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meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Lebanon Food and History - Tailormade Tour

Tour Duration – 9 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●○○ | History ●●●○○ | Wildlife ●●○○○

Tour Pace

Moderate/Busy

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Explore the fascinating city of Beirut, Gateway to the orient where old meets new
- ✓ Stroll in the narrow streets of Byblos (UNESCO), constantly inhabited since the 6th Century BC
- ✓ Stay in a monastery in the verdant and peaceful Qadisha Valley
- ✓ Marvel at ancient Cedar trees, a key emblem of Lebanon
- ✓ Observe ancient Lebanese architecture in Deir el Qamar (UNESCO)
- ✓ Visit Beiteddine Palace, notable for its exquisite mosaics
- ✓ Wander the atmospheric souks of the port Phoenician city of Sidon
- ✓ Stand before some of the best-preserved Roman architecture in Baalbeck (UNESCO)
- ✓ Immerse yourself in the delicious food and excellent wines of Lebanon





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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	Comfortable small-scale hotels
Included Meals:	Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size:	Private Tour
Start Point:	Beirut
End Point:	Beirut
Transport:	Private air-conditioned vehicle
Country Visited:	Lebanon





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Private tour of Lebanon

Lebanon was known in the 1960's as the Switzerland of the Middle East. Today Lebanon has largely rebuilt itself after a devastating civil war that ended in 1991. This small country extending for only 250km's North to South and 50 km's from East to West excels in its diversity of experiences and exceptional sense of hospitality. On our journey we will experience the vibrant city of Beirut, both old and new. However this tour offers much more. Get to grips with the heart of Lebanon as we spend plenty of time out of the big city. We will journey to ancient settlements such as Byblos and Batroun on the shimmering Mediterranean coast, wander through the atmospheric souks of Sidon, and admire the noble emblem of Lebanon: the majestic Cedar Forests of the Chouf Reserve. Stay in a monastery in the lush Qadisha Valley and enjoy walking amidst inspiring scenery, and enjoy the magnificent food and wine of Lebanon in the fertile Bekaa Valley. Standing in front of the magnificent Roman temples of Baalbek (UNESCO) is sure to inspire and delight as well as castles from Crusader times and the UNESCO town of Deir Al Qamar with its excellent examples of grand feudal architecture.

Tour itinerary notes

The day-by-day itinerary as printed below is an exemplar and, upon request, can have a large degree of flexibility built in. This may include additional side excursions, stop-offs en route or indeed further days to visit other sites. In winter months alternative routes must be taken to get to the Bekaa Valley so the itinerary will be slightly different. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, might be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour. You may not be accompanied by a guide for your arrival and departure transfer.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Beirut

Arrive in Beirut and transfer to your hotel. Depending on your time of arrival, there may be time to explore the city. Overnight Hotel Le Caramel Boutique Hotel. No meals or guided activities are included today.

Beirut

Beirut, the Gate to the Orient, Destroyed and rebuilt seven times, it owned the title of "the city that refuses to vanish". Solidere has succeeded in re-creating life in the heart of Beirut, making it once more the vibrant place where young and old from various countries come together. The capital still has many attractions to offer, such as many archaeological and religious sites in the Downtown, the National Museum, the Moawad Museum, the Pigeons Rock, the Sursock Museum, Shopping Centres, and lots of Restaurants with delicious menus of International and Lebanese cuisine.

Day 2: Beirut

This morning after breakfast, start the day with a stroll on the breezy and bustling corniche, an activity enjoyed by many local Beirutis. During the walk, learn about how the area was shaped by the civil war and the regeneration efforts since.



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Stark reminders of the conflict are very much still visible including the bullet ridden Holiday Inn hotel building which has remained derelict and were the scenes of intense battles. Continue to Martyrs Square and the impressive Mohammad Al Amin Mosque complete with its towering sandstone minarets. We will also stop to see the archaeological site of the Roman baths in the centre of the city. Continue to the National Museum where we take an enriching visit and learn about the turbulent history of Lebanon which will give the experiences of the coming day's added context. Any time after 11am you can visit the Souk el Tayeb food market (Saturday and Tuesdays only), an authentic local experience not to be missed. After the visit to the souk, enjoy some time at leisure before this evening heading to the bustling Bourj Hammoud with its large Armenian population. Here you will enjoy an authentic Lebanese/Armenian meal tonight. Overnight Hotel Le Caramel Boutique Hotel. (BD)

Souk el Tayeb Market

Souk el Tayeb's weekly farmers market hosts around 100 small producers from all over Lebanon who offer fresh, local, seasonal food products and organic produce, ranging from fruits and vegetables, "mouneh", dairy products, ready- to- eat food and sweets alongside traditional, handmade crafts. By connecting consumers and producers, Souk el Tayeb promotes the consumption of local food, thereby giving livelihoods to small-scale farmers and enhances food knowledge and culture throughout Lebanon.

Day 3: Beirut – Batroun – Byblos (UNESCO)

After breakfast, continue a short distance up the Mediterranean coast to Batroun. Explore the narrow cobblestone streets and observe the traditional Ottoman style houses. Also take a stroll through Batroun's small but old souk and the magical ruins of the Phoenician port including the ancient sea wall. We recommend that you take an opportunity to try the authentic local lemonade here in Batroun, very refreshing and equally as delicious. Later continue up the coast to the ancient town of Byblos, said to have been continuously inhabited since the 6th Century BC. Spend the afternoon exploring this delightful place with its picturesque harbour, the well restored 12th century crusader castle and the roman archaeological site with a beautifully situated small amphitheatre overlooking the shimmering Mediterranean Sea. This evening enjoy a fresh seafood dinner on the shores of the Med and after dinner wander in the atmospheric souk area and perhaps enjoy a drink at one of the bars. Overnight Hotel Ahiram. (BD)

Byblos

At 37 Kms north of Beirut, Byblos city has constantly been inhabited since the sixth century BC until today. Its lovely alleys in the old town, all ochre stoned, invite long walks where churches (including the Crusader church of Saint John), chapels and houses are worth visiting. Its tiny port, the most beautiful one in the country, is a nice place to relax on one of the terraces with a glass of Lebanese wine. Byblos is rich in history and is also notable

Day 4: Byblos – Cedars of God – Bcharre- Qadisha Valley (Approximate overall driving time today is 2 hours and walking time around 3 hours depending on your pace)

After an early breakfast, travel inland for an approximate 2-hour drive to the Cedars of God forest. Known as Arz Ar-Rab (The Cedars of the Lord), this is one of the most beautiful places in the country. Here you have the option of taking a 9km hike from Wadi Qannoubine to the picturesque hill town of Bcharre located at an altitude of 1450 meters above sea level. The walk affords inspiring panoramic views throughout. En route, enjoy a picnic mezze lunch. On arrival in Bcharre have a walk around the central area of the town and visit the Gibran museum dedicated to the renowned Lebanese artist, author and poet. Later, continue to the nearby splendid Qadisha Valley and to your accommodation, a quite beautiful 12th Century monastery in the most peaceful setting with just the sound of birds and the wind for accompaniment. Overnight Saint Antoine Monastery. (BLD)



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Note: The hike today is recommended, but is optional and a later start can be arranged or a shorter hike can be taken in the Qadisha Valley close to the monastery as an alternative. The Cedars of God forest is closed during the winter months.

Qadisha Valley

The Qadisha Valley is one of the deepest and most beautiful valleys in Lebanon. The word Qadisha means “holy” and Wadi Qadisha is the “Holy Valley.” Filled with caves and rock shelters inhabited from the third millennium B.C., the valley is scattered with cave chapels, hermitages and monasteries cut from rock. The Valley area is surrounded by many important sites like: Monastery of St. Elisha, St. Antonios Qozhaya and Our Lady of Howqua’s chapel, etc... The valley with its caves and churches is inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Day 5: Qadisha Valley – Anjar Citadel – Chateau Ksara - Baalbek (Approximate overall driving time today is 4.5 hours)

This morning after breakfast enjoy a short walk as the sun lights up the valley and the bells of the church ring out. We then drive over the mountains dropping into the Bekaa Valley. Then visit what surely must be regarded as one of world’s most astonishing Roman archaeological sites at Baalbek. We spend ample time exploring the site in detail which is believed to date back some 5000 years. The site is so grand in its scale that is not hard to visualise what the city must have been like in its pomp. Continue to Chateau Ksara for a leisurely Lebanese mezze style lunch and wine tasting in the Bekaa Valley. Here enjoy a tour of the cellar and the production areas before enjoying degustation of the excellent wines. Finally, today visit the ancient Anjar Citadel. Dinner tonight will be at Palmyra Hotel which has an excellent reputation for good food and has a very rich and interesting history. Overnight Hotel Palmyra. (BLD)

Note: The drive over the mountains to Baalbek can only be made in normal snowfall years between late May and mid-November. Outside of these months the itinerary will take a different route from Days 3 – 5 but you will still visit all of the same places.

Baalbek (UNESCO)

Located in the Bekaa valley and at 1,170 meters above sea level, Baalbek is home to the largest and best-preserved examples of Roman architecture standing proudly in the city. An 85 km drive away from Beirut, this marvellous example of historical architecture is an important piece of Lebanon’s history and should not be missed. Those standing before the spectacular row of age-old pillars of this UNESCO World Heritage site will be stunned by the beauty and the elegance of the site which was built by the Romans to pay tribute to the god of the sun (Baal) and the gods of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury.

Anjar Citadel

Standing at the crossroad of two important trade routes, the ancient city of Anjar is home to astounding archaeological ruins from the Umayyad civilisation. Only discovered by archaeologists at the end of the 1940s, the historical site unveils the complex of Umayyad ruins, including two palaces, a mosque and a public bath. Traces of Greek, Roman and Byzantine architecture can also be found. Towering over the ruins, the anti-Lebanon mountains stand proud giving another dimension to the visit for a unique experience.

Bekaa Valley and Wine in Lebanon

The Bekaa Valley is a fertile valley in eastern Lebanon and the most important farming region in the country. The valley is 120 kilometres long and 16 kilometres wide and is blessed with a Mediterranean climate of wet, often snowy winters and dry, warm summers making it an ideal place to harvest grapes and where 90% of Lebanon’s wine is made. The south of the Valley is where the more fertile soils can be found with a large variety of vineyards and orchards.



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Day 6: Baalbek - Beiteddine Palace - Chouf Cedar Reserve - Deir Al Qamar (UNESCO) (Approximate driving time today is 3 hours)

After breakfast take the short journey to the exquisite 18th century Beiteddine Palace complex notable for its elegant mixture of Italian and Arab influenced architecture. The palace contains important archaeological collections including some stunning mosaics. The views from the grounds are also a delight to stroll at leisure. From here we continue to the Chouf Reserve to take a short walk amongst the majestic Cedar trees, a symbolic emblem of Lebanon. Finally, we overnight in Deir Al Qamar at a charming property where dinner will be included at its excellent restaurant. Overnight Deir al Oumara. (BD)

Deir Al Qamar (UNESCO)

Deir Al Kamar (meaning Monastery of the Moon) is a charming town with many historical buildings, famous for its palaces which reveal the ancient Lebanese style in architecture. It played a very important role in the history of Lebanon. The most famous sites to visit in Deir Al Qamar are: Emir Fakhr Eddine's mosque and Palace, the Kayssaryah, the church, etc... Considered as a well-preserved traditional village, it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, which not only preserves its grand feudal architecture, but its old stepped streets, walled gardens, and picturesque corners as well. Continue to the Chouf Cedar Reserve where we stretch our legs on a short easy circuit to admire more of the majestic Cedar trees and the splendid mountain vistas.

Chouf Cedar Reserve

The largest of Lebanon's nature reserves, it was declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2005. This Cedar forest accounts for a quarter of the remaining cedar forest in Lebanon, and some trees are estimated to be 2,000 years old. The size of the reserve makes it a good location for the conservation of medium size mammals such as the wolf and the Lebanese jungle cat (although visitors are unlikely to see them), as well as various species of mountain plants. It covers about 5% of the overall area of Lebanon including 24 villages and overlooks both the Bekaa valley to the east and Shouf region to the west. The altitude of the Reserve varies from 1000 meters to 2000 meters above sea level.

Day 7: Deir al Qamar – Sidon - Beirut (Approximate driving time today is 3 hours)

After breakfast take a short walk around the charming town of Deir al Qamar admiring the interesting architecture. We then travel back to the Mediterranean coast to Sidon, once a prosperous and flourishing Phoenician city. Visit the 13th Crusader Castle of the Sea and Khan el Franj 17th century, before taking a leisurely stroll in the atmospheric narrow streets of the old souk where once can observe all manner of tradesmen and craftsmen and the kaleidoscope of colours of the fresh produce on offer is striking. Grab an authentic local lunch at a historic falafel shop where the freshest ingredients are used and speed the ingredients are married together is a sight to behold! Thereafter, continue back to Beirut where any remaining time will be at leisure. Overnight Le Caramel Boutique Hotel or similar. (BL)

Note: For an even fuller day it is possible to travel south from Sidon to Tyre (UNESCO) and observe the beauty of the ancient Roman streets, arcades and the well-preserved hippodromes. This will mean an early start and arriving back to Beirut for sunset.

Tyre (UNESCO)

The southernmost city in Lebanon and located on the coast at about 80 km from Beirut, tyre is an ancient Phoenician city and home to a majestic UNESCO Heritage Site. Against the modern cityscape and high-rise buildings, the beauty of the Roman streets, arcades and the well-preserved Roman hippodromes is striking.

Sidon

Sidon is a port city on the coast 48 km south from Beirut, was one of the most remarkable Phoenician cities and trade ports of the 12th century BC. It is an atmospheric and lively place, bringing together traders of all kinds, with craftsmen, restaurants and authentic cafes.



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Day 8: Beirut – Mtein – Mrouj – Beirut

This morning enjoy some time at leisure, perhaps take a walk in the corniche and observe the fishermen. Your guide and driver will collect you from your hotel at your chosen time and drive you to Mounir Restaurant, a Lebanese restaurant renowned for hospitality and true authentic cuisine. After lunch, visit the traditional villages of Mtein and Mrouj before heading back to Beirut. Overnight Hotel Le Caramel Boutique. (BL)

Day 9: Departure from Beirut

Spend any remaining time at leisure before transferring to the airport for your onward flight. (B)

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions

Arrival and departure airport transfers
All accommodation as per the itinerary (alternative properties can be arranged)
Private ground air-conditioned transportation
Services of an English-speaking guide from Day 2 to Day 8
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites as listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded

International flights
Travel Insurance
Items of a personal nature
Visa (usually issued on arrival)
Drinks
Tips (discretionary)

Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At the time of writing there are no travel warnings in place for areas that we visit in Lebanon.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm.

This private tour stays in comfortable accommodation, typically small-scale hotels. All rooms have private bathrooms. If you wish to upgrade your accommodation then please contact us for options.



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Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £5 / Dinner £10

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer £3 / Water £1

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practise in the Middle East although not mandatory. If you have been happy with the services of your guide and driver, then a suggested amount to tip would \$ 10 – 15 per day for the guide and \$ 5 – 10 per day for the driver.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: ATMs found in the main cities only

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are widely accepted at hotels throughout-Beirut

Local Currency: Lebanese Pound but US Dollars are widely accepted

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollars

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

This tour can either be booked as a flight inclusive package or as a land only arrangement. Please contact us if you wish to receive a flight quote. Airport transfers will be provided in accordance with the flights that we book for you or if you book your own flights please provide us with the details as soon as possible so we can put the transfer arrangements in place.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities.



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Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

Many nationalities including British, US, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and EU passport holders can routinely obtain a visa on arrival for Lebanon.

Regulations do frequently change though, so we advise that you check the current requirements with your nearest embassy.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

**PASSPORTS SHOULD HOLD NO TRACES OF TRAVEL TO ISRAEL (STAMPS OR STICKERS).
PASSPORTS ARE CHECKED.**

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively, UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

For the visitor of Lebanon, there are no compulsory vaccinations. However, we strongly recommend that you contact your Doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the recommended vaccinations.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

Lebanon can be visited year-round although the hottest months are June to August especially on the coast. Away from the coast temperatures are more pleasant in the more mountainous inland areas. During the winter months temperatures are usually mild on the Mediterranean coast but can be cold in land and snow is possible in the higher elevations. Spring and Autumn are particularly pleasant times to travel. From May – October, Lebanon experiences very little rain although it is not unheard of in the mountains. Rain is more common in the winter months and early spring.



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Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet although this will be rare in summer. For the mountainous areas particularly from November – March, it is advisable to bring some warmer clothes especially for night time and early mornings. Lebanon is in general quite a liberal country so wearing t-shirts is fine. Shorts can be worn but should be at the knee or below.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared and to be adequately immunized. A good insect repellent and bite cream is advisable. Suncream/sunblock is a must – please ensure you bring enough as it may not be available locally. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. It is recommended to also bring a torch (flashlight).

Footwear

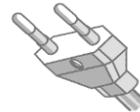
Comfortable walking shoes are recommended when visiting the various sights during the tour. Sandals are fine when travelling.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electricity in Lebanon is 230V, with a frequency of 50hz, the following plug type is commonly used.



Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 11th November 2020.