafa.org**



On the table

It's always 5 o'clock somewhere, but when it's 5 in Beirut, here's where you want to be. Lebanon's number one food and lifestyle magazine, **Taste & Flavors**, rounds up the best happy hours in town

Room For Three

In Beirut one thing is for sure: you are never alone. When most of the time people can agree that two is company, at Room For Three they know that three is a party.

Time: Happy hour from 4pm to 8pm

Happy hour deal: 50% off regular drinks, cocktails and beer. Every Wednesday from 6pm to 9pm, happy hour is replaced with a free open buffet

Signature cocktail: The Rosemary Gin
Beirut, Badaro, 01 382969, 03 621896



Pablo Escobar-Coctel Y Cocina

Walking into Pablo Escobar, the latest Tex-Mex cocktail bar and restaurant, is like taking a stroll in an old Latin alleyway. Hand painted trompe l'oeil on its walls, a wrought iron staircase and floral patterns all evoke the authentic charm of another era.

Time: Happy hour from 5pm to 8pm

Happy hour deal: 50% off regular drinks, quesadillas and appetizers

Signature cocktails: Margaritas, daiquiris
Dbayeh, The Village – Dbayeh, 76 777092



Taylor's Bar

Taylor's Bar is a feel-good resto-pub with a cozy laid-back vibe. The vintage décor, cocktails of the week and all-day menu make it a perfect spot to reminisce about the city's glory days.

Time: Happy hour from 4pm to 8pm

Happy hour deal: 40% to 50% on all regular and premium drinks

Signature cocktails: DesPêchesModes, Cinnamon Twist, Anis-O-Rez
Beirut, Badaro Main Street, 71 449344



Feb30

As one of Hamra's main attractions, Feb30 makes you see things from a different angle, to look at life upside down. It's of course helped by the fact that some of their furniture has found its way to the ceiling.

Time: Happy hour from 5pm to 9pm

Happy hour deal: 50% off the regular menu
Signature Cocktails: Homemade Devil's mix: rum, brandy

Hamra, The Alleyway, Street 78, 76 994405



L'Avocat

A comfortable retro chic space with year round outdoor seating, great food, delectable drinks and a classy vibe.

Time: Happy hour from 4pm to 8pm

Happy Hour Deal: Up to 40% off drinks, salads, and appetizers

Signature Cocktail: Matyche
*Beirut, Badaro Main Street
Facing SGBL bank, 01 382522*



Junkyard

Located in one of Mar Mikhael's hidden corners, Junkyard Beirut is a place of upcycle madness. A funky and creative take on recycling is what the venue is all about, offering a unique and fun dining and nightlife experience.

Time: Happy hour from 6pm to 8pm

Happy hour deal: 50% off, except bottles
Signature cocktail: Passion Fruit Martini

Beirut, Mar Mikhael, 03 945961





Boutique wine trail

The beautiful district of Batroun is now home to a bunch of prominent Lebanese wineries. Lebanese mapping company **Zawarib** pick their favorites for a road trip to the north Lebanon region that will satisfy your senses. All you need is a car, sunshine, and an early start

Head north along the country's coastal highway for a scenic sea view. Once you pass Jbeil, keep an eye out for an army checkpoint from where you can take a mountain road that leads to Rachana, a village which features an open-air drive-through exhibition of splendid sculptures by the Basbous family of artists. The art will keep you inspired until you reach the village of Smar Jbeil, characterized by a Crusader castle ruin. The village is also home to Mar Nohra Church, named after a Persian missionary who was blinded by the Romans. Today the church welcomes pilgrims from near and far seeking to be healed from eye disease.

Further up the road that goes above Smar Jbeil sits **Atibaia** (1 – atibaiawine.com), a boutique winery surrounded by fertile vineyards. The winery makes its home inside a 17th Century rustic house with lush surroundings and produces a delicate and intense deep red wine.

Further along the road, catch your last glimpse of the Mediterranean sea before being completely immersed in the Batroun Valley. Soon enough you will reach a fork in the road at a gas station. Take a left to reach **Clos du Phoenix** (2 – 06 720366, 03 271672, closduphoenix.com), managed and run by a family of artisan winemakers. Enjoy a wonderful wine-tasting experience and breathtaking view on the terrace of the winery restaurant (*open on demand for groups of 10 plus.*)

Drive back down to the town of Batroun, and expect to be taken aback by Batroun's very own Hollywood signpost – the town's name is realized in huge white letters that sit at the town's entrance.

Turn right at the gas station and head to the village of Kfifane, where monastery and winery **Adyar** (3 – 03 586244, adyar.org.lb, [f Adyar.lb](https://www.facebook.com/Adyar.lb)) are waiting to be explored.

Breathe in the mountain air and drink from the fresh water wells surrounded by endless groves of olive trees, before savoring wine and organic produce made by the monks.

Nearby in Basbina lies **Ixsir** (4 – 71 631613, ixsir.com.lb), another magnificent winery in a 17th Century bastion. Bask in the garden sunlight while enjoying the gifts of Mother Nature in a glass of wine. The **Nicolas Audi à la Maison d'Ixsir** (71 773770) restaurant is open for lunch daily, excluding Mondays.

Proceed on your journey to Chabtine to see ruins of a stone house and the famous life-sized shrine of **St. Rita**. Although it looks as though you have reached a dead end in the road, drive on to reach **Domaine S.Najm** (5 – 70 623023, domaine-snajm.com), a beautiful old house come winery where the sweet smell of arak and wine will draw you in. Olive oil, wine and arak can be appreciated in this charming spot, which is also excellent for picnics if the weather allows.



Back at the St. Rita shrine follow signs to Douma, a picturesque and authentic village filled with traditional stone houses, red roofs and an old souk. There you will find the grand circular **Douma Hotel** (6 – 06 520202, hoteldouma.com) – the oldest hotel of the village, built in the dazzling era of the '60s. Each room offers a 180-degree view of the valley due to the curved architecture of the building's façade. Take note of the stone plates that commemorate events from the 19th Century – Douma is over 120 years old.

Another great place to stay overnight or visit for lunch is **Beit Douma** (7 – 06 520702, soukeltayeb.com/beit/), a beautifully restored Lebanese house where you can completely immerse yourself in the classic Lebanese village way of life. Connect with nature and

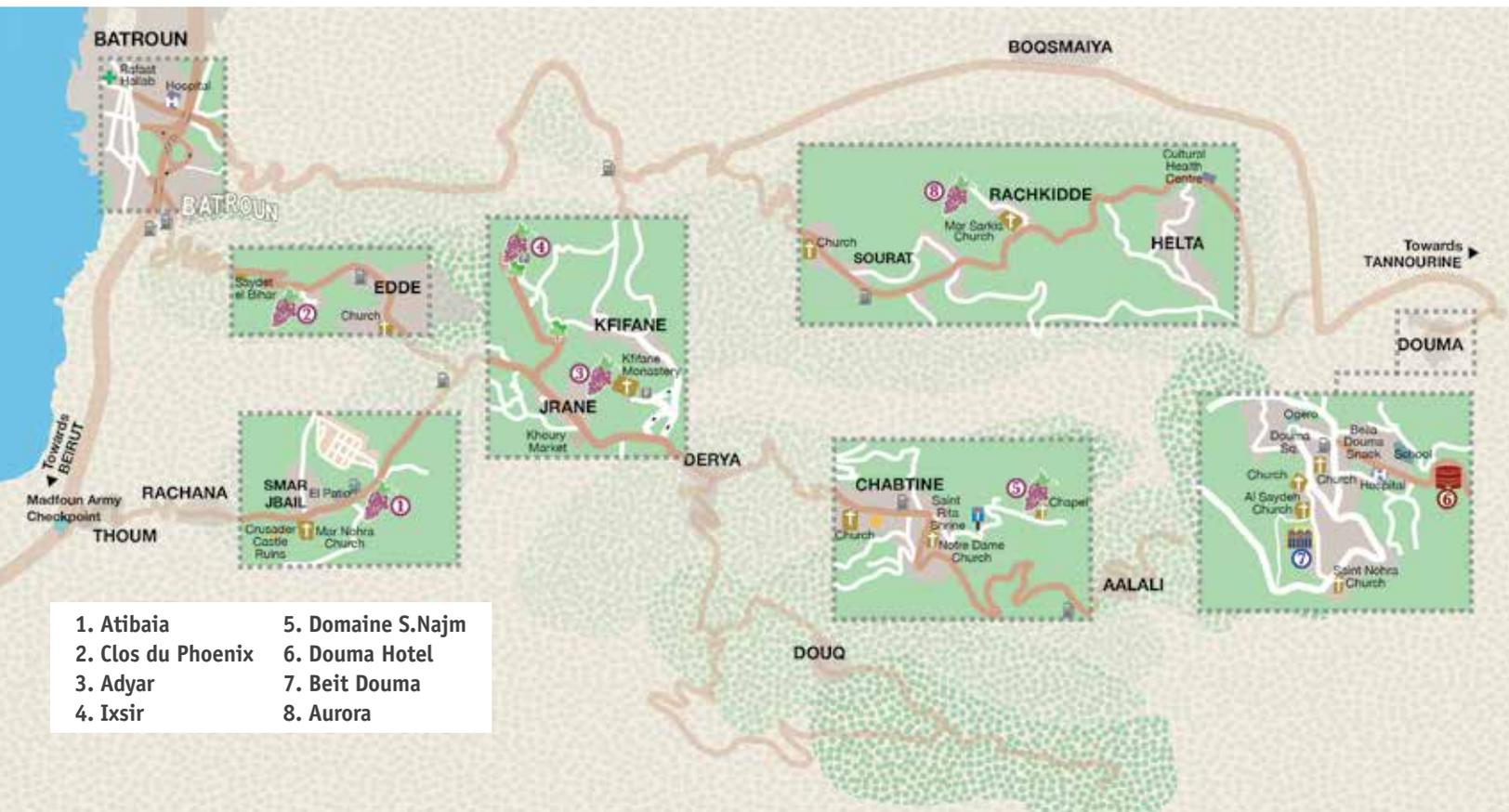
gather, pick and appreciate fresh ingredients before cooking them. Beit Douma offers a rich culinary and cultural experience with all the comforts of 21st Century living.

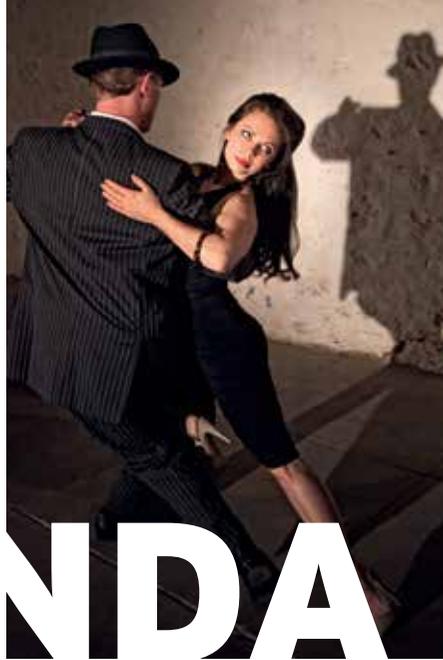
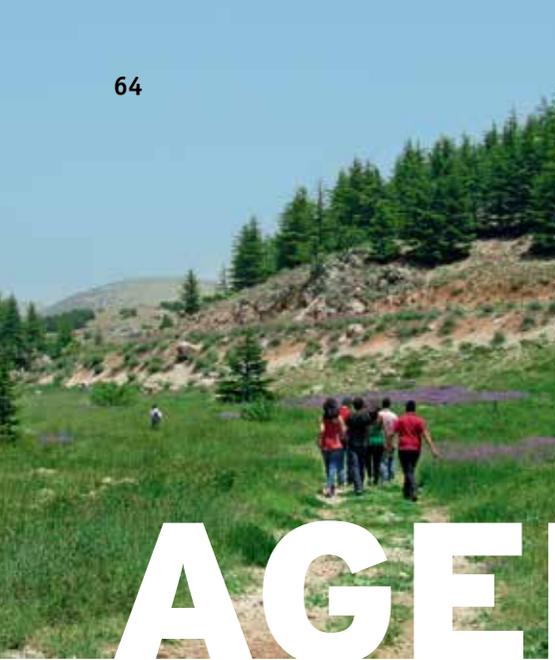
As you near the end of your excursion, take the new highway from Douma back to Batroun and enjoy one last sweet detour to Rachkedde. There lies family-owned boutique winery **Aurora** (8 – 03 295458,

 **Aurora Wine.**) Enjoy the majestic colors of Batroun's sunset sky with a bright, fresh and velvety glass of the Aurora Vin de Montagne, before heading home.



A collaboration between Lebanon Traveler and Zawarib – guiding you around Lebanon.





The Garden Show & Spring Festival

AGENDA

MARCH

Sun 20

Listening Through the Lens

A selection of images from the Fouad Debbas Collection at the Surssock Museum, showcasing sound recordings, archival documents, postcards and photographs around the history of Middle Eastern dance. *Until 18 April. Surssock Museum*

Snowshoeing in Laqlouq

Enjoy the white peaks of Laqlouq with a day of snowshoeing through nature. The walk is easy level, with light ascents and descents, so perfect for picture taking. *LL50,000 including transport. Meeting point Mar Maroun Church parking, Dora. Dale Corazon*

Nahr Al Barouk hike

A hike in the Shouf region, along the river of Barouk, taking in waterfalls and old bridges. Various hiking levels are on offer. *7.30am. Meeting point parking by Hikmeh School, Sagesse, Achrafieh. LL40,000 + LL7000 reserve entrance including transport. Liban Trek*

Ammiq Reserve hike

A hike in the beautiful nature reserve of West Bekaa's Ammiq, an important resting spot for migrating birds. The hike will be along the edge of the mountains, where

diverse tree species provide shade and shelter. *7.30am. Meeting point parking of Sagesse School, Jdeideh. LL85,000 including transport, lunch and reserve entrance.*

Vamos Todos

Arsoun hike

An 8km hike around the typical traditional Lebanese village, Arsoun, in upper Metn. The village is located amid pine and oak trees and features old bridges and mills and great scenery. *LL35,000 including transport.*

We are Hikers

Sat 26

Qannoubine hike

Join Vamos Todos for a hike along a new trail in the Qannoubine (aka Qadisha Valley or the Holy Valley.) The historic region is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and offers breathtaking scenery with ancient monasteries carved into the rocks. *7.30am. Meeting point parking of Sagesse School, Jdeideh. LL50,000 including transport.*

Vamos Todos

Camping in Wadi Krakir

Enjoy a weekend camping trip to Qoura in the valley of Krakir, where tranquil nature awaits. *Meeting point Mathaf, Beirut. LL90,000.*

Footprints Club

APRIL

Fri 1

Thru Walk

The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association's annual Thru Walk, covering the 470km trail from north to south. This year themed around food heritage. *1 April-1 May, LL127,500 per day/night including accommodation, meals etc. Lebanon Mountain Trail Association*

Sat 2

Bekaa valley wine tour

Enjoy a day visiting the wineries of the picturesque Bekaa Valley. *7am. Meeting point Mar Abda Church parking, Jal El Dib. LL40,000 including transport. Dale Corazon*

Sat 9

Mountain climbing in Afqa Jbeil

Feeling active? A day mountain climbing and rappelling should do the trick. *Meeting point Mathaf, Beirut. LL90,000. Footprints Club*

Wed 20

Tripoli Film Festival

An annual film festival in Lebanon's northern city, held at Safadi Center and Beit el Fan. *30 April-7 May. Tripoli-filmfestival.org*

MAY

Sun 1

Nahr Bisri hike

A trail along a cliff in the south region of Jezzine with breathtaking views. *7.30am. Meeting point parking by Hikmeh School, Sagesse, Achrafieh. LL40,000 including transport.* **Liban Trek**

Tue 3

Beirut Spring Festival

The Samir Kassir Foundation returns with another edition of their unique Beirut Spring Festival which features multidisciplinary international performances across music, theater, dance and conferences around cultural diversity. **Samir Kassir Foundation**

Thu 5

Beirut International Tango Festival

Lebanon's only tango festival organized by Mazen Kiwan returns with its eighth edition, bringing that Argentinean flavor to the city. This year will feature legendary dancing couples on the international scene. *5-8 May, 7pm-4am.* **Beirut International Tango Festival**

Sat 14

Mresti hike

A hike in the Shouf district to Mresti. *7.30am. Meeting point parking by Hikmeh School, Sagesse, Achrafieh. LL40,000 including transport.* **Liban Trek**

Tue 24

The Garden Show and Spring Festival

Entering its 13th year, The Garden Show & Spring Festival is a major event of the season for Beirutis. This year the show takes place under the theme, "The Garden of Scents." Over 250 exhibition stands offer attendees an extensive array of garden and floral retail products and tools, outdoor furniture and beautiful gardens. *24-28 May. Beirut, Hippodrome, the-gardenshow.com*

SPOTLIGHT 24-28 May Travel Lebanon

Happening simultaneously with The Garden Show and Spring Festival in Beirut Hippodrome, Travel Lebanon is a celebration of the country's rural regions. With over 60 exhibitors including regional municipalities, eco-tour operators, craftsmen and designers, rural resorts and eco lodges and outdoor activity providers, Travel Lebanon is a sample of the different destinations and getaways on offer in the country. Discover the best of the countryside, culture, heritage,



food and music of Lebanon and enjoy the daily entertainment from Lebanese villages highlighting rural traditions such as the folklore dance dabkeh, the village poetry zajal, Lebanese songs and live craft demonstrations. the-gardenshow.com

Regular Events

Every Wed and Sat Souk El Tayeb

Food producer's market Souk el Tayeb comes to Gefinor Center every Wednesday (*2-6 pm*) with fresh fruit and vegetables, Lebanese specialties, saj and mouneh, also continuing in its usual Beirut Souks spot every Saturday (*9-2 pm*).

Every Thu Souk El Akel

This street food market in Downtown Beirut, showcases Lebanon's vibrant culinary world of food including Lebanese, Middle Eastern and international bites. The market is a collaboration with Souk El Tayeb, NoGarlicNoOnions, Chef Wael Lazkani, Solidere and Beirut Souks, bringing a hand-picked selection of almost 30 vendors from local artisans and everyday restaurants to cafes for all budgets. Also expect celebrity chefs, pop-ups and street-inspired dishes from Beirut's famous restaurants. *Downtown Beirut.*

Every Sat and Sun Diving in Lebanon

Take up a new hobby by trying diving lessons to discover the country's underwater paradise. Each session includes theory, equipment class and 25mins of underwater diving, along with the opportunity of underwater photo shoots. *1 May onwards, 6am-8pm. LL45,000. Ghaith Travel*

ADDRESS BOOK

Beirut International Tango Festival
 Tangolebanon.com

Dale Corazon
 70 986118, dalecorazon.com,
 DaleCorazonLeb

Footprints Club
 03 876112, footprintsclub.com

Ghaith Travel
 71 941100, 71 847163,  Ghaith Travel

Lebanon Mountain Trail Association
 05 955302, lebanontrail.org
 Lebanon Mountain Trail Association

Liban Trek
 01 329975, 03 291616, libantrek.com

Samir Kassir Foundation
 01 397331, info@beirutspringfestival.org, beirutspringfestival.org

Souk El Akel
 01 448129, 03 111343, soukelakel.com,
 soukelakel

Souk El Tayeb
 01 442664, soukeltayeb.com

Sursock Museum
 01 334133, sursock.museum

Vamos Todos
 03 917190, 79 115001, vamos-todos.com

We Are Hikers
 03 582084, wearehikers.com

For daily event updates visit
lebanontraveler.com



MICHEL ELEFTERIADES

LT speaks to Greek-Lebanese artist, producer and founder of cabaret-style theater, Music Hall, **Michel Elefteriades**. He might be a master of nightlife, but we discovered he still makes time to enjoy the country when the sun is still shining. Here are his tips for exploring Lebanon

IF SOMEONE IS VISITING LEBANON FOR JUST 24 HOURS, WHERE WOULD YOU TAKE THEM?

I would take them to Baalbeck and we would have lunch in Zahlé at a good Lebanese restaurant like Casino Mhanna (*Berdawni, Zahle, 08 800634, closed during winter*) or Arabi (*08 800144, Berdawni, Zahle.*)

WHAT'S YOUR HIDDEN GEM IN LEBANON – AN UNKNOWN DESTINATION AWAITING DISCOVERY?

I have one but don't expect me to reveal it to the media and take the risk to mention it to invaders.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE NIGHTLIFE ESSENTIALS TO VISIT IN BEIRUT?

Music Hall (*Starco Center, Omar Daouk Street, Beirut Central District, 01 361236,*

themusichall.com) and I would have given you the same answer even if I wasn't its owner.

NAME ONE VILLAGE OR TOWN THAT FEELS LIKE HOME AND WHY?

Ajaltoun in the Keserwan region because that is where I spent all my summers till I was 20.

TELL US ABOUT ONE OF YOUR URBAN SECRETS?

Bread Republic (*Main Street, Hamra, 01 739040,  Bread Republic Hamra*), late at night.

WHERE IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE TO GO FOR A WEEKEND GETAWAY IN THE SPRING?

Laqlouq because it's a special place for me.

WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE IN A PICNIC BASKET FOR A TRIP TO THE CITY PARK HORSCH BEIRUT?

Bananas, oranges and apples, and maybe *kaaké* and Picon cream cheese.

WHERE IS THE OLIVE OIL IN YOUR KITCHEN FROM?

Every year, Faysal and May Khalil, the founder and president of the Beirut Marathon Association, send me oil and olives from their village Hasbaya.

IF YOU WERE STUCK ON A TRIPOLI PALM ISLAND AND COULD ONLY TAKE THREE RECORDS BY LEBANESE ARTISTS WHICH ONES WOULD THEY BE?

The best of Fairuz, the best of Wadiah El Safi and an album that I produced for Tony Hanna, Tony Hanna & the Yugoslavian Gipsy Brass Band – “My Village, Lost Somewhere Between Beograd And Baghdad.”

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